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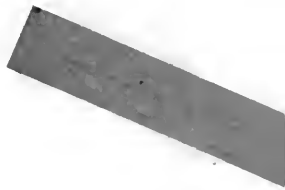
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THE TURK IN THE BALKANS







IN SPRING A BULGARIAN'S FANCY LIGHTLY TURNS 'TO THOUGHTS OF FREEDOM.

[See page 62.]

Frontpiece.]



# THE TURK IN THE BALKANS

BY  
T. COMYN-PLATT



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## P R E F A C E

**I**N submitting the following chapters to the notice of the reader, it should be observed that the one and only object in view has been to throw some light on the path of Eastern politics to the advantage, it is hoped, of future travellers.

Before many months have elapsed, Macedonian troubles will once more arrest the attention of Europe; the insurrectionary Hydra will again demonstrate its vitality, and the country be overrun with correspondents and others, eager for information as to current events. In the hope, therefore, that the knowledge and experience gained during a two and a half years' residence in Turkey, and by a journey of some months in Macedonia itself, may be of use to the intending traveller, the following pages are offered by way of arriving at a correct estimate of the true state of affairs.

To this end it has been found necessary to inquire briefly into the religious and political phases of the situation, though in so doing the investigation has been carried no deeper than is absolutely

## PREFACE

essential to a correct appreciation of the subject under discussion.

Without some such knowledge, any conclusions arrived at are almost certain to prove fallacious ; and it is because the vast majority of latter-day travellers, in this part of the Sultan's dominions, are so entirely ignorant of the very axioms of the situation, that the "truth" in Macedonia assumes such weird shapes.

To conclude without an expression of the most sincere thanks for the great hospitality and valuable information afforded by H.M.'s Consular officers, would be ungracious in the extreme. As Government servants, the very scant appreciation their labours call forth is anything but encouraging ; and yet, despite the manner of their treatment, no service can boast an abler, harder worked, or more miserably rewarded body of men. As representative officials they are unsurpassed, as sources of information they are invaluable ; and should the traveller at any time need assistance, he will find that no amount of trouble is spared to further his wishes.

T. COMYN-PLATT.

ARTHUR'S, ST. JAMES'S, LONDON.

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# THE TURK IN THE BALKANS

## CHAPTER I

### TURKEY IN EUROPE: A SURVEY

THOSE who travel through a country without a previous knowledge of its history lose more than half the interest and pleasure of the journey, and any conclusions formed by such apathetic wanderers should not only be accepted with great caution, but, as a rule, entirely ignored.

Like the lawyer, the traveller should study his brief diligently before entering upon his labours, otherwise his arguments and conclusions may be at issue with the true interests of his client. And yet the importance of this rule is seldom recognised, even by politicians and authors, who are continually endowing the parliamentary and literary world with speeches and books, the result of a flying visit to some distant land with no greater knowledge of the country visited than that supplied by Messrs. Cook.

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We live, in truth, in an age of rapid locomotion and overweening conceit, when the traveller who has journeyed from Ostend to Vladivostock considers himself fully eligible to write, not only a history of Russia, but a treatise on the future of Japan, together with as many articles relating to the Manchu Dynasty as time will allow between his diurnal voyages.

In these days, travelling has really become a profession, indulged in by a few to the edification of the many, who, without inquiring into the author's credentials, accept any book of travel, provided the account is interestingly written. Still, less harm would be effected if only such authors would condescend to indulge in even a superficial study of their subject; as it is, the vast majority of these itinerant historians arrive in a country knowing nothing of the region or people whither inclination accredits them, with the result that the babbling gossip of any chance companion is readily believed, and the information imparted by a bountiful host swallowed as greedily as his dinner.

All this may seem an exaggeration of facts, but such is by no means the case. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the vast majority of modern books of travel are the result of a few weeks' journey through a country, during which time the prospective author has been primed by an even more ignorant interpreter.



## TURKEY IN EUROPE : A SURVEY

But the ill effects thus wrought are not to be compared with the harm done by the politician who enters the lists ignorant of his subject. Government officials "speak with authority" of any country they have passed through, noble lords obtain a "thorough grasp" of the Eastern Question after a brief sojourn at Constantinople, and who shall dare contradict the member of Parliament who has travelled a week in foreign lands? It is at the hands of such excursionists, each interested simply and solely in the discovery of evidence to support his own particular line of thought, that the cause of a country suffers and its people are maligned. In this respect, no nation has paid a bigger penalty than Turkey. Start with a bias for or against the Turk, or any of the numerous nationalities that go to make up the Mahommedan Empire, and there is abundant evidence to hand to support any contention, good or bad. It is for this reason that the Turk is either translated to a seventh heaven or condemned to a deplorable futurity. For him, in the opinion of the majority, there is no halfway house, no happy medium. He is either angel or fiend, his Government is the best or the most despicable, his religion thoroughly suitable or positively degrading. And thus he is misunderstood by friend and foe alike, who only meet on common ground in describing him as a Mahommedan, and not a Christian. As a matter of fact, the longer one lives in Turkey the more one

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becomes convinced that, under any ordinary form of government, the Turk would very soon adapt himself to the ways of Europe. It is true that commerce, or indeed work of any kind, has little or no interest for him ; but then it must be remembered that he is a born soldier, and as such his inclinations naturally tend to arms, to the contempt of every other profession.

There are, indeed, many considerations to encourage this martial ardour ; the life is pleasantly idle, food is generously supplied, and if he can live in comfort at the expense of the Christian population, why should he work ? All this the Turkish Government understands only too well, arguing with true Eastern philosophy that if Christian and Moslem alike traded and were similarly taxed, discontent in the country would be general in a week, and the chances of revolution doubled. Once a soldier, therefore, the powers that be do nothing to encourage a change of profession.

In present circumstances, it is true there is little cause to anticipate any such change, for the lot of the peasant is anything but enviable, in that he is mulcted of even that little with which Fortune has favoured him. Still, the Sultan is always on the safe side. Militarism is vigorously encouraged, for if he reigned over a commercial nation his throne would not be worth a day's purchase.

It is not that there exists any very great difference

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between Christians and Turks. The good and bad, amongst one and the other, are almost equally distributed. It is the Government that is the curse of the land, and the Government which alone is at the root of all the troubles in the Near East.

Ruled by a set of palace intriguers as avaricious as they are fanatical, what chance have the Sultan's unfortunate subjects of bettering their position? Left to themselves, and under the most ordinary form of government, Turks and Christians would long ago have agreed peacefully to differ ; as it is, every action of the authorities is thought out with a view to creating friction, not only between the individual Moslem and Christian, but between every religious denomination throughout the Sultan's dominions. It is undoubtedly true that the jealousy of the Great Powers has prolonged the " Sick Man's " dying, but the policy of " Divide et Impera," pursued by the Porte, is the breath of the invalid's life, and nowhere is it more carefully practised than in Macedonia.

A mosaic of sects and creeds, no more fruitful soil for the advancement of such a policy could possibly be found ; and in furtherance of the assertion it is not too much to say that were the religious differences, which at present separate the Christian denominations, settled to-morrow, the downfall of Turkey would speedily follow. As matters stand, however, Greeks, Servians, Albanians, Bulgarians, and

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Roumanians, vie with one another in missionary enterprise, and by means of "Propagandas" as ecclesiastical in name as they are political in spirit, strive for national pre-eminence in the Balkan Peninsula.

It is, of course, thoroughly recognised that, so long as religious and political differences in Macedonia can be kept alive, there is little possibility of united action against the Turkish Government. Accordingly, every sectarian disagreement is exploited and fostered by the Turkish authorities to the last degree, with the result that the dramatic representation of the "Kilkenny Cats" is for ever being repeated.

Here, then, is a golden opportunity for the Porte.

In a subsequent chapter the important *rôle* played by the various "Propagandas" will be discussed at greater length. For the present it is sufficient to state that the policy of the Sultan is to pit one against the other, and thus blind Europe to the greater evil which is the bed-rock of all Eastern troubles—Turkish Government.

Every one knows the story of Sinbad and the Old Man of the Sea whom he could never rid from his back, and that how, finding him asleep one day, Sinbad killed him with a stone. Such is very much the position of Turkey to-day as regards the rest of Europe. Out of harmony, social and political, with her neighbours, she is an incubus on the back of

## TURKEY IN EUROPE : A SURVEY

Europe, and, although it is generally agreed that her transference to Asia would be the best of all possible blessings, there is unfortunately no such happy consensus amongst the Great Powers as to a successor.

Not only does the Sultan thoroughly understand the position of affairs, but he loses no opportunity of turning even the mutual jealousies and disagreements of the Powers themselves to his own advantage. In such circumstances Turkey's position is a paradox, for her very weakness is her strength. Thus the ball is kept rolling, and the kingdom of Abdul Hamid still exists, though its end has been predicted by statesmen a score of times. And so matters will in all probability continue, for, as stated above, the policy of "Divide et Impera" is not only practised by the Sultan in his own dominions, but is carried into the councils of Europe, and with exactly the same results as produced in Macedonia.

Jealous of each other's intentions, and fearing the consequences of a general conflagration, the Great Powers prefer, anyhow for the present, to patch and mend the dilapidated Turkish Empire, though each and all are fully alive to the futility of the suggested reforms. Thus things are allowed to drift, with the result that insurrection has become chronic, and but for "Generals January and February" would be continuous, year out and year in. Now, such a course is one after the Turk's own heart. At the game of repression he is unmatched, for, left alone, he can

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manage his affairs excellently well, and if reforms are thrust upon him, there are methods of evasion that Europe never dreamt of. Unfortunately, the policy of the Great Powers and that of the Sultan place the wretched Christian between the devil and the deep sea, for although his condition evokes European sympathy, he is told that force cannot be exercised in his favour. It so happens, however, that armed intervention is the one and only persuasive argument the Sultan understands—a sad coincidence, since it is the one thing the Powers object to. Thus a deadlock takes place, and the Christians, tired of waiting for European assistance, have at last adopted measures of self-preservation.

How long the present state of affairs will last it is impossible to say. It may be that Europe will ultimately agree (a very nebulous hypothesis) as to a partition of the Mahommedan kingdom; but whatever the future has in store, there is little doubt that Turkey is a dying nation. Old age and second childhood may last many centuries, but the “mene, mene” is written on the wall, and the best proof of the assertion is to be found in the fact, that not only are the Turks a decreasing minority of the population, but, despite innumerable hardships, the Christians are steadily multiplying, so that slowly but surely a process of absorption is taking place which cannot but end in complete Moslem evanescence.

In 1683 the Turks were at the gates of Vienna.

## TURKEY IN EUROPE : A SURVEY

From that date onwards time is strewn with the wreck of the Ottoman Empire, so that to-day, of her vast dominion that extended from the Austrian capital to the Ægean, and from the Black Sea to the Adriatic, little else remains to the Sultan but Albania, Macedonia, and the shore of the Mediterranean.

## CHAPTER II

### MODERN MACEDONIA

**T**HE term Macedonia may, for all present intents and purposes, be applied to that part of the great Balkan Peninsula which is bounded on the north by Servia and Bulgaria, on the south by Thessaly and the Ægean Sea, on the east by the Rhodope Mountains and the river Mesta, and on the west by Albania.

As the Assyrian Empire has left no trace of its former greatness, so has Time dealt with the once flourishing kingdom of Macedonia. A Macedonian, therefore, in the sense that one speaks of a Russian or a German, is to-day an unknown quantity, though there is abundant evidence to prove that the Vlachs, a people scattered throughout European Turkey, are the remote descendants of the once famous Empire of Philip.

A mountainous country of stunted forests, few roads, and, as yet, meagre cultivation, situated midway between Europe and Asia, no more favourable spot could have been discovered for the hatching of



## MODERN MACEDONIA

insurrectionary movements. In fact, Macedonia is the *sentina gentium* of Europe, the barrier between East and West, civilisation and barbarism, education and ignorance ; a very mosaic of peoples, creeds, and tongues ; the most prosperous district of a decaying empire, and therefore the coveted of all. And thus it happens that the phrase "Macedonian Question" has become a generic term for all the problems connected with Turkey in Europe, in that the aspirations, the policy, the national feelings of all the Balkan States, including Greece, are centred in this one district. In a later chapter the subject of Balkan politics will be further reviewed. For the present, however, a brief survey of Macedonia, as regards climate, locomotion, and general facilities for travel, will be sufficient.

From April to September no more ideal country exists than Macedonia. Rough comfort one certainly has to put up with, for the most sumptuous inn is but a poor apology for a house, whilst the fare, though no doubt appreciated by the peasant, is but poor satisfaction after a long day's ride to the hungry traveller. Still, if one's lodging is indifferent and ill-kept, if the food is unpalatable, the cost of living is in exact proportion, and although to journey in Macedonia is to experience discomforts unknown in more civilised lands, the scenery during a day's ride is equal to any in Europe. In spring and summer the varying tints of the trees are a feast for an

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artist's eyes, the ground is carpeted with wild flowers, whilst the lights and shades that follow the sun change the face of the country every mile of the way. Here and there are deep valleys rich with cultivation, and far-stretching plains watered by many streams that bubble through orchards and cornfields, carrying with them the scent of may and cherry blossom. Although at times the heat is excessive, a soft breeze is seldom lacking to temper the sun's rays, and the nights are always delightfully cool. Far more trying than the hottest sun, however, is the winter cold. In October the night air rips through the thickest coat, the snow creeps down into the valleys, making the roads impassable, whilst the wind cuts through one's very bones like a frozen knife.

Of all the provinces of Turkey, Macedonia is perhaps the most civilised. Certainly it is the richest in railways, for whereas Turkey proper and Asia Minor can only boast the existence of one line apiece, Macedonia has reached such a standard of civilisation that no less than three lines have been constructed within the last thirty years. That is to say, starting from Salonica, the traveller may journey west to Monastir, north to Uskab and Nisch, and east to Constantinople, by three different routes. Naturally the trains are the reverse of express, for nothing in the Sultan's dominions goes quickly, except His Majesty's revenues. Still, considering all things, the lines are worked well, whilst the

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officials, in addition to being excessively polite, are able to converse in French and German with the inquiring traveller.

It might reasonably be supposed that, after so many years of continuous traffic, the railway would have ceased to interest the Turk, and yet it is to-day as great an object of wonder as ever. Indeed, every station, on the arrival of the daily train, is the scene of a veritable *levée*. The entire population of the town turns out to meet the traveller, much drinking of coffee follows, whilst cigarettes and fruit are freely given to beguile the rest of the journey. In fact, the train is literally mobbed by a seething crowd, who shout in a babel of tongues, and during calmer intervals gape like a flock of sheep. The extraordinary thing is that every one in the train seems to know every one at the station! Indeed, the belief is borne in upon one that people in Macedonia merely consider the line as a happy rendezvous where friends may all meet.

But the railway is a poor guide to Macedonia, for the train has an annoying habit of skirting the towns and pulling up in some barren plain a few miles distant. To see and understand something of the country and its hybrid population, one must strike inland across the mountains, where alone the village peasant is discovered in his true colours, and the story of his life may be inquired into without fear of interruption.

## THE TURK IN THE BALKANS

It is well at the outset of one's journey to bear in mind that the best maps procurable are not always to be relied upon. A road may be clearly marked as leading to a particular town, and yet one may ride all day without necessarily finding a trace of it, whilst, on the other hand, one stumbles across routes of which the map is altogether oblivious. It is not that the geographer has been guilty of carelessness or wilful misinterpretation; the winter storms have demolished the one, and the local authorities have temporarily constructed the other! In Turkey the roads and bridges are the most amazing phenomena conceivable; indeed, it is not too much to say that the superintendence of Macedonian thoroughfares is the chief source of many a Pasha's affluence. The *modus operandi*, though simple, is very lucrative, and, briefly stated, amounts to this—that the Turkish local authority, Pasha, Vali, Kaimakam, or whoever he may be, by way of satisfying the demands of the Porte and lining his own pocket, taxes the district periodically for the construction, maintenance, and repair of roads and bridges. Now, if he happens to be honestly inclined, the money thus collected may be faithfully allocated. As a general rule, however, the Turkish Exchequer takes three-quarters, the Pasha the remainder, and the roads are left to the mercy of the next storm, which is made the excuse for another all-round tax.

With such conditions prevailing, it is wise to rely

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entirely on local information as regards one's itinerary, in which respect no one is better versed than the driver of one's conveyance, who thoroughly understands the fickleness of the road. He knows the history, past and present, of every route—the date when a certain bridge was swept away, how many times the people near by have been taxed to rebuild it, the short cuts that will avoid disaster, and a great deal more as to other prospective thoroughfares that have all ended in the Pasha's pocket.

It is a strange but nevertheless undeniable fact, that in Turkey, everything, even to-day, has an air of temporary stability which leads one to the inevitable conclusion that the present occupiers of the soil momentarily anticipate their expulsion. Thus it invariably happens that after the winter snows have melted, not a bridge is left by river or stream. It never seems to occur to any one to build for future generations. Everything is patched up for the moment, so that to talk about plans or routes is sheer waste of time. The most one can do is to state one's wishes, and to leave the carrying out of the same to Fortune, who, it will be discovered, is more fickle in Turkey than in any other country in the world.

Many of the largest towns in Macedonia, during six months in the year, are unapproachable by carriage owing to heavy rains. On such occasions, therefore, one has either to continue one's journey on foot, or else follow the tortuous windings of some

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mountain track that leads mysteriously to an entrance at the back of the town.

Hidden in some wooded valley, or clinging to the side of a steep hill, it is not always easy to discover a Macedonian village until one is near by. Built of mud and thatch, the low houses lean one against the other in strange yet picturesque confusion; the narrowest of streets intersect one another and cut up the village into small squares like a chess-board, whilst a stream running down the main thoroughfare, supplies the wants of the community, serves as a drain, and, in addition, turns the mill when it has fulfilled its other duties.

In this medley of dwellings one building stands out in marked contrast to the rest—the church. Perched on some small hillock and endowed with the best architectural skill obtainable, it overshadows all, and is a fitting indication of the relationship existing between peasant and priest. Socially, there is nothing to choose between “sheep” and “shepherd”; both live in a state of poverty, both are subject alike to the abuses of Turkish misrule. But whilst education in the former is a negligible quantity, the priest has a smattering of many arts. In addition to his spiritual functions, he is doctor, judge, school-master, and farmer, all in one. It is not surprising, therefore, that his flock regard him with respect, and treat him as the village potentate, for although his income, a mere pittance, is derived from the performance

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of certain clerical duties, the amount is liberally supplemented by the charity of his parishioners. At times he may be seen digging in the fields, his long black cassock tucked to the waist, or thatching a cottage with the skill of an expert. But wherever he is, whatever he does, a halo of respect seems to surround him, which reaches its climax as he chants the canticles at evening or morning prayer to a devout and appreciative congregation. With such a hold on his flock, it is little to be wondered at if Turkish officials invariably regard him as the instigator of every village plot. Yet in reality his practices nowadays, whatever they may have been in the past, are the reverse of Machiavellian, for having seen the failure and disastrous consequences of insurrection, he recognises that Time is the only antidote for Turkish evils.

As regards cultivation, it would be quite in keeping with the nature of things if the peasant merely farmed sufficient land to supply his household wants, for any surplus store is always a great temptation to the Pasha of the district. Still, in spite of the fact that taxation increases in proportion, and very often in exact inverse ratio, to the savings of the peasant, the area of cultivation round every village is considerable, and if only the local authorities were less voracious, the commercial prosperity of Macedonia would improve rapidly. As things are, however, the peasant works in order to satisfy the necessities of

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life and the Pasha's demands; there is little or no inducement to do more.

In many villages on the Herzegovina-Bosnian frontier there is an annual exodus of peasants, who, tired of being mulcted by the Turks, travel far into Hungary, plying their trade and engaging in work anywhere so long as they are allowed to enjoy the proceeds in peace. In fact, it is not at all uncommon for a peasant to live half the year in Austrian territory, and, having saved a little money, to return and spend it in his native village.

But the collar rubs hardest in cases where the local authority takes advantage of his office to demand labour, as well as taxes, of the unfortunate peasant. Of all the curses to which the Macedonian peasant is subjected, the system of Corvee is by far the most disastrous to his welfare. It is needless to say that Christian forced labour in Turkey is illegal—every hardship suffered by the unfortunate Rayah is, at least on paper! Nevertheless, despite the threats levelled in the Penal Code against such offenders, the practice exists, and must necessarily continue so long as avaricious officials farm the land and pocket the taxes. It is these local tyrants that are the curse of the country, for not even Ministers themselves dare raise a finger in opposition to their wishes, particularly if the offender chances to be an Albanian,

The marvel is that such a state of affairs creates so little disturbance, for the Bey's henchmen, in



## MODERN MACEDONIA

collecting the necessary labourers, spare no means to attain their end. Hence the Rayah submits to forced labour, in the name of which every conceivable depredation and crime is committed; thus, as in mediæval times, the feudal chief flourishes in "inverse ratio" as the serf is degraded.

And for such oppression, what is the redress? Ask a Mahomedan official, and he will answer: the "Justice of Turkish Law." But, were the peasant to act upon his advice, he would most certainly lose his case; and even if he won, the cost in bribes would amount to ruin.

Such, then, is the Rayah's condition in Macedonia to-day. Would that it could be denied, for the disease is increasing. Still, sad as is this state of affairs, like the Turk, there are many people in Europe who turn their backs on the spectacle merely because the sufferers are Christians of a schismatic Church!

Perhaps the most picturesque time of year to travel in Macedonia is the autumn. The weather is perfect, the country is a mass of colour, and the peasants are occupied with the harvest. No one is idle; the women at home thresh the corn, the children tend the cattle, whilst the men cut the hay and till the fields. Of the most primitive description, the plough, which is merely a short pointed stick fastened at right angles to a wooden cross, is drawn by yoked oxen, who, with solemn dignity, pace up and down

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the long furrows. A peasant, in sheepskin coat and cap, shirt and trousers of coarse frieze, and wearing sandals, walks behind, armed with a long stick, and by strange cries and as many thrusts vainly urges his unenterprising steeds. Such agricultural methods are certainly primitive, yet they are in exact keeping with Macedonian life; for, go where you will, everything material and social is stunted and atrophied, the inevitable result of a system of government as corrupt as it is avaricious, which absolutely destroys every incentive to work.

Although the wolf is always near his door, the hospitality of the Macedonian peasant is not one whit inferior to that of the Turk. His food is rough and unpalatably served, but, such as it is, the traveller is welcome to his share. In short, the Christian inhabitants of Macedonia have all the good points common to their Moslem neighbours, and a great many more besides. That neither are perfect is in the natural order of things; but if people who talk so much as to what they have seen and heard would instead direct their energies towards a deeper study of Christians and Moslems alike, the process would do much to balance their minds and prevent a fanatical judgment being passed on either.

## CHAPTER III

### GOVERNMENT

**I**T is presumably unnecessary to state that Macedonia, as a province of Turkey, is subject to the Administrative rule of the Porte, and as such comes within the jurisdiction of the Minister of the Interior. It may seem superfluous to reiterate a truism of this nature, but when educated people clamour for reforms, and brandish a tomahawk by way of enforcing their demands, this fact seems to be entirely forgotten, as also the enormous difficulties of the situation.

As regards Turkish Administration, it may be well here to state that the Empire is divided into Provinces, each with its own Vali or Governor-General. These provinces are again subdivided into "Mutesariflicks," each with its own Mutesarif; the Mutesariflicks into Cazas, which are administered by Kaimakams; and last of all one arrives at the "Nahie," or collection of villages, which is the administrative unit under the rule of a Mudir.

Social equality being part of a Moslem's creed,

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there is little to choose between these various functionaries ; certainly their positions are one and all equally precarious. It is true that the Vali is a white-bearded old gentleman, and that his administrative subordinates are of a younger generation. With this exception, however, they are similarly moulded, and in nine cases out of ten govern on precisely the same principles, and with equally disastrous results.

Nominally, Turkish civil officials are appointed as the result of an examination ; but, with palace favour, such minor idiosyncrasies are easily overcome, and the same influence as readily ensures rapid promotion. To describe the various duties imposed upon the civil servants of the Porte would be to no purpose. It will be sufficient to state that by far the most necessary and important function is the remission of funds to Constantinople, and woe betide the official who fails to respond to such Treasury demands. That these financial agents—they are really little more—are all Mahommedans is a matter of no very great surprise ; but what does strike one as amazing is the similarity of action and thought pervading the entire class. To this rule there are but two exceptions, the Christian Governor and the Albanian. The former is the still-born effort of the Great Powers as embodied in the Armenian Reform Scheme of 1896. Drawn up by Europe with the best possible intentions, the Sublime Porte, as usual, has driven a coach and four through the Scheme, and, although Christian Governors were

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duly appointed, they have since been systematically reduced to a state of official impotence.

The Albanians, however, are of an entirely different mould. Strict Mahommedans and loyal public servants, they are imbued with a natural aversion of existing administrative methods, and see very clearly that the present system is the ruin of the country. Of all the Sultan's subjects none object more strongly to foreign interference, or, for that matter, to any interference at all. Being, however, sufficiently large-minded to recognise the disabilities under which the Christians suffer, and clever enough to see that all intervention on their behalf is at the expense of Turkish sovereignty, the Albanian official endeavours to govern firmly and justly, with the result that the district and people under his authority are comparatively prosperous and happy. The truth is, the Albanian is a European and not an Oriental; indeed, his every action betrays the truth of the assertion, and it is because the Porte realises the fact and fears the consequences of their Europhile tendency that more are not employed in high office.

Having said this much of Turkish officials, it will be necessary to inquire into the working of the administrative system in Macedonia.

In the principal town of every province or district, the Konak is the centre of government. More capacious than any other building, the seat of authority may be otherwise recognised by the

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presence of two dilapidated sentries, who, but for their rifles, are in no way distinguishable from the crowd of beggars that throng the gateway. Here it is that justice is dispensed, grievances rectified, and every civil disorder inquired into. As each Konak is in telegraphic communication with the Porte, as also with the most distant official in the province, the Sultan is daily informed of the gossip of empire. It is to the Konak that the weary traveller is hurried, presumably to pay his respects, directly he sets foot in a town, despite the fact that every incident of his journey has been previously telegraphed at length.

On entering the Governor's house, one is shown through many passages, thronged by men and women in every conceivable costume, all of whom would have been better advised had they stayed away. To the right and left are holes in the walls (it would be inaccurate to describe them as doorways) hung with massive curtains, in front of which the patient litigants await, it may be for days, an audience of the official inmate. Here, where the crowd is thickest, within a bare but spacious apartment, sits the supreme authority of State, into whose presence the traveller is ushered.

During the earlier days of one's journey, such audiences are regarded as the apotheosis of Turkish hospitality, for coffee and cigarettes are freely offered, and the innumerable questions asked are taken as

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evidence of the paternal interest of a benevolent Government. In a very short time, however, the fatuity of any such idea becomes apparent, and the fact is brought home to one with crystal clearness that the courtesy of Turkish officials is part and parcel of a huge system of "espionage."

The room occupied by the Sultan's representative is indeed a hungry-looking apartment, for, with the exception of a few rugs and a hard divan skirting the four walls, a chair and writing-table constitute the entire furniture. In winter-time, however, things are still less cheerful. The windows, draughty in summer, seem to invite a gale later in the year; damp patches cover the ceiling, streams of water trickle down the walls, and a charcoal brazier, placed in the centre of the room, is all the comfort to be expected in the shape of a fire.

The customary salaams over, the interview, or, properly speaking, the cross-examination, begins. It is just as well to remember at the outset that any attempt at concealment is absolutely futile, for if full details of the route have not already been telegraphed, the coachman or the interpreter, or both, have been thoroughly sounded on arrival, so that the Vali, or whoever the official may be, knows all. During the audience, secretaries, wearing black frock-coats buttoned to the chin, fezes, and the inevitable elastic-side boots, are continually appearing with long strips of paper for signature, to some of whom

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the Vali dictates letters during the pauses in the conversation. And here it may be mentioned that no well-educated official ever writes at a table from choice; he lays the paper on the palm of his hand and scratches with a piece of wood dipped in wet soot. But to continue. Having satisfied his curiosity and proved the efficiency of his spies, the Governor's attention is directed towards the discovery of the traveller's future plans. Thus, after half an hour's interview, the soul of one's journey is laid bare (not that there is anything to hide), and before sunset the information gleaned is telegraphed to the Porte, as also to every official on the morrow's route.

But the comedy by no means ends here. During one's stay in the town the strictest methods of "surveillance" are put into operation. Odd-looking men, who try to appear disconcerted, hang about the inn door. To walk down the street is to be shadowed by two or three very obvious detectives, whilst the inoffensive shopkeeper, from whom one purchases the smallest article, is at once cross-examined as to the nature of one's conversation. Even the landlord is pressed into the conspiracy, and as for one's interpreter, he is for ever the centre of a group of inquiring friends. But all this is part of the Vali's plan of campaign. He must know everything, or invent information, in order that a complete history of one's movements may be telegraphed to the authorities concerned. Suspicion, with



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the Turk, is what steam is to machinery ; it arouses his latent energy, gives him an interest in life—in fact, earns him his daily bread. If strangers alone were sufferers by this persecution, some excuse might be made for the system ; but not even the Turk himself is exempt, and high officials least of all. For instance, at every Konak there are a certain number of spies whose duty it is to keep the Porte informed of the Vali's doings. These in turn are again watched by others, and so on *ad infinitum*. The amount of money spent in carrying out such a policy is perhaps the largest item of Turkish expenditure, though, as regards results, it is very doubtful whether the system serves any other purpose than to create general mistrust, and to enrich the scum of the population at the expense of honest men.

But perhaps the greatest curse in connection with Macedonian administration is the inadequacy, as also the precariousness, of official salaries. Consider what such a state of affairs leads to. The most capable Governor must eke out an existence somehow or other, and, as the Porte is studiously unmindful of its financial obligations, the peasant is called upon to save the situation. This solution of the difficulty having proved as successful as it is lucrative, the Vali troubles the authorities little about his salary, and the Porte troubles less about the Vali. The remedy discovered for such financial embarrassment is, in fact, an all-round success, with

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the exception, perhaps, of the Christian tax-payer. But even here there is a saving clause, for, in objecting to disgorge, the wretched peasant is put down as an Insurrectionist and accordingly imprisoned, after which he is left alone for the time being, which, after all, is a great happiness in Turkey. It would, of course, be absurd to suggest that every official is an avaricious monster. There are many upright and God-fearing men who recognise the deplorable condition of the peasantry, and do all in their power to "temper the wind to the shorn lamb," even to the extent of foregoing their salaries. But such magnanimity cannot last. Once a year, on an average, peremptory orders are received from the Porte for money—orders that must be satisfied under pain of instant dismissal. What is to be done? The Vali is bankrupt, but the peasant has his flocks and herds and a little money stowed away from last year's harvest. Here, then, is the solution, and a very feasible one; but to blame the Governor as tyrannical for adopting the only course open to him is, to say the least, a little hard. As well might one find fault with a gaoler for carrying out the regulations in force as to sentences of hard labour. In both instances responsibility rests with the Government, if the remedy increases the disease.

A great deal has been written and said as to the Macedonian peasant, whose condition, it is stated, has been grossly exaggerated. But starting with the

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plain, undiluted fact that the Turkish Government is always on the verge of bankruptcy, and that the Christians, who form the majority of the population, are the only people who have any money at all, extortion is a logical sequence.

In certain cases, it is true, the Porte does pay a limited number of officials, but this in no way from a sense of duty ; it would be more correct to ascribe such action to the basest economy, for it so happens that such a policy is indulged in merely by way of satisfying a host of other importunate petitioners. For instance, salary to the amount of £1000 is owing, let us say, to the Vali of Salonica, who, by way of satisfaction, receives a Government bill, drawn on some provincial treasury, the name of which is left in blank. On receipt of this rare document, the fortunate possessor at once interviews a bill discounter, who is always prepared to take Government paper at a price. After much delay, and even more arguing, an arrangement is concluded whereby the Vali receives 40 per cent. of the amount of the bill as full purchase money, and the draft changes hands. Now, the discounter is, so to speak, a universal financier. In touch with the Governors of all the provinces, he knows the harvest of every vilayet, the number of times the tax-gatherer has visited the district, and the chances of a further successful "squeeze" ; thus he is in the best position to dispose of the bill at good interest, for it is obviously to the advantage of

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any Governor or official to buy it at any price, if he can recoup himself by taxing his province for the full £1000. Having discovered so fortunate a Vali, the name of his administrative district is inserted in the bill, his signature is added, and the work of mulcting the peasant begins.

In short, the whole transaction is a huge gamble, which invariably ends by the last holder of the bill collecting his due by force of arms—a course of procedure of which the soldiers employed take ample advantage to enrich themselves.

It is no uncommon occurrence for a village to pay an annual subsidy to some Albanian tribe for protection against the extortionate demands of a Vali, and, when such a course is adopted, the peasant, finding that his life and property is secure, very naturally regards his Albanian protector as his lord and master. Strange as this may appear, it should be borne in mind that Albania is in reality only nominally subject to Turkish rule, and the best proof that the Sublime Porte recognises the fact is to be found in the exceptional treatment meted out to Albanians whenever they transgress the laws of the land.

It is true that there are many Turkish Governors in Albania who, as the Sultan's representatives, are responsible for law and order, but should they go too far in the exercise of their authority, disturbances invariably follow; so that the Porte, very wisely,

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closes the incident, and withdraws the troops. In fact, Albania is the Poland of Turkey, and as such is a constant source of terror to the Sultan, who humours the tribes in every possible way. Thus the Albanians pay no taxes, they are exempt from military service, capital offences are outside the jurisdiction of the Turkish Governors, whilst the same independence is observable in matters of religion, Christian-Albanians accounting for very nearly half the population and adulterated Mahomedans for the remainder.

Such is a brief sketch of Turkish government in Macedonia, an administrative system which is responsible for the deplorable condition of the Sultan's dominions.

Recognising the evils as also the dangers of the existing state of affairs, the Great Powers are for ever trying to instigate reforms. The most elaborate and comprehensive schemes are continually being drawn up and presented to the Porte, with the result that after much pressure the Sultan accepts the wise (?) recommendations of his European neighbours. But there the matter ends; the Powers have other interests elsewhere, and the Turkish Government, left to itself, deposits the Reform Scheme in a bag that hangs on the minister's wall at the Sublime Porte, and everything continues in the same old way.

For years past the Sultan has thus completely hoodwinked Europe. It would seem, however, as

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though a day of reckoning was at hand, and that the Great Powers, having determined on legislative reforms, mean to insist on their rigorous execution. Time will show. How far the most honest acceptance of such reforms will tend to regulate Eastern disaffection is a matter of opinion. There is, however, no question but that the introduction of European institutions into Turkey is the surest method of limiting Mahommedan rule ; for if only Western ideas were allowed a full sweep, the Sultan and his Moslem subjects would very soon find themselves relegated to the more salubrious climate of Asia Minor. Such being the case, and no one is more convinced of it than Abdul Hamid himself, it is not surprising that every nerve is strained in official Turkey to circumscribe the area of Western manners, customs, and ideas.

## CHAPTER IV

### POLITICS AND RELIGION

**M**ACEDONIAN politics may be summed up in the one word "propaganda." Throughout the length and breadth of the land there is hardly a peasant who is not subject to its intoxicating influence—an influence which has permeated the entire country, north, south, east, and west, and is the cause of the bitter hatred existing to-day between the various nationalities.

To inquire more deeply into this state of affairs, it must be borne in mind that the word "race," as implied by such terms as Greek, Servian or Bulgarian, has little or no significance in speaking of a Macedonian. Indeed, no one realises the fact more than the peasant himself, for, although he vaguely conceives his natural affinity with one or other of the surrounding States, it passes his comprehension to which in reality he is most closely affiliated. In truth, the difficulty of the situation is not surprising when it is remembered that, since the Empire of Philip, Macedonia has been subject to Greeks, Servians,

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Bulgarians and Turks. The peasant, therefore, may well be excused if he has lost count of his true ancestry.

And thus it happens that such words as "race," "nationality," "lineage," or whatever be the expression most suited to differentiate between a Macedonian and the rest of the Balkan world, have lost their savour, with the result that the peasant is ready to adopt any nationality as his own, provided arguments sufficiently plausible are advanced in the process of conversion.

But there is a political side to this extraordinary phenomenon, which is not less bewildering. Of late years the different Balkan races have conceived a "national idea," or rather, a host of politicians have inspired their followers with dreams of former greatness. Servians, Greeks, Bulgarians are reminded of the extended empire of their forefathers, the necessity of returning to the same order of things is advanced, and Macedonia is claimed as the heritage of each.

In the ordinary course of events these aspirations would be best furthered by means of agitation and public meetings. Such methods, however, are, and always have been, strictly forbidden by the Sublime Porte. Consequently the ambitions of the various Balkan States are advanced, under cover of "missionary enterprises" or "propagandas," which, although political in their ends, are religious and educational in their methods. It therefore happens that, to-day,



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every Christian denomination in Macedonia has its hierarchy and its schools, with the result that a proselytising warfare is carried on between the various sects for national and political ascendancy in which the entire population engages.

That the Porte takes every advantage of these religious campaigns is but natural; indeed, as the Sultan very rightly argues, so long as Christians disagree *inter se* there is little chance of a combination against the Turk. Thus the policy of "Divide et Impera" has all the elements of success ready to hand.

There are many ways of furthering this denominational antagonism, and adding fuel to the fire of discord; but the most satisfactory results are obtained on such occasions as when the Sublime Porte favours the request of one nationality to the detriment of another. For instance, the Patriarch and the Exarch—that is to say, the respective heads of the Greek and Bulgarian Communion—may apply for permission to build new churches. The request of the one is granted, that of the other refused; the schools of one denomination are allowed greater freedom than those of another; books of instruction are forbidden or authorised, as jealousy is likely to be aroused; the language of one sect permitted, that of another forbidden. Thus the Porte fans to white heat the rivalry, recrimination, and vindictiveness of the various Christian denominations, and in the process diverts attention from the iniquities of Turkish government.

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But if the policy of the Sultan, in dealing with his Christian subjects, is to further mutual jealousy, that of the several autocephalous Churches in no way tends to denominational harmony. And herein lies the greatest obstacle to any peaceful solution of Balkan troubles, *i.e.* the difficulty of satisfying the claims of the various orthodox communities.

It would be beyond the scope of the present work to inquire at any length into the history of the Eastern Patriarchate; and yet Macedonian politics are so inseparably bound up with religion that a brief sketch of the past is absolutely essential. The designation Orthodox Church may, for practical purposes, be said to embrace all the Christian communities of the Near East.

Originally divided into three Patriarchates—Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria—the Christian Church was homogeneous; but when the capital of the Roman world was removed to Byzantium, a fourth See—Constantinople—was founded, which, under the fostering care of the Emperor, developed such sovereign pretensions as ultimately to rebel against the successor of St. Peter.

In the quarrels which ensued the Pope, as "Sovereign Pontiff and Vicar of Christ," hurled the most violent anathemas against his pretentious rival, who not only returned the compliment, but in styling himself "Œcumenical Patriarch," still further

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increased the schism, to the eventual secession of the Pope's Eastern kingdom.

Once discord was aroused, the breach between East and West was for ever widening until at last affairs reached a climax. As a punishment for the many insults heaped on the Latins at Constantinople, Leo IX., in 1054, excommunicated the Patriarch, with the result that Christendom was rent asunder and Constantinople left a tempting prey to the Ottoman hordes who were scouring the plains of Asia Minor. Indeed, for the next four hundred years, as a result of this schism, the Byzantine Empire had to withstand single-handed the attacks of the Saracens, Crusaders, and Latins, to say nothing of internal revolutions, until at last an enemy, greater than all three combined, grasped the sceptre of the Eastern world.

By the conquest of Constantinople, in 1453, the Turks not only became masters of the Byzantine Kingdom, but, strange as it may appear, protectors of the Eastern Church, for which they henceforth evinced a marked solicitude by way of widening the existing breach with Rome, as also of preventing a combination of the armies of Christendom.

It is more than probable that the Caliph had followed, with the closest attention, the proceedings of the Council of Florence (1439)—that greatest of many attempts to unite East and West, which, if successful, might have effectually prevented the Turks from entering Europe. Indeed, at one time,

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Mahommed II. must have feared for his chances of success, for the schism between Rome and Constantinople was actually cemented—on paper. But the Act of Union, which was signed in Council, was received with contempt as soon as the price of the concessions paid by the Eastern delegates was known.

Certainly the reconciliation had been purchased at the full value of Eastern conscience, for the most vital questions of dogma and creed, as involved in the "Procession," the "Filioque," the "Eucharist," as also the Pope's supremacy, were all adjusted in conformity with the Latin faith. It is not surprising, therefore, that such epithets as "traitor" and "apostate" should have been levelled at the heads of the perfidious signatories on their return to Constantinople, and further, that a few years later the Act should have been denounced and communion with Rome for ever abandoned. It was at this juncture that Mahommed judged the moment opportune for a descent on the Eastern capital.

Whether or no the conqueror shaped his course by the compass of Christian schism is a matter of merely speculative interest. What, however, he did most thoroughly understand was the policy, which is maintained in Turkey even to this day, of creating dissensions amongst Christians as a counterpoise to their united action against Islam.

In pursuit of this end the Patriarch was immediately taken under the Moslem wing, his religion

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was respected, freedom of worship was permitted, and in addition he was invested, not only with Papal authority, but with plenary powers of adjudication in all matters, civil and religious, in which Christians alone were concerned. But great as was the power thus delegated, the very source of the Patriarch's authority tainted his every action. In truth, the compact proved as unhappy as it was unnatural, and eventually conduced more to the degradation of the Eastern Church than a score of anathemas hurled by the most vindictive of Popes.

But although Turks were quite prepared to support Christians in the fulfilment of any apostatical dream, it was to be quite understood that such assistance, passive or the reverse, was a favour graciously bestowed and at a price. They were indeed sad days for the Church; the Patriarch was merely a Turkish deputy, benefices were marketable commodities, churches were heavily taxed, simony reigned supreme. Small wonder, then, that a Moslem learnt to despise a Christian, and ultimately, when all fear of union between East and West was at an end, to treat the "Rayah" as less than a dog.

There were, however, dregs yet more bitter to be tasted ere the degeneracy of the Patriarchate was complete. That the office was refused by all self-respecting Christians was but natural. So long, however, as men existed who coveted power, the

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Constantinopolitan See was not likely to go a-begging. The appointment was a lucrative one, for the stipend rose and fell in exact proportion as the Patriarch chose to squeeze his flock for the benefit of himself and his Mahommedan master. Thus the Bishop of the East, in due course, developed into a royal tax-gatherer, and as such, learnt in time to regard his ecclesiastical functions as of merely secondary importance.

Never before had the See of St. Chrysostom sunk to such depths of dishonour. Disowned by the West, and ruled by heretics, she not only accepted a new code of morals, but was content to live in spiritual impotence, until finally her very corruption became so great a danger, that projects of wholesale extermination were more than once seriously considered by the Porte. In the end better counsels prevailed; a partial cleansing of the "Augean stable" was deemed advisable, and the Christian mouse was permitted to live solely for the object of serving the political and financial purposes of the Turkish cat.

In course of time, however, Moslem power found its tether. The Sultan's troops, hitherto victorious, tasted the bitter fruits of defeat—a fact that considerably encouraged Christian discontent and valour.

Added to this, the central government was almost entirely vested in the hands of Greek patricians, who, in their desire to Hellenise the Caliph's Christian

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subjects, employed means as drastic as the Turks by way of emphasising their superiority.

In 1769 Russia conquered Moldavia and Wallachia, and two years later took possession of the Crimea—a course of action vindicated, it was maintained, by Christian suffering. Eventually, in 1774, peace was concluded with the Porte, and in the Treaty which followed, Russia, in return for the recession of conquered territory, acquired the right of at all times interfering on behalf of the Christians in Turkey—a right which she has never relinquished and has invariably exercised by way of furthering her own ends.

With so powerful a protector, Christian insurrections were at a premium; every element of discontent in the Ottoman Empire flourished, until at last matters were brought to a crisis in Moldavia and the Morea which threatened the very existence of Sultan and Patriarch alike.

Formerly such revolutionary movements had been severely and successfully dealt with by the Turkish authorities. In the present instance, however, the Morean revolt resulted in the establishment of a Greek kingdom, as also an independent Church, whilst Moldavia, later on, was incorporated with the independent State of Roumania, thus also severing her connection with Constantinople.

Greece having won her independence by a successful revolution, it would have been surprising had

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her example not been followed by other discontented Balkan nationalities. The ball once set rolling, the fire of freedom raged through the land, with the result that by the Treaty of Berlin the Signatory Powers despoiled the Ottoman Empire of Servia, Roumania, and Bulgaria, all of whom, having been granted independence, eventually demanded autocephalous Churches. Further, by the same treaty, the administration, both civil and religious, of Bosnia and Herzegovina was entrusted to Austria, whilst, as regards Montenegro, Europe stipulated that her independence and episcopal autonomy should remain inviolate.

And this process of disintegration seems likely to continue, be the present "Reform" panacea never so faithfully applied, and for the most logical of all reasons—that Turkish manners, customs, and ideas are entirely opposed to the great march of European civilisation. Like the Ethiopian, the Turk is born with a coloured skin which no power on earth can alter. Would that it were otherwise, at least in so far as the peace of Europe is concerned. But Time, the curer of all evils, is working silently but surely, and if the signs be judged aright, the day is inevitably approaching when the Turk will be relegated to another continent. To-day the sovereignty of the Sultan towards the West extends no further than the confines of Macedonia (the Porte exercises barely a nominal authority in Albania); shorn of this province,



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and Turkey in Europe practically ceases to exist. Oddly enough, the present prescribed limits of the Sultan's dominions coincide, almost precisely, with the area affected by the Patriarch's encyclicals, as recognised by the Council of Chalcedon (451). In this respect it is interesting to observe that the influence of the Eastern Patriarch extended or decreased in exact proportion as the Sultan's empire expanded or diminished.

For instance, in 1683 the Sultanry had reached its perihelion, for the Turks were at the gates of Vienna; simultaneously the Eastern Church was at its meridian, its influence being conterminous with Mahomedan conquests. Subsequently every blow directed at Islam reacted on the Patriarchate, the dinarchy was eventually abandoned, and to-day Macedonia alone remains of the once powerful and extended empire that at one time looked like emulating the Roman world.

But the parallel between Caliphate and Patriarch is not merely territorial. Autocracy is, and always has been, the characteristic of both, and whilst in former days the system worked well enough, it was the rabid prosecution of such a policy, out of season, that resulted in common ruin.

Even to-day the Sultan governs very much as did his Seljuc ancestors (certainly no living soul has ever witnessed any change in Turkish life), and the Patriarch still persists in styling himself Œcumenical.

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The authority of neither is increasing, whilst both still continue to persecute Christians, with the result that the one continues to lose provinces, the other Churches. In short, neither seems to have appreciated the fact that despotism entirely depends upon the power available to counteract opposition.

Formerly, Sultans were supreme by virtue of their conquering armies, and similarly Patriarchs could exact obedience, supported as they were by Eastern emperors. Now, however, all is changed. Europe is gradually depriving the Sultan of his heritage, and the Patriarchs' ecclesiastical kingdom is divided into twelve isotimous Churches.

Of these various heterodox communities, the Russian Church is by far the most important; Greece and Bulgaria follow next, then Roumania, Servia, Montenegro, Cyprus, Carlovitz (south of the Danube), Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and lastly the Church of Mount Sinai. All have their own particular form of hierarchy, all, according as the doctrines of Christianity are interpreted, profess the original and orthodox faith. It is true that slight differences of ceremony do exist; they are, however, of very minor importance. But, even supposing that any serious schism should result in the future, there would yet remain one indelible bond of sympathy between them, *i.e.* a fierce and inborn detestation of Papal authority, which is, at any rate, a fundamental

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creed to which the different Churches in the East unanimously subscribe.

So lengthy a dissertation regarding the Orthodox Church may seem out of place in treating of Macedonian politics, but if the foregoing remarks are considered irrelevant, a journey through the country to-day will very soon dispel any such illusion. With the greatest reverence be it uttered, religion in the Balkans is the source of all evil. It is not that Christianity is at fault; it is the ministers that are unworthy, in that, instead of attending to the spiritual well-being of their flocks, they are the prime movers in every political campaign that is started.

Orthodoxy to-day, or its prototype, is the horse ridden by every shade of politician in the Near East, and in the race for the possession of Macedonia, the entire hierarchical machinery is set in motion by way of advancing the cause of the various claimants. Here, then, is material and enough for Eastern difficulties. Greeks, Bulgarians, Servians, and, indeed, every Christian element that goes to make up the mosaic of Balkan nationalities, fight among themselves, the Porte knocks their heads together by way of embittering the contest, whilst the Great Powers, from selfish motives, not only prevent an amicable settlement, but add fuel to the fire by way of furthering their own ends.

## CHAPTER V

### EUROPEAN JEALOUSY

**I**N the previous chapter a brief outline has been attempted of Macedonian domestic politics, with the attendant results. But if there are causes of internal dissension, the external are equally apparent, for never was there a more unfortunate country or one upon which a greater amount of jealousy has been expended. In truth, it is almost safe to say that were it possible to flood the entire peninsula to-morrow, the greatest danger to European peace would have disappeared.

It is not proposed here to offer any solution of the Macedonian *impasse*; such a task has long ago been delegated to tourists, who, with a quickness of perception that is almost uncanny, alone attempt to solve a riddle of centuries at no greater pains than a railway journey from Salonica to Uskub. That foreign ministers have entirely failed to untie this Gordian knot is sufficient evidence of the extreme difficulty, not to say dangerous nature, of the task, for it would seem that unless the apportioning of

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Europe is to be again attempted at Berlin, a resort to arms, sooner or later, is inevitable. But if the Eastern Sphinx propounds an unanswerable conundrum, the attitude of the Great Powers, in connection therewith, increases the difficulty a thousand-fold. To what extent Europe is responsible for the present state of affairs is a theme of no speculative inquiry, at any rate in the chancelleries of Foreign Powers. The pity is that the various phases of the situation are not more generally understood, for there is little doubt that a better acquaintance with the Macedonian problem would compass the violent demands of noisy politicians, who are for ever insisting that Great Britain can, single-handed, save the Balkan situation.

Of the many conflicting interests in Macedonia, by far the most aggressive is that of Russia.

Pent up by frozen seas, north, east, and west, her natural expansion is towards the Mediterranean. That in the possession of Constantinople her dreams would, at any rate, be partially realised is strategically certain ; but her calculations in this direction having been upset in 1856, not only was another line of march discovered, which led through the Balkans, but the policy of "Panslavism" was inaugurated by way of overcoming the difficulties of the route. As a stepping-stone to Constantinople, Bulgaria was all that could be desired. Accordingly, Russian statesmen spared no pains to further the aspirations of the Principality at the expense of the Porte, with the

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result that to-day Prince Ferdinand can boast, not only an autocephalous Church, but an independent kingdom.

So far, Russian diplomacy had swept the board ; the Prince of Bulgaria was henceforth a *persona grata* at the Winter Palace, and the Pan-Slavic dream seemed on the high-road to realisation. But a great awakening soon followed. No sooner had Bulgaria tasted the fruits of independence than the evil genius of self-emancipation took hold upon her, Russian leading-strings were gradually dispensed with, until finally, in 1885, by the annexation of Eastern Roumelia, she disclaimed all connection with her protector as the ruling factor in her national existence.

That Bulgaria should, sooner or later, have evidenced a spirit of independence was certainly in the nature of things, yet, oddly enough, Russian statesmen never appear to have dreamt of such a contingency. When the truth did eventually dawn upon the Czar's advisers the mischief was done, and the situation mournfully realised that, instead of an obsequious ally, Russia had been nurturing a dangerous foe, who threatened to upset all her most cherished schemes. But the feud thus brought about was at least unnatural, not to say disadvantageous, to both parties. A reconciliation, therefore, was eventually arrived at, and, by way of emphasising Bulgarian contrition, the infant son of Prince Ferdinand

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was a few years ago baptised according to the rites of the Russian Church.

Although differences had been adjusted, the very fact of their occurrence was a warning to Russia that in furtherance of her "Panslavonic" policy, Bulgaria was not to be relied upon. A substitute, therefore, endowed with even better qualifications and presumably more pliable, was discovered in Serbia, who, as a counterpoise to Bulgarian ambitions, as also a stepping-stone to Constantinople, became first favourite at the Russian Court.

In dealing, however, with this new order of things, a somewhat different course of action was necessary. The Bulgarian *contretemps* had taught Russian statesmen that "Panslavism," to be a success, required a different form of advertisement; the pill had not been sufficiently gilded, hence the nauseating taste. Accordingly the prescription, as administered to Serbia, was slightly altered, a more palatable dose was prescribed, and instead of the mixture being described as "Panslavism," the bottle was labelled "Pan-orthodoxy." In other words, the Servian Propaganda is made the instrument of Russian expansion—a policy which, if successfully carried through in its entirety, means the Slavonisation of the entire Orthodox Church. But although Russian influence is thrown into the scale of Servian national aspirations, Bulgaria is not forgotten. Thus, by way of currying favour and tightening her grasp,

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Russia is always ready to act as banker to the Principality.

It is unnecessary here to discuss the question of Pan-orthodoxy further than it affects Macedonia. Suffice it to say a similar crusade is being pursued in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, the whole being characterised by a persistency of purpose common to all Russian undertakings.

Thus far the Balkan problem is comprehensible enough, however difficult the solution.

Summed up the situation is as follows:—Russia's objective is Constantinople, and as Servia and Bulgaria have national and religious aspirations, she exploits both in furtherance of her own dreams of expansion.

That the machinery of Russia's might should for one moment be delayed in deference to the susceptibilities of her two Balkan neighbours is absurd. It so happens, however, that there are other "dreamers" in Europe, who, unfortunately for Muscovite aggrandisement, have aspirations in a similar direction—"dreamers" who, although adopting a somewhat less adventurous policy, have no intention of being "sent empty away" if the Sultan's heritage is to be scrambled for.

In this respect Austria is by far the most interested spectator of Russian intrigues in the Near East. Like her northern neighbour, she, too, is ambitious of lands bordering on the Mediterranean,



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Consequently her gaze is directed towards Salonica, which, in the fulness of time, she will undoubtedly demand as a *quid pro quo* for any Russian aggrandisement in Turkey.

With this object in view, nothing could have been more propitious than the terms of the Berlin Treaty, by which Bosnia and Herzegovina were placed under her protection. Unfortunately, however, Austria's march southwards is impeded by two very important geographical factors—Montenegro and Albania.

As an obstacle, no doubt, to Austria's advance, Montenegro has always received the marked favour and protection of Russia, to whom, moreover, she is united in the bonds of firm Orthodoxy; whilst Albania, although petted at Vienna, is equally favoured at Rome. But whatever the future has in store, the two suitors for Macedonian spoils are at one in their reluctance to disturb the existing *status quo*. For the present, therefore, both are anxiously watching the development of events in an attitude of "loyal and harmonious co-operation," though if, as a counter-stroke to any Russian advance, Austria should occupy Novi Bazar, Italy would most certainly appropriate Tripoli—a course of action likely to cause a serious rift in the lute of the Triple Alliance.

The fact is that Italy, like England, can ill afford to risk any disturbance of the present Mediterranean equilibrium. It thus happens that she, too, is content to be a passive spectator, awaiting the course of

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Balkan events, though fully prepared to demand her share of the spoil if the Sultan's dominions are to be divided among his greedy neighbours.

Of the remaining European Powers, France, England, and Germany, the two former have no territorial aspirations whatsoever in the Balkans. Speaking generally, the interests of the Republic are little more than sentimental, and although, to a great extent, similar feelings have prompted British interference in Macedonia, it is realised by both that the worst execution of the most imperfect reforms is preferable to a general conflagration. With regard to Germany, however, things are very different, for of all the Great Powers that meddle in the Balkan pie, she is undoubtedly the most earnestly desirous of prolonging the Sultan's existence. In this respect the "Sick Man" has latterly received every indication of Teutonic affection, for the Berlin Press has found a plethora of excuses for the most circumstantial excesses committed in Macedonia. The fact is, the Ottoman Empire offers a limitless field for German enterprise, Asia Minor alone being a valuable investment, to say nothing of an increasing trade in European Turkey, as also railway construction, which is being entirely exploited by Germans. With such conditions prevailing, opposition to Panslavism is not surprising, for Russian ascendancy in the Balkans is only another word for German deterioration. In these circumstances, therefore, Kaiser and

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Sultan can strike a bargain, and although it is very improbable that the life of a "single grenadier" would be risked in pursuance of the compact, the Ottoman Government may rely on German moral support *ad nauseam*.

Shorn of its internal complications, the Eastern difficulty, therefore, may be summed up as follows :— Russia is the mainspring of the Balkan clock, and as such, sets the time of the East. So long as she is content to remain inactive, so long will Austria follow suit. Once, however, the Rubicon is crossed and the troops of the Czar set foot on Ottoman territory, a general advance all along the European line is inevitable, with the result that Macedonia and Salonica will be the spoil of the Dual Monarchy, Italy will demand Albania, Germany and France will seek compensation in Asia Minor and Morocco respectively, whilst our occupation of Egypt will be assured, never again to be disputed.

That the map of Eastern Europe must, some day or other, be re-coloured seems foredoomed ; it is merely a question of time, and it is because the process is rife with such terrible possibilities that every chance remedy for Macedonian troubles is suggested, by way of staving off the conflagration.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE KOMITAJI

**I**T is an undoubted fact that the Bulgarian Committee, or "Komitaji," to use the more colloquial designation, has, during the last few years, not only acquired an influence in Macedonia that is paramount, but in addition has demonstrated more amply the anachronism of a Turk in Europe.

In its origin the Committee attracted little or no attention; indeed, the Great Powers scarcely deigned to recognise its existence, and were certainly quite unmoved by the numerous petitions indited on behalf of the Sultan's Christian subjects by foreign sympathisers. But if the Committee was treated with contempt by Europe, a very different policy commended itself to the Sublime Porte. In the Sultan's Legislative Council, secret societies are, and always have been, regarded with the utmost suspicion, not to say holy terror; consequently the "Komitaji" were rigorously proscribed, and every official nerve was strained to eradicate the Revolutionary germ. Unfortunately, like most Ottoman specifics, the antidote

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administered was somewhat prehistoric, for instead of allaying the disease, the patient very shortly developed symptoms of insanity. Then the evil day arrived, rumours of atrocities and massacres were general, the Great Powers felt compelled to intervene, and the question of Macedonian Reforms was discussed by statesmen and diplomatists throughout Europe. The task of reconciling Christians and Turks was certainly not an easy one; still, as the result of European intervention, many schemes for the better government of Macedonia have, at various times, been drawn up, with the result that to-day, despite the still-born efforts of previous statesmen, a fresh attempt is being made to regulate the clock of Turkish government. That an infallible cure for existing evils is to be found in any reforms, only the most superficial student of Eastern politics will maintain. Certainly the Komitaji have no faith in any such panacea, for, despite assurances to the contrary, they refuse to believe in the Turk's honesty of purpose, and to-day await the moment of action even better equipped than hitherto.

Whoever the master-mind that directs the revolutionary machine, he is certainly an administrative genius. With Sofia as a centre, the revolutionary agent and his satellites are conveniently near the scene of action, and what is of still greater importance, beyond the reach of Turkish interference. Here, in the Bulgarian capital, is established the

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insurgent bureaucracy ; here the Head Committee assemble in Council, and plans of action are evolved for the liberation of the oppressed brethren in Macedonia. The expenses of such an organisation must of necessity be very great, for not only is its influence felt throughout the length and breadth of the Balkans, but large sums of money are continually being distributed to relieve the sufferings of victims within the Turkish Empire itself. For the success, however, of the "Cause," something more than funds are necessary. Seditious pamphlets are scattered broadcast, in which the Sultan's authority is held up to scorn ; rifles, ammunition, bombs, are distributed freely, and although the peasant may not always receive such gifts in the spirit in which they are made, he accepts them very gladly, realising that the avarice of the Turkish tax-collector is considerably appeased when opposition is supported by a rifle.

As far as it is possible to ascertain, the Komitaji Central Committee, in order effectually to carry out the revolutionary programme, have divided Macedonia into districts and sub-districts, under the superintendence of as many chiefs. These territorial areas are again split up into towns and villages, each with its agent, whose duty it is to keep his superior in the district informed of the smallest incident, which in due course is communicated to Sofia. In fact, Macedonia might fittingly be described as an insurrectionary automatic machine. The marvel is that so

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little harm comes of it all ; indeed, if the Turk was not so incredibly lazy, every individual, even suspected of insurrectionary tendencies, would long ago have been summarily disposed of. As may well be imagined, arms and ammunition are the most powerful fulcra in the cause of freedom, the smuggling of which into Macedonia is not the least of the many dangers to be undertaken by a Bulgarian patriot. Once safe across the frontier, however, the rifles are deposited in subterranean magazines, until such time as they can with safety be distributed to the various district agents, who in turn supply their sub-agents, and so on down the scale, until the smallest village is fully equipped for the fray. In speaking thus, it must not be supposed that the Macedonian Bulgarians *en masse* are in favour of these drastic measures of deliverance, such is by no means the case. But when the innocent peasant suffers equally with the guilty, there is little inducement to remain a law-abiding subject of his Ottoman Majesty. Still, even to-day, there are many villages where the vast majority of the inhabitants absolutely refuse to participate in any insurrectionary movement—villages where the most fervent eloquence of the Komitaji leaders falls upon stony ground. But if active resistance is repugnant, there are few who are unwilling to offer financial sympathy. The writer has on several occasions met wealthy tradesmen whose lives have been threatened, and actually attempted,

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for refusing to subscribe liberally to the cause of freedom. In many cases, to such an extent is the policy of extortion carried that the benefactor is ultimately ruined, and by sheer force of circumstances becomes an adherent of the policy he once disapproved. Thus it is with the many thousands of homeless and destitute peasants who suffer year after year at the hands of the Turks. If they privately muttered Sedition in the past, they publicly shout Revolution to-day. In their present distress, therefore, as no assistance can be expected from the impoverished Ottoman Government, the sympathy of the Komitaji, which takes the form of a rifle, is appreciated far and wide, and the advice *sauve qui peut* gladly acted upon. In these circumstances, is it surprising that revolution in Macedonia flourishes?

Thus placed between the Scylla and Charybdis of Turk and Komitaji, the peasants adopt the most feasible course, and by throwing in their lot with the revolutionary bands, make peace with an enemy who professes, at any rate, to have their best interests at heart.

At least once during the year every adherent of the "cause" is compelled to undergo a course of drill; rifles are exhumed and distributed, ammunition-belts filled, and under cover of night the peasant volunteer hurries away to some secluded spot in the hills, there to improve his accuracy of aim. As has already been stated, fire-arms are indispensable, and although it is



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true that the greater number distributed are of the oldest pattern, the fact in no way discourages revolutionary neophytes, who are as confident and fearless in the presence of the enemy as the Sultan's troops are sure of victory. It may appear surprising that the Turkish authorities should not long ago have confiscated every rifle in Macedonia. Unfortunately, however, the secrecy observed with regard to the depôts of concealment is more than the most astute official has ever been able to fathom, though there is scarce a village that has not been searched, scarce a peasant who has not been interrogated.

Now with regard to this question of "search for arms," although, *prima facie*, the practice seems innocent enough, in reality it produces the very worst excesses imaginable. It is always wise to discount very largely the reports of Turkish atrocities, for exaggeration in the East knows no bounds. But is it not conceivably possible that, in order to discover the whereabouts of arms, the troops may sometimes incline to forcible persuasion?

Looking at the question from the broadest point of view, and admitting for the sake of argument that not a shadow of evidence does exist to support the rumours of excesses so prevalent every year, will it be admitted that such practices are improbable or foreign to the Turk? In present circumstances, indeed, force, and force alone, will induce the peasant to disclose the whereabouts of his magazine, and as

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such methods of persuasion do undoubtedly produce the desired results, is it reasonable to suggest that the Sultan's troops are deterred from such action merely on the grounds of European objection?

To quote a very ordinary case in point. A band of Komitaji is known to have visited a village and distributed arms, with the result that a few days later a party of soldiers is fired upon. (Such instances were of everyday occurrence during the disturbances of 1903.) What is the natural course of action? The officer commanding the district despatches a company of troops to the offending village, with a view to instigating a search for arms. It is, however, a rare occasion when his most peremptory orders can produce more than half a dozen rifles, for long before the arrival of the soldiers every weapon has been buried. Indeed, no one is more alive to the fact than the officer himself, who is accordingly not likely to be put off by the solemn protestations of the headman of the village that his stick is his only weapon of defence. In these circumstances, there is clearly but one path open to him—that is to say, if he intends to carry out his orders. The village is far removed from consular ears, the truth in Turkey travels slowly, why not, then, earn the favour of his superiors, and slake his own vengeance by the display of a little physical persuasion? The most superficial knowledge of the Turk will supply the rest of the story. As a rule, however, recourse to such Procrustean methods

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is unnecessary ; the demand for arms is satisfied, to a limited extent (there are always a few rifles buried for this purpose !), and the officer having administered a warning, if nothing more, retires with the spoils of war. It may be that the revolutionary magazine appreciably suffers by the visit (it is unlikely) ; but if such be the case, the following day the agent of the district is requisitioned for a fresh supply of arms, and the Hydra of Insurrection, fully equipped, rises once more.

In dealing with this question of Turkish reprisals, Komitaji and peasant fare very differently, for although the latter are perfectly ready to receive arms and ammunition, active support of the bands is invariably followed by the sacking of the village, with all the accompanying excesses—a form of retribution which the Komitaji, owing to their kaleidoscopic movements, are spared. Such a policy, doubtless, has its advantages, for extermination of the bands would very shortly put an end to Macedonian Revolution. On the other hand, however, the unfortunate peasant, having borne the burden and heat of the day, is not only abandoned by his champion at the most critical stage of the proceedings, but returns to find his home, and very probably his wife, in ashes. His last state, therefore, is worse than the first, and the Komitaji, in their ardour for recruits, have latterly been compelled to resort to the most violent threats, the peasants having stubbornly refused to take up arms again until such time as the Bulgarian

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Government actively participates in the insurrectionary movement. Such an attitude ill agrees with Komitaji tactics, for recruits are essential if the cause is to succeed, and believing their quarrel just, the revolutionary leaders, in certain cases, have undoubtedly employed measures of persuasion the reverse of civilised.

From the Komitaji point of view, such proceedings are considered justifiable, for active support, not merely sympathy, is imperative if the "Great Cause" is to succeed. Unfortunately, the wretched peasant, unlike his sympathetic instigator, is unable to avoid Turkish retribution; for him there is no frontier beyond which the arm of the Sultan is unable to reach; he must return to his village after the Summer campaign, there to expiate his crime at the hands of the Turkish guard that patrol the district.

In spring a Bulgarian's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of freedom; so soon, therefore, as the snows have melted, the bands, each with their leader, cross the frontier into Macedonia. As a rule, none but the chief has any distinctive uniform, his followers being content to wear a small black cap emblazoned with skull and cross-bones.

Having successfully run the gauntlet of the frontier guards—no very difficult task at night—a course is shaped for some village from whence the Jihad of Revolution can be preached undisturbed.

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It may be that the authorities in the adjacent town have received information of their proximity, in which case troops are despatched to arrest the agitators, who, however, on receipt of such intelligence immediately decamp. But not always do the revolutionists show their heels ; sometimes it happens that a leader decides on the arbitrament of the sword. In the event of so bold a course being adopted, the villages in the near vicinity are peremptorily invited to supply the requisite number of volunteers, and should a sufficient force be collected, the little band, from some vantage ground overlooking the nearest ravine, awaits the advent of the unsuspecting soldiers. Then does Greek meet Greek. At the psychological moment, when retreat is impossible, the order is given to fire, and if a single Turk escapes to tell the tale, it is a lucky chance not often repeated. But although vengeance has been meted out, retaliation will assuredly follow. The leaders, therefore, hurry away, and their brethren in arms are left to the tender mercies of another Turkish contingent, who demand indiscriminate and disproportionate revenge for the wrong suffered by their comrades.

For at least six months in the year such are the tactics pursued by the Komitaji. As missionaries, bankers, and combatants—in short, as a revolutionary machine—they are invaluable, and, but for their exertions, Europe would have found little time to spare for the consideration of Macedonian troubles.

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Like the mendicants of old, the sky is their roof, and to supply their wants is considered the duty of every man.

To reiterate a former statement, there is no doubt that at the Komitaji door must be laid the blame for the perennial outbreaks in Macedonia.

It is often suggested that the Bulgarian Government is in a position to prevent the incursion of the "bands" into Macedonia, but that political reasons prevent such action being taken. As a matter of fact the Bulgarian Government is honestly averse to any such insurrectionary movement, and does use its best efforts to close the frontier to the passage of revolutionary bands. But how is it possible to set up an absolutely effective "cordon"? It is doubtful whether the entire army of the Principality could afford the necessary frontier supervision over some hundreds of miles of mountainous territory and thick forests. As for Turkish preventative measures, they are equally useless, though for entirely different reasons, such, for instance, as the joy of wholesale extermination if the Sultan's troops should fall in with a "band" in Ottoman territory, as also the extreme susceptibility of the Sultan's troops to bribery. As a proof of the latter statement, during the 1903 disturbances, it was common knowledge that a party of revolutionists had been permitted to cross into Turkey on payment of a small sum of money to the frontier guard. The instance may be unique, though, considering the utter destitution of the troops, a



A BAND OF KOMITAJI.

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multiple of such cases would be well within the bounds of probability.

That the Komitaji have been guilty of many crimes, none but the most credulous would attempt to deny. In times of distress, when every man's life is in his own hands, when the most terrible vengeance is regarded as a sacred duty, the moral standard of the most civilised people is apt to suffer; how, then, should it be otherwise with the revolutionists in Macedonia?

A band demands hospitality at a village, a request which is refused for fear of Turkish vengeance; an adherent (?) of the "cause" is in communication with the Pasha of the district; volunteers for an attack on some military post are not forthcoming. In such circumstances, what is the natural corollary? The inhospitable must be robbed, the traitor shot, and the recreant made to see the error of his ways.

But if the Komitaji chastise with whips, the Turks make use of scorpions. Now, if the guilty alone suffered, the punishment meted out by the Turk might possibly be condoned, and his love of "Jedwood justice" find excuse in the rudeness of his civilisation. It is, however, the innocent, as a rule, that are made to taste the dregs of his wrath, for, as already observed, the Komitaji save their skins by flight. To this casual and relentless chastisement may be attributed, in a large measure, European sympathy with the Macedonian cause, as also the general condemnation of Turkish government.

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Reviewing the situation as a whole, it may well be doubted whether the revolutionary dream is possible of attainment. For the success of any cause, two factors are essential—unanimity of action, and clearness of purpose. As regards the former, not only have there latterly been divisions in the revolutionary camp, but certain leaders, disapproving the policy of the "Sofia Central Committee," have decided to act in future on their own initiative. As to clearness of purpose, it is true that the Committee for the Autonomy of Macedonia have drawn up, and presented to the Cabinets of Europe, a project of settlement; but so impracticable is the scheme suggested, that the document is only valuable as a proof of the utter incapability of the authors to govern. In such circumstances, one may well ask what possible chance is there of a solution of the Macedonian riddle.

But whatever the future has in store, it is mainly owing to the action of the Komitaji, reprehensible though it be, that the Great Powers have been forced seriously to consider the question of Macedonia, and, although the present "Reform Scheme" as drawn up by Austria and Russia may prove abortive, Bulgaria's eagerness a few years ago to measure swords with her Ottoman neighbour sufficiently indicates the danger of "Fabian tactics" in Eastern affairs, as also the necessity for strenuous action, if a European conflagration is to be avoided.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE TURKISH SOLDIER

**T**O Prince Bismarck is attributed the statement "that Europe stops at Vienna." He might have added that any further progress could only be at the expense of Turkish sovereignty, for the Ottoman Empire is to-day the stumbling-block of civilisation.

Since Turkey is essentially a nation of soldiers, its commerce is, and always has been, exploited by foreigners, with the result that the Osmanli, relying upon his sword alone, is merely an effete observer of human progress and civilisation.

It is not so much that he lacks commercial instinct, for the Turk, when put to it, trades most successfully; it is that a soldier's life is regarded as the one and only profession worthy of a good Mahommedan. At the age of twenty-one every Turkish youth is called upon for military service, and, although by the law of the land he is permitted to retire at the age of forty, he seldom avails himself of

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the opportunity, nor do the authorities offer any inducement to men thus inclined.

However remote and impracticable the idea of a general European disarmament, the consummation of any such ideal has at least the sympathy of the civilised world. To the Turk, however, the advantages of such a millennium are positively distasteful, and the reason for this attitude of mind is very obvious. So long as the Sultan rules by the sword, he can hold the balance between the discordant elements of his Mosaic empire, always, be it noted, to the advantage of his Mahommedan subjects. But should the day ever arrive when the lion lies down with the lamb, and the Turk learns to prefer an office to a barrack, the descendants of the Prophet will be no more, and the Turk, being no possible match for his Christian neighbour at the art of peace, will be compelled to relinquish his present position as ruler of the East. In short, as a soldier, the Turk is unrivalled, whilst at the profession of commerce he is the bankrupt of Europe.

But if love of war is an indigenous characteristic of the Moslem race, it is only fair to say that the attitude of the Great Powers has done much to further this martial spirit.

Within measurable distance of two powerful and hostile neighbours, whose dearest visions are thwarted by the geographical position of Turkish provinces; surrounded by small independent states of national

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and progressive tendencies ; and, above all, constituted by fate the Shepherd of Christian souls, the Sultan's position is a very precarious one.

In these circumstances, however, two important factors temper the wind of His Majesty's adversity ; firstly, the mutual jealousy of the Powers, and secondly, the Turkish Army—a force in no way to be despised by the most powerful European State. As regards the Turkish soldier, perhaps the most extraordinary characteristic to be noticed is his absolute obedience to orders, in which respect he is a perfect automaton. To obey is undoubtedly a military creed of world-wide acceptance. In the Sultan's army, however, the word is interpreted in its very widest and fullest significance, for no crime is considered too heinous when duty calls. To "reason why" is as foreign to a Turkish soldier as heat is to an Esquimaux. The "Padisha" must be obeyed, and in the execution of "His Majesty's commands" a policy of "thorough" is inaugurated, that would put even Strafford to the blush. In order to account for this extraordinary subserviency, Abdul Hamid's sacrosanct character must never be lost sight of. In his dual capacity of Sultan and Prophet, his omniscience is undisputed, and although the religion of Mahommed still flourishes in many lands that have long ceased to form part of the Turkish Empire, the Sultan's influence in the Mahommedan world is sufficiently appreciated to cause the gravest anxiety

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throughout Europe, whenever the integrity of his kingdom is threatened.

As the descendant of the Prophet, and therefore head of the Mahommedan world, the Sultan is regarded as "a fountain from which all blessings flow." Indeed, were it not for the religious halo with which he is surrounded, there is little doubt that the entire Turkish Army would long ago have indulged in open insurrection. If the assertion is disputed, what better explanation can be advanced to account for the extraordinary docility of the Turkish soldier in his permanent adversity? Miserably clothed, his pay some months in arrear (if forthcoming at all), obliged to be content with quarters that are mere hovels, and continually called upon to perform the most arduous duties, he makes one marvel at the loyalty which has to bear the strain.

But although the organisation of the Ottoman Army is deplorable, the authorities at Constantinople have at least the perspicacity to supply the troops with the most ample daily rations. With this one exception, however, the soldier is deprived of every advantage promised by enlistment, and yet open insurrection, or even discontent, is practically unknown. In any discussion, therefore, relative to excesses committed by the troops in Macedonia, these facts should be carefully borne in mind, for if the many rumours current of ill-treatment, etc., are devoid of foundation, the Turkish soldier must, indeed, possess qualities

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eminently angelic. And here let it be clearly understood that force of circumstances, rather than a predilection for crime, is in reality the incentive to every Turkish misdemeanour.

As regards robbery, such misconduct on the part of the troops is so natural that one can almost excuse the offence, for, as has already been stated, with the exception of daily rations, the soldier is entirely dependent upon his own commissariat, with the result that, in many districts, the men are barely supplied with the necessities of life. In Macedonia, however, such omissions are easily rectified. More fortunate than the fox, the grapes are within his easy reach, and if the soldier takes advantage of the opportunity to the extent of satisfying his most pressing needs, who shall blame him? It may well be doubted, in such circumstances, whether the most disciplined troops in the world would act differently. In close proximity to a military camp, a thriving village presents a contrast but too apparent to both soldier and peasant. Neither, it is true, can boast a surfeit of luxuries, though the latter, as a result of his labours, is able to live in comparative comfort. It thus happens that the soldier gives rein to his desires, and satisfies his wants at the expense of his more fortunate neighbour. However such behaviour may be condemned, no one can deny that the temptation thus to act is certainly very logical.

Again, in many districts, troops are employed to

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collect taxes, during which operation hospitality is demanded of the peasant in the shape of food and lodging. The feast may not be very sumptuous, still it has its advantages, for the guests are thus enabled to gain an insight into their host's state of living, and tax him accordingly. Such methods of assessment may not seem unfair, and possibly the system, if properly carried out, might work well enough; but when the rich man is taxed and robbed because he honestly parades his worldly goods, and the poor man suffers the same treatment, in that his show of poverty is believed to be assumed, there is clearly a miscarriage of justice somewhere. With regard to the ill-treatment of women, the truth of the assertion is surely not unnatural in a country where religion so absolutely separates the sexes prior to marriage. In a previous chapter the facility for such abuses, afforded by the search for arms, has been fully discussed. The whole question, therefore, of Turkish excesses resolves itself into the following indictment:—

An army, almost destitute of the bare necessities of life, polices a country of plentiful resource. The troops differ from the inhabitants in manners, customs, and ideas, as also religion, and the hatred inspired is very naturally reciprocated. Is it to be wondered at if, in times of disturbance, the individual soldier, possessing the power to exact obedience, and seldom, if ever, reprimanded by the authorities for excess of zeal, alleviates his wants at the expense of



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his less hungry compatriot? Such is a *résumé* of the state of affairs to-day in Macedonia.

Now, it may be that the Sultan's troops are more richly endowed with moral qualities than any other military force in Europe. Such being the case, to what cause can be attributed the terror their presence invariably inspires? In a subsequent chapter ample proof of this is set forth. For the moment, therefore, suffice it to say that wherever one travels in Macedonia the cowed attitude of the peasants is evidenced at every turn. For this condition of things it must, in common justice, be admitted that the Bashi Bazouks, not the regular troops, are mainly responsible. And here a phase of the situation presents itself, which the Great Powers might well interest themselves from the point of view of reforms.

A very collateral branch of the Sultan's forces, if recognised as part at all, the Bashi Bazouks, *i.e.* "Broken-heads," or irresponsible persons, are the carrions of the Turkish Army, and a very serviceable branch at that.

Without organisation, the dregs of every Mussulman village spoiling for loot give little trouble, so long as they are permitted to indulge their inclinations; but when it becomes a question of repressing their zeal, the authority of the Porte is shadowy in the extreme. Without pay, led by men of their own choice, whose thirst for plunder is, if possible, surpassed

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by that of their followers, they stop at nothing, however contemptible or criminal, provided, and always provided, that there is some substantial advantage to be gained. Like the proverbial blind horse, they await but the nod of the "Padisha" to embark on any enterprise, however hazardous.

In dealing with this question, it may be mentioned that the vast majority of the men implicated in the Armenian massacre of 1896 at Constantinople were drawn from this particular class of His Majesty's loyal subjects!

A proper respect for the Sultan's troops is, no doubt, a very valuable asset in the government of the country. It is, however, the fear they inspire that is so unnatural.

The Macedonian peasant may be the most dissatisfied subject in the world—to whom murder is a pleasure, insurrection a hobby; but however reprehensible his conduct, the employment of irresponsible agents of correction, such as the Bashi Bazouks, is to put a premium on every conceivable form of crime.

Every now and then Europe, staggered by their exploits, insists on the punishment of the chief offenders, but even though the Turkish authorities were prepared to satisfy such demands (a very improbable hypothesis), it is extremely difficult to arrest the guilty. Supposing, however, that the Porte, compelled to take action, does discover the

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offender, what guarantee is there that the sentence inflicted will be carried out?

In this respect it often happens that the ambassadors at Constantinople demand the instant dismissal of an undesirable Pasha or the arrest of an offending soldier; what is the result? The Porte complies, provided sufficient pressure is brought to bear, and the individual is finally convicted; but there the matter ends, so far as the Great Powers are concerned; there is no means of discovering whether or no the sentence has been carried out.

The authorities, if pressed, are ready to maintain, by every oath, that the full penalty has been paid by the victim. As a rule, however, he is merely removed from the district, and given a better appointment in some distant province of the Empire.

To instance still further the utter lack of responsibility which characterises Turkish methods of repression, a corporal having command of a small detachment of troops receives instructions to investigate certain offences committed by Christians in some village. The result is inevitable. The victims, innocent or guilty—the difference is really insignificant—are possibly discovered, and so soon as the troops have satisfied their desires at the expense of the village, the prisoners are hurried off to stand their trial. It is a rare occurrence if there is any acquittal; but however that may be, the term of detention, in the most awful of prisons, is sufficient expiation for

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any conceivable crime committed. In times of insurrection this *modus operandi* may be slightly expedited, though, whatever happens, the wretched victim has a poor time of it, to say the least.

If only the authorities were genuinely anxious to prevent the recurrence of these promiscuous methods of Turkish correction, the employment of irregular troops would be discontinued. As it is, however, not only is their presence ubiquitous, but at least two-thirds of the troops employed to-day in Macedonia are such as here described. Drawn from the remotest parts of the Empire, with as little respect for orders as for Christian susceptibilities, they hold that all is grist that comes to their mill. And how should it be otherwise?

Thanks to the policy of the Sultan, Christians are as much "dogs" to-day as they were in the time of Mahommed, and such being the case, the tenets of the prophet are sufficient excuse for any excesses committed by his followers.

But with all his faults—and they are many—the Turkish soldier combines a host of qualities that one cannot help admiring. His extreme politeness, his unbounded hospitality, his courage and absolute belief in his God, are characteristics more highly developed in the Sultan's army than in any other in the world.

As evidence of the assertion, one has but to visit the meanest camp. Whoever the stranger may be,

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the most sincere welcome awaits him. Conducted to the most spacious tent, the many occupants compete with one another in supplying his wants. Coffee, cigarettes, fruit—indeed, the very best of a limited larder—is generously offered, whilst the honoured guest is respectfully waited upon by his several hosts, with interminable apologies for the indifference of the fare.

The meal finished, the entertainment becomes less formal. The assembled company circle round a charcoal brazier, and if at the end of an hour any information desired by the traveller is not forthcoming, it is entirely owing to indifferent diplomacy. Very insidious is this custom of drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes. It affects the Turk to the extent of loosening his tongue, and, further, conduces to a state of mind in which he is capable of confessing anything and everything.

Thus when all is said and done, the Turkish soldier is by no manner of means the debased creature his enemies would have it believed. If it is a fault, he certainly has one that is the mainspring of all his actions—strict obedience to orders. Whatever his Padisha commands, that will he do; and if such commands include wholesale murder, extermination of Christians, and general incendiarism, he obeys cheerfully, never questioning but that his rulers know best.

In conclusion, if it be maintained that the Sultan's

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troops are responsible for the many crimes committed in Macedonia, there is one factor which is never sufficiently taken into account, and that is the uncivilised condition of Turkey as compared with the rest of Europe.

To live in the Ottoman Empire to-day is to ante-date one's birth by some five hundred years; and not only is this evidenced on all sides, but the Turk himself reasons and acts on exactly the same lines as did his forefathers.

The African savage has little respect for life—cannibalism to him is no offence; as for the blessings of civilisation, he knows nothing and cares less. In short, he is outside the pale of Europe. Very similarly constituted is the modern Turk. He lives the life of his ancestors, whose manners and customs he lays hold of to-day with holy reverence. His ideas of civilisation may not be in keeping with modern requirements, but is it conceivable that his mode of life can be suddenly changed at the bidding of Europe?

Supposing he does murder, it is very rarely any one but a Christian! And these, his natural enemies, have they ever shown him any mercy? Further, when it comes to a question of enforcing reforms, it should always be remembered that the Turks are the governing power; they are lords of the land, and if the Christian objects to Mahomedan rule, he is perfectly free to go elsewhere. In short, the Turk

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argues very logically—what possible right have the Great Powers to interfere with the Government of a friendly and neighbouring State?

When all this is taken into account, when the enormous gulf is considered that divides East from West, is it extraordinary if the Turkish troops and the Turkish nation generally are out of harmony with the rest of Europe?

Armies better organised than those commanded by the Sultan have before now been accused of crime; the finest troops in the world have been known, in certain circumstances, to indulge in regrettable excesses. When one considers, therefore, the state of affairs in Macedonia and the constitution of the Turkish Army, it is really surprising that atrocities, excesses, or whatever Europe is pleased to call them, are not more general and widespread. That the Sultan's troops do indulge, freely, in every sort and description of enormity, no one knowing anything of Turkey will for a moment deny. The great thing, however, to remember is, that what many Europeans consider a crime the Turk regards as a legitimate pleasure, and nothing that Europe can do will make him think otherwise. Such being the case, the Turk should be judged and condemned by his own standard, not by our moral code.

## CHAPTER VIII

### DIFFICULTIES OF TRAVEL

TO "do in Rome as the Romans do" is an adage well suited to the traveller in Macedonia, for, however disagreeable the process, unless one is prepared to sacrifice every comfort, it is impossible to gain any real knowledge of the country or its inhabitants. The railway, it is true, opens up a certain field of information ; but to alight at a station, to drive through a town, or to converse with a consul for an hour, is not to know Macedonia. And yet the vast majority of politicians, who speak *ex cathedra*, as it were, on the Eastern Question, have no better claim to attention.

It is perfectly obvious that, in order to arrive at any real estimate of the state of affairs, one must leave the beaten track, and pursue one's path by tedious ways, that lead far behind the mountain wall that shuts one in on every side. In this respect, no country in Europe is more impenetrable to the ordinary traveller. The espionage of Turkish officials, the difficulties of locomotion, the absence of hotels—





KOMANOFF AND MOTE, TWO LEADERS FROM SOFIA.

*Photo by A. Hamilton.*

*[To face page 80.]*



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in short, the general inconvenience of daily life—is sufficient to prevent the most enthusiastic explorer from leaving the main thoroughfares.

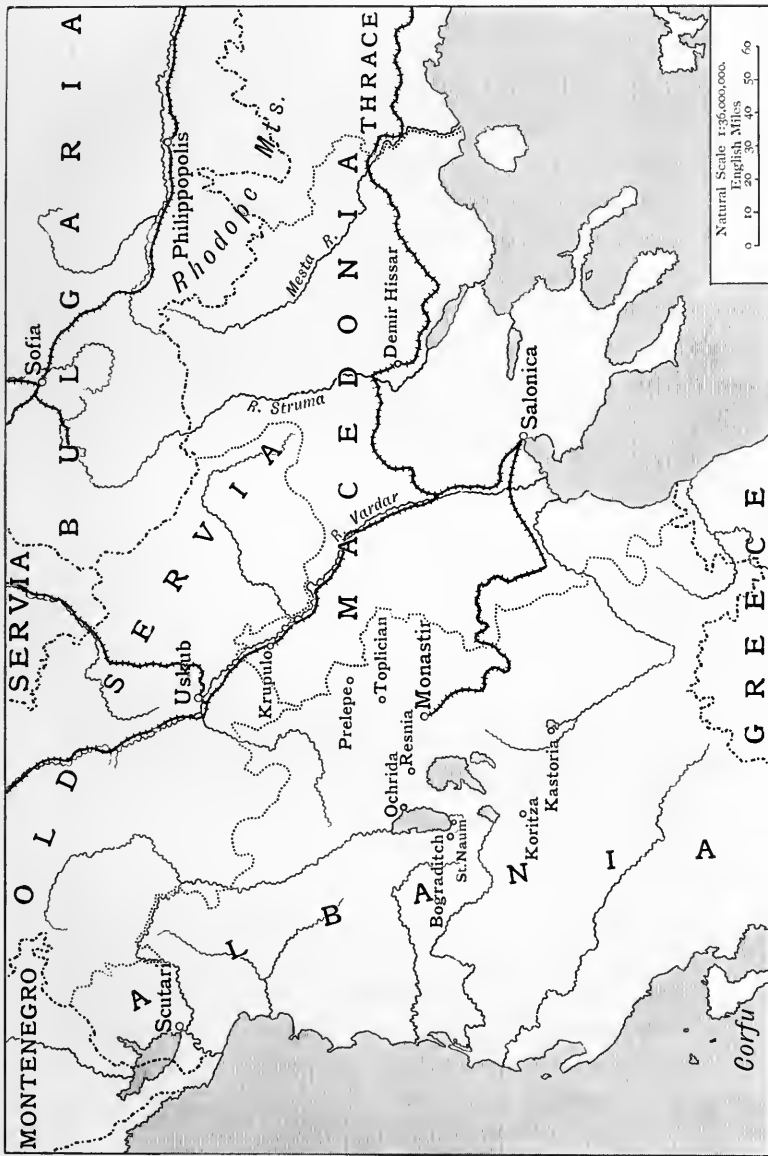
As a rule, with a very dilapidated conveyance that has known better days, possibly as a landau, and a pair of emaciated animals, an apology for ponies, one is enabled to accomplish the greater part of one's journey in moderate comfort; though, should the road be impassable, or a sheep track be the only means of arriving at one's destination, the slowest and most stubborn of mules is the sorry alternative. But were all the conveniences of modern locomotion obtainable, travelling in Turkey would be no easy task, for the reason that the authorities invariably regard every foreigner with the gravest suspicion, and thus puts every obstacle in his way.

From a financial point of view, travelling in Macedonia is not expensive. The most formidable item is the hiring of conveyances; but even in this respect the sum paid is purely a question of bargaining. All things considered, it is extraordinary that one arrives anywhere at all, and yet, despite the fact that the road is more often than not merely a continuous heap of thickly strewn boulders, one covers, on the average, twenty-five miles a day. In speaking thus, it is always supposed that one is prepared to set out with just as many clothes as will pack into the smallest bag—an economic necessity absolutely imperative if one wishes to see the country thoroughly.

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Previous to travelling anywhere in Macedonia, permission has to be obtained from the authorities, who, before considering any such request, demand the fullest statement as to how, when, and where one proposes to go. It may be here mentioned that any alteration of plans, permission once being granted, is very difficult, and invariably necessitates a delay of many days, with as often as not a direct refusal in the end.

The Governor having apprised every conceivable official *en route* of the approaching danger, one is eventually permitted to depart ; not alone, however, but in the company of an officer and a party of soldiers, who take note of one's every movement by day, and even share, when possible, one's room at night. Needless to say, the authorities, in thus providing an escort, strenuously deny that they are prompted by any ulterior motive. "The district is infested with Komitaji ;" "the conveyance may break down ;" "the road is easily lost." It therefore behoves a benevolent Sultan to honour his guest by the closest attention, as also to dispense hospitality by the way, lest disloyal hosts should inform the traveller as to the nakedness and misery of the land. Theoretically, the officer of the escort pays for the food, etc., required by his men during the journey. As a matter of fact, the unfortunate peasants, being far too frightened even to suggest payment, are mulcted right and left. So long as one is content to



Natural Scale 1:36,000,000.  
 English Miles  
 0 10 20 30 40 50 60



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journey by main roads, it matters little whether one is accompanied or not ; but when it is a question of discovering the truth of massacres, of seeing burnt villages, and of conversing with the peasants themselves, an escape from one's escort is essential, for the very sight of a soldier induces mental paralysis on the part of the villagers. To do this, however, necessitates a more profound knowledge of the Turk than the ordinary traveller, as a rule, possesses. Every imaginable trick has to be resorted to, every form of cajolery indulged in, bribery in every guise must be attempted, and, as a counterpoise to Turkish mendacity, the most subtle diplomacy is essential. Small wonder then that, in such circumstances, the truth is hard to arrive at.

Whenever it is possible, the authorities arrange that the traveller, on arriving at a town or village, shall be lodged with some loyal Mahomedan of means. Such a course has doubtless many advantages, from an official point of view, though as far as the traveller personally is concerned, it is the most boring arrangement imaginable. If only the guests were left alone, all would be well ; but, unfortunately, this is contrary to Turkish etiquette ; consequently one's host becomes a human incubus whose kindness of attention, after a few hours, becomes positively maddening. Seated in a corner of the room, he is an interested observer of one's every movement, including one's evening and morning toilet ; and if the

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passive silence he maintains is ever broken, it is only to offer coffee and cigarettes, or on the still more important occasion when dinner is prepared, and the dictates of hospitality urge him to wait upon his guest.

It sometimes happens that for lack of other accommodation the traveller is permitted to spend the night at a village "hahn," or native inn, should there be one, and although the disadvantages are many, one is, at any rate, alone, and thus spared the presence of an inquisitive host, as also the intolerable company of the officer of one's escort. As a rule, the proprietor of the inn is either a Greek or a Bulgarian, whose chief source of revenue is derived from the sale of coffee, cigarettes, and "raki," a native liqueur never refused by Turk or peasant. In engaging a room it is always necessary to stipulate that one wishes to be alone, otherwise the remaining three or four beds in the small apartment will certainly be occupied when the sleeper awakes. Generally speaking, the "hahns" are by no means ill kept. There are certain customs, it is true, that may not appeal to Europeans as being particularly happy—such, for instance, as the absence of baths and the invariable custom of supplying one basin and one towel for the common use of the entire hotel. Still, there are many advantages in the situation, the cuisine is as palatable as anything in Macedonia can be, and by being alone one is enabled to talk freely to any



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chance companion. Delightful though the innkeeper may be, his charms should never blind one to a most careful study of one's bill, for a fixed tariff being unknown, the proprietor's charges are calculated on the basis of appearance. Consequently, if the sum demanded appears too excessive, the bill must be treated like any other article to be paid for in Turkey, three-quarters or half being offered in full settlement—a course which the host rarely objects to.

Another difficulty to be contended with in travelling through Macedonia is the constant disappearance of the roads as marked on the map. The route may appear easy and direct on paper, yet at the most critical stage of one's journey it vanishes, without leaving even the suspicion of a track. In this respect even the latest maps, as published in Vienna, are most unreliable, especially as regards the districts north of Monastir, where the main road from Pribilce to Prelepe, twelve miles in length, is altogether ignored! Even where a road does exist there is always a delightful uncertainty as to where it leads to. The reason, of course, for this road vacillation is due in a great measure to the idiosyncrasies of Turkish bridges, which, like promises, seem "made to be broken." It is true that as often as they need repair, the Vali calls upon the peasants for funds; but as the money thus collected is invariably appropriated by the Pasha of the district, the bridge,

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left to the tender mercies of Time, disappears on the approach of the first storm.

Maps, therefore, being of little or no use, the only alternative is to rely implicitly on one's driver, who in such matters is a mine of information.

There is not a bridge that has been swept away by winter floods, not a road out of repair or a house lately burned, of which he is in ignorance ; he knows how much the last tax realised, and can tell you the Kaimakam's share of the spoil ; he will show you the most agreeable spot for lunch by day, and the best "hahn" in the village to sleep at by night. In short, he is Bradshaw and Murray combined, and to contradict him out of the leaves of either is to excite astonishment that any one, knowing Turkey at all, can talk so foolishly.

Formerly—that is to say, until the Komitaji became so aggressive—the traveller could always find accommodation and rough fare by the roadside. To-day, however, all such convenience has departed, for there is scarce a "hahn" in Macedonia that the revolutionists have not burned to the ground. Such being the case, it is wise to travel with a supply of provisions, for there is little to be purchased in the villages beyond milk and coarse bread. Even the monasteries, formerly so numerous in the land, where hitherto the stranger enjoyed the best of the monks' humble fare, have been razed to the ground, so that the country is practically devoid of all means of

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hospitality. Until happier conditions prevail, therefore, it is advisable so to arrange one's itinerary as to arrive at some town at nightfall. The suggestion is made advisedly, for otherwise it is more than probable that the monastery, or even village, selected for a night's rest is found on arrival to be in ashes—there are few things more annoying after a ten-hours' journey in a storm.

Secrecy in Turkey being an unknown quantity, one's arrival in any town is the occasion of a popular outburst of inquisitiveness. The police turn out in force; men, women, and children throng the streets and gape at every window and door. For a long hour business gives way to gossip and speculative suggestions as to the traveller's movements past and present—a state of mind which must be comforted before any one retires for the night.

To follow the customs of the country, the first and foremost duty on such occasions is to visit the local authority. Indeed, there is little choice in the matter, for horses, coachman, escort, to say nothing of stray officials, regard such action as the sole object of one's journey. No matter, therefore, how indisposed or disinclined the traveller may be on his arrival, to the Konak he is taken, and, under cover of hospitality, subjected to the most careful examination—a process, by-the-by, upon the result of which the continuance of one's journey on the morrow entirely depends. But however satisfactory the interview, and however

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anxious the Sultan's representative may appear to further the traveller's wishes, there are a hundred and one methods of politely delaying his departure, should it be deemed advisable.

There is an old proverb to the effect that it is unwise to shout before one is out of the wood. In Turkey, however, it is all forest—the most carefully laid plans are for ever being upset, despite the official blessing they have received at the outset, and should the unfortunate traveller attempt to raise any objection, he is politely told that he must possess his soul in patience. This means a week's delay.

In travelling through Macedonia the stranger must necessarily provide himself, should he have any intention of leaving the railway, with an interpreter, an adjunct as indispensable as difficult to obtain. Not that there is any lack of applicants, for the post is the birthright of every idle scoundrel in the land. The main difficulty, when one of the many candidates has been selected, is to fathom the depths of his linguistic proficiency, which but too often is merely a veneer of Greek and Turkish. The necessity for securing a competent and trustworthy individual cannot be overrated, for it must be remembered that it is at all times within his power to present a garbled interpretation of the most important conversations—a fact that too often accounts for the exaggerated and unfounded statements that appear in the Press.

It is difficult to lay down any rules governing the

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selection of such individuals ; but, speaking generally, a Vlach possesses better all-round qualifications for the post than a man of any other nationality.

As regards pay, there is no limit to an interpreter's demands ; as regards work, there is absolutely nothing he will do, except talk, for, strange as it may appear, the most forlorn individual, directly he is engaged as a dragoman, seems to imagine that he is a heaven-born genius.

And yet another truism well worthy of attention. However agreeable the officer of one's escort, he is always to be treated as a pleasant acquaintance, never as a friend, for although he may abuse the Sultan and condemn the Government, he is in reality a spy, who never omits to retail every item of conversation to the first responsible official he meets.

To demonstrate the truth of this statement, two English correspondents, travelling in Macedonia a few years ago with a view of discovering the *real* state of affairs, fell unconscious victims to the insidious policy adopted by the officer of their escort. It is unnecessary here to enter into details ; suffice it to say that the officer in question posed so successfully as a revolutionist that the correspondents were induced to express their opinions, as regards the Sultan, and Turkey generally, in terms which were anything but agreeable to the authorities at headquarters.

As a result of this discovery, the most elaborate precautions were taken to upset their Anti-Turkish

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proclivities. The roads leading to certain villages where the troops had been particularly aggressive were "unfortunately impassable;" "but for the presence of many bands the area of their inquiry would be unrestricted." Every man, woman, and child with the smallest scratch was commandeered to recount stories of Bulgarian excesses, whilst others, artistically bandaged to hide their supposititious wounds, were paraded on every occasion. Finally, their conversion being well-nigh complete, the ingenuous pair were invited to hold a court of inquiry relative to atrocities supposed to have been committed by the troops—an investigation which, thanks to the intimidation of the witnesses, redounded very creditably to Turkish honour!

Now, had the matter ended here, the finding of the court might have been accepted. Certainly the real truth would never have been known. Unfortunately, however, the fact of having so successfully hoodwinked two such astute (!) Englishmen was a joke that the officer considered well worth repeating. Accordingly one night he delighted the audience of a *café* with a full account of his wonderful diplomacy to the tune of much laughter. That the circumstances were exceptional is undoubtedly true; still, the story illustrates very aptly the obstacles to be encountered in arriving at the truth in Turkey. To the uninitiated the task of obtaining reliable information, as to Macedonian affairs, is almost superhuman, for the

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authorities, being naturally disinclined to parade their misdemeanours, take every opportunity of hindering the inquirer. Indeed, obstruction has been brought to a fine art. It is on this account, as has already been stated, that every traveller is supplied with an escort. It is not that he is in any way worthy of such attention, or that he is in any danger of his life ; it is merely with a view to restricting inquiry and terrorising the peasantry that an armed escort accompanies him everywhere.

Yet, despite this obstructive policy so successfully carried out, an increasing number of travellers journey in Macedonia yearly, who, on their return, are interviewed and pose as authorities, solely by reason of the fact that they have travelled through the country in a railway carriage !

Now, although in the Councils of Europe the statements and opinions of such political excursionists merely incite a pitying smile, public opinion, to a certain extent, is undoubtedly influenced by their ignorant assertions—a fact which fully accounts for the extravagant views held by the supporters of either Macedonians or Turks. To sum up one and the other correctly, a prolonged residence in the country is absolutely essential ; yet every politician out for a holiday, after bustling through the country for a week, returns home fully satisfied with his investigations, and in stating his views, displays a depth of ignorance that is only surpassed by the height of his conceit.

## CHAPTER .IX

### PART I

#### FROM MONASTIR TO RESNIA

**I**N the previous chapters a more or less general survey has been taken of Macedonia. The various questions of Government, Religion, and Politics, so vital to the well-being of the Sultan's Christian subjects, have been briefly touched upon, as also the two great antagonistic forces, Troops and Komitaji.

The ground thus prepared, the hope is expressed that the Macedonian Question may appear less incomprehensible to the ordinary reader; and further, that the scepticism regarding Turkish excesses may henceforth be less general.

The centre of the 1903 disturbances and massacre was unquestionably Monastir. Discontent, consequent upon Turkish oppression, had here levelled a large area for revolutionary manœuvres, so that when in the spring the bands appeared in the hills, the gospel of insurrection was eagerly listened to. Hardly a day passed that some unfortunate Turk or



## FROM MONASTIR TO RESNIA

Christian was not waylaid and murdered, a village burnt or a caravan pillaged—a form of warfare which naturally led to the most violent reprisals.

It will be readily conceived, therefore, that Monastir, the capital of the vilayet, was the maëlstrom of Macedonian excitement. Here sat the great Inspector-General, Hilmi Pasha himself, a man even more subtle than the Sultan, aided by a General of Division and some thousand trusty (!) soldiers, two of whom had, a few weeks previously, murdered the Russian Consul in the main street of the town.

Before proceeding further, one word as to the Inspector-General himself is essential. Tall, of a sallow complexion, with the eyes of a lynx, Hilmi Pasha is the incarnation of craftiness. Oddly enough, with his black beard and generally Jewish appearance, his resemblance to the Sultan is very striking. The suavity of his manner at once excites a feeling of distrust, added to which he seems to experience some difficulty in looking one in the face, and here it may be mentioned that one is invariably offered a cigarette by way of reply to any questions His Excellency considers of too leading a nature. For unadulterated mendacity, the Inspector-General has probably no peer in the Ottoman Empire, except, perhaps, it be his master—a statement, however, that deserves the qualifying remark that a perversion of facts, according to Turkish morality, is no very heinous crime.

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Never once during many lengthy and interesting conversations did Hilmi ever admit that the vilayet of Monastir was anything but *tout à fait tranquille*; never once did he allow the existence of any bands in the vicinity; whilst as for burnt villages, they were to be counted on the fingers of one hand;—and all this with such unblushing assurance that the most sceptical might well have been deceived.

As a matter of fact, it was common knowledge that the entire country was in a ferment of terror owing to the daily encounters which took place between the troops and the Komitaji; further, that the prisons were full to overflowing with revolutionary sympathisers; whilst as for burnt villages, they were scattered broadcast throughout the district; and yet the Governor-General maintained that all was quiet!

And this, be it observed, is the Sultan's representative, who to-day is executing the Austro-Russian Reform Scheme—a fact, it may be mentioned, which has created a vast amount of distrust amongst the peasants as to the *bona fides* of the project.

So much for Hilmi Pasha. With regard to Monastir, the capital of Southern Albania, it is a long, straggling town of, roughly speaking, fifty thousand inhabitants. Beyond being the terminus of the Salonica line, there is little to recommend it from a European point of view. The streets, narrow and dirty, are paved with huge cobbles, with a variation of enormous holes where the stones have been

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removed, by some chance architect, for building purposes. The houses are low, with jutting eaves, red-tiled roofs, and many creepers, so that in summer the narrow pavements are overhung with flowers. There are also many mosques and churches—a fact which is thoroughly realised at sunset when the voice of the Muezzin\* and the chime of bells vie with one another in their summons to prayer.

The most noticeable building is a huge barrack, at the gates of which are many ragged soldiers, who loll on the muzzles of their rifles half asleep, to be occasionally reminded of their duties by the approach of an officer or a too inquisitive beggar.

All things considered, Monastir in summer is a decidedly picturesque spot, which compares very favourably with Stamboul, although a few hours' rain converts either into the most perfect slough imaginable.

The interests of the town having been thoroughly exhausted, permission to journey elsewhere was the next obstacle to be circumvented—an obstacle which the good offices of the Inspector-General could alone remove. In times of disturbance restrictions as to travel are doubtless advisable, but to persist in such precautionary measures when all danger is admittedly at an end is naturally suggestive of ulterior motives on the part of the authorities other than the safety of the traveller himself.

\* The Muezzin is a Mahomedan priest, who, from the summit of the minaret, calls the faithful to prayer.

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And such in reality was the case. It was precisely because Hilmi Pasha was aware of the terrible havoc wrought by the Sultan's troops, that Macedonia was for so many months hermetically sealed. The effect of this policy, as may be easily imagined, gave colour to every conceivable rumour. According to information which leaked through into European journals, every town was burnt to the ground, massacres were of daily occurrence, and the usual abuse was levelled at the Turkish soldiery for supposed atrocities. At length, seeing the fatuity of the course adopted, Hilmi Pasha, acting probably on orders from Constantinople, partially opened the "gates of inquiry," and the "truth," as was to be expected, appeared far less hideous than "rumour."

It was a week previous to the inauguration of this policy that the writer was at Monastir, endeavouring to obtain permission to travel in the interior. To this end, and after a host of excuses, difficulties, and objections had been overcome, permission to visit the districts of Ochrida and Demir Hissar was eventually granted, though with many restrictions, which, as it appeared later, were framed with the evident intention of concealing the real state of affairs. But ignorance is bliss, and the conditions of travel, which included amongst other things an escort of six men and an officer, having been agreed upon, a start was eventually made.

## FROM MONASTIR TO RESNIA

Roughly speaking, the distance from Monastir to Ochrida is about sixty miles, though, on account of dilapidated roads and steep gradients, twenty hours is by no means an inordinate allowance for the accomplishment of the journey. Indeed, one might have expended even more time without a shadow of regret, for the scenery is superb. But there were other sights to arrest one's attention, for within an hour of Monastir the beauties of nature are marred by the horrors of insurrection.

Between Monastir and Ochrida the road leads by eighteen Christian villages, containing on an average seventy-five houses each, all of which, with but one exception, were literally in ruins. The few walls which had been left standing crumbled when touched, the narrow streets, scarcely discernible for the *débris*, were strewn with ashes, whilst a few charred rafters were all that remained to show that a roof ever existed at all. In some of these villages a small church had been built, though nothing was left to denote the fact beyond a larger amount of *débris* and a heap of broken glass.

Giavat, which formed a community of six small hamlets situated an hour from Monastir, may be taken, however, as typical of all. Here, in the shape of a few battered walls, was all that remained of the once comparatively flourishing town of some two thousand inhabitants.

According to information supplied by one of

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the unfortunate survivors, a "band" had arrived a few months previously demanding food and recruits. The former, however, was scarce, the neighbouring Mahomedan village having exacted more than its full share of forced labour—a fact which had prevented the people of Giavat from gathering even their own harvest ; whilst as regards recruits, not a man could come forward. It happened, however, that supplies were being despatched from Monastir for a Turkish battalion which was quartered a few miles distant. The peasants therefore proposed that the Komitaji should waylay and rob the caravan. It was certainly a feasible way out of the difficulty. Accordingly the suggestion was acted upon, the caravan was waylaid, a certain amount of corn was captured, two of the Turkish escort were killed, and the "band," having replenished their exhausted larder, decamped.

Then the work of retaliation began. Troops were sent by Hilmi Pasha to the scene of action, and a bombardment of the guilty village was commenced, which lasted many hours, with the result that not a house was left standing. But there was worse yet to come. The Bashi Bazouks were let loose, and, having looted and burned everything, finished the day by indulging in the grossest excesses. Eight hundred defenceless people were either killed or died of their wounds, and to-day Giavat is a heap of ashes.

It would be to little purpose to multiply such descriptions, for exactly the same methods are

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indulged in whenever a Christian village is attacked, and thus, for the next twenty miles or so, there were five villages in precisely the same condition.

Between Giavat and Resnia the road winds through the mountains at an altitude of some two thousand feet. There is practically no sign of life, cultivation ceases, though the hills are covered with every description of shrub, the leaves of which in autumn turn the brightest gold that reflects the sun in glittering patches. Suddenly the road takes an abrupt turn, and from the precipitous slope of a mountain spur one looks down on a vast plain peppered with small villages. It was from this spot and onwards that the road began to display some of its worst characteristics. In many places it had been entirely washed away, the bridges merely existed in theory, whilst enormous holes by the wayside were continually being pointed out with grim satisfaction by the driver as scenes of the most gruesome accidents. In addition to these many interesting details, parties of ragged and hungry-looking peasants were continually passing on their way to Monastir.

Owing to the vigilance of the escort, and particularly that of the officer, it was impossible to converse with these homeless individuals, for at the very sight of a soldier they hurried past or disappeared in the wood. Towards noon, however, the sun being hot, a halt was made for luncheon. The repast over, a bottle of brandy was much appreciated by the

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abstemious (?) soldiery, who, as time was of little consequence, fortunately decided to work off the effects by a short sleep.

It was then that two women, who had been hiding in the forest above, ventured down and begged for food. Their village, they said, had been attacked by troops two days previously, and most of the inhabitants killed, whilst as to the unfortunate survivors, they had either taken refuge with friends or were wandering homeless in the woods. There was nothing very novel in the story, for the same had been heard a dozen times before.

For the next three hours of the journey the route was literally strewn with ashes. Every "hahn," the smallest hut, and no less than six villages along the roadside had been burnt to the ground, to say nothing of isolated cottages in the distance which were scarcely distinguishable from ant-heaps. It was as though an army had swept through the country with firebrands, so systematic had been the destruction wrought—an army, moreover, of Mahomedan persuasion, for wherever a minaret showed its head the sword of the avenger had passed by.

With regard to this wholesale destruction, it may be alleged by some that mud walls, branches of trees, and the narrowest alleys, hardly constitute a village in the strict sense of the word, and that therefore the significance attached to such incidents is out of all proportion to the harm done. If such be the argument,



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one can only reply that comfort is merely a relative expression, and that, as compared with the "Heavenly Jerusalem," the boulevards of Paris are probably mere gutters. To the Macedonian peasant, however, his village is his paradise, and although he may not have strictly conformed to "county council" regulations, he is none the less an outcast when his hovel has been destroyed.

For the last three and a half hours of the journey, with the exception of burnt "hahns," there was no sign of disorder. Cattle were feeding near the streams, the ploughs, drawn by yoked oxen, cut deep furrows in the rich brown soil, whilst the peasants pursued their ordinary vocations undisturbed—a happy state of affairs, 'accounted for by the fact that the district is entirely populated by Mahommedans, as the minarets only too clearly denote.

At length, however, the town of Resnia, where it was proposed to spend the night, was reached. It had been a tiring day, for the sun was scorching. Still, before even a thought could be given to personal comforts, the usual official visit had to be undertaken.

In the squalid building, that is "konak," hostelry, and *café* combined, the Kaimakam sat in tawdry state. Coffee and cigarettes, the equivalent to shaking hands, were at once offered, and the usual cross-examination commenced.

After half an hour of this searching inquiry

## THE TURK IN THE BALKANS

(in this respect the Turkish official is even more importunate than his Russian prototype), which was conducted in the presence of many secretaries, who seemed anxious to impress the traveller as to the valuable time the Governor was pleased to waste in polite conversation, the information was imparted that every available room in the town was occupied—an unfortunate (?) coincidence, followed by an invitation to accept such poor hospitality as His Majesty the Sultan was enabled to offer. As the carriage had been dismissed, and the luggage already conveyed to its official destination, there was nothing for it but to submit. Besides, it was long past sunset, and to grope one's way through the dark, narrow streets in search of a more congenial lodging would not only have been unwise, but certainly useless. His Sultanic Majesty, therefore, is extolled in language of extravagant flattery, to which the Kaimakam replies by stating that such an opportunity enables his master to "expire in complete happiness." Then follows a battledore and shuttlecock argument as to with whom rests the bulk of the honour, a comedy which is interrupted by the entry of a tattered and forlorn orderly, who is deputed to act as guide, or spy, as occasion may offer.

After a perilous journey through the narrowest of thoroughfares, where the light from a window or the flicker of an occasional street lamp alone pierced the darkness, the place of hospitality was eventually

## FROM MONASTIR TO RESNIA

arrived at. However disadvantageous the lodging arrangements, there was little doubt that the most opulent person had been selected to do the honours, for the sumptuousness of the house was out of all proportion to the squalor of the town. An old man of Jewish descent, tall, with long white hair and beard, and wearing a flowing robe and huge turban, awaited on the threshold, with his son, the arrival of the guests. Had one been of his own kith and kin, the reception could not have been more cordial; servants were at hand to remove one's boots, scented water and the finest linen towels were ready for one's use, whilst in deference to an expression of hunger, orders were at once given to prepare dinner.

The room into which one was ushered, though conventional, was most luxuriously decorated. The eight windows were hung with white lace curtains, and a divan, covered with purple and yellow silk, with gorgeous cushions, skirted the room; two floriegated lithographs of the Sultan's signature—a common pictorial device in Turkey, resembling a squashed spider—adorned the walls, whilst a Persian carpet, that would have done honour to the Sheik at Mecca, covered the floor. Such was the entire furniture of the room.

After a conversation of some length with the host, who seemed very desirous to curry favour with the military representative of the party, dinner was announced.

## THE TURK IN THE BALKANS

If any evidence were lacking as to the uncivilised condition of the Turk, a native repast will more than substantiate the fact. On the occasion in question—and there are few exceptions—a low table was deposited in the centre of the room, round which the guests ranged themselves on the floor, to be waited on by the host and his son. Course followed course with increasing lusciousness (?); soup, fish, hashed meat, roast goose, chicken, macaroni, honey, pastry, cheese, and other incidental dishes, were placed upon the table, and eaten with fingers. Perhaps the soup course at such entertainments is the least difficult, for at least one is given a spoon. With the other dishes, however, one must put aside all decency, and grab the daintiest morsels, or starve. That one displays a becoming diffidence in picking holes in a trout or duck is not unnatural, neither is it a simple matter to cut the wing of a half-cooked chicken with one's fingers. Given, however, a robust appetite, and an equally hungry friend opposite, and one is more than a match for the toughest fowl. Now and then, by way of emphasising the honour in which the guest is held, the host discovers a *bonne bouche*, which he politely places in the visitor's mouth—a compliment which, fortunately, one is not expected to return.

From the strictly Mahommedan point of view, wine is forbidden, and no self-respecting Turk ever dreams of transgressing the prophetic commandment,

## FROM MONASTIR TO RESNIA

at any rate, in public! Of late years, however, the observance of this rule has been increasingly honoured in the breach, so that to-day it is more or less rare to meet a total abstainer. Thus on the present occasion the guests were supplied with wine, though the good host maintained that water was his only beverage!

Dinner over, the old man and his son removed the table, which was immediately replaced by an impromptu washhand-stand, at which the kind host in person attended to his guests. Coffee and cigarettes were then distributed, and round the brazier one conversed on many subjects until the purple and yellow divan, with its many-hued cushions, tempted one to sleep.

## CHAPTER IX

### PART II

#### FROM RESNIA TO OCHRIDA

**I**T is early morning when one wakes. Flocks of geese, herds of goats and sheep are all penned together in the yard below, so that it is impossible, except one has been born and bred in a menagerie, to sleep after daybreak.

As it happened, however, all was for the best, for Ochrida being some eight hours' distance from Resnia, the carriage had been ordered to be in readiness at the hour of seven.

That there was no sign of the conveyance until long past ten was not really surprising, considering that the escort and the coachman had spent the entire night carousing with friends. Nevertheless, despite the "terrible dangers" (!) of the route, it was decided to start unaccompanied—a proceeding which very soon brought the army to its senses.

It was during this short period of solitude that some valuable information was obtained from a Vlach schoolmaster, who lived on the outskirts of the town.

## FROM RESNIA TO OCHRIDA

He was somewhat uneasy as to the consequences of the interview, for to converse with a foreigner was to be at once accused of revolutionary tendencies. Still, the arrival of the escort was sufficiently delayed to enable one to glean some information as to the general condition of the country, as also the names and situation of the burnt villages passed along the road.

A few miles from Resnia the main road is intersected by a broad track, which leads to the village of Isbista, and many another hamlet, all of which lie wholly concealed in a valley. It is a quiet spot, far removed from the outside world, where trees stand in thick clumps, and small streams rising at the end of the valley leave patches of green grass in their wake. Being some two hours from the highway and impossible of approach by carriage, it had been arranged the previous night, unbeknown to the officer, that a mule should be in waiting at a certain spot in order to ride to the villages in question.

On arriving at the place indicated, it was not surprising, therefore, that the officer objected to the proposed deviation. And here it may be mentioned that in arguing with a Turk he should never be allowed to sit down; if he does, he will prolong the discussion out of sheer love of the situation. On his legs, however, nine times out of ten he will grant any request in order the sooner to be seated. At any rate, such tactics proved eminently satisfactory in the present instance. Excuses followed objections,

## THE TURK IN THE BALKANS

which naturally entailed the most lengthy arguments, though all the while the distance to Isbista was being shortened. "Excuses" having failed, the dangers of the road were advanced, which took, if possible, a little longer to combat, until at last, the village being in sight, affairs reached a climax, and the stereotyped and irrefutable objection of "disobedience to orders" was put forth by the officer as a last resource. This was, of course, a very plausible argument (!), and one which merited the strictest observance; but, strange to say, directly he had grasped the fact that to return meant a journey on foot of some eight miles, his dislike of exercise showed itself in stronger colours than his affection for orders.

To all outward appearances, Isbista might be said to have escaped the general incendiarism, two houses only having been destroyed. But the complexion of affairs, inwardly, threw a very different light on the scene. As elsewhere, furniture, bedding, cooking utensils, clothing, the very bars in the fireplace—everything, in fact, had disappeared; not an animal of any sort or description was to be seen, whilst as regards the inhabitants, groups of half-starved and ragged peasants were squatting round small fires roasting beans, their only supply of food.

There were probably not more than seventy or eighty houses in the whole village. To escape from the escort, therefore, was difficult. Still, after many attempts, the feat was at length accomplished, and in



## FROM RESNIA TO OCHRIDA

a brief conversation with the headman, the information was elicited that a month previously the village had been visited by a company of soldiers, who, having satisfied their every want, disappeared.

As has been stated in a previous chapter, with the exception of food, there is little else supplied to the Turkish soldier; consequently he raids to make up the deficiency, and, opposition being very naturally offered, uses his rifle, unless, of course, he prefers to be killed himself, for the peasant is not always placidly content to be robbed.

From Isbista the road leads by six other villages, all of which, with the exception of Kosel and Bukovo, inhabited by Albanian Mahommedans, were in ashes.

There is a monotonous similarity of events as regards all these villages that will save any further account. The village of Krussieh, however, deserves particular attention, for the causes which led to its destruction are typical of Turkish policy in Macedonia.

Krussieh, until latterly, was a thriving village of some three thousand inhabitants. Situated on rising ground, it overlooked a broad extent of cultivation, due to the industrious tendency of the inhabitants. On the surrounding hills there was abundant pasture, whilst nearer home a rapid stream turned a mill-wheel, and supplied the wants of the small community. The peasants, too, were content, not to say prosperous, for, left alone, the world for them went

## THE TURK IN THE BALKANS

very well. In short, a more picturesque or pleasant abode it would be impossible to imagine.

A month previous, however, owing to the rumoured presence of a "band" in the neighbourhood, a battalion of irregulars was sent in pursuit, which encamped at the river near by.

Shortly after their arrival, two cases of sickness occurred amongst the troops—a fact which the Turkish doctor attributed entirely to poisoned water. Such being the case, there was no doubt as to the culprits! On the following morning, therefore, there was a call to arms, the village was surrounded, and before sunset the whole place was like an empty honeycomb; and not only Krussieh, but four other villages in the near vicinity, suffered the same fate on exactly the same suspicions.

How many poor, wretched peasants lost their lives rumour estimated as from two hundred to two thousand. It may be that every one escaped—it is best to think so; but that the village itself was absolutely destroyed there is no doubt whatsoever.

Now, it really matters very little to whom the offence of poisoning the water was due. It may have been the inhabitants of Krussieh or one of the other villages; possibly the doctor was mistaken in his diagnosis, for even the Faculty in Turkey are sometimes at fault. The main point to be observed is that, without any inquiry, without any trial, merely on the *ipse dixit* of one doctor, five villages were razed

## FROM RESNIA TO OCHRIDA

to the ground, and the inhabitants left absolutely destitute.

Had the account here given emanated from Macedonian sources, there would be good reason to doubt the accuracy of the statement ; but what can be said when a Turkish officer, directly implicated, himself narrates the story ?

After the ruins had been inspected, the officer commanding a company of troops near by sent a corporal with offers of hospitality, and from him, an actor in the scene, the foregoing facts were elicited.

Onwards to Ochrida, the road descends through a winding valley. On either side, and as far as the eye can reach, the country is gold with autumn tints ; huge silver poplars like giant distaffs stand sentinel by the wayside ; the mountain peaks, already capped with snow, lose themselves in the clouds, so that it is difficult to tell where Earth ends and Heaven begins. Suddenly the road turns, a huge plain separates the great ranges, and midway, on a high rock, stands to view the once famous town of Ochrida, the capital of a king, the See of a Patriarch, though its fame, alas ! to-day rests solely on the excellence of the fish caught in the lake.

It was Ramazan, the Sun had set, the day's fast was over, so that as the carriage rattled through the cobbled streets of the town every inhabitant turned out to gaze at the travellers, an inquisitive interest that ultimately resulted in a mob inspection.

## THE TURK IN THE BALKANS

Eventually the driver halted at the door of a house, the owner of which, being a rich Greek, had been "honourably selected" by the Turkish authorities as the dispenser of hospitality. Although the good man was too polite not to extend the most cordial of welcomes, it was later discovered that his financial resources had been seriously taxed owing to the kindly (!) interest of the authorities in thus saddling him with guests.



INSURGENT LEADERS.

[To face page 112.]



## CHAPTER X

### THE SACKING OF PRISIOVANI

**B**EYOND the fact that Ochrida is mainly inhabited by Greeks and Albanians, it differs but little from any other town in Macedonia.

The houses, irregular and low, with red-tiled roofs and white walls, pay little attention to the symmetry of the street, which every here and there is obliged to make a *détour* of some particularly pretentious dwelling.

The narrow pavements are, if possible, worse kept than the roads—a fact that was excused by the statement of an official that the “town was under repair.” It certainly *was* a very inconvenient moment to arrive, and one to be avoided in future, for the road and pavement seemed in the act of changing places!

Now, such repairs either take an unconscionably long time in the completion, or else there is a synchronous attempt at improvement throughout the whole Empire, for every town visited was in exactly the same unfinished condition, and had been within the memory of the oldest inhabitant.

## THE TURK IN THE BALKANS

A *pot-pourri* of nationalities, languages, and creeds, Ochrida is perhaps the most interesting town in the whole of Macedonia. Certainly, from a picturesque point of view, it is unsurpassed.

The staple industry is fish, an article so highly esteemed that in some form or other, not always fresh (!), it is offered as the *pièce de resistance* at every meal and at every "hahn" throughout European Turkey. As a matter of fact, beyond supplying the wants of the neighbouring villages, the riches of the lake are very sparsely drawn upon, for the simple reason that means of transport are entirely lacking—a state of affairs much to be regretted, since, if only a light railway were constructed from Ochrida to Monastir, there is little doubt whatever that in a very short time the district would become one of the most flourishing in Turkey.

Notwithstanding these disadvantages, the town and "environs" are in marked contrast with the rest of the "vilayet." There are few burnt villages to be seen, the peasants are contented, the country well cultivated, and, during the late disturbances, the heterogeneous population lived side by side contented and peaceful.

To account for this very unusual phenomenon, it is sufficient to state that the Kaimakam of Ochrida is one of the most enlightened Albanians it has ever been the writer's good fortune to meet with. Wherever he brought his influence to bear, law and order was maintained, justice was dispensed equally to



## THE SACKING OF PRISIOVANI

Christian and Turk alike, whilst no complaint, however small, was beneath his inquiry.

There were, certainly, villages, some two days' journey from his administrative centre, which, owing to stress of work and the unsettled state of affairs, he had been unable to visit, but it was curious to notice how the insurrectionary movement had been proscribed by the zone of his personality.

For instance, the road for five hours north of the town is devoid of revolutionary indications. Directly one ascends the mountains, however, the story of wholesale destruction recommences, and within a radius of four miles, five villages are to be seen levelled to the ground. This may appear a somewhat small percentage in so large an area; but it must be remembered that the natural formation of the country entirely precludes anything in the shape of a *coup d'œil*, so that unconsciously one may pass within half a mile of a burnt village and be totally unaware of the fact.

In this part of Macedonia, contrary to precedent, the villagers had returned to their dust-heaps (it would be misleading even to talk of ruins), where their united efforts, so far, had resulted in the erection of a few huts, into which men, women, and children crowded nightly. The village of Prisiovani, however, is typical of all. High up on the spur of an even mightier eminence, which is dwarfed on all sides by a colossal range, it is the centre of what

## THE TURK IN THE BALKANS

may be described as a stupendous colosseum, the receding hills forming the steps. With the exception of a few clear patches near the village, the entire region, as far as the eye can reach, is dense forest, as devoid of roads as it is presumably of inhabitants. There is no question of riding, the trees would effectually prevent any such attempt; to walk, therefore, is the only possible mode of progression—a form of exercise which is not only excessively fatiguing, but very costly, as regards time.

An hour before sunset, after the most exhausting climb, Prisiovani, or what remained of it, was at length reached. It would be a tedious reiteration to describe the spectacle presented to one's view. As elsewhere, the village had been sacked; a certain number of the inhabitants had returned, a few shelters had been improvised; but the wretched people, cowed and bewildered, seemed absolutely incapable of grasping the situation.

For another ten days their supply of food would probably suffice, after which they would have literally nothing to live upon. In a miserable hovel, the size of a packing-case, an old woman sat nursing a child whose mother had been killed during the attack on the village a few days before; several men had serious bullet-wounds, and many more had been left on the hills, never to return.

The news that a stranger had arrived was almost telepathic in its immediate results, for every now and

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then a peasant would issue from the forest and join the little crowd that listened attentively to the information imparted by the "headman" of the village. It was a curious sight, this rustic parliament, so to speak—the men seated on the ground in their sheep-skin coats, frieze trousers, and hide sandals; the women, with their vari-coloured aprons and kerchiefs, standing a little beyond, anxiously awaiting an account of the proceedings. And then, too, the Turkish guard, sullen and revengeful, eager to discover some excuse for the havoc wrought. Now and then the speaker, before answering a question, would turn and consult his friends or be corrected in a statement; but there was never any attempt to usurp his authority. For the first twenty minutes or so the conversation was entirely devoted to the question of food supply and the necessity, if any, for help from the "Macedonian Relief Committee." Suddenly the subject of past events was introduced; the escort, if possible, looked even more cadaverous, the officer remarked upon the lateness of the hour, and a dead silence settled down over all.

After a few seconds, however, there was a movement in the crowd; a stalwart peasant stood up and inquired, in the purest German, "whether the officer understood anything but Turkish." Here, indeed, was an opportunity rarely met with in Macedonia—a peasant who could speak German, an escort incapable of understanding a word. Having been

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assured that his remarks would be quite unintelligible to the officer, as also to the soldiers, he proceeded to give a full account of the sacking of the village. It appeared that three months previously a "band" had arrived, demanding food and recruits—a demand supported by force, which resulted in every able-bodied peasant being obliged to take up arms. The extent of their depredations (!), so far as could be gathered, consisted in *avoiding* contact with the Government troops, which they managed very successfully. Still, every crime was laid at their door, with the result that the entire machinery of Turkish vengeance was set in motion. And thus it happened, some weeks after the villagers had joined the band, that three companies of troops arrived at Prisiovani, with the object of punishing the revolutionary sympathisers. As luck would have it, the men had not yet returned—a sad disappointment to the correctionary force, but one which patience would be sure to rectify. Accordingly the soldiers retired to the hills overlooking the village, and there in hiding, watched like eagles the return of the coveted prey. They had not long to wait. In a week's time the village settled down to its old life; the men returned to their homes, the cattle grazed in the fields, the harvest was being gathered, and the mills were at work again. But suddenly one evening, before the sun had quite set, the troops crept from their ambush, surrounded the village, and in less time than it takes

## THE SACKING OF PRISIOVANI

to tell, had shot eighty-nine of the inhabitants. Still, the full penalty had not yet been exacted, for the soldiers entered the houses, looted to their hearts' content, and, having grossly insulted the women, decamped.

Visiting the scene of action two months afterwards, not a house or shed, not an animal, not a single article of any form or description, was to be seen, so thorough had been the work of robbery and destruction.

An even fuller account might be given of the interview, details of which would throw a very interesting light on the machinery of revolution; but lest the peasants should suffer for their temerity, it is advisable to say no more.

And to whose charge shall these terrible proceedings be laid—Komitaji or Turk? It may be argued, as well within the region of possibility, that the former, eager to advance the cause of insurrection, threatened and finally were the means of effecting the destruction of Prisiovani. In this particular instance, however—and there is a marked similarity of action as regards the destruction of all Macedonian villages—not even the dashing tourist, with all the idiocy of his self-assurance, could maintain that the Komitaji were alone to blame, for the church had been desecrated, the mills and crops destroyed, and, as has been stated, eighty-nine of the inhabitants massacred. Now, it does not require a very profound

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knowledge of either Turk or Komitaji to understand that such action, if indulged in by the revolutionists, is quite the most fatuous imaginable ; so fatuous, indeed, that one almost apologises for the suggestion. Is it conceivable that the most respected monasteries, the most hallowed sanctuaries, endowed with the devotional offerings of centuries, should have been so vilely desecrated by the very men who profess their adoration ? Is it possible that the peasant source of supply can have been destroyed by the very men who live upon their charity ? And lastly, is it credible that the Komitaji can have visited with wholesale murder the very men they rely upon for the success of their cause ? Such ideas are beyond the region of common sense, and may be summarily dismissed. That the "bands" have indulged in incendiarism is no doubt true ; that many Turks have suffered death at their hands is clearly possible ; but when the village church, the crops, as also the mills, have been destroyed, and the inhabitants indiscriminately murdered and insulted, it is conclusive evidence that the Turk is the offender.

But to return to the village of Prisiovani. It was late ere the meeting broke up ; the sun had set, and the shadows, like mammoth flocks, had more than half covered the mountains. For a mile of the return journey a few peasants acted as guides, but having gained the highway (!) (a narrow footpath), the officer himself undertook to pilot the *cortège* to its destination.

## THE SACKING OF PRISIOVANI

It is never comfortable, neither is it particularly dignifying, to ride a donkey. But to do so along a Turkish mountain pathway at night is a positive danger. The tired beast stumbles and slides—one minute his head is buried in a bush, the next he is skimming the edge of a precipice; huge bats fly fearlessly near one's head; ferocious sheep-dogs attack one at every turn; and, in addition, there is always the agreeable possibility that a "band" may be lying in wait to "cut up" the party.

By eight o'clock, however, the village of Maeslodetcha was reached in safety, where, by orders of the authorities, quarters for the night had been prepared.

Here, at the house of the Mollah, in a small room of very doubtful cleanliness, a meal was served by the host himself, who, later on, gave up his own mattress (!), by way of emphasising his hospitable inclinations.

The following morning the return journey to Ochrida was continued, and before midday the escort was cantering through the streets of the town, scattering the townspeople right and left. It was a great occasion, as it happened, the town being *en fête* for the Sultan, who had graciously condescended to be born sixty-two years previously. Flags were flying, the shops were all closed, whilst every individual who could muster a uniform, no matter how ancient, paraded the streets in full panoply of faded greatness.

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A human tide ebbed and flowed in solemn state (the English are not alone in enjoying their pleasures sadly) ; hawkers, some with trays of indigestible-looking sweets, others with small barrels of coloured syrups, more dangerous still, loudly advertised their wares, whilst every now and then a mounted officer, with unnecessary zeal, forced his way through the crowd, callous of every one's feelings and feet.

Suddenly an unusual interest in the day's proceedings was noticeable, the most discordant sounds (it was a Turkish band !) were heard in the distance, and through the densely thronged street the smallest of Kaimakams, accompanied by a brilliant (!) staff, was seen to be making his way to the Konak. There, having delivered a laudatory address, embodying as many of the Sultan's amiable qualities as could be recited in twenty minutes, a *levée* was held, to which, as far as could be gathered, the entire population had been invited.

Although such entertainments are devoid of all pageantry, the dignity of the proceedings is really quite extraordinary. In batches of twenty the guests silently enter the Audience Chamber (!), and range themselves along the low divan that skirts the lamp walls. At the furthest end of the room, on a cane-chair throne, sits the Kaimakam, who every now and then gets up and bows low to his guests, and is bowed to lower in return. To a select few he addresses as many words ; coffee, cigarettes, and "rahat lâcoum "



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are handed round, after which the company withdraws as silently as it entered.

Later in the day the most prominent officials are entertained at dinner. It is a long and tedious meal; course follows course in unpalatable order, and, as at the feast of Ulysses, "the tables groan" with unwholesome fare. Dinner concluded, toasts are drunk in water. The list, in addition to the Sultan, the Army, and the Civil Service, includes the strangers present, who are welcomed in flattering terms. Amongst many and singular customs attending an Albanian repast, one, and only one, is really material; never wait until the host commences, for, the dinner being entirely for the guest, it is for him to take the initiative. It may appear discourteous to give orders in a strange house; but unless the practice is followed, there will be no dinner, for the entire party will wait hungrily and silently for hours and hours until the honoured guest signifies his wish to begin.

Not long after sunset is Ochrida awake. The lights in the houses are soon extinguished, the street lamps flicker like huge glow-worms, and the silence of the night is only broken by the watchman, who, lantern in hand, beats the hours on the pavement with his long staff. A few fishing-boats glide silently across the lake; a shepherd's dog, on the outskirts of the town, barks spasmodically; whilst the echo of a distant bell loses itself in the hills. For a brief

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moment Christian and Turk live in harmony, religious and racial differences are all forgotten, political antagonism ceases. But on the morrow all will begin again. More villages will be burnt, more horrors will be perpetrated. The "bands" will attack the troops, troops will retaliate on the nearest village, and thus it will be the next day and the next, and so on until the crack of doom—that is to say, if Mahomedans and Christians are still living side by side when that great day arrives.

## CHAPTER XI

### ST. NAUM AND KASTORIA

**B**EING a more or less novel performance, railway travelling in Macedonia is slow. One instinctively feels that the driver regards his engine much in the same way as a jockey would a restive horse, who at any moment may take the bit between his teeth and bolt. Consequently the brake is never off, except, perhaps, in descending (!) an incline, when the riotous speed suggests that the machinery is defective. The trains being slow, the coachmen feel justified in following suit, whilst as regards the boatmen, it is a marvellous coincidence if one ever starts at all.

The craze for repair which had seized the Ochrida "Town Council" seemed to have permeated all classes of society, for wherever one went, any one who owned anything was engaged in mending it. There was not a carriage in the town with its full complement of wheels, not a horse that could boast four shoes, or a boatman whose craft was fit to brave the terrors (!) of the calm lake. By a lucky chance, however, the Kaimakam was starting on a tour of inspection that

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day, and with true Asiatic politeness "would feel honoured if the stranger would deign to grace his humble barque." There was certainly nothing regal about it. If anything, the description was far too flattering, for a more weird and dangerous-looking conveyance never put out to sea. A small platform, surrounded by a low railing, and perched amidships on two hollowed-out logs, was the "humble barque" in question, into which crowded nine people! When the boat (!) had been pushed off from the shore, two small boys, with the assistance of a slightly older companion, wielded a pair of gigantic oars with superfluous though laudable energy. It was a praiseworthy attempt at locomotion, which might have succeeded if some common plan of action had been decided upon. As it was, their united efforts merely resulted in a circular course, for they all persisted on rowing on the same side. After a lengthy argument, during which the passengers remained stolidly indifferent, it was eventually decided that the ordinary methods of rowing were perhaps after all the best, and thus in ten hours (!) the journey to the south end of the lake, a distance of some fifteen miles, was completed.

There was little to arrest one's attention during the voyage; a few fishing villages skirt the shores, whilst clusters of small houses are seen in the wooded green of the mountain slopes. In many parts the scenery is not unlike that of the Norwegian fjords,

## ST. NAUM AND KASTORIA

so perpendicular do the hills stand to the water's edge. And yet, with all this beauty, endowed with so many natural advantages, the country, on either side of the lake, bears a half-starved and destitute appearance, as though some unnatural crisis had taken place to the annihilation of life and property.

It was a disagreeable day; the tops of the hills were buried in grey clouds, rain fell incessantly, and an icy wind swept down the lake, raising quite a sea. Eventually, however, the raft (it would be absurd to call it a boat) drifted against a huge rock at the foot of the monastery of St. Naum, where two monks awaited the arrival of the unexpected, though welcome, guests.

A capacious building, half covered with ivy, three stories high, with a red-tiled roof, projecting eaves, and white walls, St. Naum stands at the apex of a precipitous promontory that stretches far out into the waters of Lake Ochrida. A high stone enclosure of great thickness completed the isolation of the building, which was entered by a huge gateway, above which hung a gilded crucifix. There were many windows, long and narrow, low doorways, and a flight of steps leading to a wooden balcony overhung with red creepers. To speak accurately, it was a mediæval castle rather than a monastery, for quite a small colony of peasants were collected inside, all of whom are busily occupied the livelong day. Whilst some were engaged in building operations, others

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were grinding corn. There were gardeners, stablemen, and servants, all hard at work; to say nothing of shepherds and cowherds, who attended the cattle in the fields near by. Besides this host of busy retainers, the monks themselves were fully employed, for in addition to the daily services, there were the sick to be visited, funerals and weddings to be attended, and a host of other duties to monopolise their time. At sunset a ragged brother mounts a stool and belabours a wooden bell; work ceases, and one by one the monastery attendants enter the little chapel, there to listen to the last "office" of the day. For a brief space the hush of twilight is only broken by the harmony of soft music; a chant of distant voices fills the air, above which, as the sound dies away, one hears the voice of the old abbot as he intones the Benediction to his penitent flock. Then the clock in the little belfry strikes the hour of seven, the congregation disperses for the night, the monastery gate is closed, and monk and peasant retire to rest.

It is a haven of peace, this little isolated world—a peace that becomes more seductive the longer one stays. Indeed, after two days in this abode of drowsy-hood, it is a positive effort to drag oneself away.

As the monastery is on the high-road to Ochrida, travellers are continually arriving at St. Naum, much to the delight of the holy quartette, who, to judge by the eagerness of their solicitations to remain, evidently enjoy entertaining their guests.

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The founder of this holy institution, Saint Naum, a mediæval monk noted for his proselytising zeal, has, in the course of ages, developed into a sort of semi-deity of whom the peasants are never tired of recounting wonders. The miracles that are laid to his charge, the dangers and sufferings he experienced, as also the extent of his missionary labours, are a creed in themselves, and form as integral a part of peasant faith as a belief in the "Paraclete." Even to-day the dust of this venerated individual is believed to possess miraculous powers, and thus it happens that hundreds of sick and devout pilgrims, from all parts of Macedonia, visit his shrine yearly, firmly persuaded of the curative results.

The nearest town to St. Naum is Bograditch, some two hours distant, where a horse and carriage, it was stated, might by chance be procured. Here, as usual, it was necessary to visit the Turkish official, who, with consummate skill, managed to delay the ordered conveyance until authoritative instructions had been received from the Vali of the district. Eventually, however, a start was made for Koritza, a town of considerable importance, some eight hours to the south-east of the lake, where it was proposed to pass the night.

As regards burnt villages, the journey was uneventful—a curious phenomenon which was later fully explained by the fact that the district was populated almost entirely by Albanian Mahommedans.

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It was a monotonous, not to say trying, journey, for, after a few hours, the road led across a huge plateau, over which the wind swept in icy gusts. In places the route was almost impassable—a fact which necessitated numerous halts to enable the breathless ponies time to recover, and the coachman an opportunity of mending the harness.

Orders having lately been issued to disband a certain class of reservists, the route was thronged with hundreds of dangerous-looking individuals, at whose hands, it was rumoured, the peasants farther along the road had suffered every conceivable injustice. Many had already been on the road for two days, and as the Turkish authorities had dismissed them without food or pay, it was difficult to explain how they had managed to exist thus far on their journey. If European troops had been similarly treated, it is more than probable that they would have satisfied their wants by force at the first village passed. Indeed, such action would merely be in accordance with the laws of self-preservation. With the Turkish soldier, however, things are otherwise—at least, according to the authorities—for his moral refinement and respect for law and order is of so high a standard that, rather than rob the peasant, he prefers to starve!

It was late when the carriage rolled through the streets of Koritza, and later still ere the inn was reached, for although the intrepid driver had groped



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through most of the streets, the Konak was nowhere to be found.

For once it appeared conceivable that the inexorable official visit was to be dispensed with ; but hardly was dinner over than the Kaimakam thoughtfully despatched an A.D.C., who was accompanied by the Chief of Police and a friend, who also brought a friend, to announce the fact of his Excellency's indisposition. Then followed the interminable train of questions as to future plans, which, it was suggested, might profitably be altered in order to view certain Turkish villages that had lately been destroyed by the Komitaji !

There was no reason to doubt the truth of the assertion, for the fact was a universal topic of conversation ; besides, no one but a Christian fanatic would ever think of denying the possibility of such a thing. Still, it is worthy of note that, during a journey of several months in Macedonia, five, and only five, villages were pointed out as having been destroyed by revolutionary bands. Doubtless there were many more, but in Turkey it is always best to confine one's attention to things "seen," for the longest life is scarcely long enough to inquire into things "heard." \*

Early the following morning, having settled a

\* It was, no doubt, merely a strange coincidence, but every Mahomedan village reported as burnt was invariably in some remote district, a day's journey in the hills !

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small bill—for, careful as the landlord is to overcharge the European traveller, his account is ridiculously moderate—the journey was continued, much to the entertainment of a huge crowd, and more to the inconvenience of the escort, who had a rooted objection to early rising.

For the first hour or so the country was flat and uninteresting. As regards the revolutionary movement, in this part of the district, with the exception of the roadside "hahns," which had all been burnt, there was no sign of destruction. The fields were well tilled, cattle grazed by the wayside, and the peasants met with seemed to enjoy a happy, almost affluent, existence. But once more, in the space of a very few miles, the kaleidoscope turns, and within five minutes' walk of the road, two villages, Koshenet and Lubanitzza, stand in ashes. The circumstances which gave rise to their destruction are worth relating as evidence of the religious antagonism existing between orthodox communities in Macedonia.

To avoid a lengthy account, Koshenet and Lubanitzza were respectively under Exarchist and Patriarchist protection. By inclination or force—it matters little—the former had espoused the revolutionary cause, much to the disgust of its neighbours, who, well aware of the indiscriminate vengeance of the troops, foresaw the disastrous results that would accrue. From arguments came blows, then later the most sanguinary encounters, which finally resulted in

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the restoration of order by Turkish soldiers, who sacked and burnt both villages to the ground.

The above account, furnished by the Greek Bishop of Koritza, was finally substantiated, on the spot, by a peasant woman, who, in repeating the story, added that she had lost her two sons in the encounter.

A little farther along the road one arrives at the extreme edge of the plateau. Looking down on the plain below, one could see the charred ruins of five villages, two of which were still burning. The fields were uncultivated, not a peasant was to be seen, whilst the whole country, as far as the eye could reach, had the appearance of a forsaken world.

It was past sunset before Kastoria was reached. For the last two hours of the journey, as the road winds through the hill passes, one catches many a glimpse of the town, though always, it would appear, at the same annoying distance. Suddenly the path, descending abruptly, leads by an artificial cutting round the shoulder of a steep hill, on the other side of which the town, monopolising a narrow promontory, stretches far out into the blue waters of the lake. After an hour's climb down the steepest descent, which even the surest-footed pony would find difficult, the traveller arrives at the city gate. Within all is dark, the sleepy guard turns out with many oaths and much rattling of musketry, every dog in the neighbourhood awakes to herald the occasion, whilst, above this awful din, the

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shout of the sentry is faintly heard demanding the travellers' business. For ten minutes all is doubt and confusion. By degrees, however, the noise subsides ; the guard, armed with lanterns and drawn swords, scrutinise afresh the nocturnal visitors, and being satisfied of the escort's peaceful mission, the gates are opened and the party allowed to enter.

They were exciting times, these at Kastoria. The insurrectionary movement had found universal favour in the district, the peasants were everywhere up in arms, with the result that pitched battles with the troops were of daily occurrence. In fact, so serious had the situation become that the authorities had despatched a general of division, with five thousand men, to maintain order. Under these circumstances, it was not surprising that the troops had monopolised the town. The "hahns" were crowded, the mosques had been turned into barracks, food was scarce, everything was at famine prices, and, as for a bed, a night in the street was all that could be expected. And such would probably have been the case ; but a Turk, armed with authority, seldom allows his comforts to be interfered with. Thus it happened that the officer of the escort, having discovered the house of a wealthy Albanian, demanded hospitality for his "charge," as also for his men. It was a sumptuous abode, and quite in keeping with the owner's wealth, which was derived from a large estate near by. On the ground floor were the stables ;

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above, the "harem" and living apartments; whilst higher still the large rooms were occupied by a retinue of servants. If Dervish Bey objected to so wholesale an intrusion, which he very properly might have done, he certainly only showed it by the most profuse hospitality, for the best room, the most faithful attendants—the entire house, in fact—were placed at the disposal of the guest "whose wishes were commands."

In front of a blazing fire (for the night was bitterly cold) the Bey, a man of some forty years, dressed in European costume, with the ubiquitous fez and elastic-side boots, entertained the travellers at a preliminary repast, consisting of liqueurs, nuts, cheese, olives, and bread, discoursing the while on the political situation. It was not surprising that he bitterly condemned the action of the Komitaji, for, a month previously, whilst visiting his estate, he had narrowly escaped capture by a "band" who would have undoubtedly demanded a large ransom, if, indeed, he had escaped with his life. Thus, owing to the disturbed state of the country, he could but stay in the town, for to judge by the thousands of rifles collected daily by the troops in the near villages, the peasants were most certainly in a state of open revolt.

After conversing for half an hour, dinner was announced. Servants in red shoes, white linen kilts, and long woollen stockings, with zouave jackets and fezes, carrying at their waists long pistols and silver

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knives, handed round basins of rose-water for washing purposes, after which an adjournment was made to the dining-room. As has already been observed, the Albanian is very nearly a European; thus the meal was a compromise between Turkish and Greek customs. Fingers were occasionally preferred to knives and forks, though, as regards accommodation, chairs were provided, and the table, according to Western manners, was spread with a white cloth.

If possible, the number of dishes was even greater than on former occasions; certainly they were not more appetising, for even the Macedonian Christian has yet to learn the lesson that, however excellent fish may be, it rarely, at least in the opinion of Europeans, is improved by the keeping!

The meal concluded, basins of rose-water were handed round, coffee and cigarettes were freely indulged in, and the host satisfied the inquiries of his guest until his thirst for information was satiated.

Every one remembers the cryptic utterance of Mr. Jorrocks as to the importance of sleeping where one has dined. Probably the immortal sportsman had never travelled in Turkey, for, had he done so, he would have discovered that the practice of which he so much approved is the custom of the country. On this occasion, therefore, as on every other, the tables having been removed, the dining-room was speedily converted into a bedroom, which, however, was happily reserved for the guest.

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Kastoria being a centre of officialism, there were many duties to perform on the morrow. The Pasha expected a visit, as also the general in command, to say nothing of minor authorities, with whom it is expedient always to keep on good terms.

Accordingly, early the next morning, the round was commenced, beginning with the Pasha of the district, who lived in a large but tumble-down house, and received his guests with the air of a king. He was a decrepit old gentleman, attired in clerical costume, had a chronic wheeze, and waddled about on very bow legs. In appearance he was not unlike the representations of Father Christmas, except that his beard was red and spread out like a fan. Of the Old School, he was a Turk to the backbone. The Sultan was his earthly Allah, his enemies little more than fiends incarnate. To do the old gentleman justice, he certainly had the courage of his convictions, for the amount of burning, killing, and looting to which he had been a party would have satisfied the most fanatical Mahommedan.

As regards the military authority, he was as fine a specimen-soldier as could well be imagined. Six feet high, and considerably over sixty years of age, he was as upright as a post, whilst to judge by his medals, his military career might have dated from the siege of Constantinople. As it was, he had served with distinction at Plevna, had fought in every corner of the Empire, and was now successfully hunting for

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Komitaji, insurrectionary peasants, and hidden arms, in the Kastoria district. "Two thousand rifles, Effendi, in a week; and, God be praised, the search still produces more," at which he pointed to a pile of arms, bombs, cases of ammunition, and swords as proof of his assertion. It was, indeed, a great tribute to his martial ardour, for, as previously stated, the peasant's rifle is his life; without it he is entirely at the mercy of his Moslem neighbour; so that it was unlikely the present collection had been made without the most sanguinary encounters.

It was past midday before these "duty calls" were paid and returned.\* The horses, lent by Dervish Bey for the remainder of the journey, were already saddled, whilst the escort, who had enjoyed a full night's sleep, were impatiently waiting to start. Having exchanged presents, therefore, with the kind host, and sworn eternal friendship, the journey was continued to Klissura, a large town some five hours distant.

It would be to little purpose to attempt any further description of burnt villages passed *en route*. If possible, the systematic devastation practised hitherto was still more apparent, for although Christian and Mahomedan villages were scattered promiscuously throughout the district, not one of the latter had been touched!

Sistora, Vichini, Klondrop, Olesta, Sarkovitch,

\* The correct thing in Turkey is to return a call within an hour.



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Bobista, Chrebin, villages of considerable importance, were absolutely in ruins, whilst side by side with this scene of destruction were flourishing Mahommedan colonies that had been left unharmed. It was truly a piteous sight, for, with the approach of winter, hundreds of poor homeless peasants must inevitably succumb. As it was, many had already died, for the cold in the hills was Arctic. According to information obtained from a boy, who was grazing a few cattle on the roadside, the majority of the sufferers had taken refuge with more fortunate friends until such time as they could save sufficient to rebuild their wrecked homes, though by what means they could possibly earn enough to do so was a question he was unable to answer. Thus the district was practically depopulated, and a return to the former order of things seemed likely to be postponed to the "Greek Calends."

The approaches to Klissura can only be compared to the descent of a mine, particularly on a dark night, for so steep is the track, that the horses seemed to slide continuously until brought up by a row of houses at the bottom. By a labyrinth of streets (it would be more correct to speak of them as drains), a foot deep in snow, the escort led the way to a small house, the owner of which, a Vlach, had, according to the officer, expressed a desire to entertain the traveller!

That the good man was held in suspicion by the

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authorities was apparent from the fact that until past midnight a lieutenant of *gendarmerie* formed one of the house-party. So soon, however, as this official had departed (the worse for drink!), the conversation began in real earnest. It appeared that the host was a money-lender (he called it "supporting the peasants") who had amassed a considerable fortune, much to the advantage of his many unscrupulous neighbours, who, when in want, compelled him to disgorge.

For instance, the Turkish officials had all had their full share, his own relations, too, had not forgotten him; but when, in addition, the Komitaji demanded funds, the situation became intolerable, the more so as, in refusing to satisfy their wants, his life had been threatened.

In fact, Klissura was a hotbed of revolution; so much so that a month previously the Komitaji had occupied the town, to the exclusion of all Turkish officials. Under these circumstances, the authorities had decided to visit the fullest vengeance on the inhabitants. By chance, however, information of such intentions had reached the British Consul-General at Salonica, who, by strongly representing to Hilmi Pasha the dire consequences of any such action, averted the catastrophe.

With the exception of some half-dozen burnt villages at the foot of the hills, the great plain that spreads out below the town is devoid of

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interest. Dust clouds hurry across the barren waste, a few crows break the silence of the air, and, high above, eagles circle the sky in majestic sweeps. There is no other sign of life ; scarcely a tree breaks the monotony of the surrounding country, whilst the road, in eccentric curves, spreads out before one like some mammoth serpent.

It is a long and dreary ride to Sarkovitch, the nearest station on the Salonica-Monastir line, which, beyond the fact of its being a landmark to the weary traveller, seems a perfectly useless and misplaced town. The inns are bad, even for Macedonia, the fare, if possible, worse ; and so far as could be seen, there is very little likelihood of improvement, for what inducement there could possibly be to visit the town at all passes one's comprehension.

Perhaps the greatest excitement during the day is the arrival of the train ; but as no one ever gets out and departures are rare, the interest of the townspeople is centred in the watering of the engine.

In most European countries the inhabitants of the smallest village possess some vague idea as to the hour the daily train arrives. In Turkey, however, nothing is ever anticipated ; the train may arrive, or it may not. If the latter, then the hopes of the traveller go out to the morrow. It is this utter indifference to Time that is so disconcerting to a European, for not only are one's best-laid plans invariably upset, but one's temper suffers in exact proportion. In due

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course, it is true, the latest and most casual train will arrive ; but there is never any attempt to "make up" time. On the present occasion the entire population arrived at the station, on a tour of inspection, an hour before the train was due ; and, having presumably approved of the mechanism and passed the engine as "sound," the driver, the guard, as also the passengers, bid a fond farewell to all, and the train proceeded leisurely on its way amidst the cheers of the assembled company.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE HORRORS OF DEMIR-HISSAR

**H**ILMI PASHA, being a typical Turk, is consequently an arch-inquisitor. The impressions formed, therefore, by the traveller, after a journey through the most disturbed districts of Macedonia, would naturally be the subject of his most tender inquiries.

Accordingly, on the writer's return to Monastir, the Inspector-General requested an interview, which resulted in a conversational duel as sophisticated as it was comic.

To any other person than Hilmi the situation would have been pathetic, for his Gargantuan attempts to whitewash the troops, as also to minimise the result of the late disturbances, were super-heroic. In truth, had one not personally visited the scene of action, one might have been listening to a description of Bunyan's Land of Beulah, with its flowers and grapes and songs of birds; a land of joy and gladness, where the sun shines night and day!

To accuse the Inspector-General of deliberate

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mendacity would be obviously unjust, for in Turkey many things happen unknown (!) to the authorities. But what can be said of a Governor, especially appointed to maintain law and order, who is misinformed as to events within his jurisdiction? For instance, he was ignorant of the fact that there were any burnt villages on the road between Monastir and Ochrida! He was unaware that a rigorous search for arms was being prosecuted! and further, solemnly declared that the Komitaji had all dispersed, and that the country was absolutely quiet.

Now, either Hilmi Pasha is a very indifferent administrator, or else he is very ill served by his agents. For the sake of the Macedonian Christian, it is to be hoped that the latter is the true explanation, for if he is an incapable administrator, the Austro-Russian Reform Scheme stands a poor chance of success.

By no form of argument or personal evidence to the contrary would the Inspector-General be convinced that all was not peaceful in the district. For three days, during as many interviews, he firmly maintained the correctness of his assertion, though a sudden diminution of his positiveness was evinced on permission being asked to travel freely and unaccompanied in the district of Demir-Hissar. Here, indeed, was a request as awkward as it was difficult to refuse. To agree with a Turk is one thing, to take him at his word is a very different pair of shoes. A refusal, however, after so positive an assurance of

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universal tranquillity, required a mental somersault for which Hilmi Pasha was totally unprepared. With evident reluctance, and many suggestions as to more interesting routes, permission to proceed to the district in question was ultimately granted, and more, the date of departure was duly agreed upon.

It would be difficult to find people more imbued with revolutionary doctrines than the peasants of Demir-Hissar. It was probably on this account that the district had been singled out by the Komitaji leaders as the plain of activity for recent disturbances. But however that may be, there was ample evidence that the Turkish authorities had made every effort to stamp out the insurrectionary movement in this quarter.

From all accounts, not a Christian village had escaped the vengeance of the troops, whilst the number of homeless peasants was calculated in thousands; indeed, a general famine was regarded as imminent. That the state of affairs was unsatisfactory appeared probable, since for two months the district had been hermetically sealed—a sign of very ill omen in Turkey. Naturally Hilmi Pasha denied, as scurrilous inventions, the many rumours of incendiarism and massacre, and yet, odd as it may appear, no one had hitherto been allowed even to approach these peaceful (!) borders.

It was a cold, grey morning in November when

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a battered carriage, accompanied by an officer and four mounted soldiers, drew up at the door of the most dilapidated, but respectable, inn at Monastir.

That the conveyance arrived an hour late was in the natural order of things, Time being of no consideration in Turkey; but that an armed escort should have been considered necessary, especially after Hilmi's further assurance that the country was *tout à fait tranquille*, appeared paradoxical in the extreme.

Considering the chances of local hospitality very remote, the carriage had been stocked with ten days' provisions—a precautionary measure which, later on, proved of vital necessity.

It was nine o'clock before the *cortège* got under way, and past ten ere the outskirts of the town were reached, for, being market day, the streets were choked with traffic. It is really astonishing how one ever makes one's way at all along a Turkish street, for there is absolutely no authority capable of dealing with the traffic. Yet, in due course, after a chorus of vociferous abuse and many violent gesticulations, the long carts, laden with timber, hay, sheepskins, live stock, and every conceivable article of merchandise, drawn by sleepy oxen, are either dragged or lifted on one side so that one has just enough room to pass.

There were many rumours as to the destruction wrought by the troops in the outlying district, all of which, as already stated, were as vehemently denied



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by the authorities. Certainly every "hahn" along the roadside was in ashes, a fact which the escort took particular pains to indicate as the handiwork of the Komitaji—a somewhat superfluous assurance, since the buildings were Government property.

After a few hours' drive, by the most Turkish of roads, through country of highland magnificence, the wealthy monastery of Toplician, picturesquely situated on the wooded slopes of a mountain range, was seen across the valley. Here it had been proposed to halt for the night, the hospitality and good cheer of the monks being proverbial.

Now, it so happened that the journey had had a particularly advantageous effect, from the traveller's point of view, on the escort. The men were tired and proportionately sleepy, their horses similarly inclined—a fact which promised well for an unaccompanied tour amongst the scattered villages near by. And thus it happened.

It was barely midday. The sun was scorchingly hot. In the vicinity were many villages of doubtful existence, the furthest of which, out of deference to the drowsy escort, it was decided to visit. As might be expected, Duty gave way to Convenience, especially as the monastery was so near at hand; so when a couple of mounted men had been detached under the name of "guides," the officer and the remainder of the "army" rode off to enjoy an afternoon siesta.

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If the information obtained at Monastir was correct, there were, within a radius of ten miles of Toplician, no less than fifteen burnt villages, the inhabitants of which had suffered the most terrible vengeance at the hands of the Turkish troops.

That such was the case in nine out of the fifteen was amply proved by a personal visit. Possibly the truth of the assertion extended to the remaining seven ; but, as stated previously, there is enough to be "seen" in Macedonia without paying any attention to "hearsay."

Belce, Sapotnica, Dolenci, Pribilcis, Babina, Brezani, and two villages of the name of Illino, had all been the scene of ghastly excesses, the outcome of a policy the main feature of which was a search for arms.

To detail the horrors carried out in these several villages would be a tedious reiteration. Catalogue the various outrages recorded in history as committed by Attila and his Huns, read Burke's description of the devastation wrought by Hyder Ali in the Carnatic, and the peasants had here tasted of all at the hands of the Turkish troops.

For some unknown reason, only two out of the nine villages visited had been destroyed, though the rest of the colony could hardly be worse off, for, if their houses were intact, every conceivable article had been looted, from the maize that hung in the roof to the bricks that covered the floor ; beds, clothing,

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firewood, the very cooking utensils—everything, in fact, had been taken, including the cattle in the fields.

At the village of Babina, a company of Redifs, during the search for arms, had not only looted every house, but had vilely insulted the women and killed seven men. At Pribilcis similar excesses had been indulged in, with the result that the unfortunate peasants, except for a small supply of maize, which it was calculated could hardly suffice for another ten days, were absolutely destitute. At Bazernik, a mile or so farther on, the same state of affairs was discovered. At this latter village, the visitation had been even more disastrous, for the houses, in many instances, were riddled with bullets—a fact which fully explained the presence of many wounded, amongst whom was a woman dying from the effects of a blow from a rifle.

According to her statement, some Bashi Bazouks had come to the village, some few weeks previously, demanding food and money. To withhold the former was difficult ; as regards the latter—it being the custom of the peasants to bury their earnings—it was merely a question of discovering the hiding-place, than which, after Turkish methods, nothing was simpler. In the present instance the woman had pleaded poverty, whereupon she was subjected to the grossest excesses, and finally robbed of even the few silver ornaments she was wearing.

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At six other houses much the same story was told, and precisely the same conditions prevailed; the furniture, every stitch of clothing, sheep and goats—everything, in short, that was worth plundering—had been taken, and, in their efforts to defend their homes, five men and one woman had been killed.

At the village of Illino, some three hours distant in the hills, similar punishment had been meted out to the unfortunate inhabitants. Here, a few days later, in the presence of the Turkish officer and the ubiquitous escort, a peasant stated that the Komitaji had lately visited the village, and, by way of obtaining money and supplies, had murdered eight of the inhabitants who refused their demands. Four of these, he said, were women, who had had their throats cut, whilst five others had suffered the grossest indignities.

At the conclusion of this interview, the officer, who had listened throughout with rapt attention, was nervously anxious that the informant should repeat the assertion that the Komitaji were the guilty parties—an anxiety which was too readily satisfied to carry wholesale conviction.

On leaving the village, therefore, a short *détour* was purposely made in the direction of the church, by way, if possible, of being rid of the escort, and thus conversing with the peasants alone.

The unsuspecting officer, unwilling to mount the

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hill, remained behind, and during the quarter of an hour's separation a few of the most prominent villagers, in solemn conclave, asserted that fear alone had prompted their spokesman to attribute to the Komitaji excesses for which, in reality, the Bashi Bazouks were alone responsible.

From previous conversations conducted in the presence of Turkish soldiers, the statement was not unexpected, whilst the fact of the church having been desecrated, the "icons" destroyed, as also the remains of a military camp near by, fully bore out the explanation.

And so the story runs through the remaining villages; loot, fire, and sword, with all the attendant horrors of religious fanaticism, were apparent at every step.

Of course it may be asserted that the statements here set forth are merely the mendacious utterances of revolutionary agents, and that the excesses committed might equally well be ascribed to the Komitaji. In support of such an argument, however, is it possible to conceive that the "bands" would have indulged in iconoclasm and wholesale destruction in the case of their own church? And then, too, surely the near presence of a military camp gives colour to the assertion that the troops were the real offenders.

As matters stand, however, it is of little consequence with whom rests the "bulk of criminality;"

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the dead are gone, and the living are destitute. But in summing up the case for the sufferers, it may be mentioned that on the *ipse dixit* of the commanding officer of the district, the troops *had* visited all the above-mentioned villages in search of arms—a statement, moreover, which was clearly demonstrable by the stack of rifles in the camp.

The fact is, in all such cases, the truth is exceedingly difficult to arrive at; any verdict in such circumstances being the result, not so much of direct evidence as of natural inference.

“You must remember,” said a high Turkish official, relative to the outrages supposed to have been committed by the troops, “that the majority of the soldiers employed are merely raw levies from distant parts of the Empire, who know little of obedience, and care less. Scarcely supplied with the bare necessaries of life, a Macedonian village is an oasis in their desert existence, where they are naturally inclined to satisfy their most pressing needs.

“Remember further the sexual estrangement in Turkey, as enjoined by the Koran, as also the libidinous temperament of the troops; and surely, if there is not some excuse, the faults laid at their doors are very natural.”

So concise an explanation of Turkish behaviour has probably occurred to few. It sums up, however, very admirably, the situation; and given, as it was,

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by a Mahommedan, may be accepted with very little reserve.

Having said this much respecting the villages near Toplician, the monastery itself claims attention, for here, as elsewhere, things had changed for the worse since the appearance of the troops.

Hitherto noted for its unbounded hospitality, there was little vestige of its former good cheer. An empty hay-loft had taken the place of the once commodious refectory; the walls had crumbled; the greater part of the roof had fallen in—everything, in fact, had disappeared since sacrilegious feet had crossed the threshold. Where formerly hospitality had been so lavishly dispensed, the host, with pathetic apologies, had to confess that all the monks, save himself, had been driven by starvation to leave, and that a little coffee and less meat was all he could offer “his guest.”

And so the tables were turned; guest became host, and an attempt was made to repay the kindness of centuries by entertaining the last of the brothers of Toplician with tinned meats bought at Monastir.

It was difficult to obtain more than the briefest account of the sacking of the monastery, for the old monk was terror-stricken at the presence of the officer. Still, during a brief opportunity, the information gathered coincided with outside reports. The troops, some weeks previously, had scoured the district in search of revolutionary munitions, and in their

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wanderings] had arrived at Toplician. Whether or not the monks were suspected of insurrectionary tendencies is really quite immaterial. They probably were. The important fact, however, to be remembered is, that the monastery was richly endowed with the good things of this world, and had therefore evidently excited the cupidity of the impoverished soldiery, who plundered the monks of their all, set fire to the building, and by acts of violence compelled the good "brothers" to decamp.

From Toplician the road leads by Prebilcis and Prelepe to Krupulo, a station on the railway, where a daily train passes for Monastir and Salonica.

Formerly Prebilcis was but a scattered village, situated on a barren hill slope, of which the map hardly deigned to take notice. Latterly, however, the district, being under the strictest surveillance, had attracted considerable interest; many regiments had arrived, camps were pitched on all sides, and what was formerly an insignificant village had suddenly blossomed out into a full-grown town.

From the buildings in course of construction it was very evident that the troops had come to stay, whilst stacks of arms, numerous boxes of ammunition, bombs, as also several Komitaji uniforms, displayed as scarecrows, clearly showed that the soldiers, up to the present, had been successfully employed.

By good fortune the officer in command spoke French, and was not only extremely agreeable, but



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anxious to impart any information in his power as to military operations. The search for arms, the daily encounters with the "bands," the numerous murders and excesses committed, as also the universal terror exercised by the revolutionists in the district, were all subjects on which he could speak with authority!

According to him, there was no doubt with whom "the balance of criminality" lay, and the most execratory epithets were levelled at the Komitaji, whom he saddled with crimes, all, oddly enough, extensively indulged in by the Turkish troops themselves. But here, again, the truth of the assertion can only be arrived at by a balance of probability, for both Komitaji and Turk as vigorously deny such accusations.

Certainly, in this particular instance, everything pointed to the troops being the offenders, for, unless this much be granted, there arises the absurd spectacle of the promoters of a cause pursuing a policy of alienating their most ardent supporters—an assumption as incredible as it is ridiculous.

That the Komitaji have been guilty of many crimes it would be futile to deny; but to attribute the destruction of Christian villages, the wholesale murder of the inhabitants, the horrible assaults on women, and the utter destitution everywhere met with, to the direct agency of the revolutionary "bands," is every whit as blatant as to accuse the Turks of

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having instigated the destruction wrought in Constantinople in 1896.\*

But enough on this point. Suffice it to say that the officer at Prebilcis was gradually reducing the district to a state of cowed submission, and, more, abject destitution; for wherever the troops went, the peasants had no alternative but to supply the wants of his men, and that at the point of the sword.

From Prebilcis to Prelepe, for the first three hours, one rides through the most magnificent country conceivable. On either side of the long valleys the mountains rise to immense heights, so that they are rarely free from snow. There are many orchards, stretches of green fields, and cultivated patches wherever a village is seen; whilst down the steep and rugged slopes of the mountain spurs innumerable streams descend by many waterfalls to swell the river below.

This being a more or less Mahomedan district, there was little evidence of destruction, though the villages of Sapotnica, Belce, and Gravista had all been looted, whilst two others had been fortunate enough to escape with the burning of a few houses.

By degrees the path becomes less steep, the hills are left behind, and the road eventually descends to a huge plain, across which, in the far distance, may be seen the town of Prelepe.

\* In the Armenian rising in this year some such idea was suggested.

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At this point the map, although the latest Austrian production, lost its way (!), the particular road leading to Prelepe being unmarked, whilst the position of the town itself was sadly out of scale. The fact is merely mentioned in order to show the vagaries the traveller has to put up with in journeying through Macedonia.

It was late in the evening when Prelepe was reached, a circumstance which nearly prevented a most instructive visit to the Kaimakam.

As in the case of all respected officials in Macedonia, he was an Albanian of the highest culture, whose wise administration had the approval of every Turk and Christian in the district. His French was fluent, the compass of his mind European in extent, and whilst loyally supporting his Government, he was very far from being blind to the evils it produced, as also the virtues that would result from reform.

As regards the town itself, a labyrinth of narrow, cobbled streets, almost covered by the deep eaves of the low houses; white walls, over which creepers hung in profusion; a knot of trees here and there, where the inhabitants assembled nightly to gossip—such is a fairly accurate description of Prelepe, if dirt, noise, and a cosmopolitan population be added.

At the end of a narrow alley, wedged in between a mosque and the wooden palace of some pasha,

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stood the one and only resort for respectable travellers. It was a picturesque building, into which a suspicion of Western civilisation had crept, not the least remarkable indication being a coloured lithograph of the King of Greece, to which the landlord drew particular attention by way of guaranteeing the excellency of his establishment. There was a courtyard in front of the inn, and a flight of stone steps leading to a long balcony, from which one looked down on to a *mêlée* of horses, carts, men, cattle, and carriages—in short, an entire farmyard, with all the attendant noise and odour.

Inside, at the end of a long room, lighted by two oil lamps, a score of men were drinking and smoking, whose conversation, on the entrance of the stranger, was changed to a whisper and a long, inquisitive stare.

After the usual delay of an hour, dinner was served. It was a plain meal, consisting of greasy soup, underdone meat, and coarse bread, though after a long day's journey, especially in Macedonia, where the air is the most invigorating in the world, few things come amiss, as was the case with one's bed, which, although dirty in the extreme, was more than welcome half an hour later.

From Prelepe to Krupulo is a drive of some eight hours by hills and valleys, the beauties of which were enhanced by subtle harmonies of colour due to autumn that had already tinted the trees; indeed,

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the scenery here compares very favourably with some of the finest in the world.

With the exception of the "hahns," which had all been burnt, there were no other traces of insurrection anywhere to be seen. The few villages in sight had been left unharmed, the fields were being cultivated, and the peasants met with were less cowed than had been the case hitherto.

It was slow travelling, and killing work for the horses, for the roads were steep and in sad repair—a state of affairs, by the way, for which the officer was continually apologising. After a climb of unusual length and exertion, the panting horses instinctively halted; the air became keener, vegetation abruptly ceased, and the glorious spectacle of the world, on Mercator's projection, as it were, lay far below at one's feet.

Within this visual circumference the countless spurs of the mountain ranges stretched away to the horizon like the limbs of some mammoth Scolopendra; the snow-capped peaks scintillated in the sunshine, and patches of cloud drifted slowly down the valleys to collect in some distant gorge.

Here a white minaret reared its top from out a clump of trees; there a plain, with its division of fields, lay before one like a chessboard, such as Gulliver in Brobdingnag might have marvelled at; whilst a river in circuitous route glided by mountain, village, and forest until lost in the far distance.

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But nearer still, through a cleft in the range, one catches a glimpse of Krupulo and the river Vardar, with a lake in the foreground, where the hills are reflected in purple shadows, and cornfields stretch from the water's edge, far up the mountain slopes, with here and there small white villages that look for all the world like "beds of mushrooms."

A descent of several thousand feet and one strikes the main road, along which the Vardar runs with rapid waters. By a bridge of doubtful safety and exorbitant toll (!), a living stream of many nationalities passes the livelong day, for the busy town is much interested in Manchester cotton and Sheffield cutlery, which, sad to relate, becomes less appreciated owing to the importation of German ware.

As regards appearance, Krupulo is much the same as other Macedonian towns. There are cobbled thoroughfares, low wooden houses, and continuous bazaars, where anything may be bought, from pearls to strong cheese. As is the invariable custom, two or three regiments are quartered in the huge "caserne" overlooking the city—a reminder, as it were, of Turkish sovereignty; whilst uncouth-looking soldiers, with swaggering gait, parade every street.

By nine o'clock the inhabitants have all retired to rest, except perhaps the "beckje," or night watchman, who manages, nevertheless, to sleep fairly comfortably on his beat! Every light is extinguished,

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every sound is muffled, so that in the death-like silence the bark of a street dog is almost welcome. Thus, callous to all disturbance, the town sleeps peacefully until Sunrise, when, as though impelled by some common motive, a simultaneous awakening takes place, and the day's work begins once more.

And how quaint and picturesque is the scene! Hawkers loudly advertise their wares; noisy carts rattle down the streets; blacksmiths, coppersmiths, and all the rest of the profession, hammer the hours away to the click of the tailor's scissors and the noise of the carpenter's saw; whilst the makers of carpets, fezes, and silk "bernouzes," sit cross-legged in their shop windows, ready to gossip with every friend who passes "the time of day."

From Krupulo to Uskub is a three-hours' journey by train, provided no extraordinary circumstance intervenes to make it less or more; whilst from Uskub to Nisch is, roughly speaking, another twelve.

As regards the town of Uskub, it differs little from Krupulo or Monastir. It is certainly larger than either, and of greater strategical importance, being the key of the Kossovo vilayet and the capital of Old Servia. The hotel is small but excellent, and although there are few sights worth seeing, with the exception of an ancient fortress, a day is well spent in strolling through the narrow streets, watching the various types and costumes that go to make up the motley population.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A RETROSPECT

**A**ND thus the story ends. In the foregoing chapters an attempt has been made to sketch the outlines of Macedonian life, political as well as social, and if the performance has resulted in a somewhat lengthy exposition, let it be remembered that Macedonia is the "hub" of Europe, a land of international jealousies, where war is for ever brewing.

That the views and opinions herein expressed will find many dissentients is only to be expected; but whatever the true version of Christian life in Macedonia, the most pig-headed and arrogant observer of Eastern politics will hardly pretend that the present state of affairs is satisfactory.

With almost perennial exactitude, rumours, if nothing more, of massacres, wholesale incendiarism, and general destitution spread through Europe, with the result that a universal cry goes up for "reforms"—a cry to which the Great Powers respond by endowing the Sultan with the most carefully devised schemes of better (?) government.



## A RETROSPECT

Not once, but a dozen times at least, has this farce been enacted, always, it is stated, with earnestness by the promoters ; always, as one sees, with indifference by the Sultan. But however awkwardly the substance is replaced by the shadow, for a time the European Conscience is satisfied, the most wholesome accord is prophesied in the Macedonian "menage," and the blessings of peace are presumably sown broadcast.

With the advent of Spring, however, the insurrectionary pie is again opened ; rumour repeats the previous year's story of Turkish excesses ; and, in a few weeks, Macedonia is in open revolt and the reform horse again trotted out for its Summer exercise.

So many times has this cycle of events been witnessed that the idea inevitably presents itself as to whether, after all, a panacea for Macedonian troubles is really to be found in reforms ; and further, if so, whether the Powers most interested are genuinely in earnest in their endeavours to solve the difficulty.

If both these questions can be answered affirmatively, how comes it that the many schemes have failed so lamentably ? Is it that the reforms suggested are not sufficiently comprehensive ; and if so, who but the Great Powers are to blame ? Or can it be that the Sultan is opposed to any reforms ? If the latter is the true answer, the conclusion is

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inevitably forced upon one that united Europe is unable to overcome Turkish opposition.

As a matter of fact, the Great Powers are not sincerely united in their reform efforts, for the very good reason that a contented Macedonia would upset the political aspirations of at least two of their number: and herein lies the crux of the whole business. Were Europe genuinely in earnest, the Sultan would not dare to refuse even the most drastic proposals of better government; as it is, the best laid scheme is doomed to ultimate failure owing to the selfishness of the initiators.

In the preceding pages no more than a brief outline of Macedonian politics has been attempted; to cast the Balkan horoscope, however, from the fullest data would tax the ingenuity of the greatest authority on Eastern affairs. It may be that in the distant future some form of autonomy on Cretan lines, or a confederacy of the Balkan States, such as the late M. Tricoupis laboured so assiduously to bring about, may prove a solution of the vexed question. Of these two suggestions, the former would probably be the least humiliating to European susceptibilities, though the most strenuous opposition to any such plan will inevitably arise in St. Petersburg.

As regards the suggestion of a Balkan Confederacy, past attempts in this direction are certainly the reverse of encouraging. A statesman of no ordinary calibre, a leader of men, and a convincing

## A RETROSPECT

orator, M. Tricoupis started on his campaign with Etesian winds ; but scarcely had he set foot in Belgrade than the fruitlessness of his mission became every day more apparent. That his specific was very acceptable to Bulgaria—the lion, as it were, of the Balkan States—was not surprising, for there is no doubt whatsoever that, in any such arrangement, the Principality would have very soon taken the upper hand and ruled the roost. Unfortunately some such suspicion seems to have prevailed in Servian political circles, for the Greek statesman was scarcely accorded a decent hearing in the capital, and eventually returned home more than ever convinced of the fatuity of human councils.

And thus to-day the Balkan difficulty is as great a thorn in the side of Europe as it ever was, and this entirely on account of the mutual jealousies and antagonisms that exist between the several Powers seated round the Macedonian pie.

But whatever the future may have in store, whatever the solution of the Near Eastern Question, the Reform panacea has surely been sufficiently tried, certainly it has been found wanting.

As a matter of fact there is much to recommend this reform policy. In the first place, it cuts the ground from under the feet of the Revolutionists and instils the Christian population with renewed hope : secondly, and this is by far the most important aspect of the case, it satisfies the susceptibilities of that vast

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mass of public opinion, in every country, that is for ever precipitating events to the danger of the World's peace.

The term "Macedonian Reforms" is generally conceived to be the apotheosis of Eastern happiness ; to the Sultan's Christian subjects, however, the expression is merely a synonym for European impotence, which, in the repetition, induces more to open revolt than a score of massacres. But the day is near at hand when, if the whole of Europe is not to be embroiled in a disastrous war, the crucial question of the Near East will have to be discussed, and settled once and for all. The most amicable agreement may be arrived at, the most satisfactory form of government instituted ; but so long as Christians are subservient to Mahommedans, so long as the Turk remains in Europe, there will be no lasting peace, and another "Macedonia" will arise wherever a Sultan is permitted to rule.

# APPENDIX

## I

### *Project of Autonomy for Macedonia, Albania, Old Serbia, and Adrianople*

Article 1. There shall be formed instead of the Vilayets of Salonica, Bitolia, Kossovo, Adrianople, Scutari, and Janina, four provinces, one of which will take the name of "Albania," and the others that of "Macedonia," "Old Serbia," and "Thrace." These provinces shall remain under the direct political and military authority of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan, under conditions of administrative autonomy.

Art. 2. The Province of Albania will include especially the territories of the Vilayets of Scutari and Janina; the Province of Macedonia, the Vilayets of Bitolia and Salonica; the Province of Old Serbia, the Vilayet of Kossovo; and the Province of Thrace, the Vilayet of Adrianople.

Art. 3. His Majesty the Sultan shall have the right to provide for the defence of the frontiers by land and sea of the four provinces, by fortifying these frontiers and guarding them with troops.

Interior order shall be maintained in each province by an international police, and a native police, assisted by local militia.

In the composition of the native police and the local militia account will be taken, according to the various localities, of the nationality and religion of the inhabitants.

The regular Turkish troops destined for the frontier garrisons shall not in any case be quartered in the houses of the inhabitants.

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In crossing the provinces the troops shall not make any stay.

Art. 4. A High Commissioner of European origin and nationality shall be appointed by the Six Great Powers for a period of three years. He shall have, for the maintenance of the interior security of the four provinces, a body of international police.

Art. 5. A Governor-General of European nationality shall be named for each of the four provinces by the Sublime Porte with the consent of the Powers for a term of five years.

Art. 6. A European Commission shall be formed, which shall be assisted by a native delegation composed of representatives elected by the population, according to the different nationalities and religions.

That Commission shall, in accord with the Ottoman Porte, work out the organisation of the four provinces.

That Commission shall determine, within a period of six months, the frontiers between the four provinces, the powers and attributions of the Governors-General, as well as the administrative, judicial, and financial *régimes* of the four provinces, taking as a point of departure the Regulations formulated by the International Commission which assembled at Constantinople in June, 1880, having regard to the religious liberty of all cults, and considering the principle of equality before all judicial and administrative authorities of the languages usually spoken by the populations of the four provinces.

The whole of the measures fixed upon for these provinces shall be the subject of an Imperial Firman to be promulgated by the Sublime Porte, and of which communication shall be made to the Powers.

Art. 7. The Commission will be charged with the autonomous administration of the four provinces until the accomplishment of the new organisation.

For that purpose shall be raised an army corps of occupation of 45,000 men, divided into four divisions of

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infantry and one division of cavalry, to be international troops, recruited by voluntary engagement—European officers and men, under the command of Generals belonging to one of the neutral States of Europe.

This occupation corps shall be kept at the country's expense. The duration of the occupation to be fixed by the duration of the work of the Commission and the necessity of maintaining interior order, after which it will be reduced by half and remain, under the name of international police, at the disposition of the High Commissioner.

Art. 8. His Imperial Majesty the Sultan shall undertake, as soon as the occupation corps is formed, and on the date when the Commission begins its work, to withdraw all troops, both regular and irregular, except those required for the garrisons of the frontier fortifications mentioned in Article 3.

Art. 9. The elections for the native delegation mentioned in Article 6 shall take place fifteen days after the evacuation of the territory by the Turkish troops mentioned in Article 8.

Art. 10. All International Treaties, Conventions, and Arrangements of whatever nature concluded or to conclude between the Porte and the foreign Powers shall be applicable in these four provinces in the same manner as in all the Ottoman Empire.

All immunities and privileges of whatever nature, acquired by foreigners, shall be respected in these provinces.

Art. 11. All rights and obligations of the Sublime Porte concerning railways shall be strictly maintained.

Art. 12. The four provinces having to support a part of the public Ottoman debt, and contribute to the Civil List of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan and to the Imperial Army and Navy Budget, the Commission shall determine, in accord with the Porte, and on an equitable basis, the amount of those contributions.

(Signed)

The Committee for the Autonomy of Macedonia.

## APPENDIX

### II

#### *Appeal of the Macedonians to the European Powers*

The Macedonians of *Athens* and of the *Piræus* see that the Bulgarians from the other side of the Balkans covet Macedonia, a country which has always been Hellenic, and that they strive to falsify the history and ethnography of their country. Finding themselves unable by this means to induce a belief in a Bulgarian Macedonia, they have had recourse to the assassin's knife and the anarchist's dynamite.

For this reason the Macedonians of *Athens* and of the *Piræus*, assembled in general meeting, have adopted the following resolutions:—

To protest against the appalling state of affairs created by the bands of brigands from Bulgaria, which only aim at destroying by fire and sword everything in our country which appertains to Hellenic nationality.

To protest against the false statistics, the figures of which are intentionally altered in order to mislead European public opinion.

To protest against the shedding of the blood of their brethren, cruelly murdered by Bulgarian bands, and against the pillaging, burning, and destruction of their villages.

They assure the Powers that if the Macedonians, who have suffered so cruelly from the Bulgarians, had taken up arms, not one of these bands would now be desolating their country. They did not do so, because they did not wish to disturb the peace of Europe, and because they did not believe that Europe would have permitted such crimes to take place under its eyes.

Finally, they declare that the Macedonians, indignant at such a state of things being prolonged, will feel compelled to take up arms in order to defend their brethren against the brigands from Bulgaria.



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Acting under this idea, they beseech Europe, in her compassion, to deign to protect their unhappy country against the Bulgarian scoundrels by putting an end to a state of affairs which is a disgrace to humanity.

The Commission :

- (Signed) THOMAS STOUROU, *Professor (Monastir)*.  
SPIRIDION ZAPHIRIOU, *Student (Salonica)*.  
JEAN BASDÉKIS, *Merchant (Meleniko)*.  
NAOUM P. TSISTINOPOULOS, *Skin Merchant (Kastoria)*.  
D. LAZOFF (*from the Olympus of Macedonia*).  
PERICLES P. PAPANAOUM, *Professor (Croussovou)*.  
DR. ÉTIENNE J. MANDRINOS (*of Klissoura*).  
DR. THÉOKHARIS CH. YÉROYANNIS (*Stagire*).  
NICOLAS CLINIAS, *Professor (Cossani)*.

*Athens, August 15 (28), 1903.*

To his Excellency the British Ambassador  
at Athens.

### III

On Wednesday, the 13th August last, the Macedo-Adrianopolitans residing at *Sophia*, assembled in meeting on the Place de St. Kral :

(1.) After hearing the speeches of MM. Sl. Babadjanoff and André Liaptcheff ;

(2.) In consideration of the deplorable situation in which their fellow-citizens are placed,

Have passed the following resolution :

1. They deplore the sad fate of their native land, delivered over once more to Turkish exactions, thanks to the blind groping of European diplomacy, whose interests are incomprehensible.

2. They express their profound gratitude to all those

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who, either through the press or by their speeches, invite the political factors of Europe to bring about in Turkey the reforms so long promised and provided for by International Treaties.

3. They note with keen regret the undecided attitude of European diplomacy in face of the grievous situation of the Christians in Turkey, whose lot is rendered worse by empty reforms, such as the last; these reforms, far from acting as a curb on the evil rule of the Turk, only exasperate Mussulman fanaticism. They note further that a Christian administration under the direct authority of Turkey has never been, and never will be, able to exist.

4. They consider the nomination of a Christian Governor-General, who shall be absolutely independent of the Ottoman Administration, and the institution of a permanent European control as preliminary measures, without which it is impossible to improve the situation of the Christians in Turkey, or to establish an enlightened Administration.

5. They blame the want of union, due to selfish considerations, which exists among the Christian "rayas," who are all equally persecuted by the Ottoman Administration, and form one whole in face of Mussulman fanaticism.

6. They express the hope that the neighbouring Christian States have finally understood that the ties of fraternity can only be maintained by disinterested mutual support in moments of trial, such as those through which the Christians of Turkey are now passing. And animated by this thought, they invite their brethren of Macedonia and of the Province of Adrianople who reside in Servia, Roumania, and Greece, valiantly to carry out their duty by preaching the truth in the countries where they are, and by dissipating the doubts, intentionally fostered, which are cast upon the pure and disinterested nature of the struggle.

7. They invite the citizens of the Principality of Bulgaria to use all their strength in order to obtain an improvement in the lot of their brethren by race and religion.

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8. They are ready to sacrifice their well-being and their lives for the success of the sacred work which has already commenced.

9. They authorise their Committee, composed of MM. V. Diamandieff, President, A. Kazandjieff, members, to communicate this resolution to the Government of the Principality, to the Diplomatic Representatives of the Signatory Powers of the Treaty of Berlin, and also to the Diplomatic Representatives of Servia and Roumania.

The Committee of the Meeting :

(Signed) V. DIAMANDIEFF.  
AT. TR. KAZANDJIEFF.  
G. STREZOFF.

### IV

*Terms of a Resolution passed at a Meeting held in Belgrade on August 30, 1903, relative to Servian Action in Macedonia*

The meeting notes the fact that all the reforms which have been tried during the course of the nineteenth century in favour of the Christian population of the Ottoman Empire, and the execution of which has been confided to the Turkish authorities, have proved futile, and that the more recent ones proposed to the Porte have not been put into execution, and this, owing much more to the bad rule of the Turks than to the revolutionary movement.

Noting that the present conditions of decadence, both as regards the existence of the Serbs, and of the whole Slav race in general within the territories of the Ottoman Empire, may become still worse, and that the suppression of our race in those territories would assure victory to the common enemies of all the Slavs in the Balkans, the meeting declares that it is a general duty of all the Slavs in the Balkans to draw together and to work in unison in order

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to prevent everything which may lead to the ruin of Slavism.

The meeting is following with the greatest sympathy the sufferings and the efforts of all those who are now fighting for liberty in Macedonia and in Old Servia, but feels quite convinced that the Government of the Sultan is not in a position to create conditions suitable for the re-establishment of order and of a lasting peace in the neighbouring countries, Servian and others; that it would be quite futile to entrust these countries to one of the great European Powers—which would only provoke fresh complications and disorders—that the bands of the Committees are also unable to gain them their liberty, and that their chiefs could not guarantee peace, order, and security to the population as would an impartial Government—the meeting is therefore of opinion that the best means of restoring peace and order in Old Servia and Macedonia would be, by mutual agreement, and while maintaining the sovereignty of the Sultan, to entrust the mission of participating in this task to the Balkan States interested.

The meeting elects and authorises MM. Alexander Stoyanovitch, printer (President of the Skuptchina); Goloub Yanitch, merchant; Zivan Zivanovitch (late Minister of Public Worship); Zivojin Peritch (Professor of the Grande École); Ljuba Stoyanovitch (late Minister of Public Worship); and Miloutine Stefanovitch (Government Cashier, retired), to carry out this resolution.

### V

*Extract from an Austrian Paper of June 3, 1903, by a Member of the Inner Macedonian Organisation Committee*

The recent events in Macedonia, the arrest of thousands of innocent Bulgarians, the destruction of whole villages, and, above all, the attitude of European public opinion

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towards this state of affairs, have induced even the moderate partisans of the Macedonian party to approve the Salonica outrages and the terrorist tactics of the revolutionaries in general.

Consider clearly the events and the judgment pronounced on them by Europe. Two railway bridges were destroyed by dynamite which might have imperilled European commercial interests, and all Europe waxed furious against the inconsiderate terrorists. Then the Ottoman Bank at Salonica was blown up by dynamite, and several Europeans were, by an unlucky chance, killed; the next day several Austro-Hungarian and Italian men-of-war anchored before the town, not to demand reparation from the Turkish Government for the deeds of blood perpetrated during that dreadful night when dozens of Bulgarians were cut down, but to protect the Austro-Hungarian subjects who were being threatened by no one.

Further, European public opinion demands that the Turkish Government should make an example and punish the murderers—that is to say, those men who have been driven by desperation to fight for their freedom. It was not necessary to make a similar demand twice from Turkey, and in a brief space of time the villages of Baldovo, Banitza, and Mogila, together with their inhabitants, were swept off the face of the earth. It was said in Europe that the Turks only wanted to punish the “Komitaji,” but stray bullets and shells struck also all the women and children of the ruined villages. The most awful fate befel the village of Smyrdesh on the 22nd May, which numbered 1200 inhabitants, and was situated in the Vilayet of Monastir. A company of Redifs forced their way into the village and maltreated the peasants on the pretext that they had provided the “Komitaji” with means of subsistence. A few of the peasants resisted, and the object of the Turks to provoke resistance was attained. The Redifs retreated from the village, and cannon from all round were directed against it.

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A frightful panic ensued ; the population fled in all directions, the village was destroyed, and all the fugitives mercilessly cut down. In the mean time the artillery continued to fire, and before long the whole village was a prey to flames.

That was the end of a large and flourishing community. Out of a population of 1200, only 300, chiefly men, escaped. In spite of the Turkish announcement, it has been emphatically stated that the village of Smyrdesch had not been visited by a "Komita" for over a month.

This terrible event left Europe comparatively indifferent ; at all events it did not affect her in the same way as the destruction of two railway bridges. They condemn us when the walls of a bank fall, but when thousands of innocent women and children are murdered the Ambassadors in Constantinople content themselves with giving friendly advice to the Porte.

What influence this attitude of Europe will have on the minds of the revolutionaries is easy to comprehend. As they see that the walls of a bank are worth more to Europe than the lives of thousands, they are steadfastly determined to continue the unequal struggle with all the means in their power.

European public opinion must not, therefore, be surprised when the revolutionaries adopt means, the results of which will be terrible and will not even spare Europe, but for which Europe herself will chiefly be to blame.

THE END

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