ZACHARY STOYANOFF

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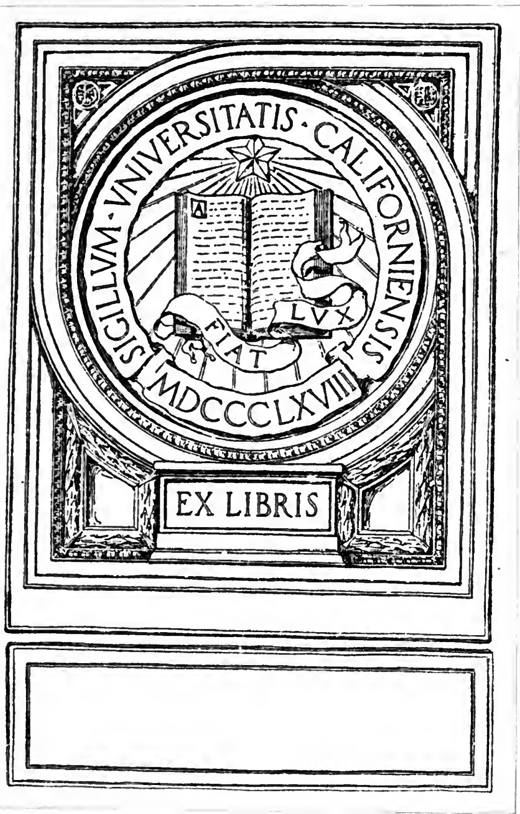
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ZACHARY STOYANOFF

PAGES FROM THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A BULGARIAN INSURGENT

TRANSLATED BY

M. W. POTTER

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

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EDWARD ARNOLD
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ZACHARY STOYANOFF

INTRODUCTION

THE tenacity with which the Bulgarian retained for centuries the feeling of nationality, in spite of the double yoke to which he was subjected—the Turkish in political, and the Greek in ecclesiastical and educational matters—is astounding, especially when it is borne in mind that little more than fifty years have elapsed since the establishment of the first school in which the Bulgarian language was taught. Evidences of this national feeling are afforded at different times, from the earliest period of the Turkish domination down to the latter half of the nineteenth century, in the appearance of bands which, like the Klephts in Greece, claimed to be working for the national cause, but which were in reality little better than associations of brigands: such at least was the character ascribed to them by the Turkish Government. Possibly the first such bands which were really nationalistic in their aims were those fitted out in Roumania about 1866. Prince Charles of Hohenzollern (the present King Charles) had just been chosen as Prince of the

United Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, and, the Sublime Porte refusing to recognize his election, a Turkish occupation of the country seemed imminent. In order to avert this danger by giving the Turks something to engage their attention nearer home, the then Roumanian Government facilitated the formation in Roumania of revolutionary bands of Bulgarian emigrants which were to cross over into Turkey and try to induce the Bulgarian peasantry to revolt. The danger passed off as far as Roumania was concerned, but the organization of the Bulgarian bands and committees remained, and they continued to work for the emancipation of their country, without much assistance from Roumania, and with possibly some more or less platonic help from Russia and Servia—mainly from Panslavist Committees in those countries. At first their idea was that a separate kingdom should be made of Bulgaria, which, however, should still remain under the Turkish sceptre, and of which the Sultan should be crowned king under the title of "Sultan of the Ottomans and King of the Bulgarians," somewhat on the model of Austria-Hungary. A petition in this sense was actually addressed to the Sultan in 1867. But the greater part of the Bulgarian emigrants in Roumania disapproved of this form of "dualism," and advocated complete emancipation and independence. Agitation with this object in view gradually extended throughout the European provinces of Turkey, and the author of this work describes how he came to join a Committee at Roustchouk and to take a part in the propaganda. Many of the emissaries and agitators were arrested and executed by the Turkish Government, but their places were taken by others

no less eager in the cause. The revolt in Bosnia and Herzegovina filled the Bulgarians with enthusiasm and the spirit of emulation; the result was the Stara Zagora attempt, described on pp. 40–68. This was a complete fiasco, as was also the plot with which it was combined of setting fire to Constantinople and assassinating Sultan Abd-ul-Aziz. The Bulgarian Khlutoff, alias Benkoffski, who took so leading a part in the "April" insurrection of 1876, fully described in these pages, was sent to the capital to carry out this abortive plan of incendiarism and assassination.

The severities practised by the Turks after the discovery of the plot at Stara Zagora led to the 1876 insurrection, which was followed in turn by the ruthless measures of repression known in history as the "Bulgarian atrocities." It is, however, only fair to point out that the insurgents during their few days of triumph committed many acts—some of which are set out in the following narrative—which cannot be described otherwise than as atrocities, and that the most that can be said is that the "balance of criminality," or at all events the greater number of victims immolated, is doubtless on the side of the Turks. Then came in succession the Conference of Constantinople (1876–7), the Russo-Turkish War (1877–8), the Treaties of San Stefano (February 1878) and of Berlin (July 1878). By the latter Bulgaria was made a vassal principality, and Eastern Roumelia, the scene of most of the events in the 1876 rebellion, an autonomous province. Seven years later, in September 1885, the latter was united to Bulgaria by a bloodless revolution, in which the author of the autobiography took a leading part.

Zachary Stoyanoff's early life is described in his book. Born of peasant parents at Kotel, north of the Balkans, his first occupation was that of a shepherd. But his ardent desire for education led him to abandon this calling and seek his fortune elsewhere: his early experiences are recounted with much humour. At Roustchouk he first joined the revolutionary movement, and after unsuccessful attempts at propaganda in the villages, took part in the 1875 and 1876 revolts. Captured by the Turks in the latter, he seems to have escaped condemnation by methods which show rather a judicious desire for self-preservation than the exercise of the heroic virtues. After the emancipation of his country he entered political life, ardently advocated the "Union" of Eastern Roumelia with Bulgaria, and after the accomplishment of that object took a great part in public affairs, being a devoted adherent of the late M. Stamboloff, a whilom insurgent and eventual Prime Minister of the Principality; in his interest he edited the newspaper *Svoboda* (*Liberty*), almost the only organ of public opinion which his dictatorial chief allowed at one time to appear at Sofia. After holding several official posts, he was appointed President of the Sobranjé, or National Parliament, and retained that office until his death in Paris, whither he had gone to visit the Exhibition of 1889.

His remarkable command of language and great facility in describing humorously the events which he had witnessed lend to all his writings a peculiar charm which it is difficult to reproduce in a foreign language. Besides numerous contributions to the daily Press, he has written some other works, mostly on the subject of the insurrectionary movements.

His early death, at the age of about thirty-eight, was probably brought on by the privations endured during the rebellion and his subsequent imprisonment, and was a real misfortune for his country.

M. W. P.

CHAPTER I

THE READING-ROOM AT ROUSTCHOUK

THE majority of the inhabitants of the Balkan villages in the neighbourhood of Kotel depend for their livelihood on their sheep. But as the mountainous nature of the country does not afford sufficient pasturage, the flocks are sent far afield, some to the distant Dobroudja, others to the rich plains of Karnobad, south of the Balkans. Their care is intrusted to shepherds, who are themselves part owners of the flocks, and the whole undertaking is conducted on strictly co-operative principles, a balance being struck at the end of the season and the profits being divided *pro rata* amongst all the owners, the shepherds naturally receiving a proportionately increased dividend in respect of their labour in tending the flocks.

These shepherds are strangely primitive and ignorant, and their life is a hard one indeed. Fifteen or twenty of them sleep in a small room, without windows, with perhaps just the untanned hide of some sheep which has died of disease to cover them. Their diet consists almost exclusively of dry bread, except during the lambing season, when this is supplemented by an occasional taste of cheese. They are superstitious to a degree, and scrupulously observe all the fasts of the Church, fearing that otherwise their flocks would suffer.

At night, when the company gathers round the fire, the conversation takes in all imaginable topics, both in this world and the next. There is sure to be present a "hajji" (*i.e.*, one who has performed the pilgrimage to Jerusalem), whose word is considered as law on every subject, and who may be depended upon to bring in some mention of his journey, whatever may be the topic of conversation.

Thus, should some inquisitive shepherd inquire which is the largest city in the world, the hajji will reply "Jerusalem"; if another asks which is the most skilful nation in existence, the answer will be "The English." "The steamer which took us to Jaffa," he will continue, "was an English boat, and one of the best." He will then describe how the pilgrims were met by the smiling monks, how the Holy Fire descended on Easter Day, etc., and will conclude with the pious wish, "May you all be spared to see it for yourselves!" to which the assemblage will reply: "Amen! God grant it!"

A very favourite subject of discussion is afforded by religion, paradise, torment, talismans, ghosts, fairies, vampires, and the like, in all of which they believe most steadfastly.

"As Turks, Jews, and other infidels are not admitted to paradise, I suppose their souls remain for ever in hell," some shepherd will say, who has probably had a thrashing from a Turk that very day.

"No, no," answers the hajji, with the air of a man who has just returned from the next world; "both heaven and hell are reserved only for Christians; infidels are not admitted at all in the next world; they're like dogs and other beasts: as soon as they die their souls melt away into air."

"But supposing a Christian turns Turk, what happens to him, hajji?" asks another.

"He burns eternally, from head to foot, like a candle," replies the hajji, "because the oil with which he was anointed at baptism, and which is pure fire, can never be extinguished."

"I've heard tell," observes yet another, "that the oil you speak of is no bigger than a grain of wheat in a man."

"Ay, and less than that. It's under the patronage of St. Basil, who's in high honour at the throne of God. As for what I said, that the soul of a Christian lives for ever, while infidels perish, that's proved by the fact that even the most sinful Christian after his death becomes a vampire, but keeps his human form, whereas Turks are turned into swine, the animals they hate most," adds the omniscient hajji.

"Quite true," exclaims some one. "I remember years ago one of us killed a wild boar. We brought it home and cleaned it and put it to roast. Well, we waited all night, but it wouldn't get cooked. So we had a good look at it, and what did we find? why, its ears were stuffed with cotton wool and it had a silver ring round one of its front paws. We discovered afterwards that it was a Turk from a neighbouring village, whose name we knew, and who had died not long before."

Every one believed all this like gospel, and the youngsters dared not go out after dark.

Such were the people with whom it was my lot to live as a shepherd from 1866 to 1870. I was one of them, and shared all their beliefs. Indeed, so strong was my faith that I was determined to leave this sinful world and become a monk, but my father

would not hear of it. However, though I gave up this desire, I was resolved to be no longer a shepherd, but to go out and see something of the world. I had heard that there were schools, where education was free, and my firm intention was to enter one of these. But for this purpose a small sum of money was necessary, if only to pay for my passport and provide food during the journey. Accordingly I addressed myself in much trepidation to my father, and informed him that I had made up my mind to be a shepherd no longer. I begged him, therefore, having served him for four years, to give me a hundred piastres (about eighteen shillings) and to procure me a passport. His reply was to snatch up a cudgel. I fled, and he followed me with a flood of imprecations.

"Help, help, the big ghiaour is killing his son!" cried several Turkish women, who thereupon took up so aggressive an attitude that my father thought better of it and gave up his pursuit.

A few hours later I entered the neighbouring town of Varna, with my writing-case projecting from my waistband so that all might see it. I had managed to learn to read and write, though the only books that had ever come my way had been a few lives of saints and other simple theological works which the monks sold us. For my shepherd's fur kalpak I had substituted a fez, and I puffed away at my cigarette, stuck in a holder which I had myself cut and hollowed from an elder twig. In this condition I went from shop to shop, seeking employment: the writing-case was to show my erudition and the fez to give evidence of the fact that I was no longer a common shepherd lad; meanwhile, my kalpak was stowed away in the sleeve of the rough homespun cloak which I carried on my arm.

My search for employment was not successful: in most cases, the only answer I received was to be shown the door. However, some charitable soul directed me to the house of a money-changer who was in want of a lad. "Yes," said the old man, pushing back his spectacles to get a good look at me, "we want a lad like you, but you must be able to help to mend the cart when anything happens to it—that's all you'll have to do, beyond minding two or three donkeys."

From the frying-pan into the fire, I thought to myself, as I left the place without a word. I might as well have stayed to look after the sheep. In another place I was sarcastically advised to go back to the Balkan and catch a bear, to earn a livelihood by leading him from town to town. Meanwhile it was growing dark. That night I spent, hungry, under the open sky, attacked occasionally by street-dogs, and in utter misery.

The next day I came across a former comrade who occasionally helped to tend the sheep, but who was more than suspected of depending for his livelihood chiefly on highway robbery. He approved entirely of my having cast away my shepherd's crook, and as we were then by the seashore, he suggested to me that there was a chance of earning a living there. Accordingly, he asked some of the boatmen whose trade it is to convey wood from one part of the port to the other, or to fish in the small bay, "Aren't any of you sailing for England this week? You might take this lad with you." Needless to say, this absurd proposal exposed us to the ridicule of the boatmen. We retreated into the town, and my companion pointed out a large house to me, which he said was the residence of a Circassian bey, and

advised me to ask for employment there. I replied that I would rather go back to my sheep than serve a Circassian. He then whispered that I did not understand: that the bey was reported to be rich, and that the band to which my companion belonged intended to rob him, in which design I was to assist. However, I declined and saw no more of him.

After my second day in Varna, where I could find neither employment, food, nor shelter, I not unnaturally resolved to go back to my former occupation. I concealed my writing-case and my cigarette-holder, took off my fez, and searched for my kalpak. Alas! it was nowhere to be found. This loss rendered my return impossible: to go back in a fez would be to confess my failure, which would have furnished a topic for the jests and sarcasms of the other shepherds for the next six months. The die was cast: the shepherd's life and I were to be strangers henceforth.

I had heard of the Government school at Roustchouk founded by Midhat Pasha, and determined to beg my way thither. To describe my journey, which lasted three days, would be to delay the reader unnecessarily. Suffice it to say that I was stopped half a dozen times by Turks, zaptiés, and others, and everything of the slightest value was taken from me. At last I reached the town, and soon attracted universal attention by the simplicity with which I stared round me, never having been in so large a town before in my life. Seeing a good-sized yellow building with a number of boys playing about, dressed in a kind of uniform, I concluded that this must be the school, and asked some of the pupils if I could speak to the master. He happened to be

looking out of the window, and I was on the point of making my way into the school when, seeing me, he motioned to me to say what I had to tell him from outside. I expressed my desire to become a pupil, but he explained that this was impossible, as I was too old. Instead of being satisfied with this reply, I continued the conversation with the naïveté of a peasant who knows nothing of social distinctions. Amongst other things I asked him if he thought I could get into a school at Bucharest. This was not long after the passage into Bulgaria of a band of insurgents from Roumania. I noticed that the Turkish schoolmaster did not seem pleased at my mentioning Bucharest; however, he replied:

"Perhaps, yes; they may take you in and make a rebel of you and send you back to Bulgaria," at the same time making a sign to me to be gone.

"Do you really think so, Effendim?" I asked joyfully; "how can I get to Bucharest?"

"Get out of my sight, you blundering idiot!" cried the enraged head master, shaking his fist at me; and it was fortunate for me that he realized the extent of my shepherd stupidity, or he might have treated me very differently. So my hopes of education vanished, and after many other fruitless attempts to obtain employment, in most of which I failed only through my crass ignorance of social observances and the respect due to my betters, I succeeded at last in being engaged as apprentice to a cloth-worker, and as such was duly inscribed in the register of the guild, trade corporations being then at the height of their glory. I cannot recount all that I suffered at the hands of my fellow-workmen, who took every advantage of my simplicity and ignorance. The work was terribly hard; we sat, ten

or twelve of us, in a small room scarcely able to hold three persons. Only the head workman was allowed to look out of the window occasionally; any apprentice who dared to do so at once felt the weight of the heavy scissors across his knuckles. In summer the hours were from daybreak to dusk; in winter, work went on till midnight. Any apprentice falling asleep was at once wakened by the penetrating powers of a bodkin in the tenderest part of his person. Our workroom was swept only once a week, on Saturday nights. This fact, coupled with the overcrowding and the use of foul tallow candles, will give some idea of the condition of the atmosphere. The food supplied to the workmen is, moreover, the cheapest obtainable: a thin soup of haricot beans, a few onions, and a crust of dry bread; on Sundays the commonest Danube fish, which scarcely finds buyers at Roustchouk. The rules of the guild specifying the duties of apprentices and workmen are draconic in their severity, but nothing is said anywhere as to sanitation, working hours, proper diet, or humane treatment of the unfortunate employees.

I still retained my thirst for education, but found little opportunity of satisfying it: my new companions took but slight interest in improving their minds. However, I heard that there was a reading-room at Roustchouk, where there were many books and newspapers. But I could not make up my mind to go in on the rare occasions when I could get away from the workshop, for I was ashamed of my humble condition. During the two years in which I remained an apprentice I had naturally increased my acquirements, thanks chiefly to a few schoolboys whose acquaintance I had made. They laughed at me when I asked them if at school they read the

peasant devotional books which for me represented the whole stock of knowledge, being the only ones I had ever seen; and explained that these books were only for village popes, whereas they learnt history, geography, and the like. I took careful note of these names, and with my scanty and painfully hoarded savings bought the books one by one, and eagerly devoured their contents, much to the disgust of my employer, who nearly turned me out for this. Every scrap of printed paper that I could pick up was treasured and its contents committed to memory. Every signboard or inscription over shops, hotels, railway stations, foreign consulates, I copied carefully and learnt by heart. Eventually I found out that some of these were in French, and thus picked up a little of that language.

Soon I began to think I might venture to visit the reading-room. But I waited outside several times before I could summon up sufficient courage to go in. However, once, as I was turning sadly away, one of those inside, seeing me, came out and asked me in, bidding me not to be ashamed, as the reading-room was for such as me. So saying, he put a newspaper in my hand. I pored over it for two hours, not daring to raise my head, as I was convinced that every one in the room was staring at me, and my forehead grew moist with perspiration. I was deeply impressed by the orderly appearance of the reading-room, with its pictures and maps (the first I had ever seen) hanging from the wall. Fortunately for me a discussion on some subject arose, and, every one else taking part in it, I slipped out unnoticed.

After this I became a regular and almost daily visitor at the "Zora" reading-room, and indeed,

neglected my work in order to go there, which led to my dismissal by my pitiless master. But I had made friends with the people who kept the establishment, and they kindly took me in; soon I was permitted to help in their work, and thus became a permanent resident there. My friends were two in number; the first looked after the reading-room, the second kept a small café annexed to it. I soon found out that the former of these used to receive a great many letters, most of which did not come by post, but were brought to him by various messengers, and which he usually burnt immediately he had read them, or else put away very carefully without saying a word about them. Now in all my previous experience I had always noticed the recipient of a letter, a thing rare enough at that time, would carry it about so that all might see, and pass it round to his friends like a newspaper. I was therefore much astonished, and ventured to question him once or twice on the subject, but was told curtly to mind my own business. Moreover, the reading-room was visited not only by many of the leading citizens, who from their social position seemed to have nothing in common with my friend, but by numbers of strangers of every class in life, many of whom he took into an inner room to converse with. I was bursting with curiosity to find out what all this meant, but I dared not ask again. One day I met in the street a young man whom I had seen at the reading-room on the day before, well dressed in a black coat and wearing eye-glasses. To my surprise he was attired in the poorest peasant costume, with a heavy sack on his shoulders. I spoke to him and asked him what this metamorphosis meant, but he would have nothing to say to me. When I mentioned this incident to my

friend at the reading-room, he took me aside, drew from his pocket a revolver which I had never seen before, and threatened to blow out my brains if I ever said a word of this to any one or tried again to meddle in his affairs.

It dawned on me eventually that my two friends were engaged in revolutionary preparations, and that the reading-room was the meeting-place of the Revolutionary Committee, in spite of the fact that the printed regulations which hung from the wall in a prominent place strictly prohibited the introduction of any book or newspaper hostile to the Turkish Government. I made this discovery chiefly from what I overheard and also from the remarks made to me by some of the habitués, who supposed that I was also a member of the Committee, and who became communicative over a glass of wine. Finally, I confessed to my friend that I knew his secret, and begged him to let me assist, assuring him at the same time by all that I held most sacred that nothing would ever induce me to reveal what I had learnt. He replied that I must wait a little longer, and for the present keep the matter secret. One evening after that I found on the reading-room table a printed paper, much worn and tattered, beginning "Brethren and Bulgarians!" I supposed it was an appeal for funds for some school or church, but the first few lines undeceived me. It was a revolutionary proclamation, protesting against the cruelly heavy taxation and other hardships to which Bulgarians were subjected, and urging the nation to rise in arms against their tyrants and join with their neighbours, the Serbs and Roumanians, in forming a Balkan confederation!

The effect of this paper on me was indescribable.

I now began to understand many things which had been full of mystery for me. This then was the reason why our poor shepherds, in spite of their everlasting toil, were always in abject poverty. Not a day passed without one of them being robbed and beaten by Turks, and yet they never talked of freeing themselves from the oppressor. Some old men may occasionally have alluded to the various Russian wars, but chiefly as affecting the ownership of the Holy Sepulchre. They all seemed to think that the Turkish yataghan was the instrument of providence, and that if a Bulgarian was maltreated or killed, he was probably himself to blame for having infringed the Church fasts or committed some other sin of the same description. I did not understand very clearly how the unarmed Bulgarian was to attempt a struggle in which the odds seemed so hopelessly against him, but finally decided that those who wrote the proclamation must have thought of that too; and accordingly I set to work to copy the manifesto, so as to learn it by heart. But I had hardly got through five lines of it when my friend burst in, saying he had forgotten something, which turned out to be the very paper I was copying. I said nothing, and eventually was fortunate enough to be admitted as a member of the Bulgarian Committee. Late one night I and two others were initiated. All the doors of the house were first locked and the blinds carefully pulled down. My friend then, in a few words, explained to us that the condition of the nation could never improve nor civilization and enlightenment be disseminated as long as the Turkish sovereignty existed over us, and that a few young Bulgarians, being convinced of this, had formed patriotic associations under the name of Revolutionary Committees, the

chief aim of which was to stir up the Bulgarian nation to revolt against the Turks.

He then read out to us the rules of the Committee, which were lengthy and explicit, but all tended to the establishment of a free and independent Bulgaria, in which equal rights were to be granted to all peaceful inhabitants of whatever nationality. Bulgaria was to be divided for the purposes of agitation into four revolutionary divisions, which were: first (North-Eastern), headquarters, Tirnovo; second (South-Eastern), Sliven; third (North-Western), Vratsa; fourth (South-Western), Panaghiourishté. It was explained to us that the number of persons affiliated to the Committee and now engaged in disseminating its doctrines throughout the country was immense, and that a Central Committee sat at Bucharest directing the whole propaganda. A complete network of secret posts existed; the Committee had secret agents in the Turkish service, and was provided with a stock of forged passports, both Turkish and foreign. We agreed to take the oath proposed to us, and were duly sworn in.

About a year after this, I started for a village near Bêla, where I was to fill the post of schoolmaster ostensibly, but in reality to act as a revolutionary agitator. I remember as if it were yesterday the village pope coming out to meet me and presenting to me his hand to kiss; it smelt strongly of garlic. After this ceremony he introduced me to his flock. He was a curious specimen of the Church militant, and seemed to devote more of his attention to his flint-lock pistol than to his breviary. One day, after noticing that he seemed well accustomed to the use of fire-arms and that evidently his occupation had not always been that of a servant of the Church,

I suggested to him that he was the kind of pope to ride with his cross and sword in front of a hundred bold Bulgarian lads. The idea appeared to please him at first, but when I began to be a little more explicit, his reverence shrank back and warned me never to mention the subject to him again. The peasants in the village were too ignorant and primitive to understand my proposals, and I was compelled to give up my situation as schoolmaster, having failed to carry out my principal task, which was that of establishing a Revolutionary Committee in the village.

My friend of the reading-room was Nikola Obréten-off, the son of Mother Tonka, whose house was the refuge of all the agitators and "apostles" when at Roustchouk, and who deserves a chapter to herself.

CHAPTER II

MOTHER TONKA

I THINK my readers may have a certain curiosity to learn something of the life of this Bulgarian mother, who took so warm an interest in all the early national movements for our emancipation. Hei career is all the more striking in that she is, as far as I am aware, almost the only woman in the whole Bulgarian nation whose services to the revolutionary cause are worth mentioning.

Mother Tonka Tikhovitsa Obrétenova, the mother of Nikola Obrétenoff (in 1892 prefect of Roustchouk), was born at the village of Cherven, in the Roustchouk district, in 1812, her parents being common shepherds. In those days it was not customary for girls to be sent to school, and her parents contented themselves with doing their best to fit her for becoming a thrifty and industrious housewife. She was an only child, and her father, who seems to have been fairly well-to-do, soon left Cherven and the family took up its abode at Roustchouk. She was never taught, poor girl, her duties to herself, to her parents, to God, her neighbours, or her country; all she knew she picked up from what she heard said around her. Her mother, a shrewd, practical women, would often tell her she must learn to get rid of her shyness before strangers, for one day she might go as bride to some rich man's house, where

the advent of visitors would be a matter of daily occurrence.

And so, indeed, it turned out. In 1831 Tonka married Tikho Obrétenoff, who then passed as one of the richest merchants in Roustchouk. With him she enjoyed forty years of married life, bearing him seven children, five of whom were boys. As her husband was a man of some education and had frequent dealings in matters of importance with various people, both Bulgarians and Turks, Tonka soon learnt the necessity of keeping secrets in delicate affairs, and impressed this duty on her children also.

About 1862 Rakoffski, the Bulgarian author and revolutionary, began to work for the emancipation of Bulgaria, and to form patriotic bands for that purpose throughout Roumania and Servia: one of the first to hear of his noble design was Tonka, who was already beginning to grow old. Every enthusiastic and patriotic spirit then in Roustchouk found a refuge at Mother Tonka's house, where together with her sons Anghel and Peter Obrétenoff, they practised the use of arms and prepared to take part in the patriotic bands which were to cross over into Bulgaria from Roumania and Servia. However, before these bands arrived, a Bulgarian legion was formed at Belgrade, with the connivance of the Servian Government, and Peter Obrétenoff was sent thither, with the consent of his mother and his comrades, to learn military drill, so as to be able to instruct the others on his return. In the same year her eldest son Anghel, together with Stefan Mesho (nicknamed the Pope) travelled over the whole of Bulgaria and Thrace, in order to become acquainted with every part of the country and see the sufferings of their brethren, as well as to

disseminate as widely as possible the idea of liberty among the latter, and especially to ascertain the moral condition and aspirations of the nation.

In 1868 Hajji Dimitr and Stefan Karadja succeeded in gathering together in Roumania about one hundred and twenty-four insurgents, who decided to cross over into Bulgaria at the beginning of July. No sooner had this news reached Roustchouk (that is to say, only Mother Tonka's house, which was already well known to the insurgents) than her two sons and their comrades crossed over to the Roumanian side of the river that very evening. Stefan Karadja himself, with a number of other lads, was then at Giurgevo. Two days later Mother Tonka crossed over to Giurgevo herself, to take a last farewell of her two sons and to wish God-speed to the Bulgarian heroes. Bulgarian tradition forbade her presenting herself empty-handed on such an occasion: she brought bunches of flowers and a demijohn of raki; the latter she herself poured out for them with her warmest wishes for their success in the Balkan. Naturally the presence of an old woman who had come specially from Turkey at so solemn a moment, and the gaiety which she exhibited, inspired the champions of liberty with courage and hope; they thought the same thing was happening all over Bulgaria.

Back came Mother Tonka to Roustchouk: all day long she remained on the bank of the Danube, on the brink of which her house stood, and peered intently at every steamer and boat which passed, to try and descry Hajji Dimitr's band, or to catch a last glimpse of her sons, who would naturally be anxious for the sight of the house where they were born and where they were leaving their old mother;

but all in vain; she could see nothing. Day after day went by, till at last she gave up watching the river. But her curiosity, unrest, maternal solicitude —call it what you will—were unceasing; she was borne down with care; sleep fled from her, and heavy forebodings oppressed her. And no wonder, while her two young sons, the pride of her heart, were facing the bullets of the enemy. More than once during each stilly night she came out and waited among the tall weeds in the courtyard of her house, anxiously listening for the slightest unusual sound—for one of the rebels had told her at Giurgevo that when they passed over into Bulgaria they would first attack Roustchouk, and that from her house would be deployed the standard of liberty. By day she wandered about the town, mostly near the Government House, trying to descry some movement or sign of preparation among the Turks. But all in vain; nothing was to be seen or heard. Every one was busy with his ordinary avocations, and seemed quite unconscious of the approaching fall of the Ottoman Empire. The Arnaout zaptiés, the best criterion of public order, were still lounging peacefully about the Konak and lazily twirling their moustaches. It was too early.

However, before long the news was brought to Roustchouk that certain unknown persons had landed at the village of Vardin from a "cham," or Danubian boat; they were armed from head to foot, and advanced with drums beating and banners flying; they cut to pieces the frontier guard, and pushed on inland towards Tirnovo. The news spread like wildfire, not only in the towns where the telegraph existed, but to the remotest corners of Bulgaria. The Government of course sent out

troops and zaptiés to arrest the invaders, who it was soon learnt were Bulgarians. The Turks began to be profuse of imprecations and threats against the peaceful rayas; the Bulgarian youths took to meeting secretly in groups, where excited language was held respecting the rebels; on their side the chorbadjis held one or two solemn meetings, used serious and earnest admonitions to the younger men, and were even more submissive and servile than usual to the authorities. In a word, the movement was general among all nationalities and classes, though the people who knew the details and composition of the band could be counted on one's fingers.

As every one knows, the band was soon dispersed and most of the rebels met their death on the field of battle, only a few falling into the hands of the Government. The first head brought in to Roustchouk was that of Stefan Mesho, the comrade of Mother Tonka's sons; it was at once recognized by the Turks, by Tonka, and finally by his own mother. The latter, who knew nothing of her son's doings and was quite unable to understand in what cause he had met his death, but well aware that for some years past he had lived with Mother Tonka's family, flew almost out of her senses to our heroine's house. Here she aroused the whole quarter by her shrieks and lamentations; she cursed Tonka as the cause of her son's death, and accused her of having led him astray by witchcraft. A time was to come when such abuse and imprecations from mothers bereft of their children would be daily poured into Tonka's ears.

During the next few days more heads were brought in, and afterwards the few prisoners

arrived, wounded and loaded with chains; many of these were hanged in the streets of Roustchouk. Mother Tonka recognized them, but could learn nothing of the fate of her two sons. Whom was she to ask? The zaptiés' bayonets and the fists of the enraged Mussulman population threatened all who ventured not only to approach the victims but even to raise their eyes towards them. I say nothing of the Turkish women, whose fanaticism is in such cases no whit inferior to that of their husbands. She would have preferred a thousand times to hear that the eagles of the Balkans were tearing the flesh from her sons' bones than to see them brought alive to Roustchouk, which could only serve further to enrage both Bulgarians and Turks against her. She had now quite made up her mind that the lads had either been killed or taken prisoner, and she had prepared herself for all possible emergencies.

Late one night, as she was getting ready to lie down to rest, plunged in grief and cares, she heard the trampling of feet and the clashing of swords in the courtyard; soon a loud knock was heard at the door. A thousand evil forebodings passed through Tonka's imagination. The first thing she saw might be the severed heads of her sons, or at best the Turks leading them in exultingly as captives in chains. Yet with an unmoved and even cheerful countenance she opened the door. Before her stood the commandant of the battalion and several officers and zaptiés.

"Oh! it's you, is it, Effendim? I was half afraid it might be some stranger," she said with a pleasant smile, as though she were greeting an old acquaintance; "do come in and sit down—my house is

always open to such valued guests as you. Only you mustn't mind if I happen to say anything rather funny, for I believe I've had a drop too much this evening."

The commandant was taken aback by this reception: in spite of his efforts to maintain his official dignity and to preserve the proper degree of decorum and severity, he could not help smiling when Mother Tonka launched out into various anecdotes and stories, such as the Turks love. By degrees his zeal evaporated, and the nocturnal visit, the primary object of which had doubtless been to ransack the house for anything suspicious, ended in a few questions as to the number and present whereabouts of Mother Tonka's sons.

But the visit of this officer boded no good, and all night the old woman tossed sleepless on her bed, torn by a thousand fears. Next day the whole town knew that amongst other vagabonds (as they were called) brought in from Tirnovo were Tonka Tikhovitsa's sons, and public rumour added malignantly that they would soon be conveyed to Roustchouk and hanged before their mother's door. Naturally, this crushing news, which would have broken down the hardest nature, fell heavily on poor Tonka. Overcome especially by that foolish and unreasoning censoriousness called public opinion, she did not dare to stir abroad for several days. Yet even in her house she had no peace, for the neighbours, and especially their womenkind, gathered round her windows and in tones purposely loud for her to hear dwelt on the harrowing details of the forthcoming execution, in which Tonka was, they said, to be the first victim. Needless to say that if the poor old woman had possessed more education, if every

feeling of social pride had not been dead in her, if, finally, she had known the honours paid in other lands to the champions of national rights and liberties, she would have felt pride, not shame, and could with two words have closed the mouths of these foolish scandalmongers.

A few days later the prisoners were brought in from Tirnovo, chained to one another; among them was only her eldest son, Anghel—Peter, the younger, was not there. They were nearly all wounded, and their clothes were stained with blood and the dust of travel. All this was reported to her at once by her little daughter, who was sent out daily to watch on the Tirnovo road. Days passed on, and still the unhappy mother feared to leave her house; every day she heard the women talking outside, saying that her son with the other rebels had been taken before the Vali Pasha and would soon be hanged. At last she could stay at home no longer. What mother could resist the desire to go forth, if only to see her son breathe his last on the gallows, and, besides that, to learn the fate of her other son? So one morning she set out for the Roustchouk prison to beg permission to see the prisoners who had been brought in from Tirnovo. Considering that at that time it was almost unprecedented that any one should seek to have any dealings with the traitors, as they were contemptuously called by all, the gaolers were not a little surprised at this bold demand on the part of a woman, and instead of replying, merely ordered the zaptiés to turn her out. But Mother Tonka was not so easily beaten; she returned again and again, in spite of abuse and threats—indeed, one sergeant went so far as to deal her several blows with his cudgel, for it was known that she had not one but two sons

among those who had ventured to turn their weapons against the Imperial troops.

However, Tonka knew the weak points of Turkish officials. She collected such money and presents as she had laid by for a rainy day, and distributed them, from the commandant down to the meanest zaptié. Then she was admitted to see her son and his comrades as well. The zaptiés and other prisoners, who had crowded round to see a mother embrace her son on his way to the gallows and already covered with blood, could not help glancing inquiringly at each other and expressing their surprise. In place of despairing caresses and floods of tears, they saw the old woman turn to her son with jeers at his expense and at the expense of his companions.

"Good luck to your Bulgarian kingdom," said she in Turkish; "I should like to know which of you was to be the King, and which of you the Vali, and so forth, when you had got rid of the Turks."

Then, turning to her son, she asked him if he was drunk when they inveigled him into taking such a foolish step; he should have asked his mother first, she said, and she would have told him that the Turkish Empire was blessed by God and that the Bulgarians were fated to be for ever its subjects. (That was, of course, the only way to talk then.) The Turks present cried "Well said, old lady!" and patted her on the back.

From thenceforth the gaol doors were open to Mother Tonka; every day she passed in and out, bearing food and clothes not only for her son and his comrades but also for certain bullies, Turkish prisoners, who enjoyed unbounded authority in the gaol, and who could do much to make the lives of the others bearable or the reverse. As for the

younger son, Peter Obrétenoff, it was untrue that he had been brought alive into Tirnovo. He had been killed at the second encounter of Hajji Dimitr's band with the troops near Sevlievo, and only his head had been taken to Tirnovo.

A month later the Turkish tribunal at Roustchouk pronounced judgment upon the eight captured insurgents. Instead of the death penalty, they were condemned to penal servitude for life in the fortress of St. Jean d'Acre, whither they were forthwith dispatched. Mother Tonka strained her scanty resources to the utmost to furnish these martyrs with a small sum of money and other necessaries for the journey. And so in this first Bulgarian movement, which gave no small lustre to our nation, she sacrificed two sons, two darling children, in the bloom of their youth.

From 1868 to 1870, as is well known, no movement took place in Bulgaria: there was a complete lull in revolutionary fervour. Meanwhile, Mother Tonka's position was a most unenviable one. Her husband, who was in partnership with one of the most grasping of the Roustchouk bourgeoisie, returned home one day from the latter's house, whither he had gone to settle accounts, feeling unwell: his illness increased, and by morning he was a corpse. He had been poisoned by his partner, who had first made away with the books of the firm and then claimed all the remaining assets as his own. Yet in all her trouble Mother Tonka was not unmindful of the memory of the insurgents who had been hanged at Roustchouk, such as Stefan Karadja, the two heroes of the steamer *Germania*, and many others of Hajji Dimitr's band. These had been buried in a remote corner of the Bulgarian cemetery outside the

town, without any funeral rites being performed or any priest being present. This thought troubled Mother Tonka, and her care was increased by the fact that the graves were overgrown with weeds and uncared for; none seemed to remember those who had fallen in the cause of freedom.

Early on Saturday mornings, before any mourners had come to pray at the graves of their departed friends, the old lady might be seen advancing cautiously, trowel in hand, towards the graves, which she then proceeded to clear from the encroaching weeds; later on she planted flowers and shrubs and lighted candles. Soon the guardians of the cemetery noticed her frequent visits, and from feelings of curiosity watched her, to find out who she was and what she had to do with the graves of brigands long since neglected and despised by all. But their suspicions were soon set at rest, when the old lady produced a black bottle, the contents of which gurgled delightfully down their throats; she assured them, moreover, that they could always find a glass of the same vintage by calling at her house. Needless to say, from that day on the two sextons were at Mother Tonka's beck and call. By the use of similar arguments she persuaded a priest to devote much of his valuable time in reading prayers over the graves of the insurgents.

Not very long after a white tombstone appeared over each grave, on which the name of the deceased, the date of his birth, and the cause of his execution were roughly carved. These tombstones were obtained by Mother Tonka from a Bulgarian stonemason from the village of Krasen, to whom she gave for his trouble a revolver which had been left at her house by one of the rebels, assuring him at the same time

that the work he was doing would be rewarded both in this world and the next. Mother Tonka's punishment would have been very severe had her action been suspected by the Turkish authorities.

So time went on until 1871, for the soil was not yet ripe for further action. But all that has been said so far bears witness to her love for the despised Bulgarian insurgents, in whose favour not a voice was then raised.

To turn back a little, Vassil Levski,* the deacon, had long wished to found a Committee in some of the Danubian towns and especially at Roustchouk, so as to facilitate the conveyance of arms and other revolutionary paraphernalia. His aim was attained by the foundation by Anghel Kuntcheff † of the Roustchouk Secret Committee, the first meeting of which took place at Mother Tonka's house.

Eye-witnesses relate that on that occasion the old lady was quite beside herself with excitement. Again and again she entered the room where the young patriots were assembled, to listen to what they were saying; after a few words of encouragement in their sacred task, she would hurry out again and carefully inspect the house and the garden, to assure herself that no suspicious person was eavesdropping anywhere. In place of timidity or womanly grief or despair for the fate of her two sons, one of whom had been cut to pieces on the plains of Sevlievo, while the other was rotting in the dungeons of Acre, she could not restrain her joy at the thought that the seed had not fallen on barren ground.

Aye, Mother Tonka was an extraordinary woman. Thereafter she continued to take a decisive part in

* Hanged at Sofia, 1873.

† Committed suicide at Roustchouk to avoid arrest, 1872.

the national movements, together with all her remaining sons and daughters, to each of whom his or her special duty was assigned, and who carried out zealously their appointed tasks.

The newly established Revolutionary Committee having informed Mother Tonka that certain materials would be brought to her house which would require especial care and precautions, she at once set about preparing a secret receptacle, the existence of which should be known only to the inmates of the house. Under the flooring of one of the rooms of her poor house she had a deep cellar dug, which was walled and floored like a room, and which was large enough to be not only a store-room for arms, papers, etc., but also a hiding-place for several people.

The preparation of this cellar was effected at night; some of the inmates of the house dug out and carried away the earth, while others kept watch outside to see that no stranger approached. Several small openings were also made in the garden wall, so that the conspirators might be able to escape in case of an unexpected police raid.

Mother Tonka's next duty was to gain over several Roumanian boatmen, whose services were required for transporting various things from the Roumanian side of the river. She soon succeeded in doing this, thanks principally to a few barrels of wine judiciously distributed among them. Her house after this was the established storehouse and meeting-place of the conspirators, whose mother and protectress she became. As was done at the time of Hajji Dimitr's attempt, her youngest son Ghiorghi Obrétenoff was sent to Odessa to study at the military academy there; his elder brother, Nikola, became an "apostle," while the other son, Tanas, remained at home to look after

the house, fetch things in from the boats, and so forth. Her eldest daughter, Petrana, besides engaging generally in the work of the Committee, was frequently charged with the duty of conveying important letters to Tirnovo and Roumania. Many of the flags used in the insurrections of 1875 and 1876 were worked by her.

It was not only the "apostles," however, who found a refuge at Mother Tonka's house. She was lavish in her assistance to those workers whom the Turkish Government had imprisoned at Roustchouk on suspicion. The gaolers did not seek to hinder her, having been previously bought over. She was known as the "Koja Komita," but all the women of the quarter called her the witch, being unable to explain the constant visits of so many men to her house except by the supposition that she attracted them by magic.

In the autumn of 1875, when the Stara Zagora insurrection broke out, the whole of Bulgaria was preparing for a general rising, which various causes prevented from taking place. The work went on merrily at Mother Tonka's house, which was converted into a regular arsenal. Her son Ghiorghi at once left the school at Odessa and returned to Roustchouk, whence he lost no time in proceeding to Tirnovo. This latter town was to supply the greatest contingent of all.

However, the only places where any rising occurred were Stara Zagora, Shoumen, and Tchervena Voda (near Roustchouk), at each of which towns small bands of youths raised the standard of revolt. The Turks were at once on the alert and took severe measures for the repression of the movement. As a natural consequence Mother Tonka's house was

the first to suffer. It was at once ransacked by the police, but, thanks to the numerous doors specially made for such an emergency, her son Nikola and his comrades were able to escape, nor did the police succeed in finding the hiding-place where various revolutionary belongings were concealed. Nikola managed to hide himself in the house of a Bulgarian employed in the Russian Consulate at Roustchouk who was a participator in the plot; a few days later he was able to slip out of Roustchouk unperceived.

The old woman's younger son, Ghiorghi, who had gone to Tirnovo, as previously stated, and her daughter Petrana both sought refuge in flight, and the mother was left alone. Her position may be easier imagined than described: she was quite unaware of the whereabouts of her children, and feared every moment to hear of their arrest and subsequent punishment for participation in the plot to which she herself had encouraged them. She was repeatedly interrogated by the police as to where her sons were, but her skilful answers disarmed all suspicion as to her own guilt. For a whole month police officials guarded every door of the house; even then the undaunted old woman had only one fear—that one of her sons might return home unexpectedly some night and fall into the hands of the sentries.

For more than a month Mother Tonka remained without news of her children. One day, however, about noon, as she stood at her accustomed place on the bank of the Danube, she saw certain people standing by the water's edge on the Roumanian shore making signs to her, after which they joined hands and danced the khoro. Mother Tonka took her telescope, and after a careful scrutiny saw that among them were her two sons, Nikola and Ghiorghi,

who greeted their mother across the muddy Danube by waving their handkerchiefs to her. A few days later she received a letter from Giurgevo informing her how her sons had escaped the gallows. One of them wrote that he had disguised himself as a stoker, and in that costume had passed through the Turkish guards and got safely on board an Austrian steamer; the other described his twenty days' wanderings on foot before he reached the Servian frontier.

The insurrection of 1875 took place from the 28th to the 30th of September, and by the end of October the Roustchouk prison was full of young Bulgarians implicated in the movement, principally from the Shoumen district. About the same time some fifteen or twenty emigrants were gathered together at the Roumanian town of Giurgevo, among them being Mother Tonka's two sons. The old lady did all she could to assist these hapless fugitives, but her scanty means were long since exhausted, and she was obliged to seek for contributions from others. Fortunately, times had changed since 1868, when Hajji Dimitr's band had passed through Roustchouk. Then no term of abuse had been too strong for the prudent merchants to apply to the misguided rebels; but seven years later the votaries of freedom were more numerous and more outspoken. Mother Tonka went from shop to shop and collected contributions of every kind for the prisoners in Roustchouk gaol and for the emigrants in Roumania. By her skilful behaviour she succeeded in allaying the suspicions of the Turks. She frequently crossed the Danube to convey her supplies to the emigrants, and even went so far as to bring across their linen, wash it at Roustchouk, and take it back to them.

As the emigrants at Giurgevo had determined to

make a fresh attempt, a regular postal service was instituted between Roustchouk and Giurgevo. Every night three or four Roumanian boatmen spent the night at Mother Tonka's house, and had to be supplied by her with food and liquor. They were fully aware of the nature of their mission, and were consequently the more exacting in their demands. Many a time they would keep up their carouse till dawn, while Mother Tonka waited on them with respect and deference, not so much for them as for the sacred cause which they served.

About that time a high Turkish official, accompanied by a numerous harem, took up his quarters at Mother Tonka's house. He had been sent specially to try and find out what was going on there. Christmas went by and emigrants from Giurgevo began to pass across the Danube into Bulgaria. Many of these quartered themselves on Mother Tonka. By night she washed their linen for them, gave them a change of clothing, etc. One night three "apostles" appeared—the Voivode Stoil, Ghiorghi Ikonomoff, and Christo Karaminkoff. They remained for a whole day shut up in a little closet waiting for the cart that was to convey them to Tirnovo. The peril was doubly great on account of the Turks living in the same house. To disarm suspicion Mother Tonka had recourse to ruse. She took a bottle of wine in each hand and began to dance in the garden, singing as she did so. The Turkish women came out to look at her and roared with laughter, being convinced that she was intoxicated; and this while she was devoured with anxiety for the fate of the three "apostles," who were waiting, revolver in hand, lest any untoward event should happen.

Mother Tonka was always ready with a jest. Did

some rough zaptié begin to abuse her for having made rebels of her four sons, she would assure him that she was about to be married, and would ask him, the zaptié, to the wedding. "These sons of mine," she would add, "have all gone to the bad, somehow, but when I'm married I shall take good care to bring forth no more rebels."

The year 1876 was as unfortunate for Mother Tonka as 1868 had been. Of her two sons who took part in the rebellion, Ghiorghi was killed by the Turks on May 20th at Neikovo, and Nikola was taken and brought into Roustchouk chained to a number of his comrades. He was sentenced to transportation for life, but his departure did not resemble that of his brother in 1868, when his mother did not dare to go out into the street for fear of the hostile comments of her fellow-citizens. This time she was accompanied by about a hundred men, women, and children, with bouquets in their hands for the condemned insurgents. Mother Tonka walked proudly behind her son, saying that four of her sons were already practically in the grave, two being dead and two half-dead, but that if she had four more she would gladly send them out to rally round the flag of revolt. As for the Turks, they remained silent and confused.

Six months later she heard that the two brothers, Anghel and Nikola, were together in the dungeon of Acre. This was an unexpected pleasure, which consoled her in the solitude in which she was now left.

After the treaty of San Stefano, in 1878, her two sons were released, Nikola first and Anghel later. The Turkish Government had at first refused to set the latter free on account of his having belonged to Hajji Dimitr's band, which was said to have had no

political character, but to have been formed simply for purposes of plunder.

When Mother Tonka heard of her son's release and arrival at Varna she could not sleep for joy. At last the time came for his return. She went forth to meet him, accompanied by a large crowd; in spite of all advice she refused to change her black clothes—she had worn mourning for ten years—for some more suitable apparel. Every one at the station was surprised at her calmness. Instead of tears and lamentations, she received her son in his Arab garb and with his fez on his head with the words, "Just look at the donkey—he's grown older than me!"

For three days the released insurgents remained in Mother Tonka's house, waiting for new clothes, for they were ashamed of their Arab dress. On the fourth day, early in the morning, the Roumanian steamer *Dorobansului* arrived and was moored off Mother Tonka's house. A band of music struck up the Hajji Dimitr march, and a deputation from Giurgevo came up to the house. Mother Tonka could not at first make out what it was all about. A touching scene then ensued when the insurgents and their friends met after so many years of suffering and separation. Half an hour later the whole party joined in a khoro, in which Mother Tonka insisted on taking part.

For some years the old lady lived on at Roustchouk forgotten and unhonoured. Her wealth consisted only of the past and of her recollections, which right up to her death she gladly related to any visitor who might be curious enough to listen to them.

CHAPTER III

THE REVOLT AT STARA ZAGORA

MEANWHILE, the Revolutionary Committee was in 1875 in the fifth year of its existence. The results attained during that short period were prodigious, but the vigilance of the Turkish Government had been aroused, and more than one agitator had perished on the gallows. About this time also the revolt broke out in the Herzegovina. The gallant defence made by the hardy mountaineers produced a great impression in Bulgaria, where it was thought that if the insurrection of a couple of hundred thousand needy Herzegovinians could so seriously affect the Ottoman Empire as to reduce it to a state of financial ruin, the rising of the whole Bulgarian nation would be the death-knell of the Sultan's domination. And, indeed, this opinion was at the time shared by many wiser than we were, though events have since proved it a fallacy.

A general meeting of the Revolutionary Committee was therefore called and at once set to work to prepare a rising. At that time the most resolute "apostle" was Stefan Nikoloff Stamboloff, a native of Tirnovo. True, he was a mere boy of about twenty, but his fiery diction, his unequalled resolution, and his impassioned patriotic songs carried away all who came into contact with him.

He had been educated at a Russian seminary, but his hot and self-willed nature was not to be subjected to the rigid and slavish discipline enforced there, and he soon bade farewell to theology and dogma. I have thought it necessary to say these few words about Stamboloff, because he was the principal mover in the Stara Zagora rising, and in general in the movements of 1875 and 1876.

In August 1875, shortly before the outbreak at Zagora, I had taken up my quarters at Seimen, as Roustchouk was no longer safe. The authorities, or more correctly the Bulgarian notables of the place, had begun to suspect my hiding-place, the reading-room "Zora." I managed to find employment at the Seimen railway station, and such time as I could spare from my duties I devoted to the Revolutionary Committee.

On August 15th an emissary arrived from Stara Zagora: he was the bearer of an inflammatory address drawn up by Christo Boteff and Stamboloff, calling on the Bulgarian nation to follow the example of the surrounding nations and to take up arms to free themselves from the barbarous yoke of the Turks. This document produced the most stirring effect, which was still further heightened ten days later by Stamboloff's arrival from Roumania, via Constantinople, disguised as a Turk. He assured us that numbers of "apostles" had crossed over into Bulgaria to foment the insurrection, and that everywhere the most thorough preparations were being made for the whole nation to rise against its oppressors. Stamboloff proceeded at once to Stara Zagora, where he was to act as "apostle." Shortly afterwards I received a summons to follow him thither, in company with Ikonomoff and some

others. I need not say how this summons affected us: not one of us closed his eyes that night. Next day I went to Stara Zagora, but it took me two days to find Stamboloff there. He was in concealment, not so much from the Turkish police as from the Bulgarian bourgeoisie of the town, who were sworn enemies to the national movement. On the third day Mikhail Jékoff took me by night to the house of another patriot, where Stamboloff lay hidden. The future leader of the revolution—and eventual Prime Minister of liberated Bulgaria—sat in a small, evil-smelling closet, quite alone, without a candle to see by or even a couch to lie on. He held a revolver in his hand, and on a chair were strewn writing materials, a map of the Balkan peninsula, a telescope, and a compass. From excessive walking his feet were swollen, and he kept them swathed in bandages.

That night many villagers from the neighbourhood came to see him, amongst them being two voivodes from the village of Hain, Dédo Nikola and Ivan Setréli. They were both armed to the teeth, and talked of their readiness for the insurrection with such calm that it seemed a waste of time to delay.

"The number of my lads at the present moment," said Dédo Nikola, with a dignity befitting a voivode, "is seven hundred; eighty of them are Turks, all absolutely devoted to me, and ready to take up their guns when I give the word. I think they'll be enough to hold the Hain Bogaz pass when the revolt breaks out."

His companion, Setrêli, who never took his hand off his ivory-hilted dagger, though there were no enemies, Turks or otherwise, in the room, confirmed this statement with an approving nod. "Lord love

you," said he, "many and many a Turk I've killed before now; but I've never been found out, because I know a thing or two. When I've killed a man, I just fill him up all round with dry faggots, drop a little gunpowder on him, and the whole thing blazes up like a safety match."

The audience, and especially Stamboloff, listened breathlessly to the terrible voivode, who was lying outrageously.

"And you, Dêdo Nikola, you've killed a good few, I expect, if the truth was known?" asked Jékoff.

"Bless you, my lad, who's to count them up?" was the reply.

Such were the much-renowned voivodes of the Balkans, whose only aim was by boasting to obtain money from the Revolutionary Committees and then to retire quietly to Servia.

Meanwhile the peasants from neighbouring villages assured us that they were eager for the fray, and urged us to hasten the day of the outbreak. "We can't wait much longer," they said; "better kill ourselves than go on living under the Turks; they've stripped the very shirts off our backs."

Being novices in the art of revolution, we took all this for gospel. So, to assure ourselves that it was not only Stara Zagora which was to rise on the 28th of September, we decided to send one of our number, named Momcheff, to Tirnovo, to inquire of the Committee there how matters stood. He was to travel over the mountains by secret paths, so as to get there the sooner and avoid detection. However, he remained away longer than we had expected, and so anxious were we lest some untoward incident should have happened, that every afternoon we went out in groups of twos and threes

to the vineyards along the Kezanlik road to await his arrival. Lest it should be thought that we had a secret object in view, and the suspicion of the authorities be thus aroused, we took care to have a bottle of raki and some glasses with us. The watchman of the vineyard, usually a Turk, would make his appearance, and on being invited would sit down and drink his raki without even a word of thanks for what he considered his due. Finally, Momcheff returned on the 26th of September. We met him at half-an-hour's distance from the town. While the chemicals for deciphering his letter (written in sympathetic ink) were being got ready, Momcheff related to us the preparations going on at Tirnovo, which he assured us would fall into the hands of the insurgents without even a shot being fired. The letter ran as follows:

"Brothers, this time it is a settled thing. We have decided unanimously to raise the standard of revolt on Tuesday next, September 28th. You, dear brothers, must follow our example and rise on the same day. If you cannot succeed at Stara Zagora, you must retire to Shipka and from there to Gabrovo, which will be the principal revolutionary centre. You can rely on the absolute truth of this. Send a copy of this letter to Sliven and Tchirpan."

This letter filled us with hope; indeed, one of us was so affected that he sank fainting to the ground. Without further discussion we made up our minds there and then in the vineyard to revolt on the 28th, even though only five of us should be present to raise the standard. Late at night we returned to the town and held a meeting, which lasted all night, at the house of Mikhail Jékoff. It was decided to send experienced men to the villages

to prepare the villagers and conduct them properly armed to the town on the appointed night. Two points outside the town were fixed upon for concentrating the insurgents from the villages; these were the Catholic cemetery and the Chadir hill. The emissaries were sent off at once to the villages, each provided with a few copies of the proclamation, which they were to read out in the churches, after assembling the whole population there. At five o'clock Turkish time (*i.e.*, five hours after sunset) they were to be at the appointed place with as many insurgents as they could collect.

The next evening messengers arrived from the villages with statistics showing the number of men, arms, horses, etc. Everything was going on as well as could be expected.

There were never less than twenty insurgents at the Jékoffs' house. Each was busy copying proclamations, writing letters, making cartridges, casting bullets, or else preparing the banner. The Jékoffs were five or six brothers who all lived together in one large house; their united families made up a total of twenty-five persons, men, women, and children. Mikhail Jêkoff generously assisted such of the rebels as were without means to complete their equipment. Meanwhile, the price of arms began to rise suddenly. A common sporting gun, such as could have been procured a few weeks before for 150 to 200 piastres (£1 5s. to £1 10s.), was now unobtainable under 400 piastres. It was impossible to keep our preparations secret, and they must have been known to the Turkish authorities, who, however, made no sign. But the public was full of anxious forebodings, and many thought the Russians were coming.

Such was the situation on the 28th of September the day fixed for the rising. It was agreed that at two o'clock Turkish time we were to march through the town with banner flying, and we had undertaken to attack Zagora if our numbers reached three hundred.

The sun was already beginning to set; in the streets the movement became greater every minute; the more impatient among us had thrown aside their red fezzes and taken off their boots, substituting kalpaks and white sandals respectively, and were already arming for the struggle. All were rushing hither and thither through the house, searching for uniforms, arms, or what not. Stamboloff, though the leader of the movement, paid but little attention to his uniform or equipment, and eventually contented himself with an old flint-lock musket and a common villager's kalpak without ornament of any sort.

The clock struck one: the lion-embroidered flag waved over the door, and each of us was impatient for the outbreak of the revolt. But of the towns-people of Stara Zagora who were in the plot, not a single one made his appearance. This was disquieting, but our greatest hope was in the villagers, who would, we felt sure, keep their promise; so we determined, even though our number should not exceed ten, to march to the Chadir hill, where we were confident we should find at least three hundred peasants assembled. With these we could attack the town and force our cowardly patriots to join us. Failing them, we could fall back towards the Hain Bogaz, where Dédo Nikola and his seven hundred lads would be awaiting us.

Before going out we sent for the pope to come and administer the oath and also the last sacrament

to us. However, his reverence refused, alleging that as it was his turn for service the next morning he could not do so. We therefore took the oath without him in the following manner: Stamboloff, standing in the middle, pronounced the words and we repeated them after him. This took place in the room, the doors of which were crowded by curious spectators, the men discussing the results of our action, the women weeping and invoking the Divine assistance on our efforts.

Then, two by two, with our guns on our shoulders, we marched out, about twenty in all, with banner flying, and took the street leading towards the Chadir hill. The doors of the house closed behind us, but for some time we could hear the sounds of prayer and lamentations which followed our departure.

We went as quietly as possible, so as to attract as little attention as we could, though the street-dogs kept up an incessant chorus. Numbers of people, both Turks and Bulgarians, passed us and eyed us with curiosity, but evidently had no idea of what we were about.

As soon as we had left the house we struck up Stamboloff's revolutionary hymn: "We seek not fame nor riches, We seek not land nor wives. . . ." Soon we came to the Chadir hill, where we looked all round us with the greatest impatience, hoping to find our comrades there, according to their promise. Alas! search as we might, there was no one there.

Still, we did not yet give up hope. We planted our flagstaff on the top of the hill and lay down on the grass to await our confederates. After an hour and a half steps were heard—we rushed impatiently in that direction, and found four of our party. All

except one were quite young, and dressed in their best, as if going to a wedding. This small reinforcement was quite sufficient to raise our spirits. But our enthusiasm did not last long; after another two hours' waiting our numbers had not reached twenty-five. To have attempted to attack the town would have been madness. Nor was it possible to return quietly, after all our preparations, without having accomplished anything. So we decided to retire to Hain and try our luck with Nikola, the voivode. But before leaving we sent two of our band to assure themselves that the insurgents from the villages were not waiting for us at the appointed place; but in vain: they returned having found no one. There was therefore nothing to be done but to make for Hain while there was yet time. We deputed one of our number to return to the town and tell our friends there what had happened, and to assure them that if we received any reinforcement at Hain we would come back next night and attack the town.

Many of the insurgents were disinclined to adopt this plan, alleging that they were not prepared for so long a journey. But the majority stood firm and the others withdrew their opposition. The standard-bearer took up the banner, and we left the Chadir hill as the town clock struck, not five—the hour fixed for our intended attack—but seven. Our party consisted of about twenty, all of them being townspeople of Stara Zagora, mostly tradesmen and fairly well-to-do, the only strangers being Stamboloff, Ikonomoff, and myself. After about two and a half hours' marching the sky began to show signs of dawn towards the east; we were then in a small thicket, which we were assured was the only cover we could hope to find. The place was about three hours

distant from Stara Zagora, and was surrounded by Turkish villages. There was also a Bulgarian village close by, named Nova Mahala.

So our little band, eighteen or twenty in number, entered the thicket, surrounded on every side by the open plain. The only part where one could remain at all concealed was a small valley. Our position was far from enviable. The whole town was doubtless aware by this time of our departure, for we had been seen by numbers of people, and we were sure to be pursued that day. We were worn out by our long march during the night, and were in want of both food and water; but where were we to find either? All we had with us was but a couple of loaves, just enough for a mouthful all round; and as for water, there was none, or at least none that we could find. About noon we were able to seize a Bulgarian who had come to cut wood. Poor fellow! he was so terrified by our appearance, thinking that he had fallen into the hands of brigands, that for some time he was unable to speak. However, we quieted him down, assuring him that we were Bulgarians like himself, and that we had gone out for his good and for that of the whole nation. He was able to show us a spring of water close by, and as we had no pitcher or other vessel, we emptied two or three leather knapsacks, which he filled for us ten or twelve times.

The most restless of us all was Stamboloff. He could not keep still, but examined the thicket on every side and scanned every point of the horizon with his telescope to see if nothing was going on anywhere. Finally, he proposed to leave us and make a tour of inspection in the neighbouring Bulgarian village. Of course no one objected, as he was the only person to

incur any risk. He disguised himself in peasant's dress and started off, leaving behind his pocket-book, which he said contained valuable papers. "Don't wait long for me," he said; "either I shall come back safe and sound or else they will have killed me, for you may be sure I shall never let them take me alive."

After Stamboloff's departure we were seen by some Bulgarian children who were tending cattle close by, and who fled in terror, leaving their buffaloes behind. At once panic spread throughout the whole plain, and we could see Turks and Bulgarians all flying for their lives. As for us, we fled in the opposite direction, but were unable to leave the thicket or we should have been seen. There was nothing to be done but to wait for the pursuit which seemed certain, and to sell our lives as dearly as possible. To our surprise no patrols were sent out after us, a circumstance due to the simple fact that the Turks had not yet fixed upon their plan of campaign.

The day wore slowly on, too slowly for us, whose only hope of deliverance was in darkness. However, half an hour before sunset we saw Stamboloff on his way back, unharmed. This at once roused our flagging spirits, and we eagerly surrounded him. He had been to Nova Mahala, where he learnt that during the night before the whole village had been waiting for the flames to burst out in Stara Zagora, to attack the town. The villagers with whom Stamboloff had spoken promised that they would give us a reinforcement of from forty to fifty men, who would go with us that night to Stara Zagora; all that they wanted was to assure themselves with their own eyes that the townspeople were taking part in the movement. Therefore our whole band

was to proceed to Nova Mahala, with banner flying, so as to inspire our peasant brethren with courage. This proposal was the more acceptable as Stamboloff added that a meal would be prepared for us at one of the threshing-grounds outside the village, and that he had himself seen this being got ready.

It was not yet dusk when we left the thicket and started towards Nova Mahala, about half an hour's walk. Before entering the village we sent two scouts (one of whom was Stamboloff) to make sure that no treachery was intended. They were to whistle three times if there was anything wrong, bnt once only if all was well. A few minutes after their departure we heard a single whistle, and we entered the village singing the revolutionary hymn, which had been forgotten since the previous evening. The whole village came out to meet us, accompanied by the dogs, who barked as if we had revolted against them. We were taken to a threshing-ground where supper really had been provided for us. Here we planted our banner and sat down to our food, being waited on most assiduously by bare-headed peasants, with candles in their hands, who one by one kissed our banner with deepest reverence. The village pope explained to his flock what was the significance of our black kalpaks, which he called Russian, and why our flag was embroidered with a lion and not any other animal. Another old peasant, sixty or seventy years of age, who had lived long in Greece and taken part in revolutions there, continued to declaim during the whole of our meal Greek poetry, in which the word "patrida" (*πατρίδα*) recurred very frequently. He was full of enthusiasm, as were all those present, so long as it was merely a question of welcoming and complimenting us. The moment we mentioned the

forty men they had promised us to assist in setting fire to Stara Zagora, the pope slunk out at the doorway, and the old peasant who had recited the poetry disappeared; the faces of our hosts lost their joyful look, and groups of twos and threes began to form; finally, they assured us that they could give us no assistance whatever: firstly, because their village would remain defenceless, surrounded by Turkish villages; and, secondly, because we should not get a single man from any other village. Meanwhile, we learned that the Turks of Stara Zagora were all armed and on the alert, and that the town was surrounded by a strong patrol, which allowed no Bulgarian to pass either in or out. Villagers who had arrived from Hain reported that all was quiet there, and had no knowledge of Dédo Nikola, our terrible voivode, the leader of seven hundred rebels.

Again despair reigned in our ranks, and also among the villagers, who were evidently on the point of asking us to be gone. Mikhail Jékoff, whom I have already described as one of the most resolute of our party, and who had sacrificed all he had in the world to our cause, lost consciousness and fell fainting to the ground. We determined to make for Hain, and if we really found that Dédo Nikola had done nothing, to try and reach Tirnovo, which we were convinced had long since shaken off the Turkish yoke. Jékoff, who was unable to walk, was hoisted on a horse which we took from the village.

About an hour and a half after sunset we left Nova Mahala, not with songs as we had entered it, but in utter despair. We gave out at first that we were returning to Stara Zagora, but when we were out of sight of the village we took the path towards the Hain pass. The rest of the band, who had not

known of our decision, were much dissatisfied, many saying that they preferred to die in their native town to wandering thus aimlessly from village to village.

They were quite right, for it was easy to guess that no revolt had taken place either at Zagora or anywhere else. So every one was left free to do as he pleased. Many returned to Zagora, but the brothers Jékoff and some others from the town accompanied us. Our intention was to reach Hain at dawn and take refuge with old Nikola. On our path was the village of Elkhovo. Fearing to meet with some patrol or ambush, we shunned the regular road and struck straight across fields and woods without any path or track. Every moment one of us would fall at some precipitous place. Poor Jékoff, whose sufferings gradually increased, fell from his horse, which at once started off through the brushwood, scattering our revolutionary paraphernalia, such as the banner, telescope, correspondence, etc., which were in the saddle-bags, and which we had to hunt for in the dark afterwards by the light of wax matches which we struck.

At dead of night we reached Elkhovo, where the dogs again greeted us. We would not have entered the village, but that our sick comrade, who could no longer sit on his horse, begged us to leave him there in some Bulgarian house. "Forgive me, brothers, for deserting you," he repeated at every step, though no one blamed him. We left him, as well as his brother Ghiorghi and another, at the house of a certain Andronik, who gave us a guide to Hain. It was broad daylight before we reached the village, and many peasants, both Turks and Bulgarians, met us on their way to work. To their inquiries we gave

various answers: to some we described ourselves as sportsmen, to others as engineers engaged on the construction of the new road through the pass, etc. So, weary and footsore, we entered the village. Our guide unfortunately had forgotten the voivode's house, and we wandered about the village for some minutes. At last we found it, and it was some time before our repeated knocks at the door attracted any attention; the leader of seven hundred warriors was still enjoying his morning sleep. Finally he appeared before us, half asleep, in his night garments.

"You've ruined me, by God!" was his welcome as he tried to shut the door in our faces. But we were too quick for him; the butt-ends of our guns forced the door open again, and we went in. "Get out of my house," he cried despairingly; "is this the time for the likes of you to come to the village?"

Our arrival spread dismay throughout the whole household, and Nikola's wife wept aloud. But the old gentleman soon recovered his wits and showed us into a small, dark closet, a kind of store-room for tobacco, garlic, and the like—not a very inviting resting-place, but quite good enough for us just then. We sank to the floor and dropped off to sleep at once, not having closed our eyes for two nights and a day. The voivode's wife unsaddled our horse and turned him out to grass in the garden, overgrown with weeds, behind the house. She also warned us to keep quiet and make no noise, having evidently received guests of a similar description before. Meanwhile her lord and master had gone out to take a turn in the village, to see if any suspicion had been aroused by our arrival.

About noon we woke up to find him rather more cheerful than before, with something in the way of

dinner ready for us. Fortunately we had not been noticed knocking at his door, and the general impression was that we had passed through the village and gone on elsewhere.

At our request, a meeting of the principal members of the Revolutionary Committee in the village was summoned that night, to discuss what was to be done. We still hoped that Tirnovo had risen in revolt, and Stamboloff proposed to the voivode that the latter should guide him to Tirnovo over the Balkan, while we were to remain concealed in some mountain cave where food might be brought to us from the village. The voivode, however, refused on the somewhat shallow pretext that the Turks would at once find out his departure and that their suspicions would be aroused.

After a lengthy discussion it was at last decided to give us a couple of guides, one of whom would conduct Stamboloff to Tirnovo while the other led us to some place of concealment, where we were to await his return. The second guide, who had gone home to get ready for his journey, soon came back with the disquieting news that his comrade, who was to conduct Stamboloff to Tirnovo, was nowhere to be found. Thus at every step we were confronted with difficulty; but we still hoped for the best. As for Stamboloff, he was ready to proceed not merely to Tirnovo, but to the next world, if it could serve our cause. Fatigue, danger, death—all these were nothing to him. He expressed his disgust, however, to the voivode, who had bragged so freely a few days before.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourselves," he said; "look at us; we're young and able to live far better and more comfortably than you grey-

haired impostors, and yet we've given up everything for the common good, and here we are wandering homeless and hungry."

It was impossible to remain any longer in the village, and about midnight we set out, in spite of the storm which had just begun to rage. Amid a shower of hail we left the house, Dédo Nikola assuring us that he would send another guide after us to conduct Stamboloff to Tirnovo. Of course, this was a mere pretext to send us away satisfied.

We had hardly left the house when we began to lose each other in the storm and darkness, and it was only thanks to the frequent flashes of lightning that we were able to get together again. So heavy was the rain that in a few minutes not only were our clothes soaked, but our guns were dripping and our gunpowder and paper cartridges reduced to pulp. Our path lay through the Turkish quarter, and the dogs barked round us furiously.

At every step could be heard cries of: "Where are you, you fellows?"—"Wait a bit, I've lost sight of you!"—"I can't see the rest of you!"

Our guide hereupon stopped, waited till we were all together, and sternly commanded us to be silent. "Do you know where we are?" he asked in a low voice; "we're all dead men if the Turks hear us! Here, I'll go on in front and whistle like a goat-herd does to the flock, and you follow behind." So we passed through the village and out into the fields.

A stream flows through the Hain Bogaz pass, and the path goes beside it. So narrow was the track that two people could not pass one another abreast. The stream was ten yards below the path, and the bank was almost perpendicular. One of our party

slipped and rolled right down the bank into the stream, where he lay unnoticed for several minutes, and it was only by his agonized cries that he was able to attract our attention. We hauled him up with great difficulty, but his revolver was lost.

That night the raging Balkan presented a terrific sight! From a distance one could hear the roar of the mountain torrents pouring down every gorge; now and then the howl of a wolf could be distinguished; the roll of the thunder from time to time drowned every other sound; and the occasional flashes of lightning gave us a glimpse of the steep rocks towering over the pass. So worn out were we that we begged our guide to let us rest for a short time in one of the mills near the pass, but the old man would not hear of reposing. "It doesn't take much to tire you out, it seems, for all you talk so big," was the only answer he vouchsafed us. He added that we had a three and a half hours' journey before us to reach the place where he meant to hide us. At his suggestion we each took hold of the skirts of the coat of the man in front of us; but this system was not altogether an improvement, for as soon as one of us slipped and fell, the whole party were rolling on the ground. Meanwhile, the torrent increased every moment in volume and force; we were obliged to ford it every now and again, and though it only came up to the knee, such was the violence of the current that it nearly carried us off our feet. After two hours' painful trudging through the pass, we turned off to the right of the Balkans in the direction of our future hiding-place. This new path was still worse, and indeed all signs of a track were soon lost.

We went along in silence, all but Stamboloff, who

infringed our guide's commands to be silent by keeping up a continual mutter.

"When a nation doesn't want to free itself, you can't force it to, can you?" he grumbled; "lies, boasts, empty promises, and nothing else; that's what one gets for wandering over these accursed mountains!"

"Just tell that blockhead, will you, to keep his mouth shut," the guide would whisper, turning round; "this isn't the time for reciting the Litany!"

After climbing a steep bank and reaching an open space over which high rocks towered on every side, our guide told us we might rest round the fallen trunk of a gigantic oak-tree. "There, lads, you can be at ease now. The devil himself couldn't find you here," he cried, and without stopping still a moment he clambered up the steep incline as nimbly as a squirrel.

Half dead with fatigue, we followed his example, and then on reaching the summit lay down, each close up against his neighbour for the sake of warmth, for now that the rain had stopped the cold was intense.

The guide managed to collect some dry wood and lit a fire, warning us at the same time not to fall asleep too near the flames. Twenty minutes later we were all wrapped in slumber except the weather-beaten old guide, who puffed complacently at his short chibouk. The next day, on waking, we were better able to examine our lair, which was an old brigand haunt known to but few in the neighbourhood. Here we waited the whole day in vain for the other guide who was to take Stamboloff on to Tirnovo. Instead of the seven hundred promised insurgents, not even one man could be found to act as guide for us!

Our hopes now began to give place to blank despair. It was clear that nothing could have happened at Tirnovo, or by this time something would have been heard of it. All our plans were doomed to failure, and it became necessary to devise some means of flight. Stamboloff went off to Tirnovo, accompanied for part of the way by our guide. His departure was another serious blow, and our anxiety was increased by the prolonged absence of our guide, without whom we were destined to perish miserably, for alone we could never have found our way from the rocks where we were perched. It was with inexpressible relief that we heard the old man coughing as he returned, a signal used among brigands to show that all was well. As a mark of gratitude we presented him with a gun and a knife.

Nothing was to be gained by remaining on the Balkan, so we decided to return to Hain in order to disguise ourselves as peasants and then to separate and each try his luck. After four hours' journey we arrived at a little wood, where the guide made us stop while he went to the village to fetch the clothes we wanted and also to bring Dédo Nikola, who as an old brigand chief could give us valuable advice. It began to rain again, and for two hours we waited, growing more anxious every minute. At last we heard old Nikola's voice reproaching us from a distance.

"Do you want to destroy the whole village, men, women, and children? Twice since you left the Turks have searched my house to try and find you."

He blamed us for not having waited a couple of days longer on the Balkan, where there was no danger. Now he was at a loss to know where to hide us. He assured us that it was impossible to

find a refuge for us in the village, nor could he even bring us bread, as the Turks kept a strict account of every loaf. That night he made us spend in a small copse an hour and a half below the village on the River Toundja, and on the next day he promised to come with a couple of companions and bring us the clothes we wanted. Ikonomoff and I only stood in need of shoes, as we still wore our railway porters' uniforms, which were a sufficient protection. Before we reached the copse a thousand hardships were to be undergone. The rain had quite obliterated all traces of the path; the Toundja, which we had to ford, was so swollen that we refused at first to attempt its passage, and though our guide eventually undertook to lead the way, even he crossed himself piously before venturing in, a sign that he was really frightened, as the Bulgarian peasant rarely crosses himself except when in imminent peril. We followed and finally reached the copse. Never shall I forget that night: it seemed never-ending. Not one of us closed his eyes until daybreak. We crouched close together, but there was no getting warm. Nor did the dawn bring us any consolation. The copse was but thinly wooded, and there were traces of paths all round it; it would be easy for any one passing to see us. Under these circumstances Ikonomoff and I determined to bid farewell to Dédo Nikola and to make the best of our way to Nova Zagora, the stationmaster there being a Bulgarian and a patriot in whom we had full confidence. If unable to hide us, he could at least send us by train to Adrianople or Constantinople. We trusted to our uniforms to overcome the difficulties which beset our path, for we had no passports, and at that time a passport was necessary to go from one village to another.

We offered to take one or two of our comrades with us, whom, if questioned, we proposed to represent as workmen in our employ, but they thought the plan too rash and declined to accompany us. Some declared their intention of returning to their native villages and of meeting there whatever fate might be in store for them. Others decided upon appealing to the protection of some foreign consul if they could make their way to Bourgas or Philippopolis, where alone such officials resided. So Ikonomoff and I bade farewell to the rest and started off.

After crossing the Toundja, which we were able to ford without much difficulty, we were at a loss to know in what direction to proceed. The sun had not appeared for several days, and we did not know the east from the west. We decided upon following the course of the stream. For about an hour we went on through fields ankle-deep in mud. Then we came upon a road, which we took, hoping to meet with some one to tell us our way. Soon after, through the mist we could see three or four figures advancing, which we could make out to be Turks. My companion wished to turn aside and avoid them, but I refused to do so, as this would be inviting their suspicion. We accordingly went on. They asked us who we were and where we were going. We explained that we were employed in making roads, and were on our way to Nova Zagora when our cart had broken down and we had lost our way. One of them then answered that we were not on the right track, as the road we were on led not to Nova Zagora, but to Sliven. At this one of his companions angrily upbraided him for telling us the way, pointing to the condition we were in as a proof that we were lying. However, the brass buttons of the railway company's

uniform protected us, and as soon as the Turks were out of sight we redoubled our pace. So bad was the weather that we met no one else until we reached the Turkish village of Chanakli; here we ventured to apply at a mill just outside the village for some food, having eaten nothing for twenty-four hours.

In the mill we found more than fifty peasants, both Turks and Bulgarians, who had brought corn to be ground. Our entry excited much curiosity, but we gave the same explanation as before. The Turks treated us very well, making cigarettes for us, as our hands were numbed by the wet and cold; this was no doubt partly due to the respect commanded by our uniforms, and also to the fact that we spoke only in Turkish and they did not know that we were Bulgarians. They could, however, give us no bread, it being Ramazan, during which month the Turks fast. But a young Bulgarian, who had been watching us quietly and whose attention was attracted more by the white hide sandals which we wore than by our peaked caps, beckoned to us to come outside. When we were safe from observation he produced from under his cloak two loaves, which he gave us, assuring us that our secret was safe; he only advised us to hurry off as soon as we could. We offered him money, but he generously refused to accept payment.

We followed his advice, and as soon as we reached the spurs of the Sredna Gora chain we left the road and took to the narrow brigand paths, with which Ikonomoff was well acquainted. We intended to spend the night at Korten, a small village not far from Nova Zagora, where Ikonomoff had some relatives, who he hoped would be able to supply us with shoes, for it was impossible for us to appear at the

railway station in our sandals. Before entering the village we tried to wash off some of the stains of travel at the village pump, but our efforts were not very successful.

At the house of this relative of Ikonomoff's we found only the old mother, who was spinning outside her door, and who at once recognized my companion. After inspecting him from head to foot she said, "Ghiorghi, I've only one thing to say to you: get out of my house before anything happens."

This was her welcome. In vain Ikonomoff assured her that we were railway servants; she again requested us to leave, adding that her house had been already destroyed once before, and that she knew well enough what our railway was.

I should add that the old lady was fully justified in what she said; she had had experience before now of Ikonomoff's dealings with brigands and insurgents, and as for her house having been destroyed, this was an allusion to the fact that her husband had been for the last fourteen years a prisoner at Adrianople for having harboured outlaws.

Her son now came up, and he received us rather more hospitably, and silenced his mother's objections. He hastily prepared something for us to eat, and went out to try and get us some shoes, so that we might be able to leave the same evening for Nova Zagora. Meanwhile the old woman continued to mutter between her teeth, lamenting our arrival and the results likely to follow it, so that it may be imagined with what appetite we ate. Our host eventually succeeded in finding a pair of ragged old shoes for each of us. We put them on hurriedly and started off, but thanks to the mud and to the fact that the shoes given us were con-

stantly coming off, it took us four hours to reach Nova Zagora, though the time usually taken from Korten is only about an hour. Fortunately we fell in with our future benefactor, the stationmaster, who was full of curiosity as to what had happened at Stara Zagora. As he had a friend with him we pretended to know nothing, but told him we would go on to the station and meet him there.

Though it was late when we reached the station, the employees whom we knew were still up and about. But we were afraid of arousing suspicion by appearing before them in our travel-worn condition, and especially with the uncouth old shoes which had been provided for us at Korten. Moreover, there were generally a couple of gendarmes on duty on the platform. So we thought it best to wait about in the goods siding until the arrival of the stationmaster. But when one is in trouble it never rains but it pours. Some women saw us from the window and at once cried out that suspicious-looking strangers were prowling about. In a moment two or three porters were after us. But they recognized us immediately as fellow-servants, and we were taken into the well-lighted waiting room, where the mud with which we were covered left its traces on the floor, but also concealed to some extent the condition of our boots. The zaptiés looked at us, but said nothing and smoked on, unmoved. At last the stationmaster returned and took us upstairs to his room, much to his wife's disgust, for we left behind us a succession of pools of mud all the way up the staircase.

As we had hoped, the stationmaster was willing to assist us. He procured for Ikonomoff a passage to Constantinople, on condition of his remaining

for nearly the whole voyage in the tank of the engine, up to his neck in water. As for me, I went first to Seimen, where I hoped to resume my former employment. This, however, was impossible; my friends all fled from me, and I saw that I was a marked man. I then tried Adrianople and was for some days concealed in the house of a railway labourer, where I was obliged to remain in bed the whole day, on pretence of being ill with fever. But it soon became too dangerous for me to stay here, and through the kindness of a railway guard I was enabled to reach Harmanli, where I had reason to believe that Ivanoff, the stationmaster, would help me. Nor was I deceived; when I presented myself to him a couple of hours later, he received me in a perfectly chivalrous manner: "If they come here to arrest you, we shan't make much ado about it. We'll each take our revolver and shoot the other dead, like real conspirators. And as for staying with me, you can be my guest, not for a few days, or weeks either, but for a whole year, if you choose," he said.

Meanwhile, from every side news came of the wholesale arrests which the Turks were making. At Stara Zagora the number of prisoners was variously stated at from a thousand to five thousand. Most of these were eventually released, but numbers of those who remained in prison were hanged the following spring, when the April rebellion broke out. The brothers Jékoff, whom we had left at Elkhovo, were destined to perish there. When their presence became known to the authorities—probably through treachery—they concealed themselves in a well, but upon the Turks surrounding their hiding-place Mikhail Jékoff first shot his brother dead and then

blew out his own brains, rather than fall into the hands of their enemies.

Such was the inglorious end of the Stara Zagora insurrection, not a shot being fired by the insurgents either in that town or in any other of the revolutionary centres, from which such ready boasts of resolution had been made previously.

As for myself, I remained for some days quite unconcealed at the station; it was enough for the others that I was the friend of the stationmaster. But one day news came that I was being sought after by the police. Hereupon Ivanoff bethought himself of the turn-table, by means of which locomotives are turned round, and next morning, before dawn, he took me thither. I was provided with a revolver, food, water, and books to read. But it was not altogether what we had expected. The darkness was impenetrable; the water came up to my knees, and the air was unendurable. I stayed there during the whole of that day, but it was impossible to stop there any longer. So next day a fresh expedient was tried, and I was snugly locked up in an empty goods wagon, such as is used for conveying grain. Hither I came early in the morning and remained there all day till long after dark. But one day, as luck would have it, my friend had gone down to the village without telling the warehouseman that wagon No. 1417 was engaged. Soon after some Greek merchants came up and asked for a grain wagon to load sesame. I heard the conversation: "This one won't do; the lock is broken"; "This one's axle gets overheated at once," and so on. But I went on reading quietly, knowing that the key was in Ivanoff's pocket, and

convinced that he had made it all right and that I should not be disturbed.

"No. 1417 will suit you, I think," said some one, and soon after I felt my carriage moving along to the goods shed, where wagons were loaded. I could not understand what had happened, and pictured to myself the surprise of the bystanders when the door was opened and I suddenly appeared. Fortunately the key was not forthcoming, and my boot tightly wedged in the bolt effectually prevented the door from being opened.

However, the danger and discomfort of my situation were obvious; moreover, it was reported that Ikonomoff and I had been drowned: and, besides, the station could not be searched without the stationmaster's permission and the compliance with a number of formalities which would give me time to escape. So Ivanoff decided to house me in a small room, without fire or lamp of any kind, where I remained wrapped up in a sack all day; my food was brought me by Ivanoff's trusted servant, except when the latter forgot or was drunk; and it was a happy night for me when the stationmaster's little dog consented to sleep inside my sack and keep me warm.

In this condition I remained from the end of October 1875 to the middle of March 1876. My only relaxation was to watch the daily train to Constantinople from the window of Ivanoff's room where I often saw the faces of fellow-conspirators, who were being taken handcuffed to Adrianople or to the capital. Sometimes these would contrive to exchange a word or two with Ivanoff, from whom I learned that I was the object of eager inquiry on the part of the authorities, most of the

prisoners having been asked if they knew me. But I remained unmolested, and in February I received a letter from Obrétenoff, my friend at Roustchouk, to the effect that a general rising was to take place early in spring, and that I was to try to make my way to Roumania.

CHAPTER IV

MY TOUR AS AN "APOSTLE"

ABOUT three weeks later, as I was one day entering Ivanoff's room as usual to watch the train from behind the window curtains, I was thunderstruck at seeing that the room was already occupied by a tall, unknown figure.

"Who are you?" I cried, starting back; the only reply the stranger made was to draw his revolver, but on my following his example he put down his weapon at once and stretched out his hand to greet me. "It's you, is it?" he said; "you frightened me at first."

My visitor was Voloff, whom I had met only once before, two years ago, at Roustchouk. He had been appointed by the Central Committee to act as chief of the agitation in Southern Bulgaria, and some weeks before had crossed the Danube in company with his assistant, Benkoffski. They had succeeded in reaching Philippopolis after many hairbreadth escapes, and Voloff had now come specially to fetch me. He was beside himself with enthusiasm for the success of the undertaking. He assured me that the days of the Turkish Empire were numbered; that the whole nation was ready to rise as one man; that in every village he was received like the Messiah; that five thousand were ready to revolt at the first signal, etc. I shared

his enthusiasm, and was eager to be up and doing. We agreed that we should go to Philippopolis by train together, I wearing a railway guard's cap; when we arrived, I was to run to the inn close to the station with an empty water-bottle in my hand, as if to fill it—an ordinary occurrence on the line—and from there I could slip out at the back unperceived by the police. The plan succeeded admirably; on arriving at Philippopolis Voloff gave up his ticket and showed his passport in the usual way. I ran with my bottle in my hand to the inn, asked them to fill it, slipped out, changed my cap for a fez which had been got ready for me, without attracting attention, and mingled with the crowd outside the station. We went separately, so as to escape notice, to the "Tirnovo" inn, where we were to have met Benkoffski, Voloff's fellow "apostle," but found only a note from him saying that he had been obliged to leave for Samakoff.

Next day Voloff, after having first made me swear on his revolver to be true to my country to the last moment of my life, appointed me in writing to be his assistant, with power to establish Revolutionary Sub-committees in the Fourth Revolutionary Division. This he signed as chief of the insurrection for Western Thrace. He gave me my instructions: these were to call a meeting in the villages and to draw a harrowing picture of the massacre of the Christians which the Turks had determined upon that spring; to form Committees, consisting of the village pope, schoolmaster, and principal residents, not exceeding ten in number. Each of these was to try to induce as many persons as possible of inferior standing to join the insurrection, but without re-

vealing to them anything save that they were to be ready to rise when they received the signal. Funds were to be raised for the purchase of arms, etc., for those who were too poor to buy them themselves; each member of the Committee was to prepare a certain quantity of ammunition, and the utmost precautions were to be taken against treachery. Further, I was to draw up statistics in each village which I visited, giving the number of the population, and stating how many of these were capable of taking an active part in the rebellion; the number of Turks in the village; topographical details of the position of each village; the number of cattle, the amount of grain, arms, and gunpowder. I was also to abstain from spirituous liquors, and to comply strictly with all Church fasts, so as not to offend the religious scruples of the peasants.

Early next morning, Voloff left for Karlovo, after providing me with a few grains of poison in case of emergency and with materials for sympathetic ink. I remained behind to wait in the house of Kotcho the cobbler until evening. It was a miserable cottage, comprising only one or two rooms, and I could not even remain in one of these for fear of being seen. I hid, therefore, in a kind of closet or store-room, with no windows, full of flour, barrels, tools, and so forth. Kotcho's faithful and devoted wife brought me his whole library, consisting of a few tattered copies of patriotic plays and popular stories, while Kotcho himself went off to his shop.

Here I spent the whole day. In the afternoon some of the women of the neighbourhood came and sat outside to gossip with my hostess, and I could hear every word they said. After discussing every topic that came into their heads, they began to talk

of the feeling of anxiety then so general among all classes of the population.

"Frightful things are going to happen, they say; all of us Christians are to be massacred, just as in old times," said one.

"God and the Blessed Virgin come to help us!" sighed another, as though the whole world would come to an end if she were killed; "let alone the men, whose business it is, but the very children stop out late every evening; you can see them sitting round as quiet as anything; they say the Bulgarian king is coming, and they learn songs to sing to him."

"Yes, and all day long they spend their time in playing at drilling and being soldiers," said another.

"What does Kotcho say about it all?" asked one of the visitors; "I know he has a lot to do with it."

"Kotcho attends to his shop; he has all he can do to get a living, poor man," answered his wife, who had had many a warning about opening her mouth too wide.

At sunset Kotcho came home, and led me by secret paths to a secluded spot beyond the Turkish cemetery. Here four or five others met us, and after some talk one of them went with me as guide to the village of Sotir, where I was already expected. I thought it prudent to change my name from Simeon to Dragan, in case anything happened.

The muezzin was calling to prayer as we entered Deirmendéré. My guide had to stop and wait for me every now and then, as I found the stony road very trying for my feet. In the village a few lights still showed in the wine-shops, and my guide suggested that we should each have a dram to refresh

ourselves; I consented, in spite of the oath I had taken, as an "apostle," to observe complete abstinence from wine and spirits. We went in and had our drink without attracting attention. Then we continued our journey. The path from Deirmendéré to Sotir follows the right bank of the Sotir and Tumrush rivulet. Not a sound was to be heard except the water rushing past and the beating of the saw-mills. My guide kept asking me various questions about the insurrection, so that we came without noticing it to the hill at the foot of which Sotir is situated. All was dark, and the village was given over to the care of its watchdogs, one or two of which had already detected our arrival. Suddenly we saw two men hiding behind a tree. I jumped aside and got out my revolver. My guide stammered out, "Who's there?"

"Oh, is that you, Atanas?" said one of the unknown; "come along, we've been waiting for you."

These men had been stationed outside the village to wait for us and lead us to the appointed meeting-place. They guided us through yards and back gardens, avoiding all the Turkish quarters. We were only four when we entered the village, but by the time we reached our destination at least twenty companions had joined us, and were leaping in and out of the gardens, barking lustily: I refer to the village dogs.

Inside the gateway of a garden in the darkness an unknown person took my hand and pressed it, and led me up the narrow stairs of a little white cottage. In the room which we entered I expected to find only the industrious housewife sitting by the fire spinning or mending the clothes of her children, who would probably be peacefully asleep in their cots in

the corners of the room. What was my surprise to find at least ten men, young and old, who rose, one and all, as I came in, and saluted me respectfully. I was much moved as I passed between them and greeted them in a voice which trembled with excitement. A man forgets fatigue, sufferings, everything, when he sees that the cause to which he has devoted himself is understood and appreciated by others. The respectful deference paid me by these poor working people, who stared at me as if I was really an "apostle," gave me strength and courage, and made me think lightly of danger or the gallows.

Before each of them was a tray, pan, or dish full of gunpowder, bullets, or paper, of which they were all busily making cartridges. In one corner of the room about ten guns were leaning against the wall, and by the fire stood a regular gunsmith's work-table, where our host, Rangel, was mending damaged guns. In a word, the work was being carried on busily. If in the village of Sotir, where no "apostle" had ever yet set foot, the preparations were so far advanced, it may be easily imagined what was going on in the larger and purely Bulgarian villages, where Benkoffski and Voloff had remained for several days.

Naturally, it was my duty to pour oil on the fire, *i.e.*, I depicted the future of the Bulgarian nation, if it failed to rise on the appointed day, in such gloomy colours, that that very evening several of those present decided to borrow money at Philippopolis, at no matter how high an interest, in order to provide themselves with better weapons.

"I shouldn't wonder if you and the likes of you, Master Dragan, knew the Russian Emperor well enough," asked one of those present, after a couple of hours' conversation, in the course of which it had

become evident that we were all patriotic Bulgarians.

"What a question!—why, of course he does," affirmed another, as though he were in the habit of conversing with His Imperial Majesty.

All night long these simple people remained listening to me. But we were unable to form a local Committee that night, because the village pope and some others were away. In the morning the pope came. He belonged to that class of the clergy who pay more attention to their guns and pistols than to their reading-desks. With his aid and that of the village schoolmaster the Committee was formed successfully, and all the members took the oath readily.

That day I spent at Sotir. There was a gunpowder factory there, just above the river, which I wished to see. The pope assured me that I could show myself freely in the village, as townspeople came there every day from Philippopolis on business. The so-called factory consisted merely of a couple of stone-built sheds, in one of which the saltpetre was pounded, and in the other the gunpowder was mixed. The pounding was done by water-mills; the rest of the work was carried out by hand. All the workmen, who were also the owners, were Turks. The profits were shared among them. All they had to pay for was the saltpetre, and the gunpowder cost them five or six piastres an oke; they sold it at twenty to thirty piastres the oke. Some years before there had been a serious accident, due to carelessness, in which five or six men lost their lives. The victims were buried secretly, and the matter was carefully hushed up for fear the Government should get to hear of it and close the factory. For this reason the

Turks looked suspiciously at me, and asked the pope if I was not a spy of the authorities. The factory did an enormous amount of business that spring. All the villages round laid in a large stock for the insurrection. At first the Turks supplied genuine stuff, but later on they began to suspect something and sold a worthless article.

The position of the village of Sotir is quite enchanting. Right through the village flows the clear mountain stream of Dedovo, whose gentle murmur lulls the villagers to sleep after their day's toil. In the middle of the village there is a spring whose clear, cold water is famous throughout the whole country-side. For eight years, up to about twenty-five years ago, the villagers were obliged to carry two barrels of this water every day to the Government House at Philippopolis. This duty was performed by all the Bulgarian villagers in turn. This was supportable in summer, but in the bitter winter of those regions, when the barrel froze before you could fill it, these poor rayas were obliged to load the barrels on their mules and trudge all the way to Philippopolis with the precious water.

"As soon as we appeared in the courtyard of the Konak," one of the peasants told me, "a whole swarm of effendis rushed out, each holding a jug, jar, or bottle and surrounded the mule in haste to get their share."

A certain Hair-ed-din Pasha, said to have been a reformer, bears the credit of having put a stop to this practice. One day he was looking out of the window when the mule arrived in the courtyard of the Government House and the officials surrounded it. He suspected that the barrels con-

tained wine or raki, and asked for an explanation. "It's only water from the Balkans, Your Excellency," answered his submissive subordinates. But the Pasha sent for the Bulgarian, and after hearing his account, gave him a hundred paras (6d.) and told him never to show his face again at the Konak.

At dusk I left Sotir and, accompanied by the pope, made my way to the village of Izvor; the schoolmaster of that village had been recommended to me at Philippopolis as intelligent and serviceable. He received me very politely, and the pope went back to Sotir. In the evening we held in the schoolhouse a meeting of the principal villagers, to whom I explained the state of affairs and the reason why I had come. The younger men were excited by my words, but the older men were doubtful and inclined to be pessimistic. When, therefore, I suggested forming a Committee and taking the oath much diversity of opinion was expressed.

"All those villages," I said, "which do not rise on the day fixed will remain exposed to the attack of the Turks, and, what is more, we shall consider them as enemies just as much as the Turks."

"We're ready to do everything you like," said the older men, "but we won't take the oath, because if the Turks should get to hear of it, they won't leave one stone of our cottages standing."

There was nothing to be done, and the meeting dispersed. I spent the night at the schoolmaster's, and I could see that he was very anxious and uncomfortable. I did not think it likely that he would betray me to the Turks, but I was also very far from being at my ease. He may possibly have

suspected me of being a Turkish spy, pretending to be a revolutionary emissary. Neither of us could sleep that night, and both rejoiced when the morning came. But the schoolmaster was as anxious as ever, and I could almost see his lips forming the words "Get out." To make matters worse, the guide who was to take me to the village of Dedovo did not appear. We sent for him—he was not at home. His wife said that he had gone out early in the morning to cut wood in the forest—in other words, he would not act as my guide. What was to be done? To go alone to Dedovo was out of the question, for a variety of reasons: I should never find my way thither, I knew no one in the place, and it was impossible to find another guide. There was no help for it: I pressed the cold hand of my unwilling host and made my way back to Sotir, there to try and find some other guide to lead me over the Rupchuz Balkan. On the way I met a Turk or two, but they did not stop to question me, and if they had done so, my answer was ready, either that I was looking for a situation as schoolmaster or else that I had business in the villages.

Early in the morning I arrived at Sotir and found Pope Todor still asleep. When he first saw me at such an hour he was afraid, but after I had explained how matters stood he promised to guide me himself halfway to Dedovo, to a place where there was a certain Grigor Argiroff, a charcoal-burner, who belonged to Dedovo and was patriotic and trustworthy.

Before noon we started along the rocky paths, the pope on his mule and I in apostolic fashion—*i.e.*, on foot. The going was very difficult; my

boots, which I had not consented to exchange for the country sandals, had quite lost their shape and were worn out.

About halfway between the two villages, in a lonely spot by the river, we found the aforesaid Grigor and his brother collecting stumps for charcoal. After the usual greetings, the pope spoke out frankly.

"It's no use beating about the bush," he said: "my friend here isn't a teacher, nor a merchant, but an apostle, sent by Uncle Ivan (*i.e.*, Russia) to come and tell us what we're to do. So you take him to your village this evening and talk things over with him, just as we've done at Sotir."

As soon as he had finished, the pope struck his heels into the sides of his mule, and soon disappeared on the path leading to his village. The charcoal-burners looked at me with doubt and hesitation, but did not dare to ask any questions. The contrast between these peasants, in their rough mountaineers' clothes and shaggy kalpaks, and my city dress and dark-red fez was so great as to render confidential intercourse at first impossible, and the farther I penetrated into the Rhodope the more convinced I became of the need of adopting the local costume. Meanwhile, Grigor could not leave his charcoal, already kindled, and besides, it would have been highly imprudent for me to enter the village before dark. So I had to wait there for three or four hours: spring though it was, at that altitude it was still very cold, and my clothes were no protection against the mountain climate. So from time to time Grigor brought me a little burning charcoal at which to warm myself.

At nightfall we made our way down the steep rocks and valleys to the village. It was decided that we should first go to the garden of a certain Dimo, the oldest schoolmaster in the Rupchuz and the first to teach the Bulgarian language, who would tell us if we should call a meeting there, or if it would be safe for me to enter the village. After he had examined my credentials, he decided that I could come into the village, but only after dark. So Grigor and I remained out there in the cold while Dimo went to the village to arrange our meeting-place and to send guides to bring me there. It was two hours after sunset when these came and took us to the appointed place. Here I found from ten to fifteen peasants, all armed with rifles, from sixty-year old men to youths of twenty, with their pope, awaiting my arrival. These people seemed more independent, as there were no Turks in their village. Once more my courage and my hopes were revived by the patriotic spirit they displayed. It was impossible not to be touched by the sight of these grey-bearded mountaineers ready to risk all they possessed in the cause of liberty. Every word I said of the necessity of being ready when the Turks should make their threatened attack fell on willing ears. "We're all ready to die for Christ's faith," said an old man as he clutched his rifle. Soon after, all standing and bare-headed, with the pope in front holding the Gospels in his hand, they repeated the solemn oath which I recited to them, afterwards kissing the Gospels and the barrel of my revolver. It was then decided to send out to buy gunpowder and bullets. Then, after the official part of the meeting, so to speak, was

ended, the turn came for a little familiar conversation.

"See here, Dragan, you don't tell us anything about yourself, but I should like to ask you where you come from, and how long you've been at this job," said one of the confederates.

"What are you in such a hurry about, like a calf running after its mother?" interrupted another, looking, however, inquisitively at my face to see what answer I should give. It was highly natural that these people, who had placed themselves so unreservedly in my hands, and whose lives practically depended on me, should wish to know who I was.

"I'm a Bulgarian, nothing more," was my reply; "if we live to see the triumph of our flag we shall know all about each other."

"There, what did I tell you?" said another, thus making it clear that they had arranged beforehand to ask where I came from.

"You must forgive us, master; we're peasants, and a bit of Pomaks, too, if you like. We just say whatever comes into our heads without thinking of the consequences," said another.

"As for learning now, Master Dragan, you know something of it, I'll be bound, if the truth was known," remarked one of the inquisitive villagers. This was as much as to say that I was the most learned man in the world.

"I expect he can at least write his name," ventured another, in the hope doubtless of inducing me to speak.

"Let him stop for a week or two with our teacher, so as to learn a bit," suggested a peasant in the corner.

"Ah, fifteen years, I shouldn't wonder, he's spent over his schooling already," said the pope.

About midnight the meeting broke up. The men took a second oath before they went home not to say a word about what they had heard and seen that night, not even to their wives. "Wives, ay? nice things to talk about to women!" I heard a grey-bearded peasant mutter to his neighbour.

Next day I started for Boikovo, accompanied by Grigor, who left his wife, his children, his half-burnt charcoal and everything else to follow me. Boikovo lies about an hour's journey to the south of Dedovo. We struck straight across the mountains as being less dangerous and shorter. About dawn we reached the village, and I waited at the schoolhouse until the master came. He advised me to stay at the school until a meeting could be got together, as it would be difficult to find any other house. A separate room was found for me, where I was to remain the whole day. The teacher brought me a rug and a little fire in a pan, and went about his business. There I waited the whole day. I had asked the teacher to give me something to read, but the only book he could provide was a tattered copy of a science manual, the outside pages of which were missing. "I expect the children have used those to light the fire with," said he, and went out quite quietly.

Two hours after sunset the schoolhouse was full of peasants, both young and old, with the village priest among them. All my proposals were accepted by all with alacrity, the pope being the only one to show any opposition. But when it came to taking the oath, he and some of the older and more well-to-do refused categorically, on the ground that the consequences would be most serious.

"Do you know," they asked, "that Tumrush is only a few yards away? What are we to say to Ahmed Aga, when he hears that the people of Boikovo have taken an oath against the State?"

Dissensions at once arose among the old men and the younger ones, the latter saying that they were not afraid of Ahmed Aga. I rose to my feet and made a sign to Grigor to be going, as I had not come to listen to their quarrels. In face of the threatening attitude of the younger men the older ones retired from the field. The young men then begged me to go on, and eventually I managed more or less to form a Committee. But fresh trouble arose when I tried to take down a few statistical notices of the village, as in duty bound; the peasants began to grumble, and I saw that they were afraid that if I was taken prisoner by the Turks their names, or at least that of their village, would be found in my notes and they would get into trouble.

It became necessary that I should do something to impress these simple people. Accordingly I wrote down on paper a few lines in chemical ink, and asked them if they could read the writing.

"How can we, when there's nothing on the paper, just a blank sheet?" they said, evidently curious to see what I would do.

"Look at it carefully," I said, "and don't say afterwards that I played a trick on you."

I then passed my finger, which I had previously dipped in the requisite liquid, over the paper, and the lines which I had written stood out bright and clear. Their astonishment knew no bounds.

"Well, that settles it; I think we can shut up now, you fellows. To think that the likes of us should take it on ourselves to talk to such as him!"

The chemical ink had done what my eloquence had failed to do, and I could leave the rest of the work to my assistant Grigor, who was perfectly competent to deal with it. "What are you fellows thinking of, I should like to know," he said triumphantly; "do you suppose I should have left my work and everything to follow him if I didn't know what I was about?"

I had intended to go next to the Bulgarian villages round Boikovo, but they told me that there was nothing to be done there, as there were Turkish villages all round them. Besides that, the road would be very difficult on account of the deep snow. I gave out, however, that I was going there, but made up my mind that I would first visit the villages at the foot of the Balkan round Stanimaka. It seemed to me best to keep my destination a secret from them, for fear of any mishap. So about midnight, as soon as the moon rose, I left Boikovo. The moment we got out of sight of the villagers, who came out to see us off, we changed our direction. I then asked my guide, Grigor, to take me to his shed in the forest so that we might rest a little. When we got there, there was no one in the place, but on the other hand there was plenty of rye-straw, which warms one wonderfully. I lay down to sleep for a couple of hours, while Grigor went to the village to get me something to eat, and also a suit of clothes such as the local peasants wear. About noon he came back with all that was necessary, and towards afternoon, when most of the labourers in the fields and vineyards had given up work for the day, Grigor and I started for Yavrovo. The path was very steep and rocky, and more than once we—or rather I—had to stop and rest. It was dark before we reached our

destination, and we made straight for the pope's house. As luck would have it we found there four or five Turks sitting in the outer room.

"Well, I never! there are some hardy Bulgarians in this world to venture out in weather such as this," said one of them, who had come out to wash his hands and saw us as we came up.

"Thank goodness, in your days, aga, the likes of us have nothing to be afraid of," I answered, knowing that such flattery to a Turk is sweeter than honey.

To my surprise the priest, when we went into his room, was reading the Greek newspaper *Neologos*, and I began to be afraid that we might have been misinformed, and that his reverence was imbued with Greek ideas; so I winked to Grigor as a sign not to be too outspoken. To the question where his companion was from, Grigor answered that I was from Ahi Chelebi, and was engaged in buying goat-skins. "What does it say in the paper, Father?" I asked; "round our way people say dreadful things are going to happen."

"Ah, so they say about here, but Lord only knows," was his answer, as would have been that of anybody else just then.

I began to be in some doubt how to begin, but looking round the room I saw a small bookcase, fairly well filled, a very rare sight in the house of a village pope, also a copy of the *Courrier d'Orient*, besides Bulgarian papers. The pope also seemed to be nervous, and to cast stealthy glances at me. I made up my mind to address him openly. The pope's satisfaction knew no bounds.

"The very first sight of you was enough for me, but I couldn't be quite sure," said the old pope; "I

could see you didn't look like a man who was buying goatskins, and then I didn't know what to think."

So saying, he burst out into the next room, where the Turks were sitting, and exclaimed, "Excuse me, gentlemen agas, for leaving you, but you see I have some business with these guests who have just come—not that I would leave you to attend to them."

"Oh, that's all right, pope; you just attend to your affairs, we're quite happy," said one of the Turks, pouring himself out another glass of raki.

"Thank the Lord He has made them such fools!" exclaimed the pope, as he returned to the room, "for if they had only a little sense, with their tyranny and oppression there would be no living with them." Then we went into matters, while the Turks sang their favourite songs over their raki in the next room.

The pope gladly undertook to form a secret Committee, but would not hear of calling a meeting of the villagers, as he said, whether sincerely or not, that many would refuse, and that there was danger of treason. He promised to talk each man over separately, to try and induce them to provide themselves with the necessary weapons, and then later on, if he saw that they took kindly to the idea, he would let me know.

By his advice I gave up the intention of visiting the other villages near Stanimaka, and he recommended me to the pope at Karagatch. We started at dawn, without any precaution, as the pope had assured me that in my new costume I might meet Midhat Pasha himself without arousing his suspicions. The distance from Yavrovo to Karagatch is about two hours and a half. On the way we met and passed the

time of day with several Pomaks. From one word to another the talk came to politics. Many of them had sons and brothers in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to them, the Christian insurgents were far inferior to the Turks both in courage and in military equipment, but there was a Montenegrin girl who flew up to the sky and from there hurled down stones and other missiles on the heads of the Turkish army. "Terrible damage she's done to our lads, that cursed girl," said one of them. These Pomaks, from what they said, were quite in despair at the state of the country, and were ready to submit to any Christian State which should come to occupy it.

In the afternoon we reached Karagatch. We asked the way to the pope's house, and sat down to wait for him in his yard, as he was out. Several people passed by and saw us, but no one paid any attention. At last the pope came; he was a young man, from twenty-five to twenty-seven years old, and with progressive ideas, as was evident from his cleanly appearance and attire, rare in a village pope at that time. In reply to his questions, we explained to him that we were travellers, and asked if he could give us something to eat, and if he had any goatskins to sell. Here again, after some hesitation, I explained my mission to the pope, who was overjoyed.

"Do you think," he exclaimed, "when I saw you sitting outside there that I didn't at once understand what your business was? It was not from mere hospitality that I asked you to come in; I've long been expecting such visitors."

Not long after four or five villagers were collected in the pope's room. "We've been straining our eyes these weeks past, looking for the likes of you, sir,"

said one of them. "We'd heard that they'd been to other villages, but never a one has been here, just as if we weren't Bulgarians."

They assured me that there were many more national people in the village, but that they happened to be away just at that moment. A Committee was formed, and on the same day I left for Markovo. It was Sunday, and when we got to the village school at Markovo we found no one there: as usual, we sat down and waited. Some of the school-children came after a little and asked us if we had anything to sell. Suddenly there were cries of "Run, run! here's the teacher!" and soon after a tall young man, dressed in European clothes in the height of the latest Philippopolis fashion, appeared, humming a tune. He went into the school, twisted his moustache before one of the windows, which served him as a looking-glass, and came out again with a Bulgarian newspaper, which he read aloud. I and Grigor pretended to listen with the closest attention, and he noticed this with satisfaction, and asked us if we could read and if we understood what he was saying.

"We can make shift to follow, Mr. Teacher, but as for reading ourselves, it's a bit beyond us. You see, our parents couldn't afford to let us have much schooling," I replied, with the deference and humility suitable to our attire and appearance.

The teacher read us out a few more articles, and then fetched from the inner room an old newspaper, dated 1870, which he gave us to read. Grigor took one end of it and I took the other, and we both began to stumble aloud over a different column; any one listening must have derived a curious idea of the contents of the paper. The service in church now came to an end, and one by one the

principal people in the village came into the school, which served the purpose of a club or debating room for the discussion of current topics. Amongst others the pope, Stoyan, came in; he was a friend of Grigor, who at once addressed him, saying that he was the person we had come to see, and that I was his cousin and also belonged to the village of Dedovo. The pope asked us to wait while he attended to some Church business, and evidently had no suspicion of our motive in coming to see him. But the others, who had gradually seated themselves on the school-benches round a table, while we stood awkwardly by the door, began to inquire who the strangers were. Pope Stoyan set their doubts at rest by explaining that we came from the neighbouring village. An interminable discussion on politics and the war in Bosnia then arose, distinguished only by the extreme naïveté and simplicity of the ideas expressed. Soon the village parliament turned its attention to local affairs, and as these had no attraction for us we went out and waited for the pope at the house of his brother, one Ilia.

Hour after hour passed by, and our patience began to be exhausted. At last, at nine o'clock Turkish time, *i.e.*, three hours before sunset, he came, accompanied by an unknown youth in fashionable European clothes, and with a flower in his button-hole. With mingled curiosity and suspicion I gazed at this figure, whom Pope Stoyan introduced as the schoolmaster of Brestovitsa and a friend of his. Being in a hurry to visit Brestovitsa myself, and having grounds from what I had heard said about the pope to trust him, I hastened to explain quite frankly who I was and what was my mission. My hearers stared at me dumbfounded.

"This is the first I've heard of such things; it's all new to me," answered the pope.

"Yes, I know," said I, "that's why I've come to tell you all about it, so that you can't say afterwards you didn't know that the nation was preparing to rise against its oppressors."

Silence ensued; the pope kept his eyes fixed to the ground, the young schoolmaster stared superciliously at my ragged peasant garments, and the master of the house waited to hear what the pope would say, quite ready to agree with whatever it should be.

"Do you know any one in Philippopolis?" finally asked Pope Stoyan.

"I know all the true Nationalists there, and I'm ready to give you their names, as soon as you've taken the oath of fidelity on the Cross and on my revolver," said I.

"Yes; but do you know any of the Gueshoffs, Daneffs, Grueffs, and other well-to-do people?" asked the schoolmaster, who evidently measured people's importance by their wealth, though he himself had probably never even set eyes on these idols of his.

I replied that I had never been engaged in commerce, and consequently had had no dealings with such folk, with whom it would be absurd to think of entering into plots and conspiracies.

"Well, then, how do you propose to prove to us that you are what you represent yourself to be?" said Pope Ilia, with growing courage.

"By my written documents and my word of honour as a Bulgarian," was my answer.

"Written documents may have been got from the Grand Vizier, for all we know, and as for your word of honour, a spy can give that too," said

the pope; "we are loyal subjects of the Sultan, we are."

"Yes," said the schoolmaster, "and as such it is our duty to hand you over to the police."

Grigor opened his eyes: the words spoken by these two had awakened in his mind ideas which had never occurred to him during our many days of wandering over mountain and valley.

"It's a sin, Father Pope; don't say such things, the man's all right; I know them as brought him to me and they told me I could trust him; seven days we've been together all the time, and I know well enough who he is and what his job is."

"You've been deceived, my poor fellow," was the reply.

As an "apostle" I could not allow myself to be treated thus. From under my tattered cloak I drew my revolver. "Do you see this?" I said; "there are six bullets in it: one I keep for myself and five for such friends as you. Whoever stirs from his place is a dead man!"

I then drew their attention to my emaciated countenance and frame, and to my feet swollen with walking, and asked them if they thought these were the characteristics of spies of the Sultan.

"That's all very well, but what the nation requires is education and nothing more," said the teacher.

There was no need to prolong the conversation: they knew as well as I did that I was no spy, but they were ashamed to confess that they were comfortably off and were afraid to risk their means of livelihood, so they found it more convenient to bring this charge against me. As for betraying me to the Turkish authorities, there was little fear of that—it was far less trouble for them to let me take myself off

again to the place from which I had come; and so with some confidence I urged them either to give me up to the Turks or else to recognize me as an apostle of liberty. But poor Grigor was utterly discomfited: he looked from one to the other, unable to make up his mind whom to believe, and when I rose to go, and asked the master of the house for a piece of dry bread before I started on my journey, his eyes filled with tears.

"See here, Dragan, lad, have pity on me. I've a wife and children. I've done you no harm. We've eaten bread and salt together," he moaned beseechingly.

"If we live we shall meet again," was my sole reply, as I went out without a word of farewell to the priest and the schoolmaster.

Quite disheartened by this rebuff, I made my way back alone and sorrowful to Philippopolis. Here, being a stranger to the place, I was unable to find my way to the "Tirnovo" inn, and did not dare to ask any of the few passers-by, for it was already late. So, as I happened to pass an inn, I thought I would spend the night there. There was a motley collection of guests in the miserable kitchen which did duty as dining-room, coffee-room, and general sleeping apartment combined. To allay suspicion I ordered a good supply of wine, but this did not prevent mine host from asking me, as he brought my order, for my passport. Now, I had on me a passport, but it was not in my name, and was moreover not in order, being viséd for Roustchouk. Consequently, the moment it came into the hands of the police (to whom the innkeeper was bound to take the passports of all his customers the first thing in the morning) I should get into trouble.

"Passport?" I said, "I don't need one—I'm from close by, from Boikovo."

"What's that?" asked the cook, who had heard what I said while he stood cleaning his saucepans; "you from Boikovo? That cock won't fight. I'm from there myself, and know every man, woman, and child in the place."

I tried to brazen it out, mentioning the names of various people I had met during my visit there, but it was no use; the cook remained firm.

"I'm very sorry," I said, "I've made a mistake; I'm from Seimen, not Boikovo."

"There's a thickhead for you! doesn't even know the name of his own village!" said the innkeeper; "now, then, out with your passport," for Seimen was in another district.

There was no help for it, and I gave him the passport. However, I managed to get up early next morning before any one was stirring, and, after abstracting my passport from the drawer where they were kept without anybody being the wiser, I slipped out unperceived. In the daylight I succeeded in finding the "Tirnovo" inn.

CHAPTER V

FIRST MEETING WITH BENKOFFSKI

AFTER spending two or three days here, I was again sent off on a similar mission to certain other villages, and returning to Philippopolis about the middle of April, found a message there ordering me to lose no time in making my way to Panaghiourishté, where a meeting of all the "apostles" was to be held to discuss the advisability of proclaiming the insurrection as soon as possible, as there were apprehensions of treachery. Meanwhile all agitation in the villages was stopped. I was to proceed to the village of Tsartsovo, near Philippopolis, and wait at the inn there for a cart which was to take me on to Panaghiourishté.

At this inn I remained for several hours. At last the cart drove up; besides the driver it contained two persons unknown to me, who seemed in the highest spirits; had it not been for their age—they were from thirty-five to forty years old—I should have thought they were on their way to be married. They looked round the inn, evidently searching for some one; the innkeeper (who was a fellow-conspirator) winked at me and made a sign to the other two, and we all drove off together.

The driver was an old acquaintance, being the secret courier between Panaghiourishté and Philippopolis; the others were prominent insurgents. They

lifted aside the straw in the bottom of the cart and showed me thirty guns which they had bought at Philippopolis.

We drove on all night, the weather being magnificent, and the only subject of conversation was the forthcoming outbreak; of its success no one had the slightest doubt. On the way we stopped in a deserted part of the road and tested the newly purchased guns, but the results were not satisfactory, and it was even said that inferior weapons had been specially imported for our benefit.

On my arrival, one of the chief organizers of the revolt came to see me, and I learnt that neither of the "apostles" was at Panaghiourishté. Voloff had not made his appearance for some time, and Benkoffski was visiting the neighbouring villages; he was, however, expected back soon, and had left word meanwhile that I was to await his return. I noticed that my informant rarely spoke of Voloff, who was the chief agitator, but always of Benkoffski, though the latter's was only a secondary rôle. He replied to my observation that they regarded Benkoffski as the principal agent in the matter, which somewhat surprised me, but I said no more. Later on news was brought to me that Benkoffski was to arrive that night at Banya, a village distant about an hour and a half's journey to the south-west. A guide was supplied to me to conduct me thither, and we started at once. On the way my guide, who was one of the couriers, told me that he had just returned from a mission to Tirnovo, the First Revolutionary Division, where he assured me that the preparations were far more advanced than in our district.

As we were making our way along the path which follows the mountain stream leading to Banya, we

were challenged by a stranger who suddenly appeared from behind a tree and levelled his musket at us. Following the established brigand custom we fell flat on our faces, and the only answer given by us was the click of our revolvers as we cocked them. However, my guide suspected that we might have fallen in with the Revolutionary sentinels, and to a second inquiry he gave a reply which proved satisfactory.

Panaghiourishté and the surrounding villages of Metchka, Poibrené, Moukhovo, Petritch, etc., had long since ceased to form part *de facto* of the Ottoman Empire. All the functions of the police, the tax-gatherers, the law courts and the municipality had been for some time practically taken over by the Revolutionary Committee. I will maintain that at that time a traveller could journey in the Fourth District, especially in its western portions, with greater ease and security on the strength of a safe-conduct from one of the Revolutionary Committees than with any number of passports granted by the Government of his Ottoman Majesty.

The police section of the Panaghiourishté Committee had organized a system of patrols and sentinels, whose duties were to observe any one entering or leaving the village, and to meet the secret couriers from other Revolutionary centres. Their orders were to stop any one who had not the proper password, unless they could satisfy themselves that they were harmless.

About midnight, as we were nearing Banya, we were again stopped by sentries. This time, in reply to the question: "Who goes there?" we answered at once, "Your brother Bulgarians from Panaghiourishté." At once three hardy mountaineers rushed

out to meet us, the barrels of their guns glistening in the moonlight. They overwhelmed us with questions, and sighed with satisfaction when we assured them that the day was now close at hand. "It wasn't our turn to keep guard to-night," said one of the three, "but what are we to do at home? One can't either work or sleep these times."

We had been informed at Panaghiourishté that the house to which I was to be taken was that of Pope Grouyou, the village priest, and accordingly we went thither. The door was opened, not as I expected by a burly insurgent, but by the pope's daughter, a young girl of eighteen. I was told that ever since the beginning of the agitation this girl had given up all her usual occupations to assist in making cartridges and embroidering the banner. We found neither the pope nor Benkoffski at home, but were told they were expected to return almost immediately. Not having slept for several days, I began to doze by the fire, and eventually fell asleep. I have a recollection of the good wife carefully covering me up with a rug, muttering to herself, "Poor fellow! he's dripping with perspiration; we mustn't let him catch cold."

How long I slept or what happened round me, I cannot say. Suddenly I felt some one shaking me roughly, and heard myself addressed unceremoniously: "Get up and let's see who you are, who make so free in other people's houses."

Half-dazed, I got up, and was surprised to see a tall stranger, dressed in a kind of military costume, armed with two revolvers and a dagger, and with a knapsack and field-glass slung from his shoulders. Moreover, looming behind him I could see ten or fifteen armed figures who were apparently keeping

guard. "Who are you—can't you speak?" the stranger repeated.

"I'm a workman, sir," I stammered, "looking out for a job."

"Don't frighten the lad; he's come specially to meet you," said the pope's wife.

"Oh! it's you, is it?—then you *may* sit down," said the stranger. Then, turning round, "To your posts on guard round the house, my lads! Some coffee, old lady, and see that my horse gets his feed!"

While Benkoffski gave his orders, I was able to steal a glance at him. He was from twenty-eight to thirty years of age, tall and slender, very upright, with a long neck and rather thin face, a long reddish moustache, and light grey eyes with a most piercing look.

After throwing his waterproof cloak on the ground—the only adjustment of his toilet which suggested itself to him, for he always kept his heavy revolvers, dagger, and cartridge-belt on him—he turned to me with the words: "Well, then, let's see where you've been and what you've been doing." So saying, he finished his coffee and immediately ordered another cup. I gave him a full account of all I had done, and showed him the statistics I had collected. Somehow mention was made of my credentials signed by Voloff, and Benkoffski asked at once to see the letter.

"These people can't be made to understand," he grumbled, "that it isn't with grammars and spelling-books that our country can be freed!" and, crumpling up my precious letter, which was to me as the apple of my eye, he threw it into the fire. "Haven't been educated in Europe, have you?" he asked with a suspicious look at me.

He explained that letters of appointment from "apostles" were unnecessary, because only the Committee of "apostles" had the right to appoint. This was not the case, however, nor was it for that reason that he burnt my letter. He was annoyed because Voloff, in signing the letter, had described himself as "Chief Agitator for Western Thrace," a title which Benkoffski arrogated to himself. I could soon see that the relations between these brother "apostles," who had crossed the frozen Danube together not to dispute about precedence but to give their lives for their country, were much strained, and when Benkoffski found that I had not been educated in Europe he began to launch out openly against Voloff, and to accuse him of failing to carry out his duties as an "apostle."

But in discussing the preparations for the revolt Benkoffski showed his mastery of every detail of the subject. Once he opened his mouth there was no stopping him; he seemed to be reading it all out of a book. "I shan't be satisfied," he said, "until I see five thousand flintlocks in front of me" (this was his favourite expression). From time to time he complained that his throat was sore from constant speaking and that he had not slept ten hours during the preceding ten days: he swallowed cup after cup of black coffee, saying it was the only thing which kept him alive.

It was settled that I should go back to Panaghiourishté and from thence to Pirdop, where I was to try and found a Committee, because none of the "apostles" had been there yet. Benkoffski was to go to Vetren and thence to return to Panaghiourishté, where the general meeting was to be summoned. He was afraid that some treachery might cause the

revolt to break out prematurely before we were fully ready, and for this reason he was anxious to hurry on our preparations. Voloff was at that time in the villages round Giopsa, and he had also been warned to make haste.

I left Benkoffski at the house of Pope Grouyou and went with my guide towards Panaghiourishté. "At all events," was Benkoffski's farewell greeting, "I'm glad you haven't been to Europe and haven't got your head full of these grammars and notes of interrogation, which only hinder our cause."

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

CHAPTER VI

AT THE BANYA MONASTERY

THE cocks were crowing for the second time and the moon was saluting the Stara Planina from the majestic peaks of the historical Dospat as we climbed the slopes of the Sredna Gora, and sat down to rest and smoke a cigarette by the fountain on the way. "We mustn't stop too long, or we shan't get there before dawn," said my guide, who could tell the time by the stars. Just as day broke we reached Panaghiourishté, quite worn out by want of sleep. My journey to Pirdop was put off for that day, because people who knew the district well all told me that there was little hope of doing any good work there. I should not have been much influenced by their dissuasion, but next day I met Father Kiril, the "igoumen" of the monastery of Kalougerovo, who advised me to go to the villages round the monastery, where he had failed to do anything and where my authority as an "apostle" might be more efficacious. So I preferred to follow his advice and gave up Pirdop, where success seemed problematical. That night I slept at Panaghiourishté in the "metocha," or rest-house, belonging to the monastery; even in this sacred building I was ushered into a room full of people busily making cartridges.

After we had gone in Father Kiril vanished for

some minutes; when he came back he was wearing his sword slung round his waist, two pistols were suspended from his shoulders, his priest's tall hat was adorned with a gilt lion, his hair was flowing down his back, and a leather water-bottle hung from his belt; with his cross in his hand he looked the complete Revolutionary priest. Behind him came all the domestic servants of the rest-house. This was done to convince me that all his preparations were made. "My sandals," he said, "and a few other things of mine are up at the monastery."

On the next day we had to start off again on the road to Banya, where the path to the Kalougerovo monastery branches off; the distance from Panaghiourishtê is nearly five hours. We left an hour before dawn, but Father Kiril assured me that there was nothing to fear, as he had often travelled on that road with people of the same description as myself, and that any one who met us would take me for one of the monastery servants. Before we set out a Bulgarian peasant came in to confess; Father Kiril called him into the room where I was sitting and proceeded to carry out his clerical functions in my presence.

"How many Turks are you going to kill?" was the first question addressed to his penitent. "How many cartridges have you got ready? If you haven't got at least three hundred there's no absolution for you. Is your dagger well oiled? have you got a gun and pistols? is your biscuit baked?"

The peasant was a little taken aback by these questions, not so much because of their import as from the fact of their being put during confession. "Don't you forget, my lad, unless you've got all

these things ready I shan't give you absolution." "That's the way I've been confessing them for the last two months," he whispered to me.

On the way we met many peasants, Moslems, of the class known as Yuruks. Most of these knew Pope Kiril, and stopped to exchange a few words. One of them, who was going our way, accompanied us for some distance. He soon came out with the all-absorbing question, "What's the news?" which at that time occupied every one to the exclusion of all others, whether Turk or Bulgarian.

"I really don't know what's coming to us all, Papas Effendi," he said; "we dig, and plough, and sow just the same as ever, but somehow our strength seems all gone. Can't make it out. Some say the Russians are coming, others, the Servians, others again, the Lord knows who. It's hard on us poor folk—we're all of a flutter, like. If you go to the town (Pazardjik), it's just the same there—the same sort of uneasiness, and the agas all whispering together; up to some game, I expect."

Our Turkish fellow-traveller parted company from us at one of the Turkish hamlets, and Pope Kiril and I went on towards the monastery, which we did not reach until past midday. There we found a visitor, I think from Pazardjik, a young village schoolmaster, well known to Father Kiril. His first question was what was the news from Panaghiourishté: he paid no attention to me, as my peasant costume led him to believe that I was not likely to be interested in such matters.

"The time has come, pope; you must be our Bulgarian Pope Jarko" (this was a pope said to be at the head of the revolt in the Herzegovina), "you must lead your flock like a good shepherd,"

the excited youth went on, turning his back on me. It was clear he had never yet met a Revolutionary "apostle," and he spoke in this manner because, like nearly every other Bulgarian at that time, he was filled with Revolutionary and patriotic enthusiasm. "You must, Father, you must! there's no help for it! The time couldn't be more favourable," he continued. "I can't sleep for thinking of it! I'm anxious to be at them!"

Father Kiril winked at me and then got up and shut the door. The young schoolmaster was far from suspecting anything; he walked up and down the room humming some patriotic song, with his string of beads in his hand.

"Young man," I said, drawing my revolver, "come here to the table and testify by your oath and signature to the fiery words you have just spoken! Before you stands a Bulgarian 'apostle.'" Meanwhile Father Kiril had donned his vestments and began to chant, "Cross thyself, servant of the Lord!"

The young man's countenance fell: he seemed quite paralysed; he forgot his courage, his ideas, Pope Jarko, and everything else. "Stop a bit—that wasn't exactly what I meant—I'm not quite ready—I must think it all over first!" and his lower lip quivered like a leaf in the wind. Before he could say another word we administered the oath to this admirer of Pope Jarko. After that he no longer walked up and down the room, but sat disconsolate in a corner, evidently afraid lest we should subject him to some fresh torture.

Just then an armed horseman passed in through the high gates of the monastery, and asked to see the igoumen at once. This was the cavass, or

some similar official, of the Bulgarian community of Pazardjik, and he was the bearer of a letter from the bishop's *locum tenens* there, ordering Pope Kiril to come forthwith with the cavass. This unexpected summons alarmed Pope Kiril: "There's something up," he said, as he mounted his weary horse, which had not yet been taken to the stable. Before he left I asked him to explain to some trusty person in the monastery that I was not really a workman on the look-out for a job, as I had given out, for I foresaw that without some such recommendation from him there would be trouble. But he said it was not necessary, as he would be back next day. The schoolmaster took advantage of this favourable diversion to clear out quietly, and I saw him rapidly disappearing down the steep path. He was not likely to betray what he had heard; at least, so Father Kiril asserted. Soon afterwards the pope and the cavass went away, and they had hardly gone when some of the labourers attached to the monastery came up and began to ply me with questions as to who I was and where I came from.

The old monastery, a huge mediæval building, since destroyed by the merciless hand of the bashi-bozouk during the revolt, contained two other monks besides the igoumen. One of these was a certain Sophroni, an old man with a scanty beard and almost in rags, who was generally believed to be very rich; the other was one Haralambi, from the neighbouring village, a hermit who never came out of his cell save at dead of night, when he said his prayers on the bare stones in the courtyard. He was more like a scare-crow than a human being. They told me that he never washed himself, changed his clothes once a year, and fled from the society of his fellows. When

the bashi-bozouks set fire to the monastery the unfortunate Brother Haralambi was burnt alive in his cell.

The building still preserved traces of former splendour. It had been for years the resort in former days of the trade-guilds of Pazardjik for the banquets and festivals given on the installation of a new guild-master or on other festive occasions, as rough inscriptions on the walls still attested. The little church of the monastery was almost underground. In the courtyard, besides the usual poultry and pigeons, at least fifty peacocks strutted about, adding, with their bright plumage, a gay note to the dismal surroundings.

That evening, as a labourer seeking work—my ostensible condition—I was given a place to sleep in, not with the servants, which would have been too great an honour, but with certain far lower creatures of the Almighty. I messed with the swineherd, an old man of upwards of sixty-five, who for fifteen years had rendered this pious duty to St. Nicolas, the patron of the monastery, for no other recompense except his food and a few pounds of tobacco every year. But his gratitude for the hospitality he received was boundless, though he never had enough to eat, and was clad in nothing but a few rough goatskins. The only thing he had to complain of was the merciless inroads made on the forest by charcoal-burners and woodcutters, who destroyed the forest and deprived his beloved flock of their food. "Poor creatures!" he sighed; "it breaks my heart to see them running about all day, trying to find something to eat, and coming home empty in the evening."

Besides him there were two goatherds, more like

orang-outangs than men, who spoke of nothing but their flocks. The room was filthy, never having been swept, in all probability, since the building of the monastery, and the food they gave us was the leavings of the other inmates of the house, a few beans, onions, and leeks stewed in a pot which never seemed to be cleaned.

Next day I was sent for early by Brother Sophroni. "You're from Bratsigovo, I hear," he said; "they're all first-rate carpenters there; just you take this wood and cut it up into stakes for the vines."

I said I knew nothing of carpentering. "Well, then, what trade do you know?"

"None," was my reply, hoping that Father Kiril would be back before the evening, because if I had admitted that I was a shepherd I should have been set to look after the goats.

"But at least you can dig in the vineyard, can't you? This is a monastery, you know; it's a sin to come and eat our bread and do nothing for it," grumbled the pope.

There was no help for it: off I went with my spade on my shoulder, with all the labourers of the village. As I knew nothing of the work, I was set to dig trenches in the vineyard.

"You don't call that work, do you, Haralambi" (my assumed name), "my lad?—that's just play. All you have to do is just to make little holes in the ground, so as to give you something to do. Remember, St. Nicolas will reward you."

Little holes they might be; but after a couple of hours of this unaccustomed work my hands were covered with great blisters and my back seemed broken in two. Every minute I stopped to look at the sun to see if the hour of evening and of my

deliverance was not close at hand. The other labourers, brawny peasants and lusty red-cheeked girls, sang at their work and joked all the time. Soon my awkwardness and lack of skill attracted their attention and I became a butt for their jests.

"Well, I never! there are some good-for-nothing people in this world, and no mistake," said a peasant as he spat on his hands to get a firmer grip of his spade.

"Haven't you got any bones in your body, mate?" asked another, who was digging a row with a girl, probably his sweetheart, before whom he wished to show off his wit.

"Don't you tease my sweetheart; we're going to be married one of these days," giggled an elderly maiden, the shape of whose back reminded one of a cobbler's work-table.

The whole company roared with laughter, and I dug away, with the perspiration streaming from me. I shall never forget that day, and for all this I had to thank Pope Kiril for not telling before he went out who I was. I did not dare to reveal myself to Pope Sophroni; so, next day, instead of going to work in the fields I remained hidden in the forest, and when I came home in the evening there was a general outcry against me for my laziness. However, they did give me some food.

The next day was Sunday, and some candidates for the priesthood, who had come to spend the day at the monastery, had collected together a few of the servants and were reading aloud to them. I could not resist the temptation of testing the knowledge of one of these candidates, who, I felt sure, did not understand one word of the book he had before him. So, as the word "Germany" recurred frequently in

what he was reading, I said, with all due deference and simplicity, "Might I make so bold, Father, as to ask you what this 'ere Germany means?"

Before the future pastor there seemed to yawn an unfathomable abyss. He stopped reading and gazed up at the ceiling, whither the eyes of all of his audience followed his, as though Germany was to be found there.

"Well—you see—Germany just means people—like you and me. But, to tell the truth, the real meaning of it is—brigands," the candidate at last broke out, and then went on reading louder than before.

"Lord have mercy on us! What, brigands, eh? Just like our Circassians?" said one of the listeners.

"Ah, yes! to be sure; that's just it," replied the candidate, without raising his head.

The monastery subscribed to the Bulgarian newspaper *Danube*, published under the auspices of the Turkish Government. I had the curiosity to look at the paper, and found a bundle of fifty or sixty numbers, all of the same issue. It appeared that the paper was sent only once a year, in a parcel for the whole twelvemonth, and this mistake had been made at the office of the paper without being noticed. Who shall say, after this, that the Imperial Ottoman Government did not do its best for the dissemination of useful and instructive literature?

All this time Father Kiril did not return. I heard at the monastery of an exploit of his which gave a very good idea of this head of a religious institution. One of the servants had a damaged leg and could only just limp about. On my inquiring the cause, he answered that one night the father wanted to

send him out on some particularly dangerous errand. The man had refused, objecting to risk his life.

"Off you go, or it'll be the worse for you!" was his master's order. "No, I won't; you can kill me, if you like," the servant obstinately rejoined. Pope Kiril took down his gun from the wall and pointed it at the recalcitrant servant. "Either you go this minute or I let fly at you," he said. The man persisted, thinking he was not in earnest. Father Kiril pressed the trigger, and his victim rolled writhing on the ground. "Water, water, for the love of heaven!" he groaned, while the pope looked complacently at the smoke floating round his hair and beard.

"Why don't you complain of him to the police?" I asked.

"What, me? Oh Lord, no! I wouldn't do that for anything. He's one of us, you see; if he shoots at me one day, he's all right the next," was the reply.

However, as I refused to work they left off giving me food. I had noticed one day in a store-room a great pile of pork sausages, put there to dry. I waited for a favourable opportunity, and in the evening, when every one was at church, I slipped in and crammed them into my pockets, waistband, and every part of my clothing which would hold them. It so happened that at that very moment there was a certain Petko Radeff, from Pazardjik, in hiding at the monastery; he had killed a Turk some months before, and was being sought for high and low by the police. There he was, hidden in an inner closet; he saw everything I did, and reported it all that same evening to Pope Sophroni. "There must be something wrong about a man who eats pork

sausages during the great fast," was their conclusion. Petko, for whom the scaffold stood ready at Pazardjik, began to fear that I was a Turkish spy come to find out if he was there. I noticed Pope Sophroni watching me suspiciously during the rest of my stay; but of course I knew nothing of all this at the time. However, on the first day of the revolt, when the insurgents from Kalougerovo joined us, I observed a young man whom I had never seen before in my life spurring his horse up to me, and apparently anxious to embrace me. "Were the sausages good?" he cried, and roared with laughter. This was Petko Radeff, who followed in our ranks.

To return to the monastery. Late that night, when all was still, I heard the plaintive sounds of a woman's lamentations. It was the igoumen's old mother weeping for her son. All the servants had gathered round her and were asking her what was the matter.

"Oh, my son, my darling son!" was her only reply; "why wouldn't you listen to me? What made you take to these wicked ways? Who's to help you now?"

This was all she would say. It was quite enough for me, and I made up my mind to take measures for my own safety, for if Father Kiril was arrested it was clear that the monastery would be searched.

After this incident I was unable to sleep: I felt I must get out of the monastery at any cost before the police arrived. But to do so was impossible until the great gates were opened at daybreak, and so I lay awake counting the minutes. At last the darkness began to give place to day, and I heard the heavy bolts of the gates drawn back. I managed to slip out unperceived by any of the monastery people, and

made the best of my way through the forest to Panaghiourishté. I did not halt for a moment until I came to the River Topolnitsa, which I examined anxiously for some minutes before venturing to ford it. But I succeeded in crossing it, though wet to the skin, and went on past the Turkish hamlets. From one of these the sounds of drums and cymbals proceeded, and I saw collected there crowds of people, mostly on horseback. My curiosity impelled me to inquire, and I found it was a Turkish wedding, which afforded an excellent opportunity for getting a good meal and for passing on my way unmolested.

The agas were busily engaged with horseraces, to the sound of their beloved drums. Those whom age and social position entitled to this privilege were seated on rugs, and, with their long chibouks in their hands, watched the races and awarded the prizes to the winners. As a mere spectator, the nonchalant superiority and careless hospitality of the Turks not only disdained to harbour any suspicions of me, but, so to speak, made me free of the festivities. Thus, I was at once called upon to walk the tired horses up and down : I hastened to do so with slavish submissiveness, and, taking a couple of horses from some one, I rubbed them down in approved style, whistled as a groom does, and acted the humble raya in a manner that set all doubts at rest. I was given a substantial meal at the hospitable table and washed it down with a couple of glasses of sweet sherbet, the Turkish substitute for wine ; after that I went on my way satisfied and grateful. An old Turk, who puffed at his pipe, smoked a cigarette, and took snuff, one after the other, tried to engage me as his shepherd, but we were unable to come to terms, because I insisted on his supplying me with shoes and tobacco,

besides the annual wage which he was prepared to give.

On the top of the mountain between that village and Banya I lost my way on account of a thick spring mist. But a Turkish drover whom I came upon trying to collect his cattle together showed me the right path, and I reached Panaghiourishté just after dark. I went straight to the inn, where I was known, and which at that hour was practically empty, and sat down to a modest repast. Just then a young man, about twenty-five years of age, came and planted himself right in front of me, as if he was anxious to count every mouthful I took. Without even saying good evening—which my costume no doubt made him think a superfluous civility—he began asking me all manner of questions: were we ploughing in the villages just now? what sort of a price was wheat fetching? was there much work going on at present? and so on. He was clearly one of "us," and was leading gradually up to the rebellion. Finally, he began, very indirectly, to come to business. Did I hear of terrible things going to happen in our villages? Did the Turks treat us cruelly? and so on. I looked at him askance once or twice, and gave him the briefest answers possible. The landlord said: "Can't you let the poor man eat his supper in peace?" but he persisted. Suddenly the truth struck him; he started from his seat as if a wasp had stung him, whispered a word or two to the landlord, and then made for the door. Just as he reached it he turned back and begged my pardon. "Pray forgive me, sir; I've made a fool of myself," he said.

Neither Voloff nor Benkoffski had returned to Panaghiourishté, and I waited there for them. But

the preparations went on just as well without them and everybody was busy. So as to account for my presence in the village, I was supposed to have been engaged by the innkeeper to dig a new cellar for his wine and raki, but the work was a mere blind, and not a stern reality, as at the monastery.

Easter came, and I do not suppose that the great feast was ever celebrated with such joy and enthusiasm either before or since. Order was kept in the little town by the local constables, all Bulgarians; they marched proudly through the streets, with their arms shining like mirrors, their moustaches waxed, and their kalpaks cocked jauntily on one side; young and old flocked to the doors to see them as they passed, for all knew that, though ostensibly guardians of public order, they were to a man members of the Revolutionary Committee. On the day of the festival a great dance took place on the village green by the church, after service. The Turkish officials and police looked on, together with the Bulgarian notables of the place, every one of whom was on the Committee. After a display by professional wrestlers the dance began, to the music of gipsy pipers. So great was the enthusiasm that these gipsies imagined it was inspired by their music, and they blew away at their pipes with such vigour that they seemed about to burst. But it was neither religious fervour nor musical enjoyment which inspired the youth of Panaghiourishté of both sexes: it was the thought that the appointed day was close at hand, and that the struggle with the tyrant of five centuries would soon begin.

"Suppose," I asked one of my comrades as we watched the dance, "suppose that at this very moment we were to hear a couple of pistol-shots, and

that some one was to gallop up with the news that Philippopolis or some other town has risen in revolt. What would all the people here do?"

"Do? Why, first of all, we should polish off those sitting yonder under the tree, and then we should proclaim ourselves independent of Turkey henceforth," was my friend's reply. By "those under the tree" he meant the Turkish officials and zaptiés. They sat there quite peacefully, and no one took any notice of them.

CHAPTER VII

THE OBORISHTÉ COMMISSION

ON April 15 Benkoffski came back. The more our preparations went on, the more arrogant and exacting he became. To be received by him in audience was a special privilege. He criticized everybody and everything: some he accused of indecision, others of covetousness, others of lukewarmness in their patriotism and devotion to the cause. One night, as he was coming into the town with some companions, he happened to meet some of the Turkish police, and as he was not known to them there was talk of arresting him. His friends managed to allay the suspicions of the police, but he was so enraged by the incident that he violently upbraided the Panaghiourishté Committee for allowing him to be stopped, as though the Turkish police were under the orders of the Committee, and insisted that the policeman who had been most active in detaining him should be condemned to death.

Meanwhile, though the preparations in our district, the Fourth, were progressing as rapidly and as favourably as possible, we received from the other Revolutionary districts such glowing accounts as put us in the shade—though in the event it turned out that only in our district was there the slightest attempt at a rising. All this still further excited Benkoffski's anger; he was furious at our supposed

backwardness, and blamed Voloff and his grammar for it all. His relations with the local Committee became strained, owing to his obvious attempts to become a dictator, and he thought it advisable to summon as his assistant Ghiorghi Ikonomoff, my old comrade in the Stara Zagora fiasco, who like himself hated educated people. But I must admit that these dissensions were comparatively unimportant, and that Benkoffski's abilities were as great as his energy was indefatigable. I have seen him pacing up and down the room for hours at a stretch, dictating two or three letters on different subjects simultaneously and remembering every word he had said—as the luckless scribe soon found out when the letter was read aloud before being signed and sent off: if there was the slightest alteration it would be torn up and another letter would have to be written. He was especially severe if the secretary was a man of some education.

By this time the organization of our revolt was complete; all the officers were appointed, and drill took place at night, as I have explained already. But it was not only the "apostles" and commissaries and officers who were busy. Almost every one gave such aid as he could—every trade was laid under contribution. I believe that with the exception of Daoud Onbashi, the police corporal, every soul in Panaghiourishté knew that there was a Committee in the place and that a rebellion was being organized, though all the actual details were known only to the initiated. Even Daoud Onbashi suspected something, though he was not intelligent enough to understand what it was all about. He was kept quiet by the two Bulgarian "vekils," or Government agents, who were not only in the plot but were actually members of the Committee. These facts

and a hundred others show the tendency of the time. The great flag to be unfurled on the appointed day by our division had been prepared by Raina, Pope Ghiorghi's daughter, whose subsequent fate was such a terrible one. On this flag the Committee had spent from fifteen to twenty pounds; it was made of silk-velvet, green on one side and red on the other, with a gold-embroidered lion in the middle and the words "Liberty or Death." Voloff had ordered of the nuns of Karlovo another flag, of green satin. Gunpowder, bullets, arms, and other munitions were being rapidly procured. The gunpowder, as I have explained, was obtained from Turks, who brought it in flour-sacks. These pious Moslems had sworn to preserve secrecy, and they kept their oath; but towards the end they supplied bad powder which was worthless.

In view of the advanced stage of the preparations in the other Revolutionary districts, as alleged in the reports received from there, we of the Fourth Division, whose condition appeared to be so far behindhand, began to be alarmed at our backwardness and to fear that the other districts would rise before we were in a condition to do so. It was decided accordingly to summon a general meeting at Panaghiourishté, to be attended by delegates from every village in our district where a Committee had been established, for the purpose of deciding whether the time had come for the Bulgarian nation to rise against the Turkish Government, and whether such a rising was the only means of liberating Bulgaria from the tyrant's yoke. Circulars were hastily sent out to all the villages, instructing them how the delegates were to be elected, and stating that the meeting was to be held at Panaghiourishté on April

25th; as soon as the letters were ready they were conveyed to their destinations by secret couriers. It was further explained that the delegates were to come to Panaghiourishté one by one, so as not to attract attention, and were moreover to have some ostensible motive for coming, to avoid awakening the suspicions of Daoud Onbashi. In a few days the delegates began to arrive; it was amusing to see one come with a sack of goatskins on his back, another with a bale or two of home-spun serge, another would have his head tied up and would explain that he had come to see the dentist, and so forth. Many of them, either of their own free will or because they were summoned to do so, went to pay their respects to Benkoffski.

Two such delegates, men of some education, and far above the standing of mere peasants, came one day, and the voivode asked them if in their village they had a secret police force.

"Why, yes, sir, we have one, sure enough," they replied, as they stood in front of him like travellers at the police-station waiting to have their passports viséd.

"And what are the principal duties of your secret police?" continued Benkoffski, seeing at once that they had replied at random and only to please him.

"Slow and sure, we shall learn it all in time," was the answer.

"What do you mean?" roared Benkoffski; "I repeat, what are the chief duties of your secret police?"

The two visitors looked at one another as if each wished to accuse the other. "Forgive us, sir," faltered one of them, "I'm afraid we don't quite know what you mean by secret police."

It was characteristic of Benkoffski to try and browbeat his visitors, whether rich or poor, learned or simple. I remember one day two rich members of the butchers' guild coming to see him, to bring a money contribution to the Committee funds, a purpose of which he was fully aware. They entered the room and remained standing by the door. "What have you come here for?" asked Benkoffski, pacing up and down, armed as usual with two revolvers and a Persian dagger.

"Oh, just to have the pleasure of seeing you, sir," was the reply of one of the butchers, uttered in perfect sincerity.

"To see me, indeed! Do you think I am an ornament? Well, look at me: here I am," was his dictatorial reply as he stood in front of them with folded arms. They lost countenance; involuntarily they wrung their hands, and were at a loss for a suitable answer to this Bulgarian déré-bey.

"Well, sir, we'd heard that you'd come to free the nation, and that you want every Bulgarian to shoulder a rifle; we're not fit for that sort of thing, so we've just come to ask you, like, if we couldn't help in the cause by just giving some money towards it," at last one of the butchers mustered up courage to say.

"Oh, that's all, is it?" replied Benkoffski, pretending that he knew nothing of the matter. "You might have gone straight to the cashier about a trifle like that; but, as you *are* here, how much are you going to give?"

"Well, you know, sir, business is very bad just now," began the other butcher, plucking up a little spirit.

"I didn't ask you what you had for dinner

yesterday," roared Benkoffski, stamping his foot; "tell me at once how much you mean to give."

The butchers' contribution amounted to a hundred pounds, not to mention a couple of riding-horses, which one of them had promised to give the Committee as well. "Bear in mind, gentlemen," added Benkoffski, "that we haven't come here to ask you to subscribe to the building of a church or the repair of a monastery, but to liberate the nation. Whatever you give now will be returned to you three- and fourfold from the treasury of the future Bulgarian kingdom."

Meanwhile the two visitors, well-to-do tradesmen, who were accustomed to be treated with some deference even by the Turks, were kept standing the whole time, while Benkoffski hovered over them like an eagle about to pounce. He was no less overbearing even with the initiated: he upbraided our chief secretary for presuming to undress before going to bed, saying that such effeminate habits were a disgrace for an insurgent; he even reprimanded one of the "apostles" for using the words "please" and "thank you" in addressing the master of the house in which he was staying. "If you use such expressions to these people, they will think nothing of calling you a vagabond and ne'er-do-well to-day, and perhaps of turning you out of their village to-morrow. There is a time for such compliments, but it hasn't come yet," he said.

Voloff and another "apostle," both of whom had been properly educated, were the principal butts of his sarcasm; he called them grammarians and philosophers, and said quite openly that he was sure they would bring disaster on the cause,

for, according to him, grammar and gunpowder had nothing in common, and philosophers were good only for words and not for deeds. To show still further his contempt for grammar and education, he would affect to throw aside all letters written in educated style, and would leave them to be dealt with by the secretaries; but those from unlettered peasants, scrawled in rough Church-Slavonic characters, he would treasure, reading them out aloud and praising their simplicity and clearness. This he did especially if Voloff or any other person of education was present. There was no help for it—little by little he became the recognized head of the insurrection, though in theory Voloff was the principal "apostle" and Benkoffski was only his assistant. That was all very well so long as they had not crossed over into Bulgaria from Giurgevo, but as soon as the respective abilities and capacities of the men came into play, practice soon showed which was the better of the two.

I once asked Voloff why he let Benkoffski usurp his authority when, as the delegate charged with organizing the Fourth Division, it was he who was responsible for everything, both to the Committee and in the eyes of the nation. "I gave up to him of my own free will, because he's more capable than I am," was Voloff's simple reply. And it really was so: with all his erudition Voloff had far less influence with the peasants. Nature had not gifted him with that fiery eloquence which is indispensable for swaying the masses; he could not express himself freely in the common peasant dialect, he could not threaten and command; after a couple of sentences he stammered and blushed like a girl. He was born to be a student or a

schoolmaster, and only his zeal and devotion to the cause had made a Revolutionary of him. Thus Benkoffski usurped his rights, taking advantage of his mild and yielding character. But, strong as he was, Benkoffski did not have it all his own way, and more than once Voloff got the better of him.

Meanwhile the deputies began to arrive in ever-increasing numbers, until even Daoud Onbashi began to smell a rat. "I can't make it out," he remarked to some one; "all these years I've lived here I never remember to have seen so many strangers in the place." As yet, however, there was no danger: measures were taken in time, and many of the delegates were sent to lodge in the neighbouring villages until the appointed day. But matters came to a crisis when Voloff arrived, in Turkish costume, with a gipsy shawl round his head, riding on a horse with a docked tail, and accompanied by some fifteen delegates, mostly popes from the villages round Giopsa. They made straight for the inn; this was enough for the innkeeper, who lost his head, and, leaving them in possession, he went off to Benkoffski and warned him of the danger, adding that the onbashi was quite likely to go at once to Pazardjik and report to his chiefs there. Benkoffski took advantage of this opportunity to administer a severe rebuke to Voloff, and it was decided that all those delegates who had arrived up to now should go and take up their quarters in the forest round Metchka for the present, as it was clearly out of the question to hold the meeting at Panaghiourishté; and the Committee at Metchka was requested to choose some place of concealment in the forest where we might meet. Many of the delegates were

rejected by Benkoffski because their credentials were not in order. This he did chiefly in the case of townspeople, because they were more or less educated. "We can overlook many irregularities in the case of peasants," he said, "but not for you townspeople." As a result, Karlovo was not represented at the meeting.

Next day, the secret post from Metchka brought a letter to the effect that the Committee had chosen a spot called Oborishté, and that all the delegates were already collected there. Late on the night of April 26th Benkoffski left Panaghiourishté with the representatives of that town, I being of the company. With us was the delegate from Banya, Pope Grouyou, already known to my readers, and five or six men on horseback, ready for anything. Outside the town fifteen or twenty horsemen joined our cortège. We all bristled with weapons, but Pope Grouyou fairly surpassed us all. He wore a long sword, which had come down from the time of Sultan Selim, and which from time to time he brandished round his head, making his horse curvet forwards and backwards as he did so. Two enormous flintlock pistols, with pans as large as an old-fashioned Turkish watch, hung from his shoulders. In his leather waistbelt were stuck powder-flasks, ramrods, bullet-pouches and other articles. Over all this he wore a red chasuble, and between his pistols and his ramrod was stuck his wooden lectern. He was a jovial soul, this Pope Grouyou, and did not allow his clerical character to restrain the freedom of his expressions. Devoted body and soul to the Revolutionary cause, he had no particular liking for the educated, a circumstance which endeared him all the more to Benkoffski. From the very first appearance of the

"apostles" in the Fourth Division he had definitely abandoned his pastoral duties, and spent his whole time accompanying Benkoffski in his wanderings as an agitator, and I am convinced that his cassock contributed greatly to the success of the propaganda.

"When Bulgaria is freed we shall appoint you Bulgarian Exarch in the insurgent district, with the title of Pope Grouyou of Banya, Second Bulgarian Exarch," Benkoffski used to say to him in jest.

"Two suns can't shine in one heaven," the pope would reply: adding, as an afterthought, "whoever made a priest of me, let his sins be on his head" (this imprecation was couched in somewhat stronger terms, but I have toned it down). His favourite occupation was swearing-in neophytes in the Revolutionary cause, and he had been known to interrupt his communion service for this purpose, calling up the candidate to the altar and administering the oath to him then and there while the communicants waited.

Until we were well outside Panaghiourishté we all kept silence, but as soon as we were in the forest the whole company burst out into song. Even Benkoffski was induced by the sight of the green forest and the exhilarating surroundings to forget his dignity and his squabbles about precedence: the very horses seemed to take pleasure in the luxuriant foliage and the verdant turf. According to the guides, who had been sent to show us the way, Oborishté could be reached only by one or two brigand-paths, which that night were carefully guarded by armed sentinels stationed at different points. As soon as we left the regular path and plunged into the thick of the forest, the challenge rang out from some unknown person, "Who goes there?" We gave the countersign, and

twenty-five or thirty armed men appeared and presented arms to the voivode. Then they returned to their posts. This happened twice more further on. Soon there was no track at all, and we made our way along the high bank of a stream whose murmuring we could hear from far below. Here we were obliged to dismount, as the going was too rough for riding. The trees were very thick, and there were besides many fallen trunks whose branches extended for a considerable distance and blocked our way. The moonbeams could not pierce through the dense foliage, and we could hardly see a couple of steps in front of us. But after a little a faint light was visible in the distance; many thought we had arrived at our goal, but the guides explained that we had still half an hour to go, and that the light we saw came from the lanterns hung on trees at specially dangerous places. And this was no unnecessary precaution, for at one such place one of the delegates fell, fracturing his skull so badly that he died next day.

After passing the first lantern there was a succession of lights, which gave the impression of a street in a town, with this difference, that instead of houses it was lined with gigantic oaks and beeches. Here we were met by a number of deputies, who cheered us loudly. Even at such a moment Benkoffski could not restrain his dictatorial tone, and replied to their salutations by upbraiding them for their boisterousness, reminding them that we were still in the Sultan's dominions. But they replied that if all the Sultans who had ever sat on the throne of Osman were there, they could not find us. At last we reached the place. "That's Oborishté, down there in the valley, where the fires are burning," said one of the guides. We looked down and saw a sight so

enchanting that we could not help gazing at it for some minutes. Through the spreading beeches from an apparently bottomless pit, otherwise in complete darkness, a circle of light appeared, as if some great subterranean building was on fire, and we could only see the flames. "The light you see comes from the fires and lanterns lighted down there," said the guides. As we drew nearer, we could hear the buzz of conversation long before we could actually see the assembled delegates. One of the guides hastened forward to announce our arrival, and when at last we were there we found the assemblage drawn up in rows on either side of our path, and Benkoffski gave the order to advance two abreast. This was Pope Grouyou's opportunity: he quickly donned his cassock, fired off his two pistols, let his hair stream down his back, and, cross in hand, spurred his horse on towards Oborishté, where at least a hundred excited insurgents awaited us. Thundering cheers burst forth and several guns were fired as Pope Grouyou with his cross made his appearance. It was a glorious moment. But enthusiasm did not prevent Benkoffski from blaming this waste of ammunition and warning the insurgents that a time was coming when bullets would be worth a sovereign apiece. And all this took place in the Turkish time, when spies were more numerous than ever all over the country, and the utmost watchfulness was being exercised by the Government!

Some of my readers may wish to know the precise whereabouts of Oborishté; I regret to say that I have never been able to visit it a second time, owing to lack of pecuniary means. It is situated in the Sredna Gora, about two and a half hours' journey to the north-west of Panaghiourishté. Round it are the

villages of Metchka, Poibrené, and Petritch. The place itself is deep down in a valley, between two great rocks, and on the left-hand side a pure mountain stream flows by. It resembled a large threshing-ground, and might have been dug out specially for our purpose. Dense forest surrounds it on every side, chiefly beech-trees. The only things visible from it are the opposite rocks and just a strip of sky straight overhead. It was known at that time to none but a few brigands and sportsmen.

The place had been cleared of fallen trees; in the middle of the open space stood a large table, roughly put together on the spot out of more or less smooth beechwood planks, and benches had been placed round it. On the table were laid crossed swords and a revolver, not to speak of Pope Grouyou's cross. The "apostles" and leading delegates took their places on these benches. Light was afforded by ten or fifteen lanterns hanging from the surrounding trees. On one side, near the rivulet, five or six fires were burning. The stream, the only witness of our doings, flowed past in its usual way, and had doubtless carried already to its mother, the Maritsa, the tidings of our meeting. A cool breeze from the very sources of the stream, far away in those dark and inaccessible heights, reminded us that there was a difference between the green plain and the damp valley, between the beech of the Balkan and the cherry-tree of the plain.

But it is time to proceed to business. Besides the deputies, who numbered close on a hundred, there were all manner of sentinels, couriers, guards, cooks, and so on, and at least three hundred people must have been collected there. Voloff had taken measures for preserving order among this multitude, and had a

small force at his disposal for this purpose. So carefully was every approach to the place guarded that not even a bird could have flown in unperceived. No courier, guide, sentinel or other person was allowed to leave without a signed permit from Voloff; no one was allowed to enter, but was stopped on the outskirts of the forest by the sentinels, and just gave up the letter or verbal message with which he was charged to a deputy who came thither to receive it. Delegates were specially appointed to act as cooks, and in order to show that they were Revolutionaries and not mere servants, they continued to wear their swords and guns slung round them, though this interfered seriously with their culinary labours. Vast stores of food and tobacco for ourselves and of hay for the horses had been laid in. But wine and raki, without which it is impossible for a Bulgarian to make merry, were strictly forbidden by the Revolutionary canon.

It was too late to begin work that night, so groups were formed round the "apostles," and the humbler insurgents gazed reverentially at their future liberators. Benkoffski's voice drowned all the rest. His costly arms and impressive countenance and bearing drew on him the attention of all. The talk was chiefly about the weakness of Turkey, whose soldiers, barefoot and starving, had been routed by the rebels in the Herzegovina, and other similar encouraging allegations. If for a moment one of Turkey's military critics stopped for lack of breath, another took up the tale, or in fiery language described the encounter in which Hajji Dimitr's band was cut to pieces, or the many ruses of Levski, or else the present apprehensions of the Turkish Government and population in general, with the invariable and complacent con-

clusion that the victory was ours from the outset. "Amen" was the pious rejoinder from the audience.

"There's a Russian general, a certain Kisselski, by birth a Bulgarian," said Ikonomoff, "who's written to our brothers in the First Division, offering to come to an agreement with them to act together against the common enemy."

"Ah, many such generals will be coming forward, but we must be careful how we take them on," said Benkoffski, who evidently had no particular predilection for generals; "we must put our trust in our own flintlocks and keep these adventurer-generals at arm's length. Perhaps, as military experts, we may engage them to serve us at a fixed salary, but that's all."

And all this, God help us! was spoken quite seriously, and every one of us was fully convinced that the right was on our side and that victory was ours; and, what is more, I will maintain that the most hardened sceptic would have been convinced of it also, for in revolutions reason and logic are abandoned and only passion holds sway. None of us could sleep that night, and we spent the hours of darkness in singing rebel songs, chiefly new compositions of Stamboloff. Here, after seven months, I met once more Ghiorghi Ikonomoff, and we exchanged accounts of our respective sufferings and wanderings after the Zagora revolt. Voloff also drew aside with some of his particular adherents, but Benkoffski did not stir from his place till the next day's sun was high in the heavens. He had gathered round him the delegates from Panaghiourishté and Pazardjik, and was blaming and finding fault with them. He threatened to prohibit the delegates from Panaghiourishté from being present at the meeting unless they summoned

all the Committee of that town before him to answer for various shortcomings, of which he had drawn up a regular indictment, while he ordered the Pazardjik representative, Sokoloff, to go all the way back to collect fresh statistics, on the ground that those he had furnished were incomplete. A messenger was sent to Panaghiourishté to summon the delinquents, but they replied that they were represented by delegates, who could answer any charges brought against them; and Sokoloff paid a pound to a messenger to fetch the statistics from Pazardjik. Benkoffski's commands could not be disregarded; but if Sokoloff and the Panaghiourishté delegates had been peasants they would not have been treated so harshly.

Soon after dawn next day most of the deputies were taking a refreshing bath in the cool stream, after crossing themselves several times with faces turned to the east. Most of them were anxious to get back to their homes, which they had left on various pretexts for a two days' absence, and they had already been away for four days. But as yet Benkoffski would not open the proceedings: when reminded by several deputies that it was time to begin, he called the "apostles" apart to a secluded spot in the forest, and when some of the delegates tried to follow, he prevented them, saying that what he had to say was meant for the ears of the "apostles" alone. When we were left to ourselves he began a long speech, in which he recounted the labours and trials of the "apostles" since their arrival in Bulgaria, their relations with the people, the present condition of affairs, and the probabilities of the future.

"When we crossed over the frozen Danube and

entered on our duties," he said, "the nation, without knowing anything about us—for all they knew, we might have been Turkish spies—received us with open arms, and confided their fate to us." We had no idea of what Benkoffski was aiming at, so we merely acquiesced in what he said.

"If, therefore," he continued, "poor and insignificant emigrants like ourselves were received so readily and hospitably, just imagine what a rapturous welcome the nation will extend to all the adventurers and philosophers, whether Bulgarians, Russians, Servians, or other Slavs, who will flock to this country when they hear of our successes. I am of opinion, therefore, that before opening the meeting we must induce the deputies to grant us full powers, in virtue of which we 'apostles' shall have the exclusive right of proclaiming the revolt at such time as we think fit; of appointing the voivodes and leaders; in short, of directing the whole course of the outbreak and the fate of the nation. Unless we do this, all those now gathered together here by our orders will forsake us at the first slight hitch which may occur, and will entrust their destiny to some one else. No doubt, Russians, Servians, and the rest are our brother Slavs, but it is quite likely that they may give another character to this purely national undertaking, the more so as we know only too well that Bulgarians are apt to attach an exaggerated importance to foreign titles and brilliant uniforms. For my part, I love all Slavs; I am a Slav myself, heart and soul, but I will never suffer, and it would be treason for any of us to permit, that the standard of any one of the nations I have mentioned should be planted over the historical Tirnovo or on the

peaks of our ancient Balkan. We are Slavs, but first of all we are Bulgarians—let us first mend our own tattered blanket before thinking about realizing the great idea of Panslavism."

He spoke much more in the same sense, the upshot of it all being that the "apostles" must insist on having these "full powers." Of the other three "apostles," only Ghiorghi Ikonomoff agreed with Benkoffski, as was to be expected. Voloff and I protested against the proposal as being calculated to introduce dissension among the delegates.

"There is no necessity for us to demand such powers," said Voloff; "our duty is confined to organizing the rebellion and raising the standard of revolt; for the rest, the nation is free to choose such leaders as inspire it with confidence."

"And why should we not have the right of choosing the leaders and of controlling the whole movement?" asked Benkoffski, growing angry; "no doubt we are not renowned voivodes, and maybe we're not all of us very proficient in the rules of etymology or elocution, but we're the best leaders the nation can produce at present. If it should turn out later on that there are persons more trustworthy and capable, we shall be ready to recognize their abilities, but the nation is inexperienced as yet."

After some discussion we yielded to Benkoffski's insistence, and agreed to demand full powers in the sense indicated, namely, that only we "apostles" should have the right of taking the lead in everything connected with the outbreak. The document was drawn up by Voloff and corrected by Benkoffski. When all this was finished, we returned to Oborishté,

and were surrounded at once by the inquisitive delegates. The secretary copied out the "full powers," and Benkoffski then announced that before opening the meeting the deputies were all to affix their signatures to a "letter," after which we should proceed to discuss other matters. Many of those present, who had long since placed their very lives in the hands of the "apostles," paid little attention to such a trifle, which Benkoffski represented as being a mere formality. But the more educated, the "philosophers," as he called them, wished to hear the text of the letter before signing it. So Voloff read it out aloud for all to hear—even then many did not understand what it was all about, and pressed forward to sign and get it over, so as to go on with the work: what did it matter signing a bit of paper put before them by the "apostles," when the gallows loomed large before everybody's eyes already? But the more intelligent deputies did not look at it in the same light; several of them protested vehemently against granting to the "apostles" any such full powers, describing in gloomy colours the possible consequences of such an act, and saying that Bulgaria sought to free itself of one tyrant, not to enslave itself to new ones.

A long discussion arose; the simple-minded peasants crowded round the orators, trying to make out what they said, and many of those who had already signed, their faith shaken by the arguments they heard, tried to get their signatures back. Benkoffski again explained his object in asking for these powers, affirming that in so doing he was acting for the good of our suffering brethren.

"It may be," he said, "that this does not fall

in with the designs of certain philosophers, but I did not come here to work for them."

The uproar became general; the peasants did not know what to think, and began to look with suspicion at the "apostles."

"We want no tyrants—whether Turk or Christian, it's all the same," shouted some one.

Poor Voloff! the sight of these dissensions was too much for him; he had given way to Benkoffski not from conviction, but solely to facilitate matters. Overcome with grief, he retired into the forest, weeping like a child. Some of his faithful peasant friends followed him, gazing at him with affection mingled with awe, and asked him to explain what had given rise to all this discord. But Benkoffski faced the tumult unmoved, leaning on his sword. From time to time he asked the disputants to make up their minds as soon as they could, as loquacity and philosophical phrases were suited only to the Greek Parliament, whereas revolutionary meetings often ended in the discharge of guns and the clashing of knives.

"To the vote! to the vote!" cried the opposition, advancing to the table where Benkoffski stood; "that's the only way to decide!"

"Better for us to remain for another five hundred years under the Turkish yoke than to submit to such terms, which bind us hand and foot and make us the mere tools of the 'apostles,'" declaimed Sokoloff.

Another deputy lamented the hard fate of Bulgaria, which, after suffering five centuries of foreign slavery, was now subjected to such torments by her own sons.

Benkoffski listened quite quietly to all this uproar: he then asked for a moment's silence, while he too

appealed to the vote of those present, many of whom, ignorant of the meaning of the word "vote," broke out into exclamations for and against the proposed measure. At last silence prevailed. Benkoffski stood on a bench, drew his sword, as was his custom in moments of difficulty or danger, and shouted at the top of his voice:

"Men of Petritch and Metchka, and you men of Moukhovo, with your long bear-rifles, are you there, brothers? Gather round me, if not to protect me, at least that we may bid each other farewell! I am going!"

These words, spoken in impressive and mournful tones, produced an immediate effect. Benkoffski was trembling with emotion; his chest rose and fell, and his face assumed an unwonted expression. It was clear that he was ready to proceed to extremes. "Here we are! here we are!" was heard on every side, and like a whirlwind his supporters rushed to him. Dead silence ensued, and every eye was fixed on the orator, who seemed like one inspired. Even the cooks, with a sword in one hand and a spoon in the other, stood staring at him open-mouthed.

"Brothers!" Benkoffski continued, "it's now nearly three months since I first came among you as your guest, since we first got to know one another. Those were hard times, brothers. When first you heard from my lips the words 'Let us rise against the enemy,' you might very well have given me up to the Turks, for you didn't know what sort of a man I really was. If you had done so, it would have caused me a thousand times less sorrow than to hear now, to witness, to see that you haven't the slightest confidence in me and my brother-'apostles.' At this

very moment, when the time is at hand for us to reap the fruit of our labours, when you will know if we are really your true brothers and well-wishers, if we are to help you at this critical moment, when you want our help most, I am obliged by the whim of some of our philosophers here present among you to leave you, against my will, together with my comrades. Farewell, dear brothers; I thank you for all your hospitality. Forgive me if, as is very likely, I have hurt any one's feelings! I am going to Batak to raise the insurrection there; you must do as you think best. God help you! farewell!"

As he finished, Benkoffski made as if he would mount his horse, which he had ordered to be brought and which was being held ready for him. A fresh uproar arose among the deputies, not on account of the full powers, but because Benkoffski was going. Many surrounded his horse to prevent his leaving, and on all sides were heard the words: "Would you desert us, voivode? what are we to do without you?"

"To tell you the truth, brothers," said Benkoffski, looking round him, "I don't know what to make of you. We simply asked you to sign a trifling bit of paper—in your own interest, mind—without which we can't do anything, and you make all this fuss and say you won't have anything more to do with us. And when I say I am going away you ask me not to desert you! I really can't undertake to make a revolution with such people, and I must ask you to let me go."

"Who doesn't want to sign?" they cried.

"You and your learned grammarians," replied Benkoffski. He then returned to his former place, and again drew his sword. "I want you to answer

me straight out: do you want to revolt or to remain the peaceful subjects of the Sultan?" he asked.

"Revolt! revolt! we want revolt and freedom!" they all cried, except the opposition.

"Then let all who want to march with me, and who are ready to carry out my orders without discussion, draw their knives."

More than a hundred well-polished knives shone in the air in response to Benkoffski's appeal. The faces of those who held them were turned towards the orator, and from their expression they were clearly ready to do his bidding to the utmost.

"But first of all, you see, I want you to sign the paper," he said, but persuasively rather than authoritatively, for by this time he was sure of them.

"We'll sign whatever you like," they cried; "we were doubtful at first because they told us the paper would tie our hands, and that everything would be done without our being asked first. But now we're ready to sign ten papers, if you like, and if any one objects, let him come forward and say so, and we'll deal with him."

Benkoffski's face shone with triumph; he looked contemptuously at the opposition, who shrank from his gaze, knowing that with one motion of his hand he could give the signal for their destruction. He then spoke a few words of thanks to his supporters, and next, turning to the others, he invited them sarcastically to proceed to the vote, if they thought fit. But they had realized by that time that logic was powerless against brute force, and though there were among them jurists who had studied law and taken their degrees, they bowed their heads to the inevitable and signed readily. "Among sons of one

country, like us, perfect confidence ought to exist; we oughtn't to suspect one another," said Benkoffski in much milder tones. The reconciliation was complete. Sokoloff, the most violent of the opposition, made a speech withdrawing his objections, and then he went up to Benkoffski and embraced him. When the document was signed, Benkoffski put it in his pocket. He had proved once more that he was a power in the land, and had silenced his adversaries.

The meeting now proceeded to business. First of all the credentials of the deputies were again examined, each one coming forward separately for this purpose. Then, on the proposal of Voloff, a divine service was held; this duty was naturally entrusted to Pope Grouyou, who advanced proudly to the table in his vestments and accompanied by most of the popes present. All the assemblage, not excluding the "apostles," whose religious sentiments were not usually very marked, showed the most profound piety, carried away as they were by the exaltation of the moment; they stood bare-headed, with lighted tapers in their hands, though it was broad daylight. Pope Grouyou took many liberties with the liturgy, inserting emendations of his own, no doubt applicable to the occasion but smacking strongly of sacrilege, so much so that many of the other priests tried to look over his shoulder to see if he was really reading from his breviary; but he would not let them see, saying proudly: "This is a new book, you haven't seen it yet." When he came to the gospel for the day, the "apostles" knelt down and crossed themselves, the others all following their example. At the close of his ministrations, Pope Grouyou drew out his two blunderbusses and fired them off as an appropriate ending to the service.

Benkoffski then proposed to Voloff to open the proceedings, which he did in a short speech describing briefly the object of this patriotic meeting and the questions to be discussed.

"First of all," he said, "I propose that, before entering upon business, all of us, 'apostles' and deputies alike, should take an oath that we will be faithful to our country."

Voloff's proposal was accepted unanimously and was carried out at once. The "apostles" were the first to take the oath, each saying a few words.

Ghiorghi Ikonomoff tried to make a speech, but broke down. Benkoffski came to his rescue, for fear lest the "learned" should scoff at him, and take him as an example that one could do nothing without education. "There, that'll do, brother," he said; "grammar and the sword have nothing to do with one another; you're a real insurgent, you are."

Benkoffski himself then embarked on a speech which lasted at least an hour. He described the sufferings of the Bulgarian nation, beat his breast, sighed and groaned, and actually shed tears. When he uttered the words: "Oh, my long-suffering brothers! the land we tread is saturated with Bulgarian blood, shed by the tyrant who has enslaved us for five hundred years," the entire audience fell to their knees, and their eyes filled with tears.

"Just look at the man," said some one to me; "how can one help giving one's life for him? There he is, striking his breast, trying to speak louder so that every one can hear him; his throat is parched with talking, but he doesn't stop—not he."

I am firmly convinced that if at that moment Benkoffski had jumped on his horse and given the

word "Forward!" the whole assemblage would have followed him to the ends of the earth.

When the rank and file had taken the oath, the discussion began. On the question as to how the outbreak was to take place two opinions were expressed: the first was that the best course would be to form bands of resolute men who would take refuge in the mountains and from there descend, as opportunity offered, and harass the enemy, while the population at large remained peaceful, merely giving such help as it could; some of the "apostles" took this view. But the majority thought otherwise; they could not see the advantage of the men going off to the mountains while their families remained in the villages unprotected, and exposed to the Turkish yataghan. Both suggestions had their good points, but the first was the most practical. The majority, who advocated the *levée en masse* of the whole population, maintained that if the bands took to the Balkan the Turkish Government would have an excellent pretext for regarding them as mere brigands, and would be able to send large forces of regular troops against them, and so each band would be pursued and destroyed piecemeal. But if the whole population, towns and villages, rose in revolt the attention of humane Europe would be attracted to our cause. Our simple deputies still believed at that time in the sincerity of Bismarck and the conscientiousness of Disraeli; they did not know that the hands of these European statesmen were steeped in blood, and that between them and Toussoun Bey, the leader of bashibozouks, there is only this difference—that the latter fights chivalrously, sword in hand, while the European bashibozouk's only weapon is a pen, but a pen dipped in human blood.

These, however, were mere details: the question whether or not the Bulgarian nation should rise was decided unanimously in the affirmative.

Long and detailed explanations were given to the deputies as to the manner in which the outbreak was to take place, and it was settled that every village was to form its own plan as to where the population was to take refuge when the revolt broke out. Every deputy was asked separately whether the village which he represented was able to defend itself or whether assistance from some other quarter would be required. Panaghiourishté was selected as the head-quarters of the insurrection; it was there that the council was to sit to direct operations. The delegates for Koprivshtitsa suggested that their town should be selected; but this proposal was rejected by several deputies, and especially by Benkoffski, who, though a native of the place, had a particular grudge against it, and in the course of his three months' agitation had visited it only once, and then at night.

But I doubt if there were five among the delegates who listened with any attention to the directions given by the "apostles" and others. The nation was so thoroughly convinced of its invincible strength, so certain of victory and of the downfall of Turkey, that they thought all precautions unnecessary. "We shall be victorious," was heard on all sides. The only thing the deputies were anxious to know was the date on which the national banner was to be displayed, and on which all their sufferings were to come to an end. Now this was a question to which the "apostles" hesitated to give a definite reply, because they feared to divulge so momentous a secret to a multitude of two hundred persons, among whom it was scarcely possible that

there should not be one who might betray their confidence, if not from deliberate treachery, then by some mere indiscretion. For months past the "apostles" in the other divisions had proposed May 13th, to which the Panaghiourishté "apostles" had practically agreed; but this was not yet known to any of the deputies save a very few in whom special confidence was reposed.

Just at this moment black clouds gathered over the sky, and with startling suddenness a thunderstorm broke upon us; in a few minutes it was as dark as night, and the rain poured down. Almost immediately a large black snake appeared and slowly crossed the very place where we were assembled. Voloff, who was very fond of natural history, seized the snake and allowed it to coil itself round his arm. "See," he said, "even the snakes cannot hurt us apostles." As he spoke the serpent bit him in the thumb; he put the reptile down hastily and sucked the injured member. In spite of Voloff's self-possession some of the more superstitious delegates were dismayed at this occurrence, and thought it boded no good for our prospects of success. The storm grew fiercer, and the fires at which lambs were roasting were extinguished and the embers scattered by the wind. It became impossible to go on with the business of the meeting. So it was decided to elect a commission which should proceed at once to Panaghiourishté, there to draw up the programme of the revolt, as also to fix the day on which it was to break out. The villagers, who were well aware that they stood no chance of being elected on the commission, opposed the proposal on the ground that they would have no voice in the decisions to be arrived at, but Voloff managed to overrule their

objections. The Commission was then elected, being composed of eight delegates, Pope Grouyou, and the "apostles."

Just as the meeting was breaking up a courier from the Vratsa Committee arrived with a letter stating that everything was ready there and that on the first opportunity the standard of revolt would be raised. Benkoffski himself read out this letter, the contents of which evoked general enthusiasm; the ominous episode of the black snake was quite forgotten. Accordingly the "apostles," judging further precaution to be unnecessary, gave the delegates to understand that the day on which the outbreak would take place in the Fourth Division was not far distant, adding that if by any chance the Turkish authorities should get wind of the affair beforehand and attempt to arrest any of the conspirators, the village in which such an attempt should be made must rise at once in order to deliver the person arrested, and must immediately send word to headquarters at Panaghiourishté, when the revolt would be proclaimed on the spot. The reasons which impelled the "apostles" to take this resolution were the following: Should the Government discover the plot and seize any of the conspirators, it was highly probable that some of these might be induced by torture and through lack of decision to reveal all they knew, in which case the entire movement might be crushed in a few days, and it would become necessary to start the whole undertaking afresh, which might take years. So, in the event of our secret being divulged, the flag was to be raised, and for the rest we must trust to Providence.

CHAPTER VIII

THE COMMISSION AT WORK.

As soon as the commission was elected and the deputies had received their instructions, all dispersed to their villages and the "apostles" left with the commission for Panaghiourishté, where next day we set about planning all the details for the insurrection. But the Turkish Government had been already informed of our designs and of all that had happened at Oborishté. Nenko, the delegate from Baldiovo, instead of returning to his village to report to his Committee, went straight to Pazardjik and revealed everything to Ali Bey there. His treachery had been premeditated, for we learnt afterwards that he had been noticeably uneasy in his demeanour, and one night at Oborishté he had asked no less than three different people what would happen if one of us were to inform the Turks that the Bulgarians were planning a rising, adding that the Government would give a great reward to the traitor, but that it would be impossible for him to live any longer among the Bulgarians afterwards. The information given to Ali Bey was of course telegraphed at once to Philippopolis and Adrianople, and thence to Constantinople. The Turkish authorities were at first inclined to make light of the traitor's story, but to be on the safe side they sent one officer of gendarmes to Panaghiourishtê and another to

Koprivshtitsa to see for themselves on the spot what was going on. It was this which caused the premature outbreak of the revolt.

When the Panaghiourishté Committee learned from their delegates at Oborishté that May 13 had been fixed for the revolt and that Benkoffski had obtained full powers, they were much displeased. They decided not to allow the deputies to remain in the town any longer; there was even talk of putting Benkoffski to death, on the ground that he had lost his head and would listen to no one. But they were not unanimous, and on April 29 they sent a deputation to ask for explanations. The deputation seemed uneasy and dissatisfied. "Having heard of the decisions taken at Oborishté concerning the Fourth Division, to which we belong," said their spokesman, "we have come to ask if certain important considerations have been taken into account, as otherwise we shall refuse to take part in the rising." "You have every right to put these questions," was Benkoffski's answer; "and for my part it gives me the greatest satisfaction to see that you take so warm an interest in our decisions." So saying, he prepared to listen to the questions, knowing well enough what their nature would be.

The spokesman then took out a paper and proceeded to read out the following: "We request the 'apostles' to inform us whether, having decided that the revolt is to break out in the Fourth Division on May 13, this decision has been made known to the other Committees in Bulgaria and Thrace, and whether these have also agreed to rise on that day. We also desire to be informed of the grounds for the decision to order the villagers to raise the standard of revolt the moment the Turkish Government tries to

arrest any one in the village; and, lastly, whether any steps have been taken for sending to Europe one or two delegates to lay our case before the Powers and to endeavour to enlist their support towards our liberation."

These questions on the part of the Committee were quite reasonable and justifiable, as the population could not be expected to risk their lives and all they possessed so blindly at the mere bidding of a handful of unknown adventurers. But the "apostles," and especially Benkoffski, were so carried away by their passionate desire for liberation, and so convinced of their authority over the masses, that they were not disposed to listen to reason, and returned an offhand and almost sarcastic answer to their questioners.

"You need not trouble yourselves, gentlemen," said Voloff, "we have done all that is necessary." "As to your third question, about sending some one to Europe," added Benkoffski, "I fear that must be put off for the present, at all events until we have tried what our flintlocks can do. Besides, I am quite certain that this idea originated in the learned brain of one of your philosophers, who, knowing French, naturally imagines that this mission will be entrusted to him, and that he may be enabled to get out of range of the Turkish bullets, and be spared the disagreeable necessity of smelling gunpowder. You had better advise him to give up the idea."

So the Committee withdrew without obtaining any satisfaction, though at first they had seemed inclined to carry matters with a high hand. Before Benkoffski's firm attitude they were forced to give way; both on this as on other occasions their feelings were much hurt, but it was impossible for them not to recognize his ability, and in their hearts they felt

a sincere admiration for him. Otherwise they could easily have rid themselves of him and of the "apostles," who after all were only four in number. A word to Daoud Onbashi would have been enough: he was by this time fully on the alert, and had even taken to questioning children at street-corners as to whether their parents spent their time at night making paper toys—"like these," he would say, showing them a handful of paper cartridges. But the people of Panaghiourishté were quite numerous enough to deal with the "apostles" without his assistance, had they wished to do so. A population bent on freeing itself from the Turkish yoke is not likely to allow four adventurers to interfere with it. The fact is that they were convinced that the "apostles" were animated with no other desire than to work for the good of the nation; the "apostles" were insignificant in themselves, but they were the practical outcome of the strong desire for liberation, which had reached its zenith in the spring of 1876. The outbreak was the work, not of Benkoffski, but of the mental condition of the people and of the course of events. No doubt his fiery nature and great powers of persuasion contributed to the success of the cause, but if he had presented himself two years sooner, or two years later, he would have been nothing but a more or less illiterate clothworker of Koprivshtitsa. When we were together in the mountains above Teteven, after the downfall of the insurrection, no one could have believed that he was the same man; he was silent, save for occasional sighs and groans, listened deferentially to everything that was said, and even shed tears when the revolt was mentioned. It is generally admitted that Rakoffski, the first Bulgarian agitator, was far

superior to Benkoffski; but even he, when he first made his appearance ten years previously, and tried to convince his countrymen that it had not been ordained by Providence that the Turks should tyrannize over us for ever, was compelled to fly to the mountains disguised in woman's clothes, and all but died of hunger. It was too soon; at that time most Bulgarians still believed that God understood no language but ancient Greek. If Benkoffski were to appear in the Bulgaria of the present day, he would excite no feeling other than that of ridicule.

Meanwhile the dissensions between the Committee and the "apostles" were set at rest, and the commission elected at Oborishté worked regularly. The following is a summary of their decisions adopted on April 29, as contained in a protocol which fell into the hands of the Turks: the insurrection to be proclaimed on May 13; the towns of Adrianople, Philippopolis and Pazardjik to be set on fire; the telegraph and railway lines to be destroyed; Karlovo and other towns to be burnt down, as also any village the existence of which might interfere with the movement. All Bulgarians to be forced to take part; all Turks who opposed the revolt to be put to the sword, but Turks who submitted were to be carefully protected, as well as their property, and any one molesting or despoiling them to be shot. Arrangements were made for conveying to places of safety in the mountains the families and live stock of Bulgarians from revolted villages.

It was, however, impossible to carry out these decisions in their entirety, as circumstances necessitated a premature outbreak. Meanwhile we hastened to inform the other Divisions that we were ready to rise on May 13. Fiery proclamations to the nation

were drawn up and sent out. Benkoffski proposed that these should begin with the words: "Brothers! after five hundred years Christ is again arisen in our land!" but Voloff and the others agreed that the civilized world would condemn the whole movement if we began in this way, and urged that the proclamation should be most carefully drawn up.

Benkoffski was furious: "I have nothing in common with Jews and crafty diplomatists," he said, "and I confess I don't care what the editor of the *Neue Freie Presse* has to say on the subject."

However, wiser counsels prevailed, and the proclamation consisted merely of an impassioned appeal to the Bulgarian nation to throw off the yoke endured for so long, and to show courage and firmness in facing the foe: it ended with an admonition to protect all who did not oppose us, and with the asseveration that we declared to the whole world that the desire of the entire nation was liberty or death for us all. The proclamations, after being signed by one of the "apostles," were to be sent round to the villages, but the course of events did not allow of this. Accordingly many of these proclamations remained at Panaghiourishté after the actual outbreak; they were then sent to the remoter villages, with a cross rudely traced in blood at the foot. One such copy fell into the hands of the Turks, being seized on the person of the courier who was carrying it, and it is from the Turkish translation of this copy that I have taken the foregoing.

Meanwhile the commission sat day and night. Only ten days remained before the date appointed for the revolt, and there were few serviceable weapons in the place, if we exclude Benkoffski's Winchester, Voloff's Chassepot, both purchased in Constantinople

for £15 apiece, three or four other rifles, a few Lefaucheux, and from one hundred and fifty to two hundred revolvers, of very inferior make, such as are sold by Jewish hucksters who deal in matches and other paltry wares of that kind. We decided, therefore, to send two agents to Constantinople to buy arms, and they were entrusted with a sum of nearly £1,000. The agents left on the next day, but we never saw any of the arms bought by them, nor did they for their part see anything of the insurrection.

There was a general run on weapons of every kind just then, but they were almost unprocurable. In order to induce the owner of a pistol or gun to part with it, even if he was too old or too feeble to use it himself, it was necessary to make a display of tact and diplomacy sufficient for the solution of the whole Eastern Question. Many of our conspirators had not even provided themselves with a pistol, and one day I came upon one of our writers who was just about to commit suicide from despair at being unable to beg, borrow or steal some kind of weapon. Poor fellow! I am convinced his sorrow was genuine.

A tailor was commissioned to make our uniforms, the barber was summoned to shave us for the last time, and even a photographer came to photograph us as a souvenir, for we were all convinced that not one of us would come out of the struggle alive. Finally, posts were assigned to each of us: Benkoffski was to remain at Panaghiourishté, Voloff was to go to Klissoura, Ikonomoff to Staro-sélo, Kableshkoff to Koprivshtitsa, and I to Belovo, where my assistant was to be Pope Kiril, of the Kalougerovo monastery; each of us undertook to proclaim the revolt on May 13, as soon as church was over.

Father Kiril had only got back from Pazardjik on

that very day, May 1st. Benkoffski reprimanded him severely for his neglect in not taking proper precautions for my welfare at the monastery, but his excuse was the trouble which had befallen him: he had been arrested by his spiritual chiefs on the charge of turning the monastery into a refuge for rebels; one of his superiors, whose name I will not mention in the interests of the Church, threatened that unless he was given a bribe of £30 he would hand Kiril over to the Turks, and it was only by dint of prayers and promises that my friend escaped from the clutches of his brother in Christ.

In accordance with a special decision, we had sent for a noted brigand of the Rhodope, named Todor, whose exploits were legendary throughout the whole district. When it was proposed to him to set fire to Pazardjik with a force of six hundred men to help him, he replied that three hundred were as many as he wanted, and that with that number he would undertake to perform the task in broad daylight, and not at night, as was suggested. He spoke so calmly that no one could doubt that the fate of Pazardjik was sealed; he did not even raise his head to look at those present, but puffed away stolidly at his short chibouk. After receiving the necessary instructions, he went away, but a few minutes later he put his head in at the door, and asked if when he got into Pazardjik he was at liberty to kill Turkish women as well. We all burst out laughing, but Todor was quite serious, and waited for an answer to his question. Voloff gave him clearly to understand that not only was he to refrain from killing Turkish women, but that he must not lay a finger on any man, be he Turk or Jew, who was ready to offer his submission. There is no doubt that Todor was

perfectly sincere in what he said: he was not one of the theatrical, boastful voivodes, as he proved afterwards by his heroism at Panaghiourishté.

We were now at the very eve of the insurrection, and had begun to relax some of our precautions, as no longer necessary when at any moment we might hear that the standard of revolt had been raised in some town or village. The suspense was very great; sleep was impossible; Benkoffski was especially agitated: constant work and talking had quite exhausted him, but he took the keenest interest in every detail of the discussions of the commission, which was now busy with collecting a store of provisions and also with providing some sort of fortifications round Panaghiourishté.

On the night of May 1st, in accordance with our practice of never sleeping two consecutive nights in the same house, for fear of treachery, we moved into the house of one Toteff. Our host met us at the door and welcomed us with the greatest delight and enthusiasm: it was an honour to receive the "apostles" under one's roof. Both he and his wife came and sat with us in the room which had been provided for us, though this visit was not greatly to Benkoffski's liking.

Toteff could not make enough of us: "Thank God I've lived to see this day!" he said, "this is a general festival for the whole of Christendom; all my life I've been looking forward to it. Ever since I was a boy I've felt the fire of patriotism in my soul. I've been in business in Constantinople, contrived to put by a pound or two, got married; through God's blessing we've a couple of children. I've managed to build myself a bit of a house, as you see; but, there it is, one can't master one's feelings—the heart never

grows old; I've always had an eye to the mountain, as they say: can't settle down to anything."

"Ah," said his wife, in confirmation of his statement, "many's the time he's given me a pretty fright with his wild doings; often and often I've been afraid of his going off to the mountain with one of these bands and leaving me all alone."

"There's nothing to be afraid of now, wife," said her lord and master, with a proud look at us; "with valued guests like these in the house you need fear nothing."

He then showed us all his preparations—guns, cartridges, sandals, etc., "And this little gun I've got for my wife," he said, producing a light sporting gun. Poor Toteff! he little knew what the next day was going to bring forth!

On the morning of Tuesday, May 2nd, Benkoffski was the first to rise. I found him walking up and down the spacious courtyard of the house, looking through his telescope at the shepherds and cattle-drovers on the hills round. "I can't imagine how you can sleep at such a time," he said as we appeared; "all the world has been up and about for hours." That day we were to have had no meeting of the commission until the evening, so there was nothing to do except to write a few letters, among them being two to certain officials in the railway company's service, fellow-conspirators, calling upon them to destroy the line as soon as they received word that the revolt had been proclaimed.

At about two o'clock there was a knock at the door. The guard on duty, seeing that those who sought admission were all friends, let them in. To our surprise almost the whole of the Panaghiourishté Committee made their way into our room, accom-

panied by an unknown youth who had evidently just come a long and arduous journey; the faces of those who entered were downcast, and it was clear that something serious had happened. Besides, it was against all rule that so many of the conspirators should come together to our place of residence, the regulation providing that no more than two at a time should be seen entering by day, so as not to arouse suspicion.

"Get ready your revolvers," said Ikonomoff, and we all started hastily to our feet.

"What is the meaning of this?" "What has happened?" "Why are you all here together?" "Has there been any treachery?" we asked anxiously.

"No, no—nothing of the kind; but it's all over now!" said the visitors, after some hesitation.

"What do you mean? Don't keep me in suspense: tell us at once," cried Benkoffski.

They looked at one another as if not daring to speak, and we began to suspect seriously that some treachery had been at work. At last one of them said, "They've been fighting for the last three hours at Koprivshtitsa! The insurrection is proclaimed."

"How do you know? Who brought the news? Tell us at once, brothers!" we cried.

"We've got a letter from Kableshkoff, signed in blood," was the reply. (We learned that this letter had been kept back for half an hour before the Committee could make up their mind to let us have it: they had intended to try to persuade us not to raise the insurrection.) The tears rushed to our eyes; we shouted "Revolt! revolt! to arms!" Then Benkoffski flew at the man who had first uttered the word "revolt" and embraced him, after which we all embraced one another. It was a stirring moment.

"Where is Kableshkoff's letter? Give us the letter!" we cried. It was handed to Voloff, but his hands were trembling so violently that he was unable to unfold it, and he passed it on to Ikonomoff, who, however, could not get beyond the first words, his emotion being too much for him. Finally Benkoffski read it out; it was as follows:

"Brothers! yesterday Nejib Aga arrived here from Philippopolis and tried to arrest some of us, including myself. Being aware of the decision adopted at Oborishtè, I called together some of our men and we attacked the Government house, killing the governor and some zaptiés. As I write this letter our flag is flying over the town-hall, guns are being fired, the church-bells are ringing, and in every street our warriors are embracing each other. If you are our true brothers and patriotic Bulgarian apostles of liberty, you will follow our example!

"T. Kableshkoff.

"Koprivshtitsa, May 2, 1876."

CHAPTER IX

A NINE DAYS' TRIUMPH

"REVOLT! to arms! quick, summon our officers, ring the church-bells, fire off some guns to give notice that the revolt is proclaimed! To arms! What are you waiting for? our brothers are fighting already," cried Benkoffski and all of us.

"Yes, but wait a moment; let us try to understand all about it first; it's too soon; we're not quite ready!" the people of Panaghiourishté faltered.

But their objections were disregarded, and several guns were fired from the courtyard; I may mention that the two-barrelled sporting gun, with which I tried to give the first signal, missed fire in both barrels; Voloff came out after me, and his double-barrelled Chassepot was the first to break the silence of the hitherto peaceful little town.

It so happened that at that very moment the other Turkish gendarmerie officer, Ahmed Aga, who had been sent by the Government to find out what was going on, accompanied by a few zaptiés, had just reached the outskirts of Panaghiourishté. The sound of the gunshots caused him to leave precipitately, and his return to Philippopolis gave the signal for the panic in that town, in consequence of which all the shops were shut.

The Committee, seeing that there was no help for

it, hurried off to complete their preparations: they seemed bolder now, the sound of the guns fired having restored their courage. We hastily donned our uniforms, or such parts of them as we could find in the hurry of the moment: only Benkoffski had on a kalpak, and as it was impossible to proclaim a rebellion against the Turks with fezzes on our heads, we came out bareheaded. Fortunately the flag was ready to hand; as we had no flagstaff prepared it was just nailed to a rough stake which was lying about in the courtyard. So, half-clad, and with such weapons as we could hurriedly lay hands on, we marched out into the street, but first we had to overcome the opposition of our host, the patriotic Toteff. His resolution and enthusiasm were merely on the surface: he had hoped that our stay with him would not exceed one night, and that when we had gone away, like any other guest, he would hear no more of us. It was a crushing blow for him when we set about to proclaim the insurrection from his very house. "I'm a ruined man; you've destroyed my house," he wailed; "have pity on my poor children, I beseech you!" But this was not the time for listening to such appeals: Ikonomoff drew his revolver and pointed it at Toteff, who had no alternative but to give way and to let us out by the high gates of his courtyard, through which a locomotive engine could have passed easily.

We left the house and marched through the streets crying "To arms, to arms! the hour has come!" and making straight for the Government house, where the zaptiés were fast asleep; our noise woke them, and some of them looked at us inquisitively, probably taking us for a troupe of travelling comedians, such as sometimes visit these

parts. Voloff knelt down, took aim at one of them, and fired. Then the preservers of law and order at once became active. To say that they fled would be to understate the case most ludicrously: they seemed to have wings, and were soon out of sight. On all sides the panic now became general, and for some time nothing was heard but the hurried shutting of shops and the barricading of doors. Soon, however, the conspirators began to join us on all sides, armed and eager for the conflict, and our fears that we were destined to witness a repetition of the Stara Zagora fiasco soon evaporated, as one after another the valiant conspirators of Panaghiourishté hurried armed from their houses to join us, wild with enthusiasm. One of them rushed up, panting and beside himself with excitement, holding out his revolver and exclaiming, "Kiss it, boys, kiss it! it's just accounted for one of them!"; he had just shot a Turk. The women standing at their windows encouraged us with cries of "God bless you, lads! may the Holy Virgin protect you!"

At this moment one of the church bells began clanging, and musket-shots were heard here and there. Our numbers increased every minute; every now and then cries were raised: "Fire! let him have it! shoot him down!" whenever a Turk was seen flying for his life. By the time we had reached the open space by the bridge the whole of the village was assembled and under arms; at least five hundred insurgents had collected, and the scene was one of indescribable confusion. At last Benkoffski succeeded in getting together a number of copyists, whom he set to work writing out copies of letters calling on the neighbouring villages to revolt. These letters were signed in blood with a cross, the bodies

of the slain Turks providing the medium. Swift couriers were sent off to every village, and Benkoffski instructed them to report to the Committees all that had happened, to put to death the village zaptiés, and to assemble the people in the church, where the pope was to read out the letter signed in blood. I pointed out to Benkoffski that it seemed needlessly cruel to kill the police, some of whom might be worthy people. But he assured me that he had good reasons for giving this advice.

"I am convinced," said he, "that at the slightest rebuff all these enthusiastic insurgents will throw away their guns and bow before the yataghan of the tyrant. But, once their village has been guilty of bloodshed, they will become more earnest and resolute than you or I. Besides, the slave of five hundred years can do nothing until he is blooded, until the thirst for vengeance is properly aroused in him!"

"Look out there!" some one cried; "there are Turks in the barn yonder, with arms!" At once a rush was made towards the barn, the doors were burst open, and at least a hundred guns were discharged. The victims, a few Turks peacefully working in the barn, fell pierced in twenty places. Alas! historical events have no mercy!

Night began to fall, but with it the excitement seemed to grow apace. Every one had a different plan of campaign. But at last it was settled that Voloff should go to some of the neighbouring villages, and that Benkoffski should make a similar tour in the opposite direction. I accompanied him to Metchka, where we learnt that all our instructions had been carried out and the policeman had been killed. We sent twenty-five men from this village to Panaghiourishté

and went on to Poibrené, a purely Bulgarian village. It was about midnight when we approached the village, and as we looked down into the valley where it lay we saw a brilliant illumination. "What is the meaning of this?" asked Benkoffski. "It's the whole village coming out to meet you," was the reply.

As we drew nearer we could hear the church sounding-board, and on entering the village we found all the population, headed by the pope, waiting on their knees to receive us. Benkoffski was carried away by his enthusiasm, and addressed them in a fiery harangue, urging them to sacrifice everything in the cause of freedom. Here we stayed a short time, and learned how they had killed their policeman, a real village tyrant who had for years oppressed them. Before leaving Poibrenê we instructed the villagers to remove, with their families and cattle, to a remote and isolated mountain gorge, where they would be safe, and whither the inhabitants of Metchka were also intending to transfer themselves and their household belongings. We took with us from here thirty or forty lads, and the pope, Kiril by name, also accompanied us, with the cross of his church, which he carried in front of him on his horse.

At Moukhovo, whither we next proceeded, the villagers complained to us of a certain gipsy, whom we decided to execute as a warning to the others. He was, accordingly, dragged out of his house and shot. Here the villagers were already preparing to remove, with all their goods and chattels, to Elêdjik, the spot we had already pointed out as a place of refuge.

So all night we went from village to village, everywhere received with frenzied enthusiasm. At one

part of the road we came upon an apparently interminable procession of men, women, and children, accompanied by carts, cattle, poultry, etc. There must have been at least five hundred wagons. These were peasants from different villages on their way to Elédjik: some were cheerful, others weeping at leaving their homes, children were crying, sheep bleating—in a word, the scene was indescribably tragic. Benkoffski was moved to tears by the sight. Turning to one of our band, he bade him ask the fugitives from whom they were flying, and what they were seeking. "We're flying from our enemies the Turks, and we're off to the mountains to search for freedom," was the answer. It was impossible not to be moved by this reply from a simple villager, who had deserted hearth and home and was wandering thus in complete uncertainty over mountain and valley, with all that he possessed in the world, simply to put off the yoke of slavery from his neck. "God! give me strength and forsake me not; help me in this sacred work, that I may free this nation from the iron grip of the tyrant!" prayed Benkoffski, as the tears flowed down his cheeks. Then he turned and spoke a few encouraging words to the fugitives. After visiting another village or two, we returned to Panaghiourishté, which we reached on the following evening. Here we found everything in order, and were received with frenzied cheers and enthusiasm. The excitement was still greater than on the previous day.

The schools were turned into barracks, trenches were dug round the village, and military preparations were hurried on. Benkoffski and the staff took up their abode in a house thereafter known as the head-quarters.

The next day our banner was solemnly consecrated in the church by Pope Grouyou; after the ceremony it was carried in procession through the village. Everywhere it was acclaimed with wild enthusiasm; the patriotic devotion of the people was unbounded. Benkoffski then made a speech, calling for volunteers to form a flying squadron, which should be ready to proceed at once to any spot threatened by the enemy. Soon about a hundred volunteered for this duty, and their names were duly enrolled.

Later on, Benkoffski caused the few Turks who had been taken prisoner to be brought before him, asked them if they had any complaints to make, and assured them that they would be well treated. They agreed to everything he said, but were more dead than alive, and not without reason, for on the one hand Pope Grouyou, enraged at our treating these unbelievers so leniently, was gnashing his teeth at them and putting his hand to the hilt of his sword as if to kill them, while the children in the street were shouting at that very moment: "Come and see the Turks killed!"; and these Turks understood Bulgarian.

Late that night we received from Petritch, a neighbouring village, the news that the Turks and Circassians of the vicinity were preparing to attack. Benkoffski at once decided to proceed thither with the flying squadron, for the use of which all the best horses in Panaghiourishté were requisitioned. We set out about a hundred and thirty in number, in the wildest excitement and enthusiasm, singing and cheering. Our path lay through the village of Metchka, where, however, we found only a few armed peasants on guard; otherwise the whole village was

deserted, every one having removed to Elédjik as already stated. We rested till dawn, and then sent on some emissaries to Petritch to make sure that all was well. These speedily returned with the news that we were impatiently awaited. We were marshalled two abreast and entered the village in military order. The entire village came out to meet us at the entrance, mostly bareheaded, and many weeping for joy. Benkoffski and the staff took up their quarters at a house, and at once orders were given for trenches to be dug round the village and for wooden cannon to be prepared. The town crier was sent round to request contributions of meat and bread, which were cheerfully brought in by the villagers. Then a feast was prepared for us, but Benkoffski's eyes flashed when he saw wine bottles appear on the board, and he ordered at once their contents to be poured out on the ground. At this very moment two gunshots were heard, and the cry was raised, "The Turks are on us!" This changed the scene at once: we had almost forgotten the existence of the Turks during the last few days. However, the necessary measures were taken. The trenches were manned, and Benkoffski, sword in hand, rode from one position to another encouraging the defenders: "Be men, and stand firm to the last drop of your blood; if we show weakness in the first encounter we shall treble the enemy's courage!" he cried.

Soon the enemy began to appear; they were all bashi-bozouks from neighbouring villages, none of them mounted. Their fire proved to be more effective than ours, for theirs were modern rifles, while the range of our antiquated flintlocks was far too short. This still further encouraged the Turks, and

they carried the first line of our entrenchments, while panic spread among our ranks. At this moment our standard-bearer distinguished himself. Upon an order from Benkoffski he cried "Forward! brothers!" and spurred his horse towards the foe. Twenty or twenty-five followed him, and when the enemy saw that these did not fly like the first rank, they began to give way. Soon they turned to flight, carrying off one or two wounded men. Our victory was complete, and no one on our side was wounded. I need not say how we were encouraged by this victory, and for the next three or four days all was dancing and gaiety at Petritch.

But disquieting news came on the 6th of May. The outposts reported that the whole plain at the foot of the mountains was white with tents, doubtless the camp of Turkish troops. We proceeded to the spot and with the help of our field-glasses were able to corroborate the truth of the report. At once we sent couriers to Panaghiourishté asking for armed assistance, and meanwhile one of the wooden cannon was dragged to the summit of the mountain and discharged in the direction of the troops. Whether on this account or from any other cause, the tents had disappeared next morning. Soon afterwards the reinforcement we had asked for arrived from Panaghiourishté: it consisted of one hundred and five armed men. That same day we were again attacked by a band of bashi-bozouks, and after two hours' fighting, in which only one insurgent was wounded, compelled them to retreat.

The next day a deputation arrived from Elédjik, where several villages had taken refuge, begging us to come to their aid, as the Turks were on the point of attacking them, and adding that unless we came

they would surrender. It was clearly our duty to go to their assistance, but the villagers of Petritch strongly objected to our leaving them at so critical a moment. After a long discussion Benkoffski persuaded them that they were quite able to defend themselves for three or four days, during which time he would arrange matters at Elédjik and then return. We therefore set out, but, before leaving Petritch, Benkoffski secretly determined to set fire to the villages of Smolsko, Kamenitsa, and Rakovo. Our reason for this harsh measure was the fact that the insurgents from those villages were constantly leaving their posts to go down and give a look round to their cattle and their wheat granaries, for fear the Turks should be plundering them. These desertions might prove a serious danger at a critical moment, and there was no other way of putting a stop to them.

Nobody had the slightest inkling of this plan, which I was to put into execution. I took with me an old conspirator named Tsvetko, of tried courage and resolution, and about ten men from the flying squadron, all on horseback. We started at about noon for Smolsko, while Benkoffski and his men left for Poibrené. On the way we met many peasants from Smolsko, who on hearing of our destination requested us to see that all was well there; some of them wished to accompany us, but I would not allow them to do so.

In about an hour we reached the village, most picturesquely situated on the slopes of the mountain. It was only when we were actually there that I disclosed to my men the nature of our mission. They were greatly distressed when they learned it. "Where do you suppose our souls will go to," asked

an old peasant from Kalougerovo, "if we venture to set fire to Christian villages, churches and all?" "What, churches as well?" asked another, "I'll never have the heart to do it." "I wish I'd never been born, rather than have to set fire to my brother's house," groaned yet another.

I distributed among them the inflammable materials I had brought with me, and we dispersed among the various streets, where it was arranged that we should set fire to each house as we passed along. We found not a living human being in the village; only the dogs barked at us furiously. My comrades could not bring themselves to begin the work of incendiarism until I set them the example: but after that the whole village was soon in a blaze. Then the scene became an awful one: and we were terrified ourselves at the result of our own acts. Such cattle and animals as were left in the village came rushing along in mad terror—buffaloes, oxen, cows, and calves; many of them had been taken away by their owners but had found their way back again, being unable to desert their homes. Now most of them perished in the flames. I saw an ox in a mad rush stake itself through the heart on the spike of a fence, the whole of which came crashing down with it, and there lay till consumed by the flames. Ducks, geese, fowls flew up into the air, but became suffocated there by the smoke, and so fell and perished. Further along the street we met two of our companions, who advised us to go on to the outskirts of the village or our retreat would be cut off by the flames. We did as they suggested, and on the way passed a shop which the remainder of my band were looting. "Better take what there is ourselves than leave it to be burnt," they said,

hastily pocketing what they could, mostly eatables. Here there were barrels full of wine and raki, and the men had begun to break bulk; but I sternly repressed this infringement of our prohibition, and old Tsvetko started the hoops and allowed the contents of the casks to run out on the ground.

While I was waiting outside a number of fierce dogs set on me, and to protect myself I was obliged to draw my revolver and shoot two or three of them. "Look out, Circassians are attacking us!" suddenly cried one of our men who came up from the left-hand side; we came out, and to our surprise saw ten or fifteen Circassians with drawn swords in their hands, not ten yards away from us and advancing stealthily towards the shop. The moment they saw us they drew back and took up a position behind the fence of a garden. We fled in the opposite direction, and, mounting our horses as fast as we could, were just able to get through the street, all passage through which a few minutes later was barred by the flames: there would have been no other exit for us but the street in which the Circassians were lying in wait. As two of our comrades were still in the village we fired a couple of shots to attract their attention. By the time they had joined us a cloud of dust was visible on the road leading out of the village on the other side, and with the aid of my telescope I could distinguish the Circassians in full flight. It was my firing my revolver at the dogs which saved our lives: had the Circassians not come out to see what the firing was about we should have passed right in front of their ambush. As it was, the sight of our uniforms and peacocks' feathers must have frightened them; they

probably took us for Russians, as many Turks still supposed the insurgents to be.

As we fled past the village, we saw an old woman, blind of both eyes, feeling her way under the projecting eaves of her house. She heard us, and asked where the fire was. We were unable to stop and give her this information, or even to protect her; and a little later, when we saw that the Circassians had fled, all help would have been useless, for her house was plunged in flames and smoke. The poor old woman was sacrificed to our cause.

Though the entire village seemed ablaze when we left it, as a matter of fact only those houses—ten or fifteen in all—to which we actually set fire were destroyed; this was due to the fact that the village is a straggling one, with houses far apart. The church and schoolhouse remained unhurt.

Our next objective was Kamenitsa, about an hour and a half to the south-west; this is also a purely Bulgarian village, of about eighty-five houses. On the way we were stopped by many insurgent patrols, who only let us pass when we gave the password. Those who were from Smolsko told us, with tears in their eyes, that their village had been burnt down by Circassians, not dreaming that we were the criminals who had perpetrated the arson, and they congratulated us on having escaped from the incendiaries. The luckless insurgents from Kamenitsa rejoiced when they heard that we were going to their village, on the ground that we would help to protect it! It was late in the afternoon when we came to Kamenitsa; there were many villagers there busily collecting their household goods or cattle. First of all they took us for the enemy and

fled, but by dint of shouting out the watchword we reassured them and they came back. It so happened that some houses in the village had been burnt by the people themselves, and so I suggested that perhaps it might be advisable to burn down a few more; but they would not consent to this. As we were surrounded by the villagers, who were asking us all manner of questions, it was impossible to slip away and set fire to the place unnoticed. So, after waiting for about an hour and seeing that ruse was unavailing, I disclosed to them the object of our visit, explaining that their village must be burnt down and that they had better make the best of it, as I could allow them only a little time to collect a few things from their houses.

They were thunderstruck and could not believe at first that I was speaking seriously. "What? was that in the day's work too?" they asked; "it isn't always going to be warm weather, like now; what are we and our children to do when the cold weather comes on?" I told them that we should attend to that, that there was nothing for them but to do as they were told, that liberty was more precious than houses and cattle, and that if their village remained standing the enemy would benefit thereby. But a Bulgarian is not easily convinced against his will and cares little for liberty unless it is accompanied by a house well stocked with furniture and surrounded with fields and vineyards. However, I had hardly finished when one of those standing round, a peasant of sixty, exclaimed with tears in his eyes: "Well, so be it!"; and with these words he knocked out the contents of his pipe on the thatch of his cottage and, blowing on it, soon set it in a blaze. "A sacrifice to God and to Christianity," he added, and to make it

burn faster, he emptied over it a pannikin of raki which he had brought out in our honour. We were quite overcome by this act of patriotism on the part of a simple peasant, who had never read a patriotic book in his life, nor heard of the defence of Thermopylæ nor of Napoleon's retreat from Moscow, nor, probably, ever met an educated person to talk to, for the village is in a very remote district. This made our task easier, and we went to work as at Smolsko, with this difference, that here the destruction took place in the presence of the owners themselves. I remember there was one house quite unusually large for such a place and resembling a barrack, the property of a rich villager whose wife happened to be there just then; she came to me and begged that her house might be spared. Her back was turned towards the house and she could not see that two of my men were already on the roof busily at work. When she turned and saw the flames starting forth, she raised her hands to heaven and prayed the Almighty to accept her house as an offering from the Bulgarian nation! Such scenes must be seen to be believed in.

Half an hour later we were descending the valley to the right of the village. Here we passed many villagers, men and women, lamenting the destruction; but although they knew perfectly that we were the authors of the calamity, not one of them uttered a word of reproach. We struck off towards Rakovo on the same errand. Hereabouts the mountain is very steep and the brushwood particularly dense, and we could never have found our way among all the valleys and hills if almost at every step we had not come upon insurgents from the villages round. We were careful to utter the password very loudly

and clearly, for the rifles of the local insurgents which we saw pointed at us through the thickets were far from reassuring. We found most of the villagers of Rakovo, who had joined the insurrection heart and soul, encamped outside their village. They explained that they had only just left their homes and had not had time to bring away their cattle and provisions, not to speak of clothing and other indispensable articles. They therefore requested us not to burn down their village yet, but to allow them three days' respite in which to collect these belongings, after which they promised solemnly to burn it down themselves. I thought it best to comply.

We returned to Poibrené, where we found Benkoffski, and with him proceeded to Elédjik. On our way, from the heights by Vakarel the whole plain of Sofia was visible: the atmosphere was calm and serene, and no sign of smoke was to be seen. It was clear that no insurrection had taken place there. Far different was the view to the south; on every side clouds of smoke were rising in the sky. But none save the Maritsa knew what was happening in those parts, and we were still infatuated enough to suppose that the fires had been caused by our own merciless insurgents.

We found Elédjik well guarded, and although attacks by Turks were of daily occurrence, they had been successfully repulsed. There was no talk for the present of surrendering. We inspected the encampment. Curiously enough, not only had every village kept aloof from the others, but the original distribution into streets was preserved. Most had built for themselves some sort of hut out of branches. The cattle had been brought up as well as most of

the grain. The news of this encampment had spread to the Turks, and two or three spies had been arrested already.

Meanwhile, we were without news from other parts of Bulgaria. Had Tirnovo, Sliven, Vratsa risen in revolt? to say nothing of the rest of the Fourth Division, such as Philippopolis, Batak, Karlovo? Every day messengers were sent to different places, but they never reached their destinations, and indeed some returned at once, saying that only a bird could get through the Turks, who encircled us on all sides.

On the evening of the 8th of May we received news from Belovo that the surrounding Bulgarian villages were ready to rise, provided that Benkoffski and his band went there to encourage them. So it was decided to go to Belovo; and though the refugees in Elédjik protested vehemently against our leaving them, they yielded when we assured them that we should return in a couple of days.

Our descent from Elédjik to the plain was slow and arduous, for the rocks were very steep, and at least eight or ten of our band were missing when we reached the foot of the mountain. They followed after us eventually. That night the rain began to fall, and entirely extinguished whatever chance of success our movement might have had. For six weeks it continued to pour, rendering our flintlocks useless and making a poultice of our gunpowder.

Owing to the rain we reached Belovo only after midday. On our way we passed the village of Sestrimo, the inhabitants of which received us with the customary enthusiasm and begged us to attend divine service in their church. This we did, to their unbounded delight. I heard an old man say, while

tears of joy streamed down his cheeks: "Oh! Lord Jesus Christ, we had heard as in a dream that in holy Russia the Christian warriors are seen in church with their swords by their sides. And we've lived to see it in our own village! God bless you, boys!"

Then we went on to Belovo. As this was then the terminus of the railway line, there were numbers of Europeans living there connected with the railway. This was our first point of contact with civilization, and I begged Benkoffski to moderate some of his Revolutionary ardour, which, truth to tell, was a little too rough for European ideas.

"Europeans, indeed!" was his reply; "I'd like to hang them all! Spies, every one, either in Turkish employ or in that of their own Governments."

However, we stopped for a short time to make ourselves presentable. Benkoffski looked every inch a voivode: he threw off his dripping waterproof and appeared in his uniform, which consisted of a black astrakhan kalpak, half covered with red cloth and ornamented in front by a gilt lion and a plume of peacock's feathers, a short tunic of green serge, faced with red, with brass buttons and yellow aiguillettes; tight white serge breeches with a gold stripe, and high boots reaching to the knees. He was armed with two revolvers, a silver-hilted sword, and a Winchester carbine. He also carried a knapsack, field-glass, compass, etc. The rest of us wore a similar uniform of a less costly description.

The best-looking members of the band formed the vanguard; then followed the pope, with his long beard and flowing hair; then came our standard-bearer, whose moustache was waxed to a point: and lastly the rest of us, in double file. At the outskirts of the town we were received by about twenty armed

men, who presented arms; they were a deputation from the Slavonic colony of Belovo, mostly Dalmatians. They were as excited as we were, and a storm of cheers in every imaginable language burst out as we entered the place.

Benkoffski received all these acclamations as if to the manner born; he never lost his presence of mind for a moment, but just nodded right and left and saluted with his sword. Perhaps he would have been more moved could he have foretold that that day, the 9th of May, was to be the last day of our triumph.

CHAPTER X

THE BURSTING OF THE BUBBLE

WE were invited by a Dalmatian named Ivan Shoutich to enter his house and rest there. Immediately afterwards Benkoffski ordered the telegraph wires to be cut and the railway line to be taken up, which was at once done; though a perfectly useless measure, for it did not interrupt communications between Constantinople and Sarambey, the next station in the direction of the capital. The Austrian stationmaster, a baron, I believe, raised some objections and desired to read to us certain articles of the Capitulations and of the railway company's concession, but was politely requested to refrain from interfering. As for the zaptiés on guard at the station, they were shot.

Then began an interminable series of visits from every European in the place, all being desirous of an interview with the voivode, who soon grew tired of this idle talk. Amongst others a Bulgarian of fifty or sixty years of age came in accompanied by his son, a youth, whom he said he desired to offer to us as the only sacrifice he could make to the national cause. As the lad knew French, Benkoffski consented to take him, in the hope that he might be of service if ever foreign correspondents or emissaries should be sent to us.

We collected all the arms to be got in Belovo, but our host refused to give up his Lefaucheux rifle and revolver; this annoyed Benkoffski, who asked him why he wanted to keep them, as he and the other Europeans had decided to leave for Adrianople. Shoutich, however, protested against such an idea, and said that he was resolved to join our band, and to take his wife, a young Bulgarian, with him. Some ten or fifteen Dalmatians joined us here, and also a German named Albrecht; most of these had at some time taken part in similar movements in their own civilized countries.

After a couple of hours' rest at Belovo, we made the best of our way back to Elédjik, which we reached drenched with the rain and utterly wearied out. The mist was so thick that the enemy might easily have fallen on us unawares. We found dismay reigning at Elédjik. News had been received that the Turks had captured and destroyed the neighbouring villages of Klissoura and Petritch (the latter immediately after our departure), and the same fate awaited Elédjik in a day or two. We had intended that day to attack the Circassian villages close by, as well as Ihtiman, where there was a depot of arms and ammunition. The Dalmatians strongly supported this proposal, but the people of Elédjik would not hear of it. "We're sure to be attacked either to-day or to-morrow, and we mean to stay here to protect our wives and children," they said. All Benkoffski's eloquence was powerless to overcome their resolution, and our influence over them was clearly gone. "Where are the needle-guns you promised us from Roumania? why haven't the reinforcements from the Danube turned up, as you told us of?" we heard on all sides. Meanwhile the rain did not stop for a

moment, and the unfortunate refugees in their huts were wet through.

But all hope was not extinguished yet; in other parts of Bulgaria the insurrection might have succeeded, and we were weak enough to think that a successful encounter with the enemy would provide us with improved weapons.

Early next morning two sentinels brought in a short sword and a little knapsack which they had found at the foot of a tree. We recognized these at once as having belonged to the lad who had been offered to us by his father at Belovo. Doubtless the rain had cooled his patriotic ardour; he had fled, and all our attempts to find him were fruitless. Who could blame him? An educated person who knows French is not so ready to give his flesh to feed the eagles of the Balkan.

The general dismay was increased still further on the 11th, when we could see that the heights above us were occupied by Turkish troops. The fate of Elédjik was sealed. And while we were devising means of flight two messengers arrived in quick succession from Panaghiourishté, each with a letter from the council of war there, enjoining us to return at once, as the place was being attacked by regular troops and bashi-bozouks. This news gave the finishing touch to our despair. Night came on, and on every side the sky was red with flames—we still tried to persuade ourselves that this was a sign that the rebellion had spread to the Rhodope, but those who knew the neighbourhood proved to us that the flames were rising from Bulgarian villages, such as Batak, Boikovo, Sotir, etc., which they named.

The 12th of May was a day of general fear and

despair, heightened by the distant sound of cannon, which froze the very souls of the hapless refugees in Elédjik; towards midday the clouds of smoke rising to the south showed unmistakably that Panaghiourishté was in flames. The insurgents from Panaghiourishté turned to mount their horses, without even waiting for an order from the voivode; the sight of the flames rising from their houses made them forget discipline, the cause, and everything else. But the refugees in Elédjik did not share their views: they cared little for the fate of Panaghiourishté or Petritch, or for anything but their own safety. They protested against being deserted, saying that they were Bulgarians just as much as the others, and that their only hope was in us. The terrified women and children surrounded us, begging us not to leave them, as the Turkish regulars were only half an hour's distance away and would attack the moment we went. At the same time fresh messengers arrived from Petritch and Belovo, stating that those places were being attacked and burnt by bashi-bozouks.

Benkoffski was struck dumb by these successive blows: for the first time his accustomed eloquence failed him. To the pleadings of the distracted and despairing couriers from the different places, each entreating assistance for his own village, he returned no reply. "It's all over," he said, when with the Dalmatians we had drawn apart from the others; "fertile Thrace and its population are doomed to destruction; it's us that posterity will curse for all this misery and desolation. It's quite clear that Panaghiourishté is in ruins, and the same fate awaits these unfortunates here; the very minute we leave, the Turkish regulars will march against them. What do you think? where had we better go? It isn't as if

this terrible news came from only one place. Who knows what's happening in the other three Divisions? Are the Bulgarian villages ablaze there too? I can't believe it. There the agitation was more advanced, the people better prepared—besides, I feel sure that the bands of Bulgarian emigrants in Roumania must have crossed the Danube the moment they heard of our plight." Benkoffski almost recovered his former courage when he spoke of abstract and hypothetical matters, such as the supposititious bands from Roumania. "So," he concluded, "let us try to hold our own for a day or two longer yet: we may get help from where we least expect it."

Our discussion might have been prolonged still further but for the arrival of fresh fugitives from Panaghiourishtê, who spread the tidings far and wide among the insurgents that the town was destroyed and the people massacred by the Turks. They said all this quite openly, in direct violation of the rule which laid down that all news must be taken first to the voivode. One of these fugitives described in detail all that had happened there during the last five or six days; he was no messenger, but had simply fled from the yataghan and the bullets of the Turks. After a desperate struggle with their numerous assailants, bashi-bozouks, regulars, and Circassians, the brave defenders of Panaghiourishté had been obliged to retire from the unequal contest, and the enemy rushed upon the little town, where all were slaughtered without distinction of age or sex. Our informant said that while flying to the forest he turned round and saw with his own eyes how his own wife, who was following in mad flight behind him, with her child in her arms, begging him not to desert her and leave her to fall into the enemy's

hands, was struck down by a bullet and fell; he had not stopped to help her.

"Silence! not another word, you despicable creature," said Benkoffski, "such as you are not fit to pollute this world any longer; you wretch, who were incapable of protecting your own wife, and had the baseness to turn a deaf ear to her agonized appeal! Give the scoundrel fifty blows with a cudgel, so that another time he may know how to defend his country, his wife, and his children." After a few blows he was disarmed and handed over to the guard, as were the other fugitives from Panaghiourishté, some twenty or twenty-five in number; Benkoffski seemed to bear them a grudge for having preferred flight to death in defence of their homes.

After a long and heated discussion, in the course of which we nearly came to blows, we arrived at a decision, though I doubt whether any of us believed it was possible to carry it out: it was resolved that we should hasten to Panaghiourishté, and, after collecting all the insurgents we could find, make a night attack on the enemy's camp in the hope of retrieving the situation. With this object in view we sent messengers to the people of Petritch and Metchka, telling them that we would pass by their encampment, and bidding them to have reinforcements ready to join us; from Elédjik we could take no one, in so critical a state of affairs as prevailed there. Before leaving, Benkoffski addressed the refugees there in a final speech, in which he explained that pressing calls forced him to hasten to the assistance of our Christian brethren who were in danger of falling into the hands of our ferocious enemies, but that as soon as he had routed the

enemy he would return to their aid; meanwhile, he urged them to stand firm and help one another like brothers. This was his farewell, for if any of them believed that they would ever see us again, assuredly this cannot be said of Benkoffski or myself.

However, the speech did not please all the refugees in Elédjik. No sooner had we left than a number of insurgents, chiefly peasants from Moukhovo, Benkoffski's most devoted adherents, hastened through secret paths to a point on the road which we were to take, where they intended to lie in wait for us and to kill the voivode and his comrades, in revenge for his deserting Elédjik at such a moment. They were in ambush, with their fingers on the triggers of their guns, when we passed; but the sight of Benkoffski unnerved them. "When we saw him, we felt as if we were turned to stone," said one of them to me, years after; "we couldn't bring ourselves to shoot at the man who first taught us that we were Bulgarians and that we ought to have a kingdom of our own." The presence of the Dalmatians also contributed to prevent the plot being carried into execution, as they were all on Benkoffski's side.

Without knowing the danger to which we had been exposed on our way, we passed through Poibrené, which was quite deserted, save that in a shop we found a peasant, who was dead-drunk. Out of personal enmity towards the proprietor, to whom he owed money, he had destroyed all the ledgers and registers, and after that he had smashed all the casks of wine and raki; the cellar was knee-deep in alcoholic liquor. Benkoffski ordered him to be brought out and questioned, but the man was too far gone for that. So he was left to wallow in his drunkenness.

That night we camped in a deep valley near the

encampment of the rebels from Metchka; they provided us with food, and said they would send reinforcements to us direct to Panaghiourishté. There was no moon that night, but the burning villages all round furnished light enough; we could even feel the heat of the flames. The whole countryside was lighted up, to the dismay of the hundreds of homeless fugitives concealed that night in the forest, who beheld the destruction, by their inveterate enemies and oppressors, of all that they held dear. We sat in silence; Benkoffski was leaning against a tree; with one hand he held his horse's reins, with the other a crust of bread which he munched moodily. The insurgents of Metchka, who were encamped close by with their families, did not come to us, though on former occasions they had thronged round us. Those of our company who were from Panaghiourishté wished to start off that night for their homes, but we would not allow them to do so. However, many of them did go, in spite of us.

Next day before sunrise we made our way through the forest towards Panaghiourishté. From the heights above we could look down on the little town, but at that moment only the houses on the outskirts were visible through the clouds of smoke and flame. No sound of rifle or gun was now to be heard; both sides had left the field, now covered with mutilated corpses. The population of Panaghiourishté had retreated into a mountain gorge close by; the only inhabitants left were a few old women and children, unable for some reason or other to escape; nothing was known of the fate of these unfortunates. The Turkish regulars were encamped outside, near the church, and only a few bashi-bozouks were pillaging, burning, and killing in the town. Accord-

ing to the statements of eye-witnesses they were being conducted by Daoud Onbashi, who pointed out to them the houses of the principal conspirators. We soon succeeded in collecting some of the insurgents, who came to us with their weapons. They were in rags, with worn and emaciated faces, utterly exhausted, not having eaten food for several days. They gave us an account of the fight with the regulars under Hafiz Pasha, who had been accompanied by a swarm of bashi-bozouks and of local Turks, well acquainted with all the secret paths. The fiercest contest had taken place on May 11th, and our men had held their own bravely, with their antiquated flintlocks, against the Sniders and Winchesters of the enemy. The Turks had thought at first that the rebels were Russians or Servians in disguise, but they convinced themselves of our being merely rayas when they picked up some of our spent bullets and found that they were round, and not conical. Our wooden cannon had done some execution, but became useless after the third discharge; far different, I need not say, were the Krupp guns of the enemy. But Hafiz Pasha's entry into Panaghiourishté cost him dear; nearly two hundred Turks, including several officers, met their death, while the casualties among our men, who fired from under shelter, were comparatively few. True, Panaghiourishté did give upwards of six hundred lives in the cause of Bulgarian freedom during the April insurrection, but these were mainly women, children, and non-combatants, unarmed, and slaughtered after the fight in their houses, where they were hidden in cellars or under the eaves.

Besides all our other deficiencies, the constant rain gave the finishing touch to our downfall. In order

to load one of our muzzle-loaders it was necessary to stand over it, guarding it carefully from the wet, and with a hundred precautions lest the paper cartridges should be exposed to the rain. Several insurgents barricaded themselves in houses and defended themselves there for hours, making many victims among the Turks. Hafiz Pasha tried in vain to induce these to surrender on promise of pardon; they were dislodged only by the employment of cannon. The brigand Todor was one of these, and after killing about twenty-five Turks he contrived eventually to make good his escape. "If these komitas had had twenty men like that," said Hafiz Pasha, "we should not have found it so easy to get into that Russian village!" Space fails me to describe all the deeds of heroism that were done; had the rest of Bulgaria risen and resisted in the same way as Panaghiourishté, the rebellion would have lasted for at least two or three months.

CHAPTER XI

THE FLIGHT THROUGH THE BALKAN

HOWEVER, for us to attempt to attack the Turkish troops, armed with Martinis and Sniders, would have been madness. We therefore decided to make for the Stara Planina, where we hoped to find a hiding-place until things should mend. We were about seventy-five in number, including the Dalmatians. After three and a half hours' march we reached the ruined village of Petritch; it was deserted, the villagers having retreated to the mountains. However, they came down to meet us, and seemed not to have lost hope yet. We encouraged them, and assured them that we should find reinforcements on the other side of the Balkans and come to their aid. We then went on, along the same path by which we had come some ten or twelve days before, but in what different circumstances! Then all had been joy and hope in the success of our cause.

The night journey was like so many I have already described. Many of our stragglers fell off and disappeared. Dawn found us climbing a steep rock, one of the highest in the Balkan chain, called the "Baba." Here the sun shone and warmed our exhausted frames. The scene was one of enchanting beauty, but to a hungry insurgent flying from the Turks the charms of nature are of small account.

We tramped on, over the rocks, seeking some path. Towards midday the rain began to fall, and a thick mist covered all the ground. We did not know in what direction to advance, having no guide, and occasionally retraced our steps. Not a sign of a shepherd or cattle-drover was to be seen anywhere. As dusk came on a violent storm arose, such as none of us had ever experienced before. It was a terrible night. We encamped on an exposed mountain-side, with the rain pouring on us, and the only sound that came from us was the chattering of our teeth. The pope from Poibrené, Kiril by name, who had followed us with the great cross of his church, spent the night in prayer. We could just discern his form as he rose and knelt down, but as he turned to the west instead of to the east, I am in doubt whether his prayers reached their destination.

The day seemed to differ very little from the night. We tried to regulate our course by the compass, but it appeared to guide us astray. After wandering in every direction we finally spent the night in the same place as the previous night; the rain continued to fall. And we had eaten nothing for thirty-six hours. We were utterly desperate: our fate seemed to be inevitable death. The Turks need not give themselves the trouble of pursuing us: starvation would finish us off in a couple of days.

After midday a slight breeze sprang up and cleared away the mist which had closed in round us. What was our joy to see at no very great distance a sheepfold round which sheep and lambs were grazing. To add to our happiness, with our telescopes we could discern the shepherd engaged in baking bread. At once ten or twelve of our party started off on a foraging expedition, and we recom-

mended them to bring not only fifteen or twenty lambs, but also the shepherd, to serve as our guide over the labyrinth of mountains which surrounded us. We waited for the return of our emissaries in a very different frame of mind from that of the last two days; some even ventured to hum the almost forgotten Revolutionary songs, and our mouths watered as we looked towards the sheepfold, which was again wrapped in mist. Our heroine Yonka, the Dalmatian's wife, whose condition was pitiable, had contrived to stow away secretly two or three crusts of bread for an emergency. But now that we were to have fresh supplies she produced her hoard and distributed it all round. It was but a mouthful apiece, but I never enjoyed anything more.

Meanwhile about fifteen minutes had elapsed, when some of us thought they heard gunshots from the direction of the fold. We paid little attention to this, but suddenly two of the foraging party dashed back, covered with blood, and crying, "They've shot us! The place is alive with Turks!"

Thus vanished our hopes of procuring a meal: we leapt on our horses and made off in the opposite direction, poor Yonka weeping and hastily collecting certain articles of clothing which she had washed and hung out to dry. The two wounded men explained that as soon as they reached the valley they were met by a regular fusillade, and saw several of the party fall dead. Only five or six returned to us. We struck off into an inaccessible ravine, which had probably never been trodden by human foot since the creation of the world. To add to our misery, the rain began to fall once more. For two hours we wandered down the ravine without reaching the foot of the mountain, where we could

hear the distant rumbling of the torrent. Our path was blocked at every moment by the fallen trunk of some gigantic oak-tree which lay stretched out on the greensward. Seeing that it was impossible to make our way down to the stream, we decided to turn off to the left, without knowing where this would bring us out. According to the compass, we were proceeding in a westerly direction, but we had little confidence in its accuracy. We tried to make as little noise as possible, but it was enough to displace a stone by an incautious movement to set it rolling down and forming gradually a sort of avalanche, which thundered down the mountain-side and terrified the bears, stags, wild boars, etc., of which we caught occasional glimpses, and which had probably never heard anything of the kind before. With the fall of night the cold grew more piercing, and many of our party made up their mind to leave us, being unable to endure hunger, fatigue, and the inclemency of the weather combined.

We halted in a kind of enclosure formed by fallen trees, and encamped for the night. With the help of our gunpowder we lighted three or four fires, there being little or no fear of being seen in that remote spot and at dead of night. The voivode, who still retained a semblance of authority, the Dalmatians, Yonka, and Pope Kiril formed a group round one fire, the rest dispersed as they pleased. But sleep was out of the question, as our hunger would not let us rest. We had eaten nothing but a few blades of sorrel for many hours. So dire was our necessity that we decided upon killing a horse and roasting it. But most of us, and especially Yonka, ate of it with deepest aversion, and the pope would have none of it. No doubt if we had not seen the

horse killed and cut up we should have thought no more of it; but such was the moral effect of the sight that within an hour of our eating the horseflesh we were most of us rolling on the ground in agony. Fortunately we had with us a couple of bottles of raki, and, though the Revolutionary canon strictly forbade its use, still this was an unforeseen emergency, and most of us ventured to take some. In the morning our pains had disappeared. We continued our attempt to reach the foot of the ravine, but at every twenty steps we were obliged to halt and rest, and many of us could not advance at all without the help of others. We examined our guns, but not more than ten were in a condition to be discharged—the rest had been rendered completely useless by the ten days' rain to which they had been exposed. As for our horses, they were quite done up. It was late in the afternoon before we reached the plain. We sat down to rest and wait for the remainder of the party, who were lagging behind with the horses. Soon about forty-five of us were collected together, amongst them being Yonka, whose petticoats were hanging in shreds, each bramble she had passed having levied its contribution.

We were still waiting for the twenty or twenty-five belated comrades, when we heard the voice of a shepherd calling his flock. Instinctively we rose to our feet and proceeded stealthily through the mist in the direction of the voice, but seeing nothing many of us thought we had been mistaken. Just then we heard the shepherd quite close to us, urging on his flock in the purest Bulgarian. Without taking the slightest precaution we rushed forward, intending to seize first the shepherd and then his

sheep, when suddenly the cry "Fire!" rang out in Turkish, and the bullets from twenty or more rifles whizzed past us. Every man of us turned and fled without thought of his comrades, and we were lost to each other in the mist. After some moments' flight I found myself with about twenty others at the foot of another ravine. We waited half an hour or more, but neither our lost companions nor the enemy made their appearance. The German Albrecht, who had joined our party at Belovo, professed to think that we had made a mistake, and that those who had fired were not Turks but our comrades coming down the ravine. He even volunteered to go out and reconnoitre, in spite of our dissuasion; but in a few minutes he flew back panting and breathless, with his big slouched hat pierced in one or two places, to say that the Turks were numerous, and that he had seen them dispatching several of our wounded fellow-rebels.

Whether the Turks, knowing the condition we were in, had deliberately imitated the shepherd's cry to lure us on to destruction, or whether we had unconsciously blundered into a village under cover of the mist, I am unable to say. But we lost from fifteen to twenty of our unhappy party in the encounter.

We could do nothing for the comrades we had lost, so we tried to climb the ravine, which was even steeper than that down which we had just come, which had cost us fifteen men! The rain was unceasing. Benkoffski, who until this last disaster had tried to preserve his dignity and presence of mind, had now completely broken down. As for poor Yonka, she wept unceasingly, and begged her husband at every moment to take her back to Belovo

(which was a dream), or else to kill her and free her from her torments. I fear she aroused but little sympathy, and, indeed, some of our party went so far as to attribute all our misfortunes to her, it being an old brigand tradition that no enterprise prospers in which a woman is engaged.

Our path became steeper and more fatiguing every moment. Moreover, we had no notion of the direction we were taking. This was the fourth day of our wanderings on the Balkan, and we had already lost twenty men. During this time not only had we failed to procure any food, but we had not even met a single man to tell us where we were or what direction to take. This was a precaution adopted by the Turks, who had ordered all shepherds, cattle-drovers, and the like to come down to the villages and to afford no assistance to the rebels. In some few cases the shepherds were left at the folds, but only to serve as decoys, and twenty or thirty bashi-bozouks installed inside quietly awaited the arrival of the famished and footsore "komitajis."

Late that evening we happened to come upon three Bulgarians, peasants from the village of Linian, about half an hour's distance from the place where we met them. They had no bread to give us, and said they had been to Zlatitsa to conduct a party of bashi-bozouks. We offered to reward them handsomely if they would guide us to Teteven, but they refused, alleging that the danger was too great. Fearing that they would betray us, we kept them close prisoners. By chance we found that evening a bag of flour, dropped probably by a band of bashi-bozouks. When we halted, a kind of dough was hastily kneaded of it, and we put it to bake on a wood fire, while armed sentries guarded it. After

about ten minutes' baking impatient cries were raised: "That'll do, it's burning!" and the pope was commissioned to divide it equally into shares, which he did under the supervision of forty impartial eyes.

The same night we came upon a shepherd, who was so terrified that several minutes elapsed before he could answer our questions. From his hut we took a jar of milk and a lump of salt, for which we paid him lavishly. Bread or flour he had none, as it was strictly measured out to him every day by the Turks, to prevent his being able to give anything to the insurgents. His son offered to conduct us some part of the way to Teteven, and we thereupon released our prisoners, after making them swear on the Cross that they would not betray us. That night's journey was the roughest we had yet experienced; there was no trace of a path, and each one of us must have fallen down at least twenty times before dawn. Many of us, worn out both physically and mentally, refused to go on any farther. At last we came to an almost perpendicular descent, which we at first declined to attempt. But our guide insisted, and we made the best of our way down, accompanied by a torrent of falling stones. Every man as he reached the bottom stretched himself out and fell asleep, so weary were we.

In the morning we found ourselves on a sloping meadow, covered with sloe-bushes, of the fruit of which we hastened to avail ourselves. Here for the first time for five days the sun vouchsafed us his countenance. Our saturated clothes steamed as though in an oven. The unfortunate horses, reduced to skeletons, greedily nibbled the green grass at their feet. But we were far from rejoicing at the improve-

ment in the weather. The previous night's journey had cost us another ten men; at this rate five days more would see the end of our band.

According to our guide we were now not far from Teteven, and he proposed to take us only a little farther to the hut of a cattle-drover whom he knew and who would conduct us for the rest of our journey. He inquired with much curiosity the reason why we had lions on our kalpaks, and put many other questions, finally observing that we did not seem to be evil-intentioned people, and that he was sorry his father had accepted money from us. This induced us to reward him still more, and as the cattle-drover he had spoken of was not to be found we sent him back. The Turks were evidently on the *qui vive*, and this encouraged our failing hope that perhaps the insurrection had been successful at Tirnovo and Gabrovo.

After our guide's departure we halted in a valley, where we lay down to rest and to let our horses graze. Some of the party tried to mend their sandals, others hunted for sorrel to satisfy the gnawing pangs of hunger, the rest sought relief in sleep. Just then an elderly Bulgarian stumbled in among us, and would have retreated when he saw us, but he was held fast. "For God's sake let me go, if you are Christians!" he said. "If the Turks hear that I've met you, I'm lost, and my poor children will starve!"

We asked him eagerly for news of Teteven and Tirnovo, and if the Bulgarians there had revolted. His reply was as follows: "There are two thousand Turkish troops and bashi-bozouks at Teteven. Every day they ransack the whole neighbourhood for insurgents, and they threaten us with death if we

dare to go out on the mountain. I've only been allowed out under the guard of two gipsies, and they're waiting for me yonder. Let me go, do, and be off yourselves before you're seen!"

This speech, the truth of which there was no doubting, finally dispersed all our hopes as to Tirnovo. Complete demoralization set in among us. Our last resource was gone. Some threw their weapons on the ground, cursing the hour when they became insurgents; others bewailed their hard fate in being doomed to perish so young. All discipline was gone, and Benkoffski did not even attempt the hopeless task of encouraging us. First of all, the Dalmatians decided to leave us, it being, as they rightly urged, quite useless for them to continue wandering thus aimlessly over the Balkan. They determined, therefore, being provided with Austrian passports, to give themselves up to the Turks at Teteven, and to say that they had been compelled by force to follow us from Belovo.

Others wished to return to Thrace, while some refused to move from the spot, saying that they preferred to die where they were. As for Benkoffski and myself, we made up our minds to try and reach Servia or Roumania, provided we could only remain hidden in some cavern or other, to rest for a few days and recruit our exhausted strength. We therefore called aside Stantcho (so I believe the Bulgarian we had just met was called) and promised him fifty medjidiés (£8 or £9) if he could find us some safe place of refuge for a few days. At first he refused to assist us in any way, but eventually he consented to show us a place he knew of. So our band broke up. The Dalmatians threw aside their arms and Revolutionary badges, as did also certain Bulgarians who

were resolved to go with them and give themselves up to the Turks. Needless to say we were all deeply moved. After a farewell embrace we went on our various ways. At the request of the Dalmatians we took with us one of their number who had lost his passport; the pope, Father Kiril, also begged to accompany us, and his services had been too great for us to reject his demand. We left our ill-fated horses tied to trees, and were on the point of starting. A few peasants from Moukhovo remained who could not make up their minds to any resolution. They entreated us to take them with us, but this would only have endangered the safety of the whole party. However, they persisted, and we were compelled to threaten them with our revolvers. "Don't desert us like this, voivode! Father Pope, have pity on us! Why did you persuade us to burn down our village, and now leave us to perish here?" they cried with tears in their eyes.

We could not endure their heart-rending reproaches, which were but too justifiable: it was a terrible scene.

The four of us soon reached the cave which had been pointed out to us. It was so narrow that a bundle of straw set on fire at the entrance would have been enough to suffocate us all. We remained in this unenviable situation for nearly an hour, but there were no signs of Stantcho, who had promised to bring us food as soon as opportunity offered. We began to have serious misgivings as to the sincerity of this man, who might even now be conducting a party of bashi-bozouks to our hiding-place. We therefore left it and climbed up the mountain-side until we came to a sheltered spot where we were safe from observation.

I learned subsequently that on the very next day the bashi-bozouks found out that this Stantcho had had dealings with komitas on the Balkan. Without much ado he was seized and closely questioned. I cannot say if he had been seen while conducting us to the cave, or if some of our party betrayed him. All I know is that he was dragged off to the mountain, and, with blows and threats, ordered to show the place where he had hidden us. While crossing a bridge over the little river Ril, poor Stantcho, fearing that he might not be able to withstand the blows and torture, and that he would be forced to reveal our hiding-place, threw himself from the bridge into the river, where he met a hero's death. I regret that I am not in a position to give a more detailed account of this noble act on the part of a poor peasant, who willingly sacrificed his life for our sakes.

After two hours' rest we made our way to the top of the mountain, and from thence saw a hut belonging to some cattle-drovers. We approached it with the greatest precautions, having satisfied ourselves that there were no Turks concealed there. The drovers gave us some milk and maize-bread.

While the food was being got ready, our simple-minded hosts, who could not take their eyes off us, asked incessant questions, to which we replied with the greatest alacrity, partly because our lives depended on their good-will, partly because the prospect of a meal disposed us to be more cheerful.

"Who knows how much money they give you for this work you're doing?" volunteered one.

"Why, of course," said another, "they don't do it for nothing; the likes of them get plenty of money.

I shouldn't wonder, now, if each of them was paid ten pounds a year!"

"Just enough to spend on tobacco, eh?" said the third, implying that the sum was an enormous one.

"I expect, now, if the truth was known, Russia was behind all this business of yours?" said the oldest of the three, pointing to the north. "We're all her children, you know: it's to her we look to free us from the infidels."

"Ah! But what about the Holy Sepulchre?" said the first. "She'll want to turn the Turks out of that before she raises a finger to help us. But Russia's the country where they keep the faith and God's laws. I've heard tell, by popes and old people, as how that's where the True Cross is kept, and also the wooden sword of the Blessed Virgin, that the Turks had when they took Stamboul. That's why no soldiers can stand against her Christian armies! The Cross is in front of their cannon when they march."

CHAPTER XII

VELIO THE TRAITOR

WE spent the night in this hut, as they assured us that since the troubles they had been visited only once by bashi-bozouks. The following day, May 20th, we were surprised to see deep snow covering the ground; but we were obliged to move on, and one of the drovers, named Neio, consented to conduct us to the hut of a friend of his, close to Teteven, where we could remain for a few days. We therefore started on our journey, and the cattle were turned out after us, so as to obliterate all trace of our footsteps.

Our guide Neio insisted on walking in front, and on our being careful to tread exactly in his footsteps, so as to make it appear as if only one person had passed that way. This succeeded admirably so long as the path was tolerably good, but soon we came to such steep, slippery ascents that every now and then one of us would fall and leave a complete impression of his figure in the snow, so accurate that one could tell at a glance what was the calibre of his revolver. The only living creature we came across that day was a bear, which fled from us. Our guide wished to continue the journey all night, and with great difficulty we induced him to let us sleep in a hollow, where the fire which we lighted could be seen only from a balloon, and even then only if poised exactly above

our heads. Here we were comparatively comfortable, except that the snow on the trees overhead melted under the influence of our fire, and we were obliged to change our place more than once.

The next day we reached the cabin to which we were being taken. Our guide preceded us, and soon came out again, accompanied by a tall, thin Bulgarian, of about fifty, with a heavy black moustache, small, glittering eyes, and an immense nose. From his lithe and active frame it could easily be seen that his life had been spent in the pure mountain air of the Balkan. He approached us with the air of an old friend, and greeted us with the greatest cordiality, when, upon noticing the pope, he flew towards him, seized his hand, and kissed it reverently. "The moment I saw you," he said, "I knew whom I'd got to deal with! I'd give my life for such as you!"

Benkoffski raised his eyes and cast a stealthy look at the stranger, then turned to me with a glance which meant "At last we've found the man we want!"

"But," continued the stranger, "I expect there's something you want first of all, and that's bread. Isn't that so? Shall I go and get you a mouthful to eat?"

No need to say what our reply was. Our benefactor was off in a minute to procure food for us.

"I think we can rely fully on this man," said Father Kiril.

"I shouldn't wonder if he turned out to belong to the Revolutionary Committee himself," added Benkoffski.

"If only he brings us something to eat, I don't care what he is," said the practical Dalmatian.

Soon our new acquaintance returned, bearing a large panful of milk, which we devoured with ravenous appetite. When we had satisfied our hunger we assailed him with questions: Could he undertake to hide us for a few days till things became a little quieter? Could he find us a guide to take us to Troyan? and so forth. To all these questions he answered affirmatively, the only apprehension our benefactor acknowledged being a fear lest the drover who had brought us to him should eventually betray us. This imputation the latter rejected with scorn, and we dismissed him with a suitable reward, which did not escape the notice of Velio, our new friend. In the course of conversation he told us that he had lost sight of his son for some months past, and feared that he had taken part in the insurrection. By a curious coincidence, Benkoffski knew this son of his, whom he had met in Roumania. This was therefore a fresh reason for trusting implicitly in Velio. He then left us to procure us some tobacco and provisions, and though we had no doubts on the score of his loyalty, we thought it safer to retreat rather farther into the brushwood. Late in the afternoon we heard sounds as of some one approaching. For the sake of precaution we levelled our guns in the direction from which the sound proceeded, but were relieved in five or ten minutes at seeing the form of our benefactor approaching, and apparently surprised at not finding us where he had left us. We emerged from our hiding-place and came out to meet him. He then told us that he would take us to a cave on the summit of the mountain, known only to himself and to a former companion of his who was dead.

"Once you're there," he said, "you need fear no one; you'll be as comfortable as in a wine-shop in Roumania. I only found the place out myself by chance one day through seeing an eagle alight there with food in its beak. Thinking it might have its nest there, I climbed up the rock, and that's how I discovered the cave."

We consented, and began to scale the steep rock, covered with frozen snow. The cave was, as he had said, on the very topmost ridge of the Balkan. We had to crawl, one by one, across the trunk of a tree stretched over the abyss to reach the cavern. At first we hesitated, for the prospect was terrifying, but there was nothing else to be done. Our guide was the first to cross over, and helped us one after another to reach the haven of refuge. When we were all four safely across, we gave Velio a number of commissions, which he promised to execute: he was to bring us tobacco, preserved meat, and various other necessaries.

"That'll be all right," he cried cheerfully, pocketing the money we gave him. "This time to-morrow you'll have the tobacco and the rest of the things without fail."

After he had gone we tried to settle down for the night. The cavern was some fifteen feet long, six in height, and not more than about three in breadth, so that we had to stand in Indian file. On all sides were steep rocks, and the only access was by the wooden bridge. If that should happen to fall, we were fated to remain for ever in the cave.

I don't think any one of us slept for twenty minutes that night. The cold on those heights was piercing, and the wind howled through our abode. Again despair reigned among us: we

seemed fated never to leave the Balkan alive. At last the dawn came, but so thick was the mist that we could see scarcely ten steps ahead. We agreed that as soon as old Velio made his appearance we should protest against remaining any longer in such an eyrie. About noon he came, but failed to produce any of the articles he had undertaken to bring. He had not dared to buy the things, he said, for fear of incurring suspicion, as the bashi-bozouks were on the look out. We requested him, therefore, to conduct us to Troyan as soon as possible. He promised to see to this, and at our pressing request helped us out of the cave. We remained for the rest of the day in a gorge lower down the mountain-side, and he went off to his herd, promising that he would be with us later on with the provisions we had ordered. Here we stayed all night, but though the rain was unceasing the cold was much less penetrating than up at the summit.

That day (May 23rd) Velio made his usual appearance about noon, apparently much disturbed in mind, though he seemed anxious to conceal this fact from us. He brought us bread and sour milk, but had not carried out our errands. "The place is alive with Turks, and I don't know what to do," he sighed. "As I was coming here from the village I was met by a party of them who took away everything I had on me and gave me a good thrashing. It's a good thing I hadn't bought that tobacco and meat, or it would have been all up with us. And I really think you'd better change your clothes, and let me look after these guns and pistols of yours for you. To tell you the truth, I don't much care about being seen with you as long as you're in this get-up." We

assured him, however, that we would not part with our weapons, and he said no more about it for the time. When he left we repeated our various commissions, and he promised again to fulfil them, though as for conducting us to Troyan he thought that was out of the question just then.

The next day (May 24th) brought no improvement in the weather, and, to add to our discomfort, Velio did not arrive at the appointed time. We waited for several hours, and became seriously alarmed. One or two of us suggested flight, but this was impossible, as we were quite ignorant of the locality and did not know what direction to take. Benkoffski had by this time entirely lost all courage or hope; he scarcely spoke when addressed, and the whole party was plunged in gloom. But there was a sudden change for the better when we heard the voice of our preserver, Velio, late in the afternoon, calling to his cattle; as he drew near he broke into a brigand song, which was evidently meant as a sign that all was well. We therefore came out boldly to meet him, even Benkoffski's countenance lighting up.

"Well, lads, you're in luck," was Velio's greeting, as he came up panting. "What do you think?" he went on, but keeping his eyes fixed to the ground as he spoke. "Every single Turk in the place has cleared out, as if the devil was after them. I met two this morning who'd overslept themselves, and as they passed me one of them gave me two boxes on the ear—my head's still buzzing with them. They say twelve battalions have crossed over from Servia, and the Turks have begun making forts round Sofia. One of the zaptiés who spent last night in our village was so excited that he walked up and down all night, cursing and swearing, and never let his chibouk go

out once. They say Russia's got a finger in it, and that cannon-shots were heard this morning."

All this fell on our rising spirits like oil on the flames. Needless to say, we believed every word of it, the more so as we had for the last three months been convinced that as soon as our rebellion broke out Servia and Russia, too, would join in. The little touch of the sleepless and excited zaptié restored our courage and hopes to what they were at the beginning of the insurrection.

"Thank God! then all the blood spilt hasn't been in vain, and we shan't be accursed by posterity for deceiving the people," cried Benkoffski. "Go on, old man, tell us all you know."

"Yes; tell us what we ought to do," we all cried. "How are we to get out of this wilderness and join our brothers in arms?"

Velio remained silent. He continued to look at the ground, and, strange to say, his forehead was covered with perspiration, in spite of the cold. But we were not inclined at that moment to carry out psychological investigations.

"The best thing I can think of for you, my lads," he said at last, "is to take you to Troyan; but, of course, you do just as you please—don't imagine I want to get rid of you. Still, perhaps, this 'll be a good time, as they've got their hands full just now. I'll take you to my uncle, who lives in a hut just across the stream down yonder, and if any one can conduct you safe to Troyan, he's the man."

We agreed enthusiastically, and prepared to start. But, not having had anything to eat all day, we asked him to bring us a little bread before leaving. However, he assured us that his uncle's hut was quite close, and that we should get all we wanted there.

"Well, then, let's be off!" exclaimed Benkoffski, and we echoed his words, Pope Kiril meanwhile muttering a prayer.

"There's just one thing, boys," said Velio. "Don't you think you'd better leave these here," pointing to our guns, "and then I can bring them along quietly afterwards? But you know best, of course." But we refused once more to comply with this request, and showed signs of impatience to be off. Our benefactor rose, crossed himself several times, kissed Pope Kiril's hand, and then led the way. It was just about sunset. We followed him down the steep incline, first Benkoffski, then Pope Kiril, then the Dalmatian, and last of all myself. After about fifteen minutes' descent we reached the plain. Before us lay a green meadow, across which stretched a path; this was unsatisfactory, for paths had but little attraction for us. At the other end of the meadow flowed the stream, and the opposite bank was overgrown with brushwood and sloped upwards until it was lost in the mist. The meadow was of considerable breadth, and we hesitated before exposing ourselves so much, but our guide urged us on and showed us the way.

I don't know what my comrades thought, but I felt serious misgivings at this want of precaution, and dared not raise my eyes. However, we went on until we came to within five or six yards of the stream, which we could not see, though we heard its rumbling, for the undergrowth which covered the bank concealed it from us. Then we saw that the river was spanned by a primitive bridge, made of two planks, which curiously enough seemed to be quite new, and to bear no trace of footmarks, though the recent heavy rains might have obliterated these, and, besides, the

region was a very remote one. Just here our guide pointed with his finger towards the opposite bank and said: "Do you see that hill, boys? that's where my uncle's cabin is; and, please God, we shall all spend the night there. Now, then, close up and let's cross the bridge, and then you'll be all right."

We crossed the bridge in silence, preserving the same order. I observed that the stream was exceedingly rapid, and the banks very steep and several yards high. So thick was the undergrowth that it formed a kind of canopy over the river.

Velio and Benkoffski had already crossed the bridge. The rest of us were on our way, when I ventured to draw attention to the fact that the bridge seemed to have been newly built, and that this was suspicious.

"Never mind about that," said Benkoffski. "We're not on the Maritsa bridge at Philippopolis, but in the Balkan."

Those were his last words. He had scarcely finished speaking when I saw our preserver, the devoted Velio, throw himself down and creep hastily on all fours behind a fallen tree, where he remained hidden. I could not understand what this meant, and was just on the point of asking him, when something happened which sealed my lips and paralysed my powers of speech. From both sides of the stream a volley of musketry resounded, and the bullets buzzed round us like a swarm of flies. "Fire! Let 'em have it! Shoot them down!" such were the exclamations, in Turkish, which accompanied the fusillade.

I am not in a position to say anything more as to the fate of my comrades. The frightful scene which so suddenly burst upon me deprived me of reason, of

courage, of sensation. I cannot boast of having seized my gun, of striving to defend myself. No; I did nothing of the kind, nor can I say whether the others did. Besides, with whom was I to fight?—with the wind, or the brushwood? Nothing was to be seen of our assailants. The whole occurrence seemed to me a dream.

A cloud of dense smoke at once covered the bridge, on which I must have remained petrified for several seconds. All that I remember is the sight of Benkoffski as he writhed in agony, with both arms extended, and finally fell on his face. He held one of his revolvers in his hand.

* * * * *

More than ten years after these events I revisited the site of the fatal bridge. I happened to be spending the day at Teteven, and related the story to the friends in whose company I was. They had heard of the incident, but the details were unknown to them. So they pressed me to go with them to the very spot next day, and they contrived that Velio, who was known to several of them, and who was at that time in the service of the mayor of Teteven, should also be present. The mayor told him that some of his friends were going to have a picnic by the river, and that all the necessary preparations were to be made for that purpose. So we started off, fifteen or twenty of us; and there, when we got to the river, was old Velio waiting for us. I recognized him at once, from a distance, by his movements; he had changed very little during the ten years, except that his moustache, from grey, had grown quite white. I could have

sworn that he was wearing the same clothes and smoking the same chibouk as in 1876.

We had agreed among ourselves to say nothing about the year of the insurrection, but to make out that we were simply out for pleasure. I led the way, recognizing the various landmarks, and at last came on the very spot: it was all exactly as in 1876, but for the bridge, which no longer existed, and the bashi-bozouks. Old Velio grew pale; he trembled and became confused, though as yet nothing had been said to him. We sat down, lighted a fire, and prepared to enjoy ourselves; but though five or six of us surrounded Velio and pressed him in the most cordial manner to sit down and partake of our meal, he was obviously very uneasy. At last one of the party asked him if he remembered the events of the fatal year, and if any komitas had been captured in those parts. "Yes, yes, there were a few, but not many; this was rather out of their way," muttered Velio. I was sorry for the old man, and nudged one of my friends to cut this inquisition short.

"Haven't you ever heard of Hajji Ghiorghi, the voivode" (it is by this name that Benkoffski is remembered in the Teteven region), "and the priest with the long beard, who came from over yonder, by Panaghiourishté—weren't they killed near a bridge somewhere about here?"

"You must have heard tell about it, Velio," said some one else. Velio did not know which way to look: in his agitation he dropped his pipe into the fire, whence it was rescued by one of the party.

"Yes, yes, I've heard about it," faltered the old man in faint tones: "it was Neio, of Brosen, who brought them over the Balkan and then betrayed them."

"God punish the black traitor!" said some of my friends.

"Was it near here that they were killed?" asked another. Velio looked round at us all, then turned as if involuntarily towards the place, and, pointing, said, "Just there." We all asked him to tell us how it had happened. He then told us how Neio, of Brosen, had conducted the four insurgents, pretending that he was leading to the monastery of Troyan, and had betrayed them to the bashi-bozouks, who lay in wait by the bridge; he himself had known nothing of the matter, but Neio had complained of him to the bashi-bozouks, who had given him a severe thrashing.

"Were the four all killed at the same place, Velio, or did any of them manage to escape?" he was asked.

"So far as I could make out, Hajji Ghiorghi—Lord have mercy on him!—was killed on the spot, and the pope was wounded: there was one from Servia or Montenegro, I don't know which, who was taken next day: and there was one more, a thin one, that was knocked on the head about a week later, over towards Shipkovo," said Velio.

The party had some difficulty in restraining their laughter, for the "thin one" was sitting in their midst. "So, then, not one of them was saved alive?" Velio shook his head without a word.

One of my friends stood up. "Velio," he said, "we know exactly how it all happened, so you'd better tell us the truth, and then God will forgive you, and so will we, if you've done wrong. You're only an ignorant man, and you may have been forced to do it by threats and ill-treatment. What's done is

done. As for the dead, God have mercy on them. Here is the 'thin one,' as you call him. You want us to believe that he was killed at Shipkovo, but if you look well at him you'll recognize him all right: it was he who brought us to this very place."

The old man's condition is more easily imagined than described: I think he would have preferred it infinitely if we had fallen on him with sticks and stones. To quiet him, I spoke to him in the most friendly tones, recalling to his memory every circumstance of our first meeting: he just listened to what I said, trembling all over. When his treachery was made manifest, the whole company broke out into excuses for him, saying that in times like those a poor man could not help himself, and so forth. In order to relieve the tension, we asked Velio to take us to the place itself, and to show us where Hajji Ghiorghi had fallen, where the Turks had been concealed, where he had hidden himself when they fired at us, and so on. No traces of the episode were visible: no sign of the bridge remained, nor had any cross or tomb been erected there. The ambush was five or six paces from the bank on the other side of the river: a couple of fallen trees had screened the bashi-bozouks, who were sixteen in number. The only signs of an encounter having taken place there were some bullet-marks on the trunks of the trees round, almost obliterated in the lapse of years: it was the old man who drew our attention to them. On one of these trees we carved the name of the hero and the date of his death, and we decided to erect a wooden cross on the place where he fell. Velio readily undertook this task, and set to work at once. As no one said a harsh word to him, he gradually recovered his presence of mind.

When the cross was set in place, Velio returned to one side and began praying and crossing himself. "Pray for the soul of Ghiorghi, and for his forgiveness!" said one of the party.

"Forgive me, Ghiorghi, forgive me, lad! I've sinned. Lord have mercy on my sinful soul!" he prayed, and kissed the cross reverentially. After this he seemed quite a different person. "For the last ten years," he said, "I've been a lost man: I've never said a word about it, but I couldn't sleep for thinking of it. Now I feel relieved of all my troubles, just as if I'd received absolution: I don't care now if you kill me."

He could not deny the fact of his treachery in conducting us to the bridge; he even confessed that the last time he came to us in the cavern to lead us to the slaughter one of the bashi-bozouks had accompanied him and was hidden among the trees; this man would have shot him if he had failed to bring us to the ambush; what he had done, he said, was under the influence of blows and torture. According to his story, the very day after we first met him the bashi-bozouks came to him accompanied by Neio, who denounced him as the man to whose charge he had handed us over: he was then forced by threats of torture to act as he had done. Some truth there may have been in his story.

Benkoffski's headless trunk was left where it lay; eventually it received Christian burial, through the pious care of an old woman who lived near there. His head was cut off, and Pope Kiril was made to carry it, first to Teteven, then to Orkhanié, and finally to Sofia: eventually the Turkish authorities handed it over to a Bulgarian priest to bury it, at Sofia, some ten days after. Father Kiril, who

was grievously wounded, suffered much before his merciful release by death in the prison hospital at Constantinople several months later. The cross of his church at Poibrenê, which he had carried with him, was taken to Sofia, together with Benkoffski's severed head, and eventually, at the request of the Bulgarian community, was given up to them by the Turkish governor. After the liberation it was restored with due solemnity to the church to which it belongs, and where it is now erected with a suitable inscription.

The Dalmatian Stefo was captured and taken to Sofia, where he was set at liberty through the intervention of the Austrian Government. Later on he was again arrested, and it is said that when at the time of the Russian advance the prisoners were taken out of the prison at Philippopolis and shot by Turkish soldiers, he escaped by lying down and feigning death. His services to the insurrection have not profited him much. I found him in 1886 breaking stones on the roadway: he seemed quite indifferent when I recalled the past to his memory, and appeared to take no interest in our former adventures.

* * * * *

During our wanderings over the Balkans, Benkoffski told us his real name and birthplace. "There's no use now in concealing anything from one another," he said, "when any moment may see the end of us all. My name is not Ghiorghi Benkoffski; I am called Gabriel Groueff Khlutoff, from Koprivshtitsa. First of all I was a cloth-worker, then I went to Constantinople, and from

there I wandered over Asia and Egypt; but I never could contrive to put by a little money; I haven't got the knack of it; I can't tell lies right and left, and be bowing and scraping to the Turks all the time. So at last I gave it up, and made my way to Roumania, to try and live a freer and more congenial life. There I fell in with some of our nationalist folk, and that's how I came to be wandering in my own country, under a false name. If any one of us manages to survive, let him tell about me when there is any talk of our national affairs."

It was not by chance that he had called himself Benkoffski. This was the name of a Pole, exiled by the Russian Government to the island of Saghalien, who had escaped from there to Japan, where the French Minister had taken him under his protection. (Even to this day many Polish emigrants, in Turkey and elsewhere, enjoy French protection.) The Minister gave him a French passport, with which he returned to Europe, settling in Turkey, where there are many Polish refugees. At Diarbekir the real Benkoffski happened to make the acquaintance of Zaimoff, a Bulgarian insurgent, who was imprisoned there by the Turks, and who was planning to escape. Zaimoff offered Benkoffski five pounds for his French passport, the loss of which would be no great hardship for the Pole, who could easily obtain a Turkish travelling permit. He consented to part with it, and on the strength of this passport Zaimoff made his way safely to Roumania in 1875.

When our Benkoffski was deputed in that year to go to Constantinople with the mission of setting fire to the capital, at the same time as the Stara

Zagora insurrection broke out—a plan which was a failure in every particular—Zaimoff gave him the passport, and thus Gabriel Khlutoff became Ghiorghi Benkoffski.

Before that he had been in great poverty, and had earned a precarious living by selling things for a few halfpence in the streets of Bucharest. He was barely able to read and write, and this knowledge he owed to the Bulgarian Revolutionaries in Roumania, who taught him what little he knew.

Pope Kiril and the Dalmatian Stefo also gave accounts of their birthplaces and history, but I confess that I have been unable to recall them after so many vicissitudes.

CHAPTER XIII

ALONE ON THE MOUNTAINS

I RECOVERED my senses only to find myself lying in the rapid current of the stream. Whether I had purposely thrown myself down from the bridge, or whether I had fallen unconsciously, I cannot say. Some minutes elapsed before I could recover my footing. The various articles which I carried on my back, such as my waterproof cloak, cartridge-box, telescope, revolver, etc., all impeded my efforts to rise. No sooner had I freed one foot than the other slipped, and down I fell again. Meanwhile a fresh volley was fired, and again the bullets whistled past me. At last, with the help of the current I was able to reach the projecting branch of a tree. I clambered up the left bank of the stream like a wild cat. The slope was very steep, or at all events seemed so to me. When I reached the level ground I saw something like a human form moving in the water on the opposite shore. Again the shots rang out. I fled, though it seemed almost useless. I fancied myself surrounded on every side. Every bush appeared to me a pursuer.

To facilitate my flight I threw away all I carried —knapsack, telescope, etc. But my legs would hardly support me. For twelve days I had been unable to warm my frozen limbs, and now I felt

as if I was in a hot bath! My throat was parched and dry as a limekiln. All the prayers I had ever known, which for years had been strangers to my lips, were now recited. Never in my life had I been so frightened. In my flight I came upon a great oak-tree with ample foliage. I climbed hurriedly up it, and began to pray like Joshua that the course of the sun might be altered for my benefit, though what I wished was that its setting should be hastened, for darkness was my only hope of safety. I now discovered to my dismay that I had scarcely fled three hundred yards from the bridge. However, I was well concealed, and in twenty minutes at most it would be dark.

From my elevated perch I heard and saw much which opened my eyes to the real character of our benefactor, old Velio. I heard one of the bashi-bozouks ask him if we had not suspected his treachery, to which he replied proudly in the negative. They also repeated many things which we had said in Velio's presence, from which it was clear that the traitor had given them a faithful report after each of his visits to us.

"Ah! you pig of an infidel, what about your oath? Didn't you all swear that you would stand fast even if the Turks came against you a hundred to one, and that you'd fight to the last?" This was probably addressed to one of my dying comrades. I could hear the knife of the bashi-bozouk grinding against his victim's bones.

Gradually it grew dark, and the silence of the night became complete. To this circumstance and to the rain and the thickness of the foliage I owed my salvation. Soon the rain stopped and the mist

rose. I began to wonder what I should do. Fearing that the Turks might be lying in wait for me, I did not dare to move. For two hours I remained motionless. The night was pitch-dark and I could see nothing round me. I knew only three points in the neighbourhood, each one of which was enough to make me shudder. These were—the hut of our benefactor, the bridge, and the cabin of his pretended uncle, to which he was leading us. The latter was important, as being in the direction of Troyan. For a long time I was unable to make up my mind what to do. Such was my despair that I began to envy my fallen comrades. It was almost midnight before I ventured to leave the tree. My gun I left hanging on a branch; since its plunge in the river it was quite useless, and could only injure me. Crossing myself piously, I descended the slope towards the stream. At every step I stopped to look round me. Every twig which snapped under my foot caused an anxious tremor in my heart. I crossed the stream and scaled the steep bank. In the distance I heard the howl of wolves, no doubt about to fall on the corpses, scarcely cold, of my martyred comrades. This so terrified me that I gave way to despair once more. I drew out my revolver to commit suicide, but my hand trembled so much that I was obliged to put the weapon down again. I made up my mind to fire when I had counted up to a hundred, but by the time I reached seventy again my courage gave way. A flood of recollections burst upon me. I thought of my parents, whose very name I had almost forgotten during the seven years which had elapsed since I had last seen them. Life is sweet. I

had not the strength of mind to carry out my design.

I clambered on up the steep and wooded slope, until dawn. Again I was aghast, when day broke, to see how short a distance I had traversed. Before me stretched a meadow, bordered at the other end by another stream. I decided to remain where I was for the day, the cover being comparatively dense. I was aided also by a mist which enveloped the thicket in which I lay. From my hiding-place I could see the various bands of bashi-bozouks starting from the village to hunt after fugitive rebels: their arms glistened in the sun. The villagers also passed not far from me on their way to their daily labour. Two old women came quite close to me to work in the meadow. When they sat down to their midday meal I could count every mouthful they took: but I dared not reveal myself to them.

So the day went slowly by. The sun set, and one by one the shepherds, goatherds, drovers began to bring back their flocks to the village. I envied the lot of these peasants, wearied out by their toil, whom at least an evening meal and a warm bed awaited. Last of all the bashi-bozouks returned: while even the birds fluttered from twig to twig seeking a place of rest for the night. Darkness came on, the delight of thieves and brigands, of the stealthy fox and the fierce wolf, of all predatory animals, as well as of such hopeless outcasts as myself. I came out from my hiding-place, with a thousand precautions, and greedily devoured such leaves and berries as I had noticed during the day as being more or less possible to eat. I then crept cautiously across the meadow and forded the stream.

Again a steep ascent confronted me, and such was my exhaustion that it was only with difficulty that I managed to climb it. I hardly accomplished an hour's journey that day. The rain had brought out snails in large quantities, and I tried to still my internal cravings by crunching these slimy creatures. With a fire to roast them and a little salt, they would have been luxurious fare. As it was, I was just able to swallow them. But a couple of hours later I was seized with so violent a heartburn that I was compelled to lie down for almost the whole night. It was the old affair of the horseflesh over again, but this time I had no raki to revive me. Next morning I dragged myself along as best I could, and succeeded at last in reaching the summit of the mountain. Here a succession of jagged peaks and deep valleys met my eye, and I was at a loss to know in which direction to advance.

On the left-hand side of the mountain, right down in the valley where a stream flowed, I saw through the tops of the trees a cluster of huts. Here I determined to apply for some food, whatever might be the consequences. Three times, one after another, I made my way through the dense thicket which covered the mountain-side, until I could actually hear every sound which came from the huts, and three times I went back again, afraid of showing myself. Finally my terror overcame my hunger and I plunged again into the thicket.

This was the second day since the encounter at the bridge, and I had failed to obtain any food or to meet any one. My condition became more critical every moment. I clambered on over the rocks, ignorant of where I was going. Again I determined upon suicide: not being able to bring myself to use

my revolver, I thought of the poison which I carried with me for this very purpose: I raised it to my lips, but again my courage failed me, and I was unable to effect my purpose.

The next morning I felt a sharp touch of fever, a not unnatural result of my wanderings, famished and exposed as I was. That day and the next I made scarcely any progress. Early in the forenoon of the fourth day I noticed a goatherd and his flock, and I hid myself in a clump of trees and carefully followed every movement they made, fearing lest a band of bashi-bozouks was hovering round. For a long time I hesitated to approach the herd, when the goats settled the question for me: they scented me and turned to flight. This attracted the goatherd's attention, and he came near to see what had startled them. So I left my hiding-place and approached him, crossing myself and seizing his ragged cloak, the hem of which I kissed. The unfortunate peasant, for whom this was a new experience, stared in dismay at my tattered and dishevelled figure. I told him I had fled from the ruins of my village and was starving, and begged him to give me a little food. He was much moved by my appeal, and having nothing with him, promised to go and fetch some victuals for me from his cabin. Previous experience had taught me to be careful, and it was from quite a different hiding-place that I watched his return. But he had no thought of treachery, and soon came back with a little jar of milk and a few crusts of bread. These I devoured with avidity: meanwhile we entered into conversation, and he finally asked me if I was not one of the companions of the pope. I was much struck by this question, and gave an evasive answer.

He then told me that, some days before, the bashi-bozouks had brought in a pope, dangerously wounded, and bound : he carried a cross in his hand. Behind him walked a Turk, carrying on the point of his long knife a human head, with a red moustache and a black kalpak with a red cloth top and a plume of peacock's feathers. The Turks had forced the peasants to come out and watch the procession as it went by, jeering at them and telling them that this was to have been their king. He added that the party had consisted originally of four, one of whom had escaped, and that the other had been captured down the river only that very morning.

I was much surprised to learn that both the pope and the Dalmatian had survived the attack. I dared confess nothing to the good goatherd, but left him after obtaining certain directions as to the path I was to follow. For the remainder of that day I crept stealthily through the wood. The night I spent in a hollow tree which I found lying on the ground. When day dawned I found myself again facing a labyrinth of rocks, and was quite unable to decide on which side to advance. I took what seemed to me the right direction. Once more I came upon a shepherd, whom I approached with the same precautions and ceremony as the goatherd of the previous day. But they did not produce the same effect this time. He replied that he would give me food, but that I must first come with him to the village for the Turkish governor to see me, those being his orders. Accordingly I was obliged to show fight. I drew my knife and threatened to kill him if he did not give me what he had on him. Sullenly he threw his wallet on the ground in front of me : it contained only two or three crusts of maize-bread and a couple of

onions. These I seized and made off, and for two more days I wandered over the mountains, just able to keep myself alive.

This brought me to the 31st of May, seven days after the affair at the bridge, and I had not yet accomplished seven hours' journey. I was finishing the scanty provisions I still had left, when my attention was drawn to a dull rumbling which could not be anything but the distant sound of cannon. At once my fancy formed a thousand conjectures. Had the Servians really taken Sofia? had our brethren of Tirnovo at last got the upper hand of the Turks? My hopes were not quite dead yet.

The next morning I was overjoyed to see that I had crossed the redoubtable Stara Planina at last, and had reached its northern slopes. Several villages lay at the foot of the mountain, and the shepherds and goatherds were already coming out with their flocks. One of these especially attracted my attention, and I made up my mind to address him, if a favourable opportunity should offer. I followed him for some time at a distance, and eventually made myself known to him. He regarded me with suspicion, and said at once: "So you're one of the komitas, are you?" He then told me of several encounters which had taken place in the neighbourhood between the rebels and the Turks, and finally sighed deeply, invoking maledictions on the heads of those who had brought about all these disturbances, which had cost the King his throne and his life.

"What King do you mean, man?" I asked.

"Why, didn't you know they'd killed the Sultan at Stamboul and put a new one in his place? That's what they fired the guns for yesterday at

Lovets. They say the Sultan was killed because he had become the leader of the komitas." And with this he disappeared, saying that he was on his way to the village to give information of having seen me.

All hope was now definitely at an end. At my present rate of progression it would take me seventy days to reach the Servian frontier over the mountains, even assuming that I could surmount the thousand and one dangers which beset my path. Equally impossible would it be for me to reach the Danube. I determined therefore to try and make my way back to Thrace, where I hoped by secret paths to succeed in reaching Sopot or Karlovo, and thence to arrive finally at Philippopolis; from there, with the help of friends, I might manage to get to Harmanli, where my friend Ivanoff would hide me. I need not say that all this was utterly impossible.

But before starting on this journey I felt it to be indispensable that I should have at least one meal of ordinary human food, for my legs would carry me no longer. I waited all day long and eagerly examined from a secure hiding-place all the goatherds who passed. Most of these were boys, and the one who seemed to me most likely to assist was a lad of about fourteen, of a cheerful countenance, who kept up a running conversation with his flock.

"You go on feeding, feeding, all day long," I heard him say, "and yet you never seem to have enough. I've only had one meal all day, but I'm not hungry." Then, after a pause, "To-morrow's Saturday; it won't be a fast-day, like to-day. Mother will get up early and milk the two goats, the brown one and the one with crumpled horns, whose kids the wolf ate, and we shall have fresh cheese."

This was more than I could stand; I went straight up to him, walking fast, as if I were on a journey, and told him that I was employed with others in felling trees for the purpose of making a bridge, and had lost sight of my comrades. I therefore asked him—incidentally, and as a perfectly secondary matter—if he had any bread on him, as I was hungry. He had very little with him, as it was already late in the day, but what he had he gave me.

"Only an hour ago," he said in apology, "I had some more, but I gave it to the goats."

Suddenly our conversation was interrupted by a voice from behind us addressing the boy and asking who his friend was. At this we both turned round. The stranger, who stood at some distance from us, was a Bulgarian woodcutter; we neither of us replied, and the question was repeated. I recited again my former story, but so guiltily that it could deceive no one. The unknown woodcutter hereupon turned round and fled at full speed towards the village. I for my part lost no time in imitating his example, in the opposite direction; and the poor little goatherd, after waiting a few moments, did the same.

It was clear that the last-comer had gone to the village to give the alarm. I fled hurriedly, trying to find some hiding-place, but the mountain here was almost bare, and there were but a few scanty bushes. Behind one of these I crouched and awaited events.

Not ten minutes had elapsed when I heard two gun-shots, doubtless a signal for the pursuit to begin. Then a crowd of zaptiês, bashi-bozouks, and Bulgarians began to toil up the mountain. The former were armed to the teeth; the Bulgarians

carried only their axes. I could hear all they said. One of the Bulgarians boasted that, as the rebel was unarmed, he would cut him down with his axe: to which a burly bashi-bozouk replied that long before that he would have put a couple of bullets through me. Again I trembled all over; this time I felt all hope was at an end. I threw away my knife and hid all papers which might compromise me; so near did the pursuers pass to me that more than once I was on the point of giving myself up to them. But they did not catch sight of me, and darkness soon covered the mountain-side. It was long before I realized that I had escaped again.

As night came on the band of pursuers slowly made their way back, with audible regrets at having failed in their endeavour. The rain began afresh, and nothing was to be seen. Wearily and in despair I slowly made my way up the mountain; there was no help for it. I must move on, for the pursuit was certain to be far more energetic next day. I began to wonder how I was to go on, unless I managed to get some food, when suddenly, just in front of me, I saw the light of a fire and heard the bleating of sheep. I had come upon some shepherd's hut, at about half an hour's distance from the spot where I had been seen. Cautiously I approached the hut; the dogs barked furiously, and the shepherd came out and quieted them, fearing no doubt lest the nocturnal visitor should be some bashi-bozouk, whose anger might be aroused at this reception.

A few minutes later I was seated at the fire with the shepherd, who asked me no questions, but did at once all he could for me. He had no bread ready, but hastily prepared a little dough and set it to bake.

"So it was you, was it, who startled the village this afternoon?" he asked. "My stars, how they did hunt for you, for all the world as if you were a hare!"

The dough was nearly ready, and while waiting for it I sat dipping my finger from time to time in a jar of sour milk at my side. Just then the dogs barked again, and heavy footsteps were heard outside. I shrank back in terror. The shepherd rushed out, but was met by the cry, in Turkish: "Back, you scoundrel! we'll teach you to harbour strangers! Get your guns ready, lads! Don't stir, you in the hut!"

These words pierced me like a knife.

The shepherd sank back into his hut, more dead than alive. As for me, I faltered as steadily as my fears would permit me that I was a poor workman, unarmed, and quite ready to give myself up. The shepherd was then ordered to come out, and I closed my eyes, expecting that the order to fire would be given at once. I was commanded to kneel down, to take off my jacket, and to hold up my hands. I obeyed, and then four persons rushed in and seized me.

CHAPTER XIV

IN THE HANDS OF THE TURKS

MY readers will no doubt suppose, just as I did, that these were bloodthirsty bashi-bozouks. Not so: they were Bulgarians, Christians, my brothers, armed only with their sharp axes. Only when I was in their grasp did they fall into their native language. I begged for mercy, but they laughed at me, and bound my arms securely with my own waistband.

"Why, neighbour, you're a regular prophet," said one.

"Ah," replied this worthy, "as soon as I heard from the boy that the scoundrel ate up the onions, I knew he wouldn't attempt the Balkan without a try to get some food first."

From this it was evident that they had themselves out of pure zeal resumed the search which had failed previously, and that the barking of the dogs had given them a clue: it is quite easy to distinguish when sheep-dogs are barking at a man.

One of the four was sent down to the village to give information of my capture, for it had been intended to send out another search party that night. We then moved on towards the village, the Bulgarians now beginning to express some compunction at having brought about my arrest; but they were chiefly anxious to find out if I had any money on

me, and urgently requested me to give them whatever cash I had. Now, as a matter of fact, I still had ten liras concealed on my person, but I preferred a thousand times to give them to the Turks, from whom I should at least get something in return, if only a little tobacco.

It was nearly midnight by the time we reached the village. On the way I assured them several times that the shepherd was not to blame for having taken me in, and that I had forced him with threats to do so. One request I made to them, and that was to hand me over to the authorities and not to the bashi-bozouks, from whom I was apprehensive of ill-treatment. This they promised to do. At the outskirts of the village was posted a guard of Bulgarians, armed with cudgels and axes. To their cry of "Who goes there?" my friends replied proudly "Come and see." They flocked to inspect me with much curiosity.

The village was as silent as the grave. After passing through several muddy streets, they took me to a comparatively large house, evidently the residence of one of the chief men in the village. The door was guarded by a sentinel—this time a bashi-bozouk—fully armed. On seeing me he gave me at once a violent blow with the butt-end of his rifle, and cried, "Hold him while I cut off his head, like a chicken's!"

However, we went upstairs and entered a room which was in total darkness, save for the faint light of a small petroleum lamp. A cloud of tobacco-smoke still further impeded my view, but when my eyes grew accustomed to the light I saw that the room was crowded with sleeping bashi-

bozouks. I then realized that my captors had deceived me and broken their promise. They did not venture to awake the Turks, and we might have stood there for a long time, had not one of the sleepers by chance opened his eyes.

"Won't you get up, effendim?" said one of the Bulgarians; "we've brought you a komita."

At these words half a dozen Turks jumped up, and one of them, seizing the lamp, pushed it close against my face to get a good look at me. After this he struck me with such violence that my kalpak went flying across the room. This woke up the whole party, and a shower of imprecations and threats followed. One of them begged the others to stand aside while he cut me down; another suggested that my head should be cut off and taken early next morning to the pasha. Meanwhile, the loyal Bulgarians who had captured me triumphed, as they explained how they had managed to get hold of me. The Turks, however, paid little attention to them; as for me, I said nothing at first, thinking it useless. But, as I knew that Turks dislike taciturnity, which they are wont to ascribe to sullenness or malice, I made up my mind to address them. I called them beys, pashas, told them that I knew their magnanimity, that I was afraid while I was on the Balkan, but that now that I was in their hands I had nothing to fear, as I was confident that they would never sully their knives with the blood of so worthless a creature as myself. Finally, I appealed to their Mussulman charity for a cigarette and a crust of bread, having fed on nothing but grass for a fortnight. I made this appeal in such touching accents and in such

pure Turkish that I had hardly finished when three or four tobacco-boxes lay before me, and the Turk who had struck me himself made and handed me a cigarette, at the same time ordering the Bulgarians to fetch some bread for me.

"How strange!" said one of the Turks; "had I died yesterday, I should never have known that the komitas could speak Turkish. I thought they only knew Russian."

"You see, there are two kinds of komitas," said another, as if he knew all about it; "one kind are natives and the others are Muscovite ghiaours."

Gradually our relations became less strained, when the door was flung open and two armed Turks came in. The one wore the uniform of a sergeant of zaptiés, the other was an old, grey-bearded Turk, a bashi-bozouk, with an immense turban. They nodded a careless greeting to their fellow-Mussulmans, and then turned to me.

"Why, you accursed infidel," said the old man, "it's a good thing for you we didn't come upon you on the mountain just now, or your head would have been on a stake by this time. But come, let's be off, and I'll teach you to be a komita."

So saying, they took me off, trembling at what was in store for me. We came to a house close by and went upstairs to a room full of provisions; this was most likely the store-room of the bashi-bozouks.

"We got him out of the hands of those dogs pretty easily, didn't we?" said the old man, who was evidently the chief of the bashi-bozouks.

"Lucky we did," replied the zaptié, "or they'd

have taken him off this very night to Troyan, to get the reward. As for you, my lad, don't you fear. Just you answer the questions we put to you, and I'll wager you get off with a free pardon."

I could scarcely believe my ears, having anticipated a very different reception.

"Come along," said the old man, "your name, birthplace, occupation, under which komita-banner you were enrolled, what rank you held, how much pay you were to receive from Russia, how many Turks you've killed—tell us all about it. Lies won't do for me, you know," he added, pointing to his grey beard.

"Let him be for half an hour," objected the zaptié; "he'll just eat his fill first, and then tell us the truth, if he wants to save his skin. Ask for whatever you want, my lad—I won't have it said afterwards that Moustafa Chaoush left you hungry and thirsty."

So saying, they ordered the Bulgarians, who had followed us, to supply me with food, wine, and raki, saying that after all it was for their good that I had rebelled, and that they ought to be grateful to me. The Bulgarians protested vehemently, but did as they were bid.

After I had eaten, they began to examine me. I had had time to prepare my story, but the most difficult part to explain was the period of eight months which I had spent at the Harmanli railway station. I told them that I was a poor man, who went from place to place to find work, and had stopped for about a fortnight at each of the stations from Constantinople.

"About St. George's day (May 7) I had work

at Belovo railway station," I continued; "I got on an empty goods train which was going there, when suddenly the engine stopped. We could see that Belovo station was in flames, and that the place had been attacked by komitas. Being frightened, I fled in company with another workman. We wandered over the mountains, and came next day to Panaghiourishté, which we found also burnt down to the ground, with women and children starving. So we fled from there also; we dared not go near any village for fear of the bashi-bozouks and Circassians. One day we were pursued and my companion was killed. As for me, I was desperate, and went about hoping to fall in with some troops, whose protection I wanted to implore, for I was afraid of being killed by the bashi-bozouks. At last, gentlemen," I concluded, "I was lucky enough to fall into your hands."

They did not believe my story, but were unable to disprove it. To divert their attention, I launched into details which I thought would interest them. Thus, I assured them that in Thrace upwards of two million girls had thrown themselves into the Maritsa, to escape from the bashi-bozouks and Circassians; most of these, I added, were popes' daughters (for whom the Turks have a peculiar predilection).

"Dear, dear, to think of that!" said the old man; "young ghiaour girls, with cheeks like apples. If I'd been there, I'd have taken five or six of them myself. I'd have given each of them a feredjé (veil) and a pair of red trousers; it would have added fifty years to my life."

It was almost morning before the Turks could

satisfy their curiosity. Twice they searched me, ostensibly for letters of a revolutionary character, but in reality to see if I had any money. They took the few papers I had on me, but in a friendly manner and without any blows or abuse. I had foreseen this, and, as already recorded, had destroyed any paper of a compromising nature, retaining only such as could serve me. Then they began to discuss how they should conduct me to Troyan, and how they should bind me.

"Oh! as for that, leave it to me," said the old man; "I know how to manage it. His arms shall be bound in two places, and he'll have a rope round his neck, one end of which I shall hold. You'll go on in front. And our moustaches must be well waxed, of course."

"I should like to take him past the big café, where all the rich Bulgarians take their coffee in the morning," said the chaoush; "that'll help them to digest their breakfast."

"Yes," said the old man, "and after that we might go through the tailors' quarter; there's a fellow there to whom I owe money, and who wanted to sue me last week. When he sees me conducting this komita he won't be in such a hurry to be paid."

"What a pity it is we haven't got the head of a komita, as well as this live one," said the zaptié regretfully.

"Ah, just our luck!" replied the old man; "if we had, both of us would have been promoted for sure."

While they were arranging all these details, the door opened and in came a bashi-bozouk who, from the deference paid him by my gaolers, was clearly a person of importance. His name, as I soon learnt, was Hassan Pehlivan. So fierce was his appearance,

and so bristling with arms was his person, that I fairly shuddered as I glanced stealthily at him from where I lay pretending to be asleep. His first words were: "I don't quite understand, gentlemen, if you are the prisoners, or this person." This was an allusion to the fact that they were both standing while I slept comfortably. They excused themselves, saying that I had suffered such privations on the Balkan that he himself would have pitied me.

"Well, serve him right," said Hassan; "who forced him to become a komita? As for you two," he added, "I can't conceive why you should have taken him alive; it only means needless expense for the Government. Don't you know that the Commandant Pasha has given orders that all komitas when found are to be killed on the spot, and just their heads are to be cut off and brought in?"

The chaoush and the old bashi-bozouk were profuse in their apologies; they did not know of these orders, and besides, they dared not deal with me otherwise, as so many Bulgarians of their village had seen me. Meanwhile, I was feigning slumber and listening to this conversation with feelings that may easily be imagined. The three Turks then entered upon a political discussion, quite heedless of the fact that a sworn enemy of their nationality and religion was lying close by.

"Yes," said Hassan, "our country has now entered upon the path of real Ottoman greatness. Our new Sultan Mourad, as soon as he mounted the throne, gave orders that all the black-kalpaked Petkos (*i.e.*, Bulgarians) should be exterminated throughout his dominions, and all their property distributed among us."

"Heaven send it may be so, but I can hardly believe it," said the chaoush; "the rayas are the Sultan's milch-cow; who's to help to support our hundred and odd millions of soldiers, besides keeping the likes of us, if the Christians are to be killed?"

"Ah, but the Divan has assured itself that the Bulgarians can never be peaceful subjects any more. They've got the list of all the conspirators —it weighs half a ton. They're all to be hanged, every one of them. They say," added Hassan, "that among the whole Bulgarian nation there was only one man who remained loyal; he was a pope in a village towards Elena. When the village Committee received orders from the Russian Tsar to rebel, he persuaded them first of all to prepare a banquet outside the village, under a great tree. After they'd all eaten and drunk, the pope proposed to them to pull down the tree, just as they intended to pull down the Ottoman Empire. They pulled and tugged away, but nothing came of it, in spite of his encouragement, and at last they said: 'It can't be done, pope; the tree is too old and firm.' 'What,' said he, 'you can't even pull down a tree, and you think you can overthrow the Ottoman Empire, which is ten times older and stronger than the oak?' They were all ashamed, and every man slunk off home. They've sent an officer to fetch that pope to Stamboul, where he's to be decorated and promoted, and what not."

In the morning the whole village was astir when I was led out to be conducted to Troyan. I was bound only with a slender rope, just for show, as my captors said. These were accompanied by Hassan, all three being armed to the teeth, and the Bulgarian who had first given notice of having

seen me in the mountain trotted proudly behind. The few Bulgarians whom we met either avoided us or else covered me with abuse. Whenever we passed a wine-shop the Turks forced the owner to give me wine. Gradually we all became on the best of terms, and the Pehlivan himself, who the night before had regretted my not having been killed, made a cigarette for me with his own hands, adding that if all komitas were like me, he would be the first to fraternize with them, and that it was a good thing that no accident had happened on the Balkan.

Meanwhile we went on through the orchards of Troyan, which border the road. I was surprised at the change from the severe climate of the Balkan: here the cherries were already ripe, and the Bulgarian who accompanied us was sent to climb the trees and pick the ripest and reddest fruit for us. The property of the Bulgarian was then at the mercy of every Turk. Soon we began to meet Bulgarians, men and women, on their way from Troyan to pick the cherries. When they saw us in time, they carefully got out of our way: if they could not help passing us, they went by with eyes cast down as though they were guilty. This still further increased the good-humour of my conductors, who made me sing a revolutionary song. Finally, they picked a bunch of wayside flowers and stuck them in my kalpak—to please the pretty girls of Troyan, they said. The people of Troyan to this day still talk of the komita who was brought in with a bunch of flowers in his kalpak. Throughout the whole of this journey, which lasted about three hours, not a single harsh word was spoken to me by the Turks.

CHAPTER XV

IN PRISON AT TROYAN

SOON we entered Troyan. Before reaching the little town, Hassan produced a box of ointment, with which he adorned his moustache, then twisting it until both ends stuck out like skewers. He then turned to me and warned me that we were no longer in the fields, and that I must remember my position. They carried out their intention of taking me through the main street of Troyan, but the inhabitants fled from our path, many being probably afraid lest the captured rebel should turn out to be an acquaintance who might get them into trouble. Finally we came to a great gateway, against which a dozen bashi-bozouks and three or four zaptiés were leaning. This was evidently the Government house, where my fate was to be decided. At once the news spread, and the bashi-bozouks crowded to the gate, cursing and threatening me, and abusing Hassan and his two comrades for not having dispatched me on the road. With much difficulty our party forced its way through the crowd to the staircase. On the landing I was met by an old Turk, who asked me in scorn if I was to have been Governor of Troyan? He then whispered in Hassan's ear, and the two went off together. I was taken downstairs again by another zaptié, who handcuffed me and fastened

an iron ring round my neck, dealing me meanwhile two or three blows. Then, opening a door on the right-hand side of the staircase, he gave me from behind so violent a push that I was sent flying against the opposite side of the room.

"That's right, give it to him!" cried some of the bashi-bozouks.

Two of them, armed with rifles, were placed at once on guard at the door.

The prison of Troyan is a prison only in name: it is in reality an ordinary stable or outhouse. It possesses no cells or barred windows, and though not unsuitable as a temporary lock-up for drunkards or thieves arrested during the night, it is not fit to be used as a house of detention. The walls are bare and discoloured, and during my stay it contained nothing but a ragged rug flung on the ground and a couple of stones which had evidently been used as pillows at no distant date. The only other article to be seen was a broken pitcher.

Here I remained for the whole day, during which an interminable series of bashi-bozouks presented themselves at the little window, cursing me and threatening me with death. One of them said that he would ask as a favour for my skull, which he would stick on a pole to act as a scarecrow. Others flicked stones or squirted water at me, while most of them took a pleasure in giving a pull at the chain, one end of which was fastened to the ring round my neck and the other to the wall near the window. But I am compelled to admit that there were some among them who had pity on me and reproved their comrades for this inhuman treatment.

After I had remained imprisoned for three hours,

the door of the prison was unlocked, and three officials, accompanied by a chaoush of zaptiés, came in. They made me undress completely and searched my clothes most carefully. Their visit terrified me, the more so as they maintained a dignified silence and neither abused nor ill-treated me. Then they ordered a brazier of charcoal to be brought in, and I felt convinced that they intended to torture me by burning. Such, however, was not their design: they turned out my pockets into the brazier, and it was only when a couple of grains of gunpowder fell from the pockets and flared up on the live charcoal that their object became apparent.

"Accursed infidel!" said one of them, dealing me a violent blow in the face. They then went out and left me a prey to the gloomiest forebodings, for the discovery of the gunpowder was a *primâ facie* proof of my being a Revolutionary. Night came on: I heard the muezzin's plaintive voice calling to prayer. All then became silent. Troyan, an exclusively Bulgarian town, seemed like a city of the dead. It was clear that the townspeople fully realized their critical position, for their comparative prosperity had aroused the envy of the Mussulman villagers round about, and there were so many bashi-bozouks assembled there that the slightest disturbance—the song of a drunken man in the street—might be the signal for a general massacre.

The hours passed by, and no one came to summon me before an examining magistrate, or even to bring me any food. At last, however, I heard steps approaching. The bolts of my door were drawn back, and a zaptié appeared with a candle in his hand. He unloosed the chain from my neck and motioned me to walk in front of him. The irons on my feet

sounded dull and monotonous as I ascended the wooden staircase. The darkness and silence of the night increased my terrors. At last the zaptié opened the door of a well lighted room, pushed me in, and then retired and kept guard outside. Here there were no less than eight persons, all Turks, crouching on divans, and all smoking thoughtfully, I noticed that one of them, a young man, seemed to be the chief person present, and I afterwards learned that he was the mudir, or governor of the town. He was dressed in European clothes and wore a fez, whereas all the others had on turbans and were fully armed. The room was quite plain, with white-washed walls. It had two windows, looking on to the river Osem, which passed under the very walls. On the opposite side of the room hung a cuckoo-clock, the monotonous ticking of which heightened the gloomy sensations produced in me by this nocturnal assembly.

When I entered, I made a low bow and greeted the company in Turkish. No reply was returned to me, and for some minutes every one remained silent. Then the mudir addressed me and asked me who I was and why I had been brought there. I am bound to add that his tone was calm and free from violence, and that he abstained from threats and abuse.

"There are two paths before you, my lad," he said; "the one leads to the gallows, the other to freedom; it depends on you which you follow. It's no use your trying to deceive us; we know, and the whole world knows, that a set of vagabonds have crossed the Danube to try to injure the Empire! Fools! They don't know that their efforts are as unavailing to hurt us as a fly is on a buffalo's back. But they

have injured others. We know they each had a bag of money, given them by the black enemy of Turkey, and with this money they have been able to lead astray a number of poor people like you. We're well aware that you've been deceived by them; so you just tell us all you know about it. Don't be afraid: there's a new firman issued by the Sultan granting a free pardon to all such as you who confess."

"There's no reason for him to conceal anything," said one of the Turks; "I'd have done just as he has if they'd offered me a few liras."

When they saw that I remained silent, they thought I was hesitating whether I should confess or not. In order to encourage me, they gave me a chair to sit on, and the mudir himself rolled a cigarette for me. I then began the story I had already told my captors. At first I was listened to with much attention, but as soon as I began to talk about Belovo, and of my having traversed the whole of the revolted district without having met any one or having been armed myself, they began to exchange glances of doubt and disbelief. I trembled, but continued my story as though I had not noticed this. I was soon interrupted by an angry exclamation: "Don't abuse our patience, you ghiaour; do you take us for fools?"

"There isn't a word of truth in the whole story," said the mudir, getting up to light his cigarette at the lamp.

"You say that the train in which you were going to Belovo went off the line because the rebels had taken up the metals. Were you the only person in the train, or was there any one else there?" asked the khoja, who was one of those

present, and who evidently had some idea of what a train was.

I admitted that there were a number of people, many being foreigners, in the train with me. The khoja then asked where the others had gone, and why I had not accompanied them, which would have been the most natural and most prudent course to follow. This question I had not anticipated. I stumbled, tried to think, and finally faltered that I was afraid. The whole party, who had been waiting for me to entangle myself in my recital, now jumped up and surrounded me with angry looks.

"Tell us, you dog of an infidel, why you didn't go with the Germans when the train broke down, instead of starting off for Panaghiourishté to kill Turks."

"Answer, or we'll cut your liver out!" shouted two of the Turks, drawing their pistols from their belts.

I did not know what to say, and tried to maintain the truth of what I had already asserted.

"Very well, you false-hearted Bulgarian, I'll pretty soon make you tell us everything, and even more than we've asked you," said a tall, well-armed Turk, who was a certain Hassan Aga, a major of bashi-bazouks. "Here, Déli Aga, just bring five or six cudgels and tell a couple of men to come here with you," he cried, taking off his coat.

He then seized me by the hair and began to drag me round the room while the others struck at me, with the exception of the mudir and the khoja, who went outside, perhaps to avoid witnessing this scene. Meanwhile the two men whom Hassan Aga had called for now appeared. They brought only one cudgel, it is true, but it was as thick as a

scaffolding-pole. This Hassan Aga at once seized, belabouring me with such violence that I fell to the ground and rolled over on my back. The two bashi-bozouks then laid hold of me, turned me with my face to the ground, and sat on me, the one on my neck, the other on my feet. Hassan Aga continued to strike as energetically as before, and most of the others beat or kicked me at the same time, so that I was soon bleeding profusely. I shrieked for mercy, called them by every flattering name I could think of, and swore that I did not know what they wanted me to tell them. But all in vain!

"Tell us who were your companions, where you hid your weapons, and whether you were one of Petkoffski's (*i.e.*, Benkoffski's) comrades!"

I cried for help to the mudir and the khoja, who re-entered the room and interfered on my behalf. But their intercession was unavailing: the blows continued. Once or twice I screamed out that I was ready to confess everything, but as soon as they ceased beating me I returned to my former story.

"Ah, I've thought of another plan," cried Hassan Aga; "go and heat a ramrod red-hot and bring it to me, and we'll see whether we can't make him speak!"

At once I was turned face uppermost, the two bashi-bozouks seized me by the hands and feet, and preparations were made for carrying out the proposed operation. I thought at first that this was a mere threat to frighten me, but when the glowing ramrod was brought in I was again induced to offer to confess. But upon thinking over the consequences which were certain to follow, I took refuge once more in denial.

"What, are we to be made fools of in this manner?" cried Hassan, seizing the ramrod; but it had grown cold by this time, and had to be taken away again to be heated. This time the bashi-bozouks locked the door to prevent any interference on the part of the mudir. But when the instrument was applied to me I roared with agony and struggled so violently that I threw both the bashi-bozouks down. At this noise the mudir knocked loudly at the door and insisted on being admitted. He reprimanded the Turks for their cruelty, and then, turning to me, with a kick, said: "Why can't you tell the truth, you pig? Don't you see they'll beat you to death as they would a mad dog?"

The Turks got up, panting and perspiring, and drew out their handkerchiefs to wipe their foreheads. I lay on the floor groaning, with my eyes fixed on the mudir's face. Hassan Aga gnawed his moustache with rage. All at once he cried: "I don't know why we're wasting our time over this traitor, when I've got a firman in my pocket which gives me full permission to finish him off!"

So saying, he drew from his pocket a letter, written in Turkish, and offered it to me. I said I could not read it, and it was then handed to the khoja, who read it out. It was to the effect that the Commandant Pasha authorized Hassan Aga to kill any rebels found in the Balkan, without having to account for his actions to any one. Whether this document was genuine or false I cannot say. But the Turks all nodded approvingly, and seemed to jeer at Hassan Aga for delaying to put me to death. Egged on by their remarks, he ordered the bashi-bozouk Déli Aga to take me to the river-side and

cut my throat there. Again I thought this might be simply a threat; but I reflected that in the present disturbed state of the country, with a new Sultan on the throne, the whole population of Troyan might have been put to the sword without any questions being asked. I implored for mercy, but to no purpose; they had already got me as far as the door when Déli Aga turned back to sharpen his knife—and what a knife! I can still remember how it glistened in the lamplight. There was even a discussion raised as to whether Dêli Aga would be able to kill me without tying my hands first. We went out, accompanied by Hassan Aga and the khoja, the latter continuing to intercede for me.

The river, as I have already said, was close at hand. In the deep stillness of the silent night the rippling of the stream filled me with awe. When we reached the brink, I was again asked two or three times if I would confess, and on my persisting in my story was ordered to kneel down and stretch out my neck. Instead of this, I clasped with both my hands the khoja's robe, and addressed him in words which I had never employed before even to my own father.

This entreaty moved the good khoja. "Hassan Aga," he said, "let him go this time, for my sake. I promise you that by this time to-morrow he'll have confessed everything to me; if he hasn't, I'll cut off his head myself."

Hassan Aga was unwilling to refuse this request. He ordered the bashi-bozouk to take me back, admonishing me that I had only the khoja to thank for this. I was then led back to the prison, where I was chained once more to the wall.

Here I was at once fed, and Hassan Aga himself

came twice to inquire if I needed anything. This, indeed, was the rule always followed: every time I was beaten I was sure to be given food shortly afterwards. I was aching all over, but could not help feeling in some respect triumphant at my moral victory. I fell asleep, for a beating makes a man sleep as well as a bath. Long after midnight I was woke up by the sound of blows and of curses in Turkish, mingled by protests in an unknown voice in the Bulgarian language, with here and there a few scraps of Roumanian. This led me to suppose that another rebel had been arrested. Soon the door was opened and a zaptié thrust in a stranger in European clothes but wearing a kalpak such as the insurgents wore. The zaptié chained the stranger's leg to mine and then left us, saying: "Now, then, you traitors, tell each other all you've done, for you've only got twenty-four hours to live."

I waited impatiently to question the new-comer, but he continued talking to himself, cursing the Turks and bewailing the fate of Bulgaria. "I've killed five of them with my own sword," he said, "not to speak of those I've shot. Tell me, brother, how many have you accounted for? Don't be afraid of me, I'm an old komita. I know the voivodes Panayot and Totio, and I'm a companion of Hajji Dimitr's; we crossed the Danube together."

This was enough for me: I understood at once that he was a spy sent to worm out my secret. It was the mention of Hajji Dimitr which convinced me, for eight years had elapsed since that band was cut to pieces. I shrank from him as from a serpent, and told him once for all that I refused to listen to such language, being a loyal and faithful raya, who

had been imprisoned by mistake. He tried for some time to induce me to talk, but seeing that I was determined to keep silent, he called out something which I did not understand and the zaptié came and took him away, which proved that my supposition was correct.

In the morning I was unable to move, being covered with wounds and bruises, while my face and forehead were caked with blood. Worn-out and excited as I had been on the previous night, I had noticed scarcely any pain, but now not a bone in my body but felt as if it was broken.

During the day I was honoured with perhaps fifteen visits from Hassan Aga, who took out his watch each time.

"If you persist in this obstinacy of yours, I shall just give you to this youngster to cut your head off," he said.

The youngster was his son, about thirteen or fourteen years of age, a sickly and delicate-looking boy, whom I could have strangled with my finger and thumb. He was dressed like a doll in a gold-embroidered uniform, with a revolver, and a little sword slung from his shoulder.

"Papa, I want to kill the komita," he cried, pressing against his worthy parent, while I skulked in my dark prison like a dog who has been caught in a butcher's shop.

But, as fortune would have it, an unforeseen circumstance now diverted attention from me. At about two o'clock in the afternoon news was brought that the Commandant Pasha was coming with a battalion of soldiers. All the notables went out to meet him, and the bashi-bozouks were drawn up in military array to salute him on arrival. Only

the kind-hearted khoja, Hussein Effendi, remained at the konak, and he found time to come and talk to me, making me a present of a packet of tobacco. He urged me to confess the truth, warning me that I should taste the cudgel again if I did not do so, but assuring me at the same time that once the troops were there there would be no more talk of cutting my head off.

"You see, what annoys them most," he said, "is that they're persuaded that you're a rebel, but there's nothing to prove it. As far as that goes, I'm convinced of it too; else, why didn't you stop with the Frank ghiaours who have nothing whatever to fear? instead of which you take refuge with the helpless Bulgarians. It's nonsense, I tell you."

The khoja was an Asiatic Turk, and as such not so hostile to the Bulgarians as the native Mussulmans. He even told me how anxious he and the mudir had been at the outbreak of the insurrection, when there were only a few zaptiés in the place, and there were fears lest Troyan should revolt. "We spent the whole night praying to God to preserve us," he said.

At this we heard the sound of the military band announcing the arrival of the troops, and the khoja left me.

The next morning I was brought up for examination. Besides those present on the previous occasion, there were several officers, and the Commandant, who was a major, presided. He was carefully and even elegantly dressed, and seemed to be somewhat European in his ideas. As soon as I appeared, he greeted me as follows:

"What, it's you, is it? fancy that! If I'd only known I'd have sent for you as soon as I came!"

"It seems you and the prisoner are old friends, sir," said the khoja.

"I should think so," said the major; "why, three months ago he kept a tavern at Ismail, in Roumania, and sold most excellent raki; I used to go there every afternoon."

I could not understand this amiability on the major's part, and replied that I had never been in Roumania in my life, and had never heard of the town of Ismail. The major then beckoned to a Bulgarian who was a member of the local council, and who I observed held my pocket-book in his hand. He produced a letter addressed to me at Harmanli, in which it was stated that I kept a tavern. As the address was written in Latin characters, they had read it as Ismail, and were much satisfied at having traced me to Roumania.

"Yes, that's as may be," said the major, after I had explained this, "but how about this photograph, with you and two others wearing a military uniform, which is another proof that you've been either in Servia or Roumania?"

This was a photograph of myself and two companions, all wearing the railway company's uniform. As a matter of fact I had specially retained this photograph and the letter, as they witnessed in my favour. I pointed out the inscription in Turkish, "Roumelian Railway Company," on the cap and buttons of the uniform.

"Do you really mean to say that the Sultan allows accursed Russian caps like this in his Empire?" said one of those present in a voice which seemed familiar to me. I looked up: it was the pretended insurgent who had been locked up with me on the previous night; he was, as I learned afterwards, a Bosnian, employed as a forest-guard.

"Perhaps, it may be so—but what is this powder which was found among your letters?" asked the major.

I was thunderstruck to see two papers containing strychnine, which I had forgotten to throw away. However, without hesitation I said I carried the powder about for medicinal purposes. This did not satisfy them, and they asked what illness I suffered from. At this I cast my eyes hypocritically to the ground, and said I was ashamed to mention it: I whispered something, and at once a lively interest was aroused. The major, as a civilized person, proceeded to deliver a lecture on the subject of certain diseases, and put the powder in his pocket. I was then asked if I had not been a member of Benkoffski's band, and where I had hidden my weapons. "If you confess the truth," added the major, "I'll give you a zaptié to take you safely wherever you like."

I was then conveyed back to prison, the zaptié giving me a gentle twist of the ear which for some time after caused a buzzing something like the sound of a thousand saw-mills in full action. In spite of this, however, I was much pleased with the result of the morning's inquiry: there had been no more blows nor abuse, and only the powder caused me some slight anxiety.

CHAPTER XVI

BOTIO

WHEN I had been in my cell for about half an hour I heard the clanking of fetters on the stairs, and soon afterwards a face appeared at the window. I recognized it as that of a young Bulgarian whom I had seen once before when I was first brought to the prison, and who, I was told, had denounced some of the principal townspeople of Troyan as implicated in the plot. Though he was heavily ironed, he seemed quite gay and cheerful, and was smoking a cigarette. He leaned his arms on the window-sill as though the prison was my shop and the window the counter, and after greeting me and asking one or two questions, turned to the policeman on duty and begged as a favour to be put into my cell.

When his request was granted he said: "Well, brother, what are you so mournful about? what are you thinking of? The time for thinking was when we started out to free good old Bulgaria; but now it's too late for us to do anything except to swell when they thrash us. A bright set of fellows we were, and no mistake: I've just begun to understand how strong the Turks are, and what fools we were to think we'd get the better of them. But there—it's no good talking—what's done is done."

These were more or less his first words as he came in; he did not even preface them with the usual inquiries as to my name and where I came from. His reckless way of talking, as well as the information given me by the bashi-bozouks that he had been brought specially from Lovets for the purpose of denouncing Bulgarians, had put me on my guard against him. I hastened to disclaim any intention of liberating "good old Bulgaria," and expressed the conviction that it was only through some deplorable error that I was now languishing in gaol.

"Oh, drop all that! this is not the place to say your prayers," was his reply. "I'm no spy, thank God! we're all tarred with the same brush. I've only come here to have a pleasant chat with you. All day long I've been sitting in the café of the prison, playing cards with the bashi-bozouks, and telling them all about the kingdom we set up in Koprivshtitsa—but I got tired of it after a bit, and at last they gave me leave to come and keep you company; only they made me promise to get you to talk, and then to tell them what you said. But don't you fear—I'm not going to do any harm to you or anybody else. I've played the fool once, through not being able to keep my mouth shut: I just happened to say I knew some of our folk in Troyan, and now they're all under lock and key, poor fellows: it's a cursed faith, the Moslem religion, and that's the truth! You be careful and never let out anything to them, or you're done for. Once they find out you know something they won't leave you in peace until they get it out of you: they're never tired of hearing about our insurrection. But you've done well so far—only

you *have* been thrashed, my word! The khoja told me all about it."

I said nothing in reply to this long rigmarole, for I was afraid he might betray me. Next he took out a packet of tobacco, and ordered a couple of cups of coffee, and we began to enjoy ourselves. My friend was a certain Botio Ivanoff, who kept a small grocer's shop near Hissar. Happening to come across the "apostle" Voloff, he was so carried away by Revolutionary fervour that he abandoned his half-pints of wine and his ounces of monkey-nuts to follow Voloff, who made great use of him in the agitation and the work of preparation. But it was only later that I learned all this, and for the present I continued to regard him with suspicion. He, however, paid no attention to my lack of responsiveness, and went on with his story:

"Well, anyhow, even if they hang me to-morrow," he said, "it's something to have been through what I have. Our reign was over in a week, but I had a good time while it lasted. Do you know Peter Vankoff?" (this was one of Voloff's aliases). Then, without waiting for my answer, he went on: "He's the one who first turned my head. Late one night—I remember now it was St. John's Eve: we'd all had as much wine as was good for us—they came and told me a stranger, some merchant, wanted to see me. I thought to myself it was some one about business, but I was mistaken; it turned out to be a strange man I'd never seen before; he was dressed in quite common clothes, but the moment he opened his mouth you could tell he was somebody. He told us all things that startled us, I can tell you. First of all he said that a thousand Turkish softas were already wandering

all over Bulgaria, stirring up the Turks to get ready for the spring, because all the rayas were to have their throats cut then; it was all settled, and the Government wouldn't be able to stop it, even if it wanted to. Then he said that all the poor oppressed folk in the Balkan Peninsula had shouldered their guns to save their lives and make themselves free. Our brave brothers in the Herzegovina had been fighting against the Turks for a whole year. Bosnia was ablaze, Montenegro had risen in rebellion, women and children and all, and the latest news was that the Cretans were sharpening their knives too; Servia was working night and day to get ready, and Orthodox Russia sent her blessing to her children; so the whole of the East was afire. How could we, a nation of seven millions, stand by and look on with arms folded? So we had a meeting, and decided to get ready, and we all took an oath to be faithful and to work as hard as we could. After that I gave up attending to my shop altogether. Voloff used to put up in my house; he would send me with letters and messages to the villages round, but he was always changing his name; once he sent me off to Troyan to get three hundred pounds of gunpowder: that time he signed his letter 'Peter Vankoff': another time I had to go to Philippopolis, and I was to say I'd come from Panayot Voloff. A funny lot, those 'apostles': pity you never met any of them. Before long every one in the place knew that in the spring we were to kill off all the Turks.

"On the 2nd of May we got the letter signed in blood telling us we were to rebel. I put on my uniform. What a time we did have, to be sure! We were ordered to go to Novo Sélo, but before

going we killed off thirteen Turks there were in the village. Then we all went off to Novo Sélo, with the women and children, and cattle and all. We found there were seven or eight Turks at Novo Sélo, hiding in the school there. The old people wanted us to leave them alone, as they were neighbours; but who was going to listen to what the old people said at a time like that? So we just went to the school with our guns and fired at them through the windows, and polished off the whole lot of them. Then we started for Koprivshtitsa, where my sweetheart lived: what fun it was, my word! swaggering and showing off before the girls in our uniforms. I spent most of my time scratching out the Turkish numbers on the doors of houses with my knife, and cutting to pieces all the fezzes I could find. Then when they began to kill the gipsies I was one of the first to start in. But there were a lot of uncircumcized Turks in the place, and we were sorry afterwards that we hadn't cleared them off instead of the gipsies."

To cut his story short, Botio was one of those rebels whom the "loyal and well-disposed" chorbadjis of Koprivshtitsa had succeeded in locking up in the chemist's shop with a view to handing them over to the Turks. When let out he had taken like the others to the Balkan, where eventually he was caught with Kableshkoff and Naiden Stoyanoff. They were taken first to Troyan and then to Lovets, and Botio had been sent back to Troyan to point out the people he said he knew there. This he had done out of mere folly and indiscretion, and not as an act of premeditated treachery; but I thought it wiser not to give him the chance of serving me in the same way, and I remained as reticent as ever.

"At least," he grumbled, when I refused to tell him anything about myself, "you won't give me away, will you, after I've told you everything? Anyhow, my business is bad enough; but that about killing the gipsies at Koprivshtitsa and the Turks at Novo Sélo would finish me off at once, if they got to know about it. For God's sake, brother, don't split on me!"

From Botio I was able to gather a great deal both as to Turkish procedure and also as to the fate of his former comrades. For my part, I lied to him unblushingly.

We were able to hold this long conversation undisturbed, because the Turks were otherwise occupied just then. Thanks to Botio's denunciations, most of the principal residents of Troyan were under arrest; many of them were people of means, and both they and their relatives were ready enough to bribe the prison warders and even the Moslem prisoners so as to secure in return some relaxation of the prison regulations and discipline. My friend Hassan Aga, who profited as much as any one by this circumstance, rejoiced exceedingly. He was in and out of the prison all the time, smiling, with his pipe in his mouth and his tobacco-box in his hand, joking with the bashi-bozouks, encouraging them, and assuring them that their labours would not be unrewarded. At such a time he was not likely to pay much attention to ragged komitadjis like myself, although the period after which he had threatened to kill me had already elapsed. I knew from practical experience that when a Turk is triumphant his benevolence knows no bounds, so I thought it would be wise to take advantage of this favourable moment to try and beg a trifle of money from the all-powerful aga, for

tobacco and so forth. It may be thought base and cowardly to beg a favour from the man who had cruelly beaten and tortured me a few hours before, but this act of humility and submissiveness would dispose him to treat me more leniently. My suggestion was eagerly accepted by Botio, who hastened to adopt it as his own and to carry it out the very first time Hassan Aga passed our window.

"Why, Botio, my man, whatever are you doing in the cell there?" was Hassan Aga's astonished inquiry when he caught sight of my friend through the window. "Do you think it's right to be hobnobbing there with that black traitor? I shouldn't have thought it of you."

Botio answered that he had come in of his own free will: he spoke with the same ease and assurance as if he had been in his own shop. I should explain that the Turks treated Botio in this kind and conciliatory manner in order to induce him to make further disclosures; this he was fully aware of, but it made no difference to his free-and-easy manner.

"Oh, very well, then—all right; if that's so, I've nothing to say," continued Hassan Aga. "But tell me, Botio, old man, what do you think I ought to do with this thief that you've made a friend of? Shall I cut his throat, as he richly deserves, or shall I let him live a few days longer? What do you say? Why can't he tell the truth like you, and then everybody would respect him and be sorry for him?"

"Oh, don't you worry about him, Hassan Aga: let him alone. I've been asking him all manner of questions, and as far as I can make out he's not worth bothering about. I don't believe he knows anything about this business."

"Now, Botio, my lad, you'll make me angry if you talk in that way: I should be sorry to see you turn out a friend of a traitor like that. Can't you see how sunburnt he is and how his face and clothes show he's been wandering on the mountain for Heaven knows how long? All that's a sign that he's a rebel, and God knows how many innocent Moslems' blood he's shed."

"Oh, never mind about that, Hassan Aga; but you might spare us a few coppers to buy something to eat with," said Botio.

"Oh, is that all? Why, of course I will—why not? How can you ask? Here you are, my good fellow," said Hassan Aga, untying his purse-strings. "I expect you'd like a little wine too, eh?" he added.

Botio was profuse in his thanks. A few minutes later two of the bashi-bozouks went off to the bazaar to get us what we wanted, including a quart bottle of wine. Hassan Aga left us majestically, puffing clouds from his chibouk: he was delighted at this opportunity of exercising the Moslem virtues of benevolence and magnanimity. Within an hour our prison resounded with the strains of a Revolutionary song, sung by Botio, who was beating time with his hand, overjoyed at this unlooked-for carouse. Some of the bashi-bozouks, and finally the redoubtable Hassan Aga himself, came to look at us through the window.

"Well done, Botio, my boy!" he said. "That's how I like to see you, cheerful and happy. And why can't you sing and enjoy yourself, you rascal? Aren't you grateful for what you've had given to you?" he asked me, as I did not evince the same exhilaration as my comrade.

In the evening the post arrived at the Government

house from Roustchouk, the chief town of the province. Among the various letters and packets I could see that the zaptié held in his hand several numbers of the semi-official newspaper *Danube.* This aroused my curiosity: I knew this paper of old as one of the principal organs for exciting Turkish fanaticism by giving the most exaggerated and blood-curdling accounts of the doings of the Revolutionary Committees. This was a good opportunity for finding out whether outbreaks had taken place in other parts of the country; whether they had been stamped out as in Thrace or whether they were still holding their own; whether many komitas had been caught in other towns, how they were being treated, and so on. But if I had asked to see these papers, in the first place no notice would have been taken of my request, and, secondly, my desire for information would have indicated at once that I took so keen an interest in politics that I could not leave them alone even in prison. However, it occurred to me that the difficulty could be got over by means of Botio, who would not be likely to trouble himself about the consequences, if I could only induce him to ask Hassan Aga or the khoja to let us have a look at the paper. When I suggested this to Botio, his only objection was that reading newspapers was a sheer waste of time, and that it would be far better to spend our time in friendly conversation or singing songs. However, I persisted, and as Botio was anxious to make himself agreeable, he asked Hassan Aga if we might be allowed to see the paper, which sure enough was brought to us, as yet unopened, by the zaptié. Botio announced his intention of reading it out aloud while I listened, and I submitted unconditionally

to this arrangement, knowing that he would soon have had enough of it, and would then pass the paper on to me.

It was clearly the first time the poor fellow had ever had a newspaper in his hand, for he began to read out the title and the editorial announcements. "'Danube.—Published twice a week, on Sundays and Wednesdays.—All contributions to be addressed to the Editor.' Well, I should like to know what's the good of all that? That's what you call a newspaper, is it? Can you make head or tail of it?" asked the simple-minded Botio, putting aside the paper which was so precious to me.

But I was too excited and too much occupied with my own thoughts to discuss the point with my friend. While he was stumbling over the head-lines I had managed to run my eye rapidly over the telegrams, the most interesting of which came from Sofia: these gave the news of the destruction of Benkoffski's band, the death of its leader (described as "Petkoffski"), and the capture of Pope Kiril. A second telegram, dated May 26, stated that Benkoffski's head had been exhibited to the insurgents in prison at Orkhaniê: these had recognized it as that of Benkoffski, and had spat upon it and cursed it as the head of the man who had destroyed their houses and brought all this misery on them: they were so infuriated that they had tried to attack Pope Kiril, whom the police had much difficulty in protecting from their violence. Among these prisoners, as I afterwards learned, were our Dalmatian comrades. They bore witness to Father Kiril's dignified behaviour in captivity: when the Turks asked him to tell them who the komitadjis were, he raised his cross and said: "All those

who believed in this sacred emblem were komitadjis."

Another telegram mentioned that troops had been sent to Drenovo, where the rebels had taken possession of the monastery, which, thanks to the divine assistance, the Turkish general had succeeded in capturing and destroying. Other bands of Revolutionaries were mentioned, but it was clear that they had been unable to hold out against the Turks, and that they had been dispersed and captured, in every instance, "with the divine assistance."

After a while Botio began to be subjected to frequent interrogatories as to his own doings, which caused him considerable uneasiness. Every now and then a zaptié would come to fetch him for the purpose of extracting from him further information about the Bulgarians arrested at Troyan. "I shall get into trouble through this confounded tongue of mine," he would mutter; "but let's hope for the best."

I left him at Troyan when I was moved on, and I was sorry afterwards that I had not been more communicative with him, for there was no harm in him, apart from his incurable propensity to gossip. He survived all these vicissitudes, and until quite recently he was known throughout the whole region of Hissar and Karlovo as the komita Botio. Two months after our meeting at Troyan I came upon him in the prison at Philippopolis, ten times gloomier and more depressed than before. I heard a well-known voice saying, "Welcome, brother!" I looked round, but could see no one. At last I ascertained that the sound proceeded from a small aperture in the door of a closed cell: Botio was

inside, in solitary confinement, which was a sign that things were going badly with him. He complained to me that all the peasants from his village were putting all their misdeeds on to his shoulders, and that he was done for.

About a year later, after the defeat of the Turks by the Russians at Shipka, I happened to be at Tirnovo, and was standing in the crowd watching the Turkish prisoners being marched along, under the guard of the Bulgarian legionaries who had joined the Russians. I noticed a young Turkish officer trying to avoid stepping in the mud, which was particularly thick.

"March on there, can't you! Never mind the mud: I've been made to walk through worse mud than that before now by you Turks, with both my hands chained, too, and the stick to help me on besides."

The voice took me back to komitadji times: I looked round; there was Botio with his chassepot on his shoulder, a sword-bayonet at his side, and a huge kalpak with a green lining on his head. "Is that you, Botio?" I said.

Botio forgot the calls of discipline: he let his rifle fall and embraced me affectionately. His first words were: "Have you forgotten the coffee in the prison at Troyan? As for killing and beating Turks," he went on, "I've had my fill this time! —up to here, at least," holding out his hand on a level with his breast.

Years passed by. In 1883 I had occasion to visit the prison at Philippopolis, no longer with handcuffs on my wrists, but as examining magistrate. There, in the very spot where six years before Botio used to sit knitting stockings, I saw a well-known figure

in disreputable rags, holding a dirty spoon in his hand. I could not at first recall where I had seen that face before: it seemed familiar.

"How are you, old friend? All right? Don't you recognize me?" said the unknown.

"What! Botio? Is it possible? Can that be you?"

"Well, I can't help it—I've got into trouble again," he replied.

Poor Botio! he was unable to realize that times had changed and that he could no longer deal with Turks as he pleased. He had been rash enough to stop a well-to-do Turk on the highroad near Karlovo, and to transfer the contents of his purse to his own pockets: hence his presence in gaol.

CHAPTER XVII

KABLESHKOFF THE MARTYR

EARLY on the morrow four armed bashi-bozouks stood outside, one of whom held a large envelope sealed with red sealing-wax. The police sergeant now came up, and, bidding me get ready, he removed my fetters and placed handcuffs on my wrists. We then set out, and I was able to make a parting salutation to the kind khoja, who passed us in the hall. I did not dare to ask whither we were bound, but supposed our destination was the neighbouring town of Lovets. I did my best to be polite to my four guards, and eventually we entered into conversation. Indeed, one of them told me to sit down and helped me to mend my sandals, for the road was so bad that they were soon quite worn out. Soon they began to complain that they had been obliged to leave their homes and families in order to take part in this hunt after rebels, from which they were never likely to derive any benefit, and which was properly speaking the business of soldiers and zaptiés. They even expressed the hope that my innocence would be admitted, and assured me that I was less likely to be beaten or ill-treated at a comparatively large town like Lovets than at Troyan.

On the road we frequently fell in with bands of bashi-bozouks on their way to hunt out insurgents.

Many of these assumed a threatening attitude, and it required all the diplomacy of my convoy to preserve me from their attacks. Farther on we met a party of gipsies, who were maddened with fury at the sight of me. The insurgents at Koprivshtitsa had put to death a number of gipsies, and their brethren burned to avenge them. So insistent were they that my guards were at last compelled to draw swords in my defence. The only person we met who did not attack or abuse me was a Turk who was travelling on business. He put several questions, and finally expressed sympathy with me, and blamed those who had led me and so many others astray.

It was nearly dark when we reached Lovets, and I was not sorry when we arrived at the Government house, and I was no longer exposed to the abuse and angry threats of the Mussulman population, who had collected in crowds to see me pass. The officer in command, after a number of sarcastic inquiries, ordered the handcuffs to be taken from my wrists and irons to be placed on my ankles: I was then conveyed to the prison. The prisoners crowded to the bars to see me; I could only hear the clashing of the irons, as the air was thick with tobacco-smoke. The prisoners were all Turkish gipsies; the only light was a lamp roughly made out of a blacking-bottle. I remained for some time standing by the door, for I was afraid to go forward. I said "Good evening," in Turkish, but no one responded to my greeting. I began to fear that they would all fall on me and attack me. At last one of the chief men among the prisoners, who stood near the light, ordered me to advance, pointing at the same time to the opposite side of the cell, where the darkness

seemed impenetrable. Many of the prisoners had—probably on purpose—stretched out their legs, so that I could hardly help knocking against them with my irons, which resulted in their abusing and kicking me. I advanced to the very end of the cell before I was allowed to rest on the damp earth, for this portion of the prison served as the lavatory. I sat down mournfully, and came to the conclusion that I should be lucky indeed if the next morning found me alive. After a short time one of the Turks took up the light and came towards me, with three or four others. I was made to sit in a rather better place, and they all sat round me, placing the lamp in front of me.

First of all they asked me for five piastres to pay my footing. As I replied that I possessed no money at all, one of them began at once to examine my garments, and finally selected my jacket, which he made me take off. "I think it'll fetch five piastres," he said, holding the coat up. The others nodded, and it was sold there and then by auction.

Then they began to question me, asking me where I had come from, under which voivode I had served, how much pay I had received from Russia, etc. Meanwhile the other prisoners gathered round and listened with interest to the proceedings.

"We've got two other komitas like you here," said one of the prisoners, in Bulgarian—for he was a Pomak. "Perhaps you know them."

I looked in the direction indicated, and saw two figures, heavily ironed and evidently suffering from utter exhaustion. One of these was a young man of from twenty-five to twenty-seven years of age, with a slight moustache and piercing eyes, so far as I could see in the semi-darkness. The other was

a man of about forty-five, with a very heavy beard, who seemed plunged in despair.

The first of these was Todor Kableshkoff, the hero of the Koprivshtitsa revolt, who fired the first shot in the insurrection, and who contrived eventually to blow out his brains in the police station at Gabrovo. I had never seen him before. The other was a schoolmaster named Naiden Stoyanoff, who had been the Koprivshtitsa delegate at Oborishté, and with whom I was consequently well acquainted. I was much moved at this tragic encounter. I feared also lest they should recognize me or mention me by name—for I had given a dozen aliases, but the authorities did not know me by the name which I had borne in the ranks of the insurgents. I tried therefore to make signals to them in the dark, and eventually addressed Stoyanoff, whom I pretended to take for a pope on the strength of his long beard, and asked him how he had been induced to become a komitadji.

"I'm not a pope, my lad," he replied, "nor a komitadji either, but I've fallen into their hands just as you have." He accompanied this with a wink, which showed me that he understood me and would make no sign of recognition.

At this moment the order and tranquillity which had been maintained during the ceremony of my official reception was broken. A few of the prisoners, most of whom were gipsies, began wrestling and managed to fall on me. Certain obscene tricks which were *de rigueur* on every newcomer's arrival were then played at my expense; after that I was left in peace. Some of the prisoners, whose profession was that of cattle and horse stealers, began asking me questions about the

(supposed) part of the country which I came from: were there many horses and buffaloes there, and did their owners look closely after them? When I explained to them that in these troublous times the cattle were straying ownerless about the fields, they wrung their hands and cursed the fate which had made them prisoners at a moment when they might have done such a good stroke of business.

I may be blamed for denying my own share in the insurrection and conversing thus amicably with these ruffians. But what good would it have done to confess to horse-stealers and brigands that I was a rebel? The only result would have been blows and torture. Meanwhile two fellow-workers in the cause were lying a few steps from me, and I was unable to exchange a word with them.

The noise and confusion now became general, and Kableshkoff began to sing the "Marseillaise," adapting to it words of his own, by means of which he informed me in French of Voloff's death, and advised me, if the authorities should discover any connection between us, to lay all the blame on the deceased. The song met with general approval, but one Pomak expressed regret at not being able to understand the words.

"No," said Kableshkoff, "it's a French song, about Napoleon, the one who helped Sultan Mejid to take Sebastopol."

"You mean the one who sent his daughter to the Padishah to gain his friendship, don't you?" asked one of the Turks.

"Yes, that's the man," replied Kableshkoff.

The rough voice of the zaptiê outside was now heard ordering every one to stop their noise and lie down. I tried to sleep, but besides the filth and

damp of the place it swarmed with vermin: in a few minutes I was scratching myself all over. But the sound of my fetters soon annoyed my neighbours, and I received a peremptory summons to be quiet. I suppose I must have fallen asleep, for suddenly I started up feeling a terrific pain in my feet. I was surrounded by flames. I rolled on the floor, shrieking with agony and fright, but the flames continued. No one responded to my appeals for help; all else was dark and still. I could discern at the window the figures of the two zaptiés, who stood enjoying my torments. At first I had thought the whole place was on fire, but I soon found that the conflagration was confined to my own person. Rags and scraps of paper, saturated in petroleum, were fastened to my feet. I got up and seized the pitcher of water to extinguish the flame, but one of the pretended sleepers ordered me to lay it down at once. I succeeded at last in freeing myself from this torture and lay down again, as protestations would have been quite useless. Afterwards I found out that this treatment was the usual custom, and I saw it applied to others, in the following manner: sheets of cigarette-paper, impregnated with petroleum, were fixed to the feet and fingers of the sleeping victim, and a large bundle of rags was tied to his fetters. Then every one pretended to be asleep, except one who lighted the match and then disappeared. The petroleum was supplied by the zaptiés.

Next day I was brought up before the governor to be interrogated in the presence of the whole Government council, which comprised two Bulgarian members. The proceedings are somewhat in-

formal: it is not only the president who examines the accused, but every member has the right to put questions. It was only when the prisoner was a Bulgarian that the Bulgarian members ventured to exercise this prerogative, but then they did so with a zeal and harshness which made up for their timidity when a Turk was the accused party. Their presence was less necessary at Lovets than elsewhere, as most of the Moslem members spoke Bulgarian. There was one old Pomak member who gave me many an anxious moment with his questions concerning my wanderings over the Balkan. He knew every inch of the whole country, the position of every hut, and the name of every shepherd on the mountain. He asked me if I had passed through the flock of one particular shepherd, whose ground was in such a position that it was quite impossible for me to have avoided it if I had come from Zlatitsa to Teteven, as I had tried to make out. Then, turning to the others, he said:

"He can't have passed by there or he would have been heard of: you never saw such dogs as that shepherd has; they wouldn't let a bird fly overhead without barking. The shepherd once gave me one of them: there was no need for me to lock my doors at night as long as that dog was in the place."

"Ah, regular dog-fancier, I suppose," said the judge.

"You miserable scoundrel, you're a nice sort of fellow to be turning the whole world topsy-turvy, meddling in matters of State, aren't you?" asked one of the Bulgarian members, an old man with a tiny little head.

"Couldn't you find a costermonger's pitch in the streets of Bucharest that you must come here to bring all this misery on the poor rayas, besides making trouble for the State?" added the other Bulgarian.

Naturally the same questions were put to me here as at Troyan: who was the voivode under whom I had served? how many were we in the band? how many Moslems had I killed? who had induced me to join the revolt? I was urged to tell the truth, as the Sultan was merciful and would pardon me, and so on. Of course to all this I answered, "I don't know anything about it—I'm innocent—I've never heard of such things."

The examination passed through various phases, good and bad, paternal and severe, but I would not shift my ground. No one was satisfied, and the kaimakam lost his temper.

"Well then, if you're innocent, as you say, what the devil were you doing in the Troyan Balkan, confound you? Why should you come all that distance from your own part of the country?"

He then sent for the police sergeant, to whom he gave orders that I was not to have any food served out to me, and that I was to be attached to the same chain as Kableshkoff and the schoolmaster Naiden. This was precisely what I desired. So I was taken out, and in accordance with this order I was made fast to the chain to which the others were fettered, my own irons being removed as no longer necessary. This manner of attaching prisoners is as follows: a heavy iron ring is fastened with a padlock round the prisoner's neck; under the chin there is an aperture pierced in the ring, through which the chain passes. As many as

ten prisoners are often chained together in this way. One end of the chain is fitted with a padlock fastening it to the end man's neck-ring, the other extremity is made fast to the window of the cell by another padlock: every hour or so the sentry gives it a pull to see that all is in order and to remind the prisoners that there is some one keeping watch over them. At Kableshkoff's special request I was chained between him and Naiden. We crouched down on the bare ground in Turkish fashion without looking at each other as long as the zaptié was there, but the mere proximity of these comrades was an intense satisfaction to me, and we all waited impatiently till the policeman should go and we should be free to converse together.

The sergeant had scarcely finished fastening me to the chain before Kableshkoff began asking me a hundred questions; he wanted to know all that had happened in Bulgaria ever since the 2nd of May, all about Benkoffski and Panaghiourishté, not to speak of the other Revolutionary Divisions: I was likely to know more than he did about many things, as I had been in a more important centre, and also because my capture was subsequent to his. Not a word of complaint escaped him as to his own sufferings and miseries. Though the news which he had been able to pick up showed quite clearly that the insurrection had been stamped out everywhere at the very first encounter, he was still an ardent believer in the eventual success of the sacred cause, to which he had contributed so much.

"Come along, brother; come and let's have a talk," were his first words. "This fellow," pointing to Naiden, "is half dead already; he'll never live

to be taken to the scaffold. He's no rebel; he's as faint-hearted as a chicken. I've had more to endure from him than from the Turks."

Poor Naiden merely flicked the ash from his cigarette and sighed deeply. The Pomak prisoners (Moslem by religion but Bulgarian in speech) sat round to listen to our conversation, but were unable to make head or tail of it, as we spoke in the modern literary Bulgarian language. From time to time they looked at us inquisitively, and asked what that swinish language was.

"Well I never! it seems the komitas have a language of their own," one of them remarked. "You'd think it was Bulgarian, but you can only pick up a word here and there; it's impossible to get the hang of what they say."

The captured Bulgarian insurgents could be divided into two categories; the first, which comprised the greater part of the prisoners, alleged that they had been led to take part in the revolt without a proper knowledge of what they were about, being either deceived by the leaders or else induced to join while in a state of intoxication. Only a few, against whom a hundred obvious facts could be adduced in evidence, and for whom no denial was possible, admitted their guilt. Kableshkoff belonged to the latter class: it was useless for him to attempt denial when the whole of his native village was ready to testify that it was from his house that the revolt was proclaimed on May 2nd, and that he had been the leader of the band; moreover, at least fifty gipsies had been killed there, and his name was repeated far and wide as that of the instigator of this slaughter. So he answered more or less truthfully the questions put to him; but he dwelt chiefly

on the sufferings of the people and the various causes which had led to the revolt. When he was asked if he was a partisan of the revolt and if he thought the Turkish Government tyrannical, he replied that it would have been impossible for him to separate himself from his friends and neighbours, even if he had wished to do so. The allegations of the gipsies that he had been the leader of the insurrection at Koprivshtitsa he flatly denied; his excuse for this to me was that it was useless to make a full confession at Lovets: he was waiting till they took him to some more important place, where there would probably be Europeans present at the trial, for we still flattered ourselves that we might get some good from civilized Europe. He urged me, if they should happen to take us before a European commission, to tell the whole truth, as it was our duty as "apostles" not to try to conceal the facts, but to relate openly the sufferings of the nation: in either case we were certain to be hanged.

Kableshkoff and his companion, with two others, had been taken at almost the same place as myself; they had been betrayed by Bulgarians to the bashi-bozouks, who had fired on them and killed the two others. Their heads were cut off and stuck on stakes, and there had been some talk of putting Kableshkoff to death, but it was decided that the triumph would be greater if two living komitas were brought in with the two severed heads. On one of the victims was found a sum of £800, and this circumstance acted thereafter as a powerful incentive to the bashi-bozouks in the hunt after insurgents.

Kableshkoff's masterful and chivalrous personality had its effect even on the murderers and horse-stealers who shared his cell with him, the very

lowest and meanest of whom, as Moslems, considered themselves a hundred degrees superior to any Bulgarian. Often the whole of these prisoners crowded round our chain of an evening to hear the stories related by the "Telegraph," as they called Kableshkoff, who was a skilled telegraphic operator. Proud and contemptuous Turkish bullies, Pomak wrestlers always ready for a fight, fierce and desperate Circassians, gay, tattered gipsies, all composed the audience; even the lamp, the cherished monopoly of the Turkish prisoners, was placed before Kableshkoff so that they might see him the better. And Kableshkoff, with a thick and rusty iron ring confining his neck, and two heavy iron chains round his weak and suffering body—his whole weight being less than that of the irons which he bore—told them endless stories of djinns and peris, such as Orientals love.

"How much did you get a month when you were a telegraph?" a Turk would ask.

"Ten pounds," answered Kableshkoff.

"My word, just think of that!" echoed through the whole prison.

"And how many oxen has your father got?" asked an inquisitive prisoner.

"More than three hundred," was the reply.

"And you mean to say that you left all that to go and become a komita on the Balkan!" was the incredulous comment.

"I'm sorry for him on account of his youth," said several, when he had finished his stories and was ordered back to his place.

"Ah, if I was the pasha, now," declared another, "I'd just give that Bulgarian a free pardon, I would."

Owing to the disturbed state of the whole of

Thrace it had not been possible as yet to collect evidence against Kableshkoff and his companions. They were consequently treated like the other prisoners, and like them received twenty paras (about one penny) a day for bread. This was wholly insufficient, and Kableshkoff and I resolved to make a demonstration in the courtyard, where we were allowed to go periodically at stated times, morning and evening. We made up our minds to choose a time when the governor and the Bulgarian bishop happened to be in the Government buildings, and then to lie down and refuse to get up when ordered by the police. This would cause a commotion, an inquiry would be held, and we should have an opportunity of stating our grievances. We did lie down as arranged, but the only result was that the zaptiés were ordered to drag us in like dogs if we refused to get up. The three of us were chained together, as already explained, but Naiden had refused to take part in the demonstration, so that when we lay down on the ground he was forced to kneel down against his will, protesting loudly against our action as he did so. This did not prevent him from being the first to taste the policeman's cudgel. He jumped to his feet, with angry protests and imprecations, but we remained lying down and awaiting satisfaction: it was not long in coming. I held out at first, but after five or six blows I followed the schoolmaster's example. Kableshkoff's obstinacy, however, was proof against the violence of the zaptiés: he stuck to his point in spite of kicks and blows. His resistance exasperated not only the police but also the Moslem prisoners.

"Give it to him! let him have it! Did you ever

hear of such impudence? A traitor like that daring to play his komitadji tricks in the very courtyard of the Government house!" they shouted. Kableshkoff was dragged into his cell by the feet, his head bumping on the rough stone pavement. That night he had a serious attack of fever and was delirious all next day.

Two or three days after this incident, early on the morning of June 15th, the overseer came in, unfastened Kableshkoff and his companion, and told them to prepare for a long journey.

"I expect they're sending us to Philippopolis, where we shall adorn the gallows," said Kableshkoff. He then told me secretly that he had made up his mind to commit suicide, as he was afraid that under torture he might be forced to make revelations which would bring trouble on others. He was suffering from a violent attack of fever and could hardly walk, so the Turks provided a broken-down old horse for him, and his feet were tied together under the horse's belly. As they went away, some of the Moslems cursed them, out of fanaticism, and one of these assured me that they were to be hanged at Philippopolis and that I should suffer the same fate at Lovets, pulling my ear viciously as he spoke.

A week later we had almost forgotten Kableshkoff, when the overseer told us that he and his companion had been taken to Tirnovo. Three or four days after this the overseer came to the window of our cell, and asked us if we remembered the "Telegraph" and his companion with the long beard. "Why, of course," said some; "it's only a few days since they were taken away."

"Well, just fancy! the 'Telegraph' killed

himself at Gabrovo, and the other died on the road."

"Dear me! who'd have thought it?" said one of the bullies, twisting his moustache; "he must have had a man's soul in that flat chest of his." He at least understood Kableshkoff's nature. "I expect," he went on, "our lads treated them a bit roughly. I made up my mind long ago that there was something in him. I tell you what: that fellow was one of the chief komitas of all, or I'll—I'll shave off my moustache."

"Why couldn't you tell us, you scoundrel, that the 'Telegraph' was a great komita, eh?" asked one of the inferior prisoners of me, and began kicking me as I lay on the ground beside him. "Leave him alone, can't you!" said the first; "what do you suppose he knows about it, a wretched creature like him? I'll bet he doesn't even know why he became a komita." Meanwhile I was overcome with emotion at the death of my friends and fellow-conspirators.

Todor Kableshkoff was born at Koprivshtitsa, a little town which for centuries had enjoyed certain exceptional privileges under the Turks. This circumstance may have made its inhabitants bolder and less submissive than the generality of Bulgarians: certainly some of the principal agitators in the revolt came from there. His father was rich and influential, and belonged to what may be called the Bulgarian aristocracy, such as it then was. Todor was educated at Philippopolis, and subsequently at the Imperial Lycée of Galata Serai at Constantinople, the only high school in Turkey at that time. When he left school he returned to his home, and after being employed for some

time in his father's counting-house, he had at first some idea of establishing a sugar factory, but eventually entered the service of the railway company and became telegraphic operator at the Belovo station. Here he threw himself heart and soul into the revolutionary movement, and was soon known far and wide. By chance he happened to be at Koprivshtitsa on May 2nd, and the suspicions of the authorities having fallen on him it was sought to arrest him. This gave the signal for the outbreak, as we have seen, and Kableshkoff took the lead in his native place. When some of the neighbouring villages were sacked by the bashi-bozouks, and the same fate seemed to be in store for Koprivshtitsa, despair set in, and the Bulgarians of the better class, or "chorbadjis" as they were called, being sworn enemies of the revolt, took advantage of this turn of affairs to stir up the mob against their leaders, who, they said, were the cause of the ruin of so many of their fellow-countrymen; if these could be seized and handed over to the Turks the town would be spared.

So Voloff, Kableshkoff, and many others were placed under lock and key in an apothecary's shop. But just as the chorbadjis were about to give them up to the Turkish commandant, who was encamped with his troops outside Koprivshtitsa, it so happened that three of the boldest and most resolute of the rebels, who had escaped from the rout at Panaghiourishté, arrived, hoping to find a refuge at Koprivshtitsa; they thought that possibly Benkoffski might have fled thither also. This unexpected turn of events upset their plans, and the chorbadjis were beginning to look with suspicion at the new-comers, when a brilliant idea occurred

to one of the latter. Turning to the chorbadjis, he said: "Are you mad? don't you know that twelve thousand Servians and a band of three thousand Bulgarians from Roumania have arrived at Panaghiourishté? Before evening half of them will be here. You'd better tell your popes and notables to put on their best clothes and go out to meet them." The story was greedily swallowed, for the fable of help from Servia and Roumania had been put about by the "apostles" so sedulously that it had become an article of faith. The fezzes which had been donned in token of submission were hastily thrown aside, and shouts of "Long live Bulgaria!" were raised. The prisoners were set at liberty, and were quickly and secretly made aware of the real state of the case. Like us, they took refuge on the Balkan, with the same hopes. As we have seen, Kableshkoff was captured near Troyan.

While they were being conveyed from Lovets to Tirnovo, blows were rained on them by the zaptiés, and the schoolmaster Naiden's beard was plucked out by the roots: he was half-dead before they reached Tirnovo, and died that night in the prison there. Kableshkoff, weak as he was, held out bravely to the last. But on reaching Tirnovo he was in such a state of misery and raggedness—probably his clothes had been taken from him on the way—that when it was proposed to lock him up in the cell where other insurgents were confined, the latter protested against such a ragamuffin being thrust upon them. They were mostly schoolmasters from Gabrovo, and were treated with some degree of consideration by the Turks. At Tirnovo Kableshkoff was subjected to a close examination,

lasting for several hours, by the Extraordinary Commission sitting there. I never learned what disclosures he made, if any: but from what I heard he said little and begged them to finish him off as quickly as possible.

A few days later Kableshkoff and some others were conveyed to Philippopolis by Selami Pasha: the trial could not take place at Tirnovo, which was far from the place of residence of the accused, and it had not been possible to collect sufficient evidence against him. Selami Pasha behaved kindly to him, conversed with him in French, and provided a cart to convey him. At Gabrovo, where the pasha stopped for the night, Kableshkoff was confined in the guardhouse, where the police were ordered to treat him well; the other insurgents accompanying him were put in the local prison for the night. The Bulgarian priest and episcopal *locum tenens* who called on Selami Pasha, found him in high spirits: the pasha himself volunteered the statement that he had got a prisoner of the very greatest importance, through whom he hoped to discover all the ramifications of the plot and to lay hands on the ringleaders. The priest was allowed to visit Kableshkoff in the guardroom, but found him so depressed in spirits and looking so ill that he could not make up his mind to address him. Next morning the pasha sent for the pope. "Well, pope, I'm afraid I was a little premature as regards that young man: you'll have to say a requiem for him," said the pasha: "those fools of zaptiés of mine have let him slip through their fingers." The pasha was furious with the zaptiés, and exhausted on them the copious resources of Turkish imprecation.

The manner of Kableshkoff's death was as follows: the sergeant of zaptiés, seeing him so depressed and ill, and mindful of the injunction to use the prisoner kindly, ordered his hands to be set free; there seemed little danger in allowing him this relaxation, as the police were actually in the room with him. About midnight, when the zaptiés were all asleep, Kableshkoff got up silently, took one of the pistols from the wall where they were hanging, and shot himself through the heart. The zaptiés tried every possible remedy, but their efforts were unavailing: the hero of the Koprivshtitsa revolt had succeeded in freeing himself from further torture at the hands of his enemies.

The pope asked if there was any objection to his burying the corpse with Christian rites: "Do what you like with him," was the rejoinder; "I wanted him alive, he's no good to me dead"; and the pasha continued his journey the same day.

The funeral was attended by the entire Bulgarian community of Gabrovo; the corpse was exposed to view, after being washed and decently dressed in new clothes as if for a wedding, and the mourners reverentially passed in front of the mortal remains of one who had given his life for them.

It so happened that at Gabrovo there were buried two insurgents who had belonged to Hajji Dimitr's band and who had been hanged there in 1868, for whom no funeral rites had ever been celebrated. Some one, bethinking himself of these forgotten votaries of freedom, asked the pope to mention their names also in the funeral service: this was done, and thus after eight years the two insurgents were admitted by their national Church to a share in the same ritual as their brother in ideas, who had

perished by his own hand only on the previous day.

Not until 1883 did the community of Koprivshtitsa, mindful of its heroic son, decide on having his remains conveyed to the place of his birth, to receive a final resting-place there, where he had been the first to deploy the flag of national liberty, and where his hand had fired the first shot in a memorable if unfortunate rising. Both at Gabrovo and at Koprivshtitsa the ceremony was made the occasion of an impressive demonstration, a special feature of which was a procession of the surviving insurgents, confederates of Kableshkoff, who took part in the funeral cortège, bareheaded and dressed in their Revolutionary attire.

CHAPTER XVIII

ON THE ROAD TO PHILIPPOPOLIS

I WAS more than once in danger of being ill-treated by some of my fellow-prisoners, but had contrived by dint of flattery and servile submission to creep into the good graces of two or three of the principal Turks in the gaol, and they protected me. Meanwhile, I was interrogated from day to day, but without any result. From time to time other captured insurgents were brought in, and I was able to learn much from them about the fate of the insurrection in other parts of the country. As for the order that I was to receive no food, the worthy police-sergeant took upon himself to disregard it, and he frequently gave me, besides, half a piastre for tobacco, when no one was looking. Even the gipsies shared with me whatever their friends brought them from outside.

One day from the commotion going on outside we all guessed that something important had happened.

The prisoners crowded to the window and eagerly questioned the zaptiés. At last one of these informed us that a great capture of komitas had taken place, and that three rebel leaders, as well as one severed head, would soon be brought in. We saw the kaimakam himself mount his horse to go out to meet

the triumphal procession. All this time I was burning with anxiety to see which of my former comrades would make his appearance. At last, from the shouts of the crowd we could tell that the cortège was advancing. First came the officials on horseback, then a number of armed bashi-bozouks; these were followed by a Bulgarian carrying a stake on which was impaled a human head, of unusual size, with reddish hair scarcely distinguishable from the mass of clotted blood which covered it. It seemed to be that of a man of about twenty-five years of age, but I failed to recognize it. Behind came three human forms, three martyrs in every sense of the word; one of them was quite bareheaded, the two others had each a filthy rag wound round his head. Their trousers were hanging from them in shreds; two of them were in their shirtsleeves, while the third wore a gold-embroidered military tunic of a cut unfamiliar to me, but resembling that of a colonel, at least. The last-mentioned seemed very young. When they came close to me, I was thunderstruck to see that the first was Nikola Obrétenoff, of Roustchouk, who had for three years shared his bed with me, and the second an old and determined agitator named Peneff. The third, in the colonel's uniform, was unknown to me. So moved was I by this meeting, that I retreated into the prison to conceal my emotion. But the other prisoners were too much occupied in gloating over the severed head to notice me. It belonged to a certain Stoyan, and was eventually thrown into the river.

The captives were brought in, and an eager crowd gathered round them. After several attempts I succeeded in catching Obrétenoff's eye: I saw his

glance of recognition; he then whispered to Peneff: that was enough.

The Turks agreed that they had not yet seen such high-class komitadjis as these, and told me disparagingly that I was not fit to carry water for the new-comers. These were taken at once before the kaimakam, and half an hour later I was sent for. The others had already admitted their guilt, having been taken with arms in hand. It was now sought to connect me with them, and the kaimakam ordered Obrétenoff to look carefully at me and say whether he knew me or not, as I had stated that I had lived for some years at Roustchouk.

Obrétenoff scanned me attentively from head to foot, with the air of a man who is really anxious to identify the person before him. Then with the greatest seriousness he turned to the kaimakam. "I don't know him, sir," he said; "Roustchouk is a large town, you see, full of all kinds of vagabonds and gaol-birds, such as this fellow. I've never had anything to do with that kind of person."

"And you, Peneff," asked the kaimakam, "what do you say? Look at him well; isn't he one of you?"

Peneff, who knew me well, replied: "I'm a rebel, sir; and I wouldn't have anything to do with a fellow like that: I should say he was a gipsy."

The Turks smiled, and I was delighted.

"Give these lads their food regularly, and see that no one annoys them," said the kaimakam to the zaptiés; "as for this scoundrel," pointing to me, "cut off his rations again; he's not fit to eat the Sultan's bread!"

"Please, sir, how am I to live if I get no food?" I said plaintively, while filled with internal joy at my escape.

Afterwards we were all locked up together for several days. I learned that the youth in the uniform was a young Bulgarian from Roumania, who had never been in Turkey before.

Then one day we were taken out of our prison cell and chained together, each having his right arm fastened to his neighbour's left, and one large chain was fixed to each man's neck. We were eight in all, some peasants who had been caught taking food to fugitive rebels having been added to our number. We then started, guarded by several zaptiés, who treated us kindly and abstained from the customary blows and abuse. Our destination was kept secret from us, but we soon understood it to be Tirnovo. The weather was very hot, and the journey under such conditions terribly arduous. Near the village of Rabiovo we noticed a cloud of dust behind us, which at first we were unable to explain. But as it gradually drew nearer, we could see that it was a body of troops marching. One of the zaptiés said that they were on their way to Servia, and this was the first news we had heard of the war. Our guards, fearing lest the soldiers in their exasperation against the Christians might not take into consideration the fact that we were State prisoners, left the road, and we all lay concealed in a cornfield till the troops had passed. That night we spent at the small village of Rabiovo, where we were packed like sardines in a tiny closet. The next day we reached Sevlievo, and were lodged in the prison there. To our surprise, it was full of Bulgarians, of whom there must have been from a hundred and twenty to a hundred and fifty, all evidently political prisoners. Not a Turk was among them. We were confined in a cell apart from the

rest, which communicated with the general prison by means of a window. When the zaptiés had locked us in and gone away, a priest appeared at the window, who greeted us as heroes, and assured us that our names would be revered by posterity equally with those of the Apostles of Scripture (two of my companions were "apostles"). After this many of the prisoners spoke to us through the window and encouraged us, and a collection was made for us, the proceeds—about a hundred and fifty piastres—being handed to us together with tobacco, food, and other gifts.

But we were not destined to remain long the heroes of the prison of Sevlievo. About dusk we heard the trampling of horses and the clashing of swords outside; at first we could not imagine what all this meant, and feared it might have some connection with our fate. Soon the door of our cell was opened, and three heavily ironed prisoners were brought in. They were left handcuffed, though our wrists had been set free. The new-comers were known to us and to the other inmates of the gaol. Their names were: Kirkoff, a leading agitator and "apostle" in the Tirnovo district; Pesheff, the president of the Sevlievo Revolutionary Committee; and Karaghieuzoff, one of its chief members. The three had been condemned, but their sentences had not been pronounced. They had been assured that they were each to undergo eight years' imprisonment in Asia, and would be taken first to their native places to bid farewell to their families and to provide themselves with necessaries, according to the law. The police-commandant came to the window and cheered them up, saying that eight years would soon pass by, and inquiring what they wished to be

brought from their houses. The unfortunate men asked for clothes, shirts, etc., begged that debts due to them might be collected, and so forth.

"Yes, yes, I'll see to it all," said the officer.

"There surely can't be any mistake about it," cried Pesheff when we were alone; "we can't have been sentenced to anything more than imprisonment. The lieutenant told me so. He said he had no reason for deceiving me, and that I was being sent here so that my sentence might be read out in public, and that after that I should be taken away."

But Kirkoff would not be convinced. He was persuaded that they were to be hanged, and though we feared that he was right, we all tried to prove that he was mistaken. But soon we heard women wailing outside; these were the mothers, sisters, wives of the condemned prisoners; their cries were heart-rending. I shall never forget this scene. The relatives of the condemned men had evidently guessed what was going to happen; nay, they had probably seen the gallows being got ready. Nor were they allowed the final consolation of an interview with their loved ones: the zaptiés drove them from the window with blows and curses.

The three men now saw that their fate was sealed. We dared not say a word, and for a long time the situation was unendurable. At last some zaptiés came and ordered us to follow them to the general cell: the three condemned insurgents were left alone. From the other prisoners we learnt that the two were to be hanged the next morning, while Kirkoff was to be taken to Lovets, his native town, and executed there. All the assurances and encouragement lavished on them by the Turks were

merely with the view of preventing their giving way to grief or breaking down, and thus being unable to walk to the scaffold. Among the prisoners we saw many who had been tortured to induce them to confess: some had been burnt with hot irons, others had their hair and beards plucked out by the roots, and others again had been suspended by the feet and kept without food.

Early in the morning we could hear the stir and the clanking of arms as the three men were led out. The first to be brought forth was Kirkoff, covered with chains; he was placed in a cart with several zaptiés, and the horses set out at a gallop. He suffered the next day at Lovets. A few minutes afterwards the two other victims passed by our grating: not one of the prisoners dared to reply to their farewell.

Twenty minutes later the zaptiés came back and described exultingly the scene of the execution, relating with glee how the women shrieked and stretched out their arms towards the gallows, and how they had been driven off at the point of the bayonet.

Meanwhile, we were not forgotten: the chaoush soon came and ordered us to get up and proceed on our way. We tried to persuade him to allow us to travel in a cart, for which we offered to pay with the money which the other prisoners had subscribed for us. But the Turks would not hear of it, nor was the moment for this request well-chosen, for the recent execution had infuriated them against all Bulgarians. The zaptiés who conveyed us were not the same as those of the previous day, and blows were rained on us, so that, chained together as we were, our situation was

terrible. Things improved slightly after the first halt, when the zaptiés allowed us to pay for their coffee.

We might easily have reached Tirnovo that day, but it suited the zaptiés better to spend the night comfortably in some Bulgarian village and to go on again the next day. They therefore elected to remain at the village of Bulvan, which lay just off the road. They secured us with chains, and stretched themselves to rest in the shade of some pear-trees. They then entered upon a discussion as to the food they should order to be prepared for their evening, at the expense naturally of the Bulgarians.

"I think," said the chaoush, "that we ought to have a roast lamb stuffed with raisins and rice: it must be well-basted, and covered with red pepper, to make it look appetizing. Then I think six chickens ought to be enough for us, won't they?"

"Oh, make it eight," said an old zaptié: "why be stingy when it's the ghiaours who pay?"

"Oh, very well then; three might be stewed and the rest roasted; then there should be two dishes of fried eggs, quite fresh. They mustn't be too salt, and the pepper must be steeped in oil first to prevent it from being too hot. And see that the pastry is made with fresh cream."

"You've forgotten the honey, Chaoush Effendi," said another zaptié; "it helps a man's food down so easily."

"Of course," continued the chaoush, "a dinner without honey is like a house without a woman. A couple of bottles of raki must do for us; remember, Tirnovo isn't far away. If you think of anything else, any of you, just say so."

"You haven't mentioned any rice-dish," suggested one; "we ought to have a pilaw, either with chicken or else plain with meat."

"Oh, they won't forget that, of course," said the chaoush; "that's why I didn't even mention it."

The zaptié who was to take all these orders had hardly gone above a few steps, when the chaoush called after him to be sure and choose a house with young women in it.

We waited in the shade till evening, or rather till the zaptiés' feast was ready for them. The prospect of the banquet had made them less fierce, and they had begun to joke and laugh with us. The house selected for the repast was the best in the village, and the table was laid under a tree, cushions and carpets being provided for them. So as to be more at their ease they proposed to lock us up in the stable, but at our earnest entreaties they allowed us to enjoy the fresh spring evening air until dark. They remained at table for about three hours altogether: the remnants of the feast they ordered to be sent to us, with the consolatory remark that it was the last time we should ever partake of such a meal. As soon as it became dark we were locked up in the stable, and for greater security a Bulgarian from the village was fettered to each end of our chain. They continued to carouse far into the night, and this emboldened us to beg the zaptié on guard that we might be allowed a glass of raki each. Soon the chaoush himself came out, bottle in hand. "You rascals!" he said; "you may have it, but you're not to take too much, mind, or you'll get me into trouble." So saying, he poured us out a glassful apiece.

The requirements of the zaptiés were not confined

to their evening meal: one of them demanded some linen to mend the sleeves of his shirt: another wanted wax to repair an oil-skin: a third, a lamb-skin to wrap round his foot, which was sore.

Next day we reached Tirnovo about noon, after undergoing the customary abuse and threats, some of which were extended to the zaptiés for not ill-treating us sufficiently. We were placed in an underground cell, full of vermin, and left entirely to ourselves, food being brought to us twice a day. On the fourth day we were transferred to the common prison cell, where the accommodation was far better than any I had experienced so far. Here the prisoners, with the exception of two or three thieves, were all Bulgarian insurgents, about a hundred in number, including many popes. The others were called up and examined, but I was left in peace; some days elapsed, and then I was again on the road, this time alone, with a zaptié and two bashi-bozouks. We stayed the first night at Elena, and then went on to Bebrovo, from whence I understood that I was on my way to Sliven. At Bebrovo the zaptiés made themselves comfortable for the night: to make sure that I should not escape, I was placed in a separate room, and a villager was chained to me, being warned that if anything happened to me he would be hanged in my place at Sliven. This unfortunate man was so wroth at being thus treated that, after the zaptié had felt us, he continued for a long time bewailing his fate, nor did he take the slightest notice when I informed him that I was tired and wanted to sleep. At last we came to blows, and when the zaptiés, aroused by the disturbance, burst in, they found us rolling

on the floor, pummelling each other heartily. I explained matters, and the luckless villager received a good cudgelling for his pains.

The next morning we waited for some time in a field just outside the village, on the spurs of the Balkan, on the northern slope of which Bebrovo is situated. The scenery was magnificent, but the only impression it produced on me was to remind me of my wanderings and final capture, the pangs of hunger, and the death of my comrades. That day was fair-day at Sliven, and a large party of Turks came up, whom we joined. I then understood why we had waited: the zaptiés were afraid to go through the pass alone, as it was reported that there were still bands of rebels about, who might attempt a rescue.

The road was a mere mountain-track, and especially hard for a man chained and handcuffed as I was. We advanced in Indian file. The bashi-bozouk behind me soon began to exclaim, "It's coming out, do you see, it's coming out!" referring to his dagger, which was partly out of its sheath, thanks, of course, to his manipulation.

"It's not my fault," he added, as I turned round; "the knife knows there's a komita in front, and it wants his blood."

This happened several times on the road, and every time I had to turn round. It was no doubt intended as a jest, but might very easily have been meant seriously: if I had been killed in that remote spot, witnesses could have been procured without difficulty to swear that I was attempting to escape. I need not add that all this took place only after we had passed the dangerous parts: until then the Turks kept very quiet.

Near the highest part of the road we came upon the scene of an encounter between bashi-bozouks and a band of insurgents from Sliven, when the latter were cut to pieces. The skeletons of some of those who had fallen were still on the spot, and on one of these the bashi-bozouks compelled me to spit. At last we arrived at Sliven, where, after the usual questions, the answers to which I was beginning to know by heart, I was lodged in gaol. The prison was the best I had occupied so far, being provided with a garden and water-tank. I was placed in a separate cell and was not allowed to communicate with the other prisoners, none of whom, however, were Bulgarians.

I looked forward to my examination here with many misgivings. If I had been successful so far in throwing the authorities off the scent, this was due to the fact that I was not known north of the Balkan, except at Roustchouk. But in Thrace I had been in close relations with thousands, many of whom must be now in prison, and any one of whom could identify me. However, things went well for the present. On the fifth day after my arrival I was summoned before the judge. He put the accustomed questions to me, to which I replied without difficulty. He then rang the bell, and asked that Osman Aga, of such-and-such a village, should be brought before him. The name seemed familiar to me, and I recollected at last that one of the principal Turks in my native village was called so, but it was years since I had seen him. When he came in I recognized him at once.

"So your village has managed to supply one rebel at least, Osman Aga, in spite of all the assurances you've given," said the judge.

"No, sir, I protest," replied Osman Aga without looking at me, and indeed not noticing that I stood behind him, for he was nearly blind.

At the judge's request Osman gazed attentively at me, after which he declared that he did not know me, and could guarantee that I was not from his village. I told him my father's name, and explained that through my own stupidity I had been taken for a rebel while I was making my way to my native place. He then recognized me, and gave me the news of my mother's death. Three days later the chief Bulgarian resident in our village was brought, and also recognized me. I then understood that I had been taken to Sliven in order to be identified.

On the fifteenth day I was taken outside and the fetters were struck off my ankles. Now, this could only mean one of three things: either I was to be released, or taken to another town, or else I was to be executed. The second was the most likely supposition, and turned out to be the correct one. A horse stood at the gate saddled, and I was foolish enough to imagine that it was intended for my benefit. But an Albanian prisoner, in a dying condition, was soon brought out and placed on it. He had been shot by zaptiés whilst engaged in pillaging inoffensive Bulgarians, and was now to accompany me to my unknown destination. After being handcuffed, I was tied to the horse on which the wounded brigand rode. In this condition I dragged myself along, while the zaptiés hurried us on and the Albanian groaned in his agony. We took the road to Nova Zagora, which we reached in the evening, though the journey usually takes six hours. The zaptiés did not abuse or ill-treat me.

The unfortunate wounded man begged us continually to give him water, which the zaptiés refused to do, fearing lest he should die. Finally he rolled off his horse as we crossed a small stream, for which mishap two or three kicks from the zaptiés were added to his other woes. The Turks are not very gentle in their treatment of Albanians.

I remained only a few hours at Nova Zagora, and was then taken off to the railway station. The zaptié in whose charge I was told me that my destination was Philippopolis. In the train were many Bulgarians, guards and others, who not only knew me but were actually members of the Committee. I was anxious to talk to them, but they one and all avoided me, being no doubt afraid lest I should get them into trouble. Two hours later the train drew up at the Seimen station. Here I was known to everybody, and only a few months had elapsed since my departure under rather suspicious circumstances. It was therefore with much emotion that I felt the train stop at the platform, and was made to get out—for passengers for stations on the main line change here. My arrival was soon known far and wide; the doors and windows of the waiting-room where I was kept in the custody of the station zaptiés, who luckily for me were new-comers, were soon thronged with former acquaintances, whose countenances expressed much curiosity and in many cases sympathy, but the only one who ventured to address me was a Greek, who managed to approach me and, unobserved by the zaptiés, to ask me if he could do anything for me. In reply, I told him that the greatest service he could render me was to address me and warn all my friends to describe me both now and hereafter by the name which I had

given to the authorities (my real name), and also to warn the station-master of this.

Not long afterwards the Greek appeared accompanied by about ten persons, Bulgarians, Greeks and Armenians, each of whom addressed me by my name, and expressed surprise at my being arrested on what they knew to be a false charge. They added that they were ready to give bail for me, if necessary; they also supplied me with bread, money and tobacco.

After this I resumed my journey, and soon arrived at Philippopolis—the centre of those scenes of horror which had been enacted so recently—the spot where the fate of so many Bulgarian villages had been decided, where the first meetings of Turks had been held for planning the massacres—the town which barely three months before we had presumptuously doomed to destruction at Oborishté, where the burning of Philippopolis, as well as of Constantinople and Adrianople, had been discussed and determined upon. And now, this same city was become a terror, a place of execution, a prison for all those bold and determined spirits who had signed its death-warrant. What an irony of fate!

CHAPTER XIX

AT PHILIPPOPOLIS

IT was about six o'clock in the evening when we made our way from the railway station to the town, along the same road which Voloff and I had trodden not long before. The little Turkish girls on our path encouraged me by expressing the hope that I should swing before long. So ragged and miserable was my appearance that I aroused the laughter rather than the enmity of the bystanders. Some Turks even asked me ironically, "Couldn't the rebellion take place without you?" the very police-officers who received me from the custody of my zaptié expressed surprise at me, saying that I was quite different from the other six or seven hundred komitadjis who had passed through their hands.

I was taken to the prison, the continual buzz proceeding from which was a proof of the large number of its inmates. Peasants of both sexes, among whom I noticed several women from Panaghiourishté, thronged round the gates. I began to wonder who would be the prisoners whom I should see the next moment. Was it likely that there would not be some one whom I had assured that our victory was certain, that Turkey was doomed, that the whole nation must rise, that no one must fall into the hands of the enemy alive, and so

forth? Would there not be many such, who had seen their parents, brothers, wives, children fall under the sword of the enemy, who had fled from the ruins of their homes, for whom nothing remained worth living for in this world—would there not be many such ready to seek revenge by denouncing one of the "apostles" as the cause of all their misfortunes?

I entered. My God! what a scene met my eyes! In the courtyard were upwards of three hundred patriots—peasants, citizens, popes, schoolmasters, many of whom I knew, some of whom I supposed to have fallen long since under the yataghan of the bashi-bozouk. Some I failed to recognize in the rags in which I now saw them and which differed so widely from the warlike attire they had worn when we had last met.

At first I was ashamed at being seen as a fettered prisoner by so many to whom I had frequently boasted that I was resolved to perish fighting under the banner of liberty. But the reflection that I was not the only one gave me a little courage. Before me were many of the principal agitators, as well as several of those who had been delegates at Oborishté.

My arrival caused a considerable stir in the prison. My former acquaintances were afraid lest I should denounce them as having had dealings with me or having taken me into their houses: on the other hand, they had regarded me as dead, many having spread the report that I had been killed.

The chief gaoler put a few questions to me and then left me. Scarcely had he gone when a number of my former companions came round me and stealthily made signs to me to the effect that they recognized me

and begged me to say nothing affecting themselves. I then began to walk about the courtyard, and they followed me. When we reached a remote part of the yard, where we were free from observation, we were able to converse. Many expressed deep regret at having thought that I had been killed, for this had led them to accuse me of many things. I urged them to continue to do so, as I was not known to the authorities by the name which I bore in the insurrection, and instead of harming me they had really done me a service.

"I'm all right," said a certain Sokolski, a doctor from Koprivshtitsa, who had accompanied Benkoffski and who had been present at Oborishté: "they've sentenced me to death; I shall be hanged in a day or two."

At first I took this for a joke, for the doctor spoke so calmly of his impending fate. But the others assured me that what he said was true.

The order was now given for the prisoners to return to their cells, for it was dark. We were allowed to remain in the courtyard the whole day; at night this was locked and tenanted only by the guard. No cell having been assigned to me, I remained where I was: the chief gaoler then ordered the zaptié to take me to the gipsies' ward, telling the man he was a fool for not having seen at once that I was a gipsy.

I was therefore taken along a narrow stone-paved corridor, lined with cells on either side. The zaptié stopped outside the door of a cell from which a great noise was proceeding, opened it, and pushed me inside, after which the iron bolts clanged behind me.

For some time I stood at the door, not venturing

to make a step forward, so strange was the scene before me. The cell was a large rectangular room, with only one window, which was closely barred; the walls had once been whitewashed, but retained but few traces of the operation. A small lamp (like that at Lovets) supplied the only illumination, and was surrounded by a number of prisoners playing cards. These were watched by a triple row of spectators, so that the light from the lamp did not extend beyond this circle except when one of the onlookers moved. These were the principal occupants of the cell. The rest, the inferior class of prisoners, were amusing themselves by wrestling, fighting, or singing. The odour was unbearable, the place was full of tobacco-smoke, and the heat was suffocating. There were some thirty gipsies in the cell, besides three Bulgarians and about six Turks.

I remained standing, partly because there was no room for me to sit down. My appearance presented nothing unusual to the inmates of the gipsies' cell, and most of them were so engrossed in their occupation that they did not even notice my entry. Indeed, one gipsy came behind me, put his hands over my eyes, and asked me, "Who is it?" taking me for an acquaintance. When he found out his mistake he addressed me in the gipsy language, evidently supposing that I belonged to his nation.

At last I attracted attention, and one of the gipsies complained that the zaptiés never brought them prisoners with anything in their pockets, but always ragamuffins like myself from whom there was nothing to be got.

"What are you, anyhow?" asked superciliously, in Turkish, a young man who from his dress and manners was evidently the chief of the ward. I

replied that I was a Bulgarian, and asked him to show me a place where I could sit down. But he replied curtly that I could find one for myself.

He was a Bulgarian, from Panaghiourishté, who for the last two years had been an inmate of the gipsies' ward. Before that he had been the leader of a band of brigands, which had been captured by the authorities at Kezanlik not long before. As a brigand chief he was respected by all the prisoners, including the Turks.

As at Lovets, I spent the night by the door in the wet. Early next morning, as soon as the cells were opened, several insurgents from Panaghiourishté paid me a visit. They were much pleased at hearing that I had not mentioned their names, and promised to get up a subscription for my benefit. They themselves were seriously compromised, for, having been the principal agitators in the place, they had been denounced by many witnesses.

The brigand chief who had shown such contempt for me on the previous evening did not know what to make of it when he saw all the notables of his village coming to visit me, an honour which they had not paid to him. He asked me what was the meaning of this. I replied that I had once been a merchant, and had thus come into contact with people of every description. But this answer did not satisfy him. On the following evening, however, he had found out who I was, and there was a marked change in his demeanour. When I came into the cell he made room for me on his carpet and apologized for his previous rudeness.

I had every reason to be satisfied so far with my lot in the prison of Philippopolis. The Turks regarded

me as a gipsy, and paid apparently no further attention to me. In order to preserve this reputation I used to wander over all the cells in the prison, and whenever I met with zaptiés or influential prisoners I hastened to salute them most deferentially and to pick up their cast-away cigarette-ends. Slavish submission always pleases the Turk.

The Philippopolis prison is well kept and clean; even the worst parts of it, such as the gipsies' cell, are habitable. The upper story, where the popes, schoolmasters, and better class of prisoners were kept, is even superior.

I soon found opportunities of conversation with Dr. Vassil Sokolski, the delegate from Peroushtitsa at Oborishté, and one of my best friends. Though condemned to death, he still preserved his excellent spirits. He had been servant to a doctor, upon whose death he set up on his own account. He would probably have escaped, but for the fact that upon the body of a dead insurgent was found a letter from him giving the decision arrived at at Oborishté. After this letter had fallen into the hands of the authorities denial was useless, and he confessed everything.

For several days his sentence was not carried into effect. During all this time he was, as may well be imagined, in a state of feverish excitement. At the appearance of every zaptié or official in the prison he thought his last hour had come. He strove to hide his anxiety, but it was impossible. I remember we were once eating our dinner together, when there was a stir outside, and his name was mentioned once or twice. His ear caught the sound, and though he did his best to appear unconcerned, the spoon in his hand began to clatter against the plate. But

as soon as the first shock had worn off he quickly recovered his presence of mind. The delay in carrying out his sentence was attributed to the forthcoming visit of a European commission which was said to be about to inspect the prison. Poor Sokolski used to spend the whole day at the prison-gate trying to pick up news about the commission, or the amnesty, about which there were frequent rumours at the time.

One day a number of officials and zaptiés entered the prison. As is always done on such occasions, all the prisoners hastened at once to their respective places, and rose and saluted respectfully as the officials passed by, in the hope that this visit from those on whom their lives depended might bode some good. But the officials paid little attention to the prisoners. On the other hand, they examined with much care the walls and windows of the cells, the bread which was served out, the rugs on which the prisoners slept, and after this they went out again. Soon a number of zaptiés appeared, accompanied by masons and carpenters, and the sound of saws and trowels was heard; floors were cleansed, new windows made, walls were whitewashed, new blankets distributed and the old ones removed, the prisoners in separate cells were brought out, and last of all a better quality of bread was served round, but only to the Bulgarian insurgents, a circumstance which annoyed the Turks in the prison; these complained that in order to be properly treated one must be a komitadji. The reader will have divined that all this was done to get the place ready for the visit of the European commission.

Great hopes were built on this visit, especially by the unfortunate Sokolski. He seemed convinced

that the noble mylords and grafs would save him from the gallows. Two or three days later these worthies made their appearance, accompanied by a number of Turkish officials. They put different questions to many of the prisoners, and some of those who spoke European languages addressed them on behalf of all, begging them to use their influence in obtaining their liberation, which the commission promised to do, much to the chagrin of the Turks, who stood by in silence. Sokolski attracted their attention, and they inquired into his case. As soon as they heard Benkoffski's name they pricked up their ears and brought out their note-books, thinking that the voivode himself stood before them.

"His doctor," said some one, "who has just been sentenced to death."

The commission took down his name, age, birth-place, occupation, etc., just enough to furnish the material for an official report.

"I'm to be hanged in a day or two," faltered Sokolski: "there's no hope for me except in you. I implore you to do what you can for me!"

The commission promised, and went its way. Everything then returned to its former condition; the prisoners who had been brought out were taken back to solitary confinement, and so on. Meanwhile Sokolski's fate was still uncertain, though one day the prison doctor, who attended many influential Turks, assured him that his pardon had been made out. That same day I had slept a little in the afternoon. When I woke I went to Sokolski's ward to see if there was any news. To my surprise the corridor was empty, which was unusual, and the customary din and buzz were wanting. I reached

Sokolski's ward, but he was not there: all the other prisoners were sitting sorrowfully, each in his place, and said nothing as I came in. I asked where Sokolski was, but had a presentiment that something had happened. At that very moment he was breathing his last on the scaffold. He was from thirty to thirty-two years of age, with large blue eyes and a fair bushy beard; he was of medium height, slender, and with a handsome countenance. Many blamed him for having confessed to the Turks things which should have been kept secret.

Another inmate of the prison was Pope Grouyou, of Banya, Benkoffski's constant companion. He was in rags, and his hair and beard had been pulled out with pincers. After the suppression of the revolt he had managed to hide himself, but was caught and brought to the pasha's camp. The commandant, seeing a village pope before him in tattered garments, whose small stature and miserable appearance made him look anything but a dangerous rebel, regarded him with compassion, and told him to sit down, ordering a cup of coffee to be brought for him. The pope was not overjoyed at this politeness on the part of the pasha, for he knew that it was but accidental, his name not being known.

"Come, come, pope, and so they've made a komita of you too, have they?" said the pasha, turning at the same time to talk to some other person.

Pope Grouyou smoked his cigarette pensively, not knowing what to make of this reception, so different from that which he had anticipated.

"I suppose you saw the chief of the komitas, didn't you, pope—or at least some of his companions?" said the pasha, but without paying much attention to him.

"Yes, sir; at least they pointed him out to me at Panaghiourishté," answered the pope.

The pasha continued his conversation with his other interlocutor, and after some time turned again to Pope Grouyou.

"Let me see. What did you say your name was?" he asked, pretending that he had forgotten it, as Turks often do.

Pope Grouyou was seized with dismal forebodings: he thought of some of his exploits during the insurrection, and how he had treated the Turkish prisoners.

"Pope Grouyou, effendim," he replied in low tones, saluting deferentially as he spoke.

"What! Pope Grouyo, from Banya?" shrieked the pasha, rising on his knees from the divan where he was squatting and clenching his fists.

Something like "Yes, effendim," came from the lips of the unfortunate Pope Grouyou, who began to tremble.

"Here, guard, sergeant, orderly officer!" cried the pasha, waving his arms desperately and forgetting all military dignity and discipline.

A number of soldiers with fixed bayonets rushed in at once and surrounded the defenceless pope, who was immediately led off, handcuffed and loaded with chains, under a strong guard.

"Ah, Pope Grouyou! ah, you scoundrelly priest!" cried the pasha, shaking his head wrathfully as he spoke. "I'd like to put forty bullets through you, and that wouldn't be as much as you deserve. You ought to be flayed alive and salted afterwards."

Terrible were the sufferings undergone by Pope Grouyou at the camp, in the prison at Pazardjik where he was first confined, and afterwards on the

road. He owed his life probably to the fact that he was regarded as one of the principal conspirators, and it was hoped that important disclosures might be extracted from him. Eventually he was released, as no proof could be discovered showing that he had acted on his own responsibility and had not, as he alleged, been compelled to carry out the orders of the Revolutionary chiefs.

Another old comrade whom I met in the Philippopolis prison was a certain Tsvetko, who assisted me in setting fire to the villages of Smolsko and Kamenitsa. I saw him by chance one day, as he was picking up cigarette-ends and begging from the other prisoners. His moustache had also been pulled out, a sign that he had experienced the tender mercies of the bashi-bozouks. We did not venture to address one another, each being ignorant of the extent of the admissions the other might have made while under examination. Being afraid lest he should denounce me (which would have brought me to the gallows), I asked one of my friends, on whom I could rely, to go and sound him.

"You were one of those at Elédjik, and you know who set fire to the villages of Smolsko and Kamenitsa," whispered my friend to him.

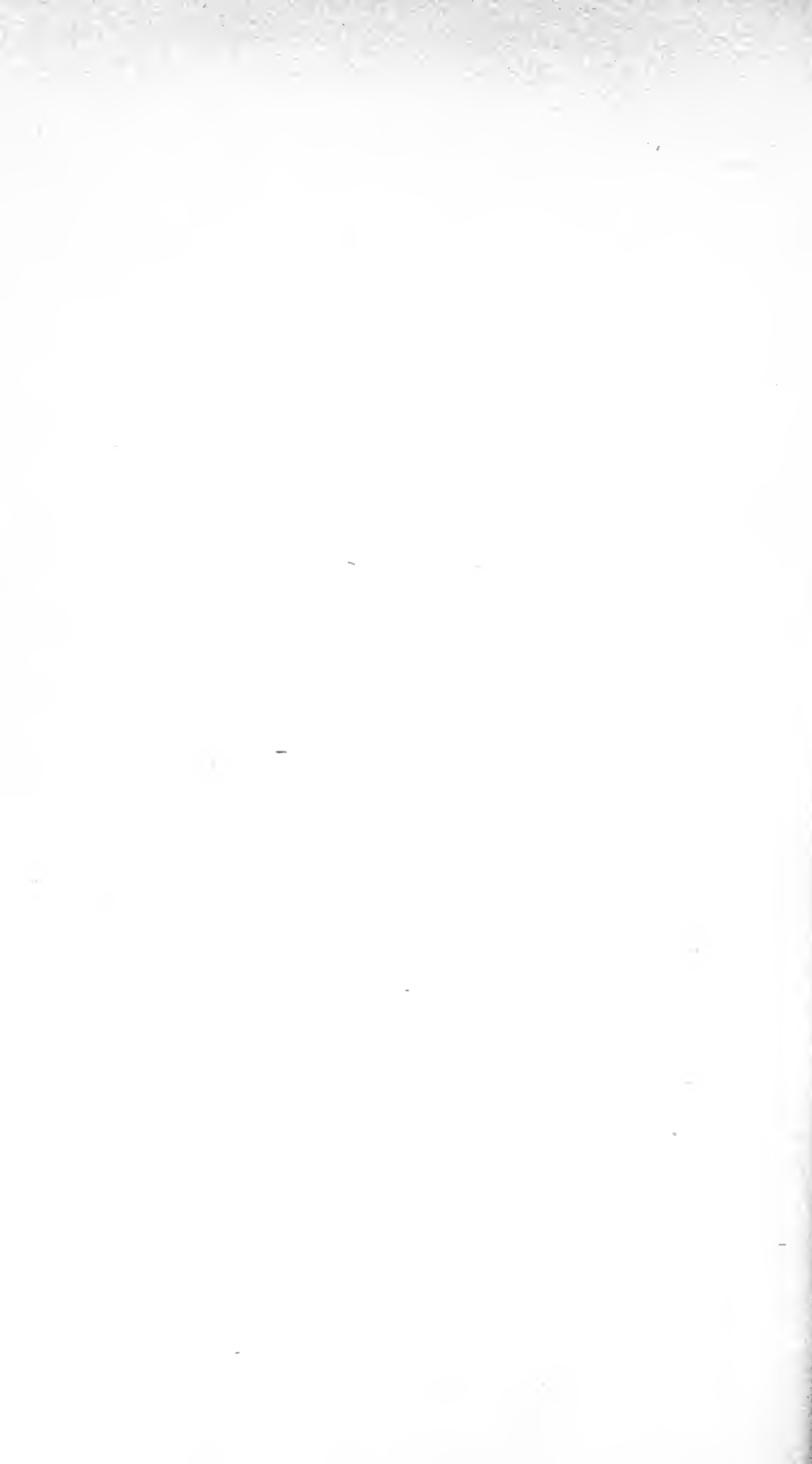
Tsvetko was much distressed at this question. and protested violently, saying that he was a poor man and knew nothing of such matters, and that at the time of the insurrection he had fled to the mountains to hide himself.

This reply reassured me, but I refrained from entering into conversation with him, for he had declared previously that he knew no one in the prison.

* * * * *

The autobiography ends here.

The author, busied with political controversies, which were particularly acute in Bulgaria during the years immediately preceding his death, never found time to finish the work. He appears to have succeeded in baffling the attempts of the Turks to establish his connection with the Revolutionary movement, in which he was so deeply incriminated, and eventually to have gained his liberty, more fortunate in this respect than many of his fellow-conspirators, of whom a large number perished on the scaffold, while others languished in confinement at Diarbekir and Acre, until released in virtue of the amnesty granted in 1878.



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