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# THE KED ORESCENT.

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AOBULANCE ADVENTURES IN THE RUSSO TURKISH WAR





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With the authors Campto Accestors-





OR,

## AMBULANCE ADVENTURES

#### IN THE

## RUSSO-TURKISH WAR OF 1877-78.

 $\mathbf{B}\mathbf{Y}$ 

### R. B. MACPHERSON,

BLANTYRE SURGEON WITH THE TURKISH FORCES, MEMBER OF THE IMPERIAL ORDER OF THE MEDJIDIE.

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#### THIS VOLUME

IS

#### DEDICATED

(BY PERMISSION)

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD BLANTYRE OF ERSKINE,

TO WHOSE KINDNESS AND GENEROSITY WAS DUE

THE ALLEVIATION OF THE SUFFERINGS OF MANY A

SICK AND WOUNDED TURKISH SOLDIER.

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THE outbreak of the late disastrous war between Russia and Turkey found the latter power but ill-prepared for the struggle, and it speaks much for the bravery and devotion of the Turkish soldiers, that, despite bad generalship and adverse circumstances of every kind, they were able so long to keep at bay the more fortunately placed Muscovite legions. We who are blessed with a free Press and a Parliament, in which even minor defects of the commissariat are soon exposed, can scarcely realise the great sufferings to which the Turkish soldiers were subjected throughout the campaign. Money is proverbially such a scarce commodity with the Turkish Government, that one is not surprised to learn that the pay of men and officers was far in arrears; but, with military operations taking place in their own territory, in the rich granary of

Bulgaria, and with unimpeded communications, one would have expected that the men would have been at least well fed and clothed. So far from this being the case, the food supply was most inadequate, both in quantity and quality, while the clothing was reduced to rags before the winter when most required. The supply of tents was very deficient, and sanitary arrangements for the health of the troops were of the most primitive kind. Of all the necessaries for the efficiency of an army in the field, the only one which seemed to be supplied with a free hand was ammunition.

When such defective arrangements for the comfort and wellbeing of the effective portion of their forces existed, it is not surprising that the sick and wounded were even more neglected. True, badly constructed military hospitals did exist in all the large towns, and a totally inadequate supply of native surgeons, the majority of whom, however, were so slothful and ignorant as to be of little service, was attached to the forces. But all further organisation, such as

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bearers for the removal of the wounded from the field of battle, field-hospitals, or transport for the removal of sick and wounded to the hospitals, were conspicuous only by their total absence.

When, shortly after the outbreak of hostilities, the sufferings of these unfortunate men became a matter of public notoriety, the British nation, with that cosmopolitan charity which is characteristic of it, was not slow in responding to the cry for assistance which arose. A large sum of money was raised, chiefly through the agency of the Stafford House Committee and the National Aid Society, and upwards of forty surgeons and dressers, and large quantities of stores, were sent to the relief of the sick and wounded of the Turkish armies. Lord Blantyre of Erskine, a prominent member of the Stafford House Committee, in addition, personally expended several thousand pounds in equipping and sending out thirteen surgeons ; and as a few English surgeons were directly engaged by the Turkish Government, we may estimate that the

sick and wounded had the benefit of the services of nearly eighty British surgeons, who, though working amid most adverse circumstances, were able to do much towards alleviating the great suffering of the time.

The Stafford House Committee state that their Report has been published not only with a view of shewing to the subscribers the manner in which the fund has been expended, but also in order to record the services performed by Englishmen in alleviating suffering humanity under difficulties, and amid scenes which the committee believe to be almost unprecedented, and in the performance of which duties the English characteristics of courage, devotion, and endurance have been conspicuous. Few people have any adequate conception of the constant labour and hardships which had to be endured by the surgeons in the late war-labour and hardships which overcame at one time or another most of those who faced them. Apart from the minor ailments from which the majority more or less constantly suf-

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fered, no less a proportion than 32 per cent. suffered from dangerous illness, while 10 per cent. died. Amongst the latter I have to mourn a fellowgraduate and companion, Dr. John Pinkerton, who fell a victim to duty by the scourge of typhus at Erzeroum, on 8th January, 1878:

Though it comes late in time, it is in the belief that some account of my own share in this work may prove interesting, that I have prepared the following narrative, giving a sketch of the every-day life, adventures, and vicissitudes of the ambulance with which I was connected.

I am painfully aware of its many defects, but can only urge inexperience in literary work, and the fact that the busy life of the surgeon left but little time for making observations or recording impressions; and with this extenuation, I throw myself upon the kind indulgence of the reader.

## R. B. MACPHERSON.

CAMBUSLANG, August, 1885.



#### CHAP. I.

A long journey at short notice—We meet company—An awkward situation—On board ship in the Mediterranean—Syra—Smyrna— The Fleet in Besika Bay—First view of Constantinople—Ramazan—Backshish—Wonderful porters—Formation of our Ambulance by the Red Crescent Society—Turkish intrigue and delay—State of medicine in Turkey—Sights of Constantinople—An awkward dispute—My first ride—We set out for Plevna.

It is related of that prince of war correspondents, Mr. Archibald Forbes, that he was wont to keep several portmanteaus ready packed with outfits suited for different climates, so as to be ready to start for any part of the Globe at an hour's notice. Though not thus prepared, my start for the East was nearly as expeditious, for it was late on the afternoon of Wednesday, 5th September, 1877, when Dr. Robert Pinkerton and I met Lord Blantyre at the Western Club, Glasgow, and arranged that we were to leave

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for London that night, in order to catch the weekly steamer leaving Marseilles for Constantinople on Saturday. Then "there was hurrying to and fro," but by great exertions all our arrangements were completed, and within four hours we started on our journey, amid the cheers of a few brother medicals met to wish us "Godspeed."

I did not burden myself with much baggage. One portmanteau containing clothing suited to meet a severe winter, a rug, blanket, and waterproof ground sheet for camping out, a small store of medicine for private use, and a revolver, completed my equipment, and I subsequently often found it a difficult matter to retain possession even of that.

We were busily engaged in London the following day selecting instruments and stores, and completing our arrangements, and at the night mail for Dover we were pleased to meet as fellow passengers five surgeons and four dressers being sent out by the Stafford House Committee. With these gentlemen we made the most of the few hours we had in Paris the following day, and by night we were all thoroughly

tired with sight-seeing, when we started on our sixteen hours' journey to Marseilles. Four of us had taken comfortable possession of a compartment, when, just before starting, an elderly and rather bulky French gentleman entered, causing a complete redistribution of our arrangements. Claiming the right of every Briton, we immediately began to grumble, and remarks not at all complimentary to the newcomer were freely bandied about. A young English dresser, seated next to the intruder, waxed specially eloquent, but he was considerably taken aback, as indeed were we all, by the gentleman turning round and saying with a smile, "I do understand the English very wellwill you take a cigar?" The situation was awkward, but at the same time comical, and we were all wise enough to enjoy a hearty laugh over it, and became fast friends for the rest of the journey.

We found the heat during the railway journey very oppressive, and on reaching Marseilles were all glad to get on board the comfortable steamer "Mendoza," of the "Messageries Maritimes" Line, and to find ourselves on Saturday

evening sailing over the blue waters of the Mediterranean.

Under the influence of fair weather and greeable company, our voyage proved a very pleasant one, and devoid of any exciting incident. On the fourth day we spent a few hours at Syra, the chief island of the Grecian Archipelago. It possesses historical interest as the place where Achilles, disguised as a girl, was educated with the daughters of Lycomedes, and the town has a very quaint appearance, the little white flat-roofed houses being built up to the very summit of a pyramidal hill which rises from the sea. There are two distinct towns, a lower and an upper, said to be inhabited respectively by followers of the Greek and Roman Catholic Churches, and between is a vacant space of ground on which we were told they sometimes adjust their quarrels.

On the following day we had a few hours in which to do Smyrna, the chief seaport of Asiatic Turkey, and despite the broiling sun, and the odours, which were not those imagination usually associates with "Araby the blest," we struggled manfully and did it. Mounted on





sturdy Eastern donkeys, we first repaired to the bazaar, where we invested in fezzes and other articles of Turkish attire, and then proceeded to visit the tomb of Polycarp, and the other sights which the unhappy tourist has to perspire through. The city looks well from the sea, at least when seen as we saw it, under bright sunshine, but a closer inspection dispels the illusion. The houses are chiefly constructed of wood, and the streets are narrow, rough, and filthy beyond description. The city was at that time full of irregular soldiers, from the neighbouring interior, known as Zeibecks, awaiting transport to Constantinople. They were tall, swarthy, fierce - looking fellows, with their belts full of daggers and antiquated pistols, and must have rendered Smyrna rather a lively place at that time.

Animated by patriotic feelings, we arranged to be called early the following morning when we reached Besika Bay, where our fleet was then lying. It was but grey dawn, however, when we passed the ships, and we had only an imperfect view of them, but we all *felt* they were there, and gave vent to our feelings in a hearty cheer.

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On the seventh day of our voyage we passed through the famed Dardanelles, studded with forts on either side, and, after a glorious sunset in the sea of Marmora, cast anchor off Seraglio Point, the state of siege then in existence preventing our entering the port of Constantinople after sunset.

We found on our arrival all the mosques illuminated, each minaret being lit up by several circles of coloured oil lamps. This was in honour of the grand fast of " Ramazan," which was then in course of celebration. During "Ramazan," the ninth month of the Mohammedan year, and the month in which Mohammed is said to have received his first revelation, a strict fast is observed by the faithful from sunrise to sunset,-eating, drinking, smoking, and all other bodily enjoyments being absolutely interdicted. Business is almost at a standstill, as most of the day is devoted to sleep; but, precisely at sunset, a gun is fired, after which an immediate onslaught is made on the viands, and feasting and other enjoyments go on during the greater portion of the night.

Art had thus combined with nature to render

our first view of Constantinople singularly beautiful, and, viewed from the waters of the Bosphorus, placidly sparkling in the clear moonlight, the whole scene appeared more fairy-like than real. Nor did the scene that met our gaze in the morning fall short of our anticipation. The geographical position of Constantinople is one of great importance and beauty, standing as it does on a peninsula of gently undulating hills, bounded by the Sea of Marmora, the Bosphorus, and the curved inlet of the Bosphorus known as the Golden Horn. The graceful minarets and massive domes of the mosques, the gardens of the Seraglio, the numerous groves of stately cypress trees, and the charming banks of the Bosphorus, lined for miles by villas, palaces, and gardens, unite to make up one of the most beautiful prospects that can be imagined. The sheet of water connecting the various quarters of the city, thanks to the swift current of the Bosphorus, is clear as crystal, and swarms with fish, whilst animation is lent to the scene by the movements of the graceful caiques, "the gondolas of the East," and of the numerous

passenger steamers plying between the city and the suburbs.

It is a sad disenchantment when one lands, and finds how all the beauty fades, how narrow, roughly paved, and dirty are most of the streets, and how badly built the majority of the houses which from the distance look so charming. But the fires which so frequently break out and destroy large portions of the city are doing much to change it for the better; the wooden houses are being replaced by more substantial stone buildings, and many of the more important mansions are largely constructed of, or decorated with, the marbles which are found in the vicinity.

Under the guidance of a dragoman in the employment of the Stafford House, who had boarded our steamer, we were soon transported, with our baggage, in a couple of caiques to the Customs landing, where we were at once initiated into the mysteries of "*backshish*." We were quite resigned to have our portmanteaus turned upside down, but there appeared to be a complete understanding between our dragoman and the Customs official, for after a few





words and the quiet transference of a little coin of the realm, all doubts as to our possessing contraband articles seemed to have vanished, and our baggage was allowed to pass without one article being examined.

As there were eleven of our party, the collective amount of baggage was somewhat considerable, and we imagined the next step would be to procure a couple of carts, or some such vehicles, to convey it. We were much astonished, however, to find it placed on the backs of four stalwart "*hammals*," or porters, who went tripping up the steep streets of Galata, the commercial quarter of the city, as if they thought nothing of their heavy loads. These men are mostly Armenians, and have wonderful muscular power, some of them having been known to carry loads weighing eight hundredweight.

On landing we were met by Mr. Barrington Kennet, the energetic Commissioner of the Stafford House Committee, who soon had us comfortably quartered in Missire's "Hotel d'Angleterre," in Pera, the accommodation of which we found all that could be desired. With-
in a couple of days two of our number were sent off to Erzeroum, and a third to Schumla. This third gentleman had evidently mistaken his vocation, being of too delicate and feminine a type for the work he had undertaken. The solitary journey to Schumla, and the work he met with there, were evidently not to his liking, for he returned to Constantinople by the next steamer, and immediately sailed for England, a wiser if not a sadder man.

The remainder of us were advised by Mr. Kennet to join an ambulance which was about to be formed by the Turkish Red Crescent Society, and was to have as its organiser and *chef* Baron Mundy, the great Austrian military surgeon, who has served in thirteen campaigns, and is said to possess more decorations than any man in Europe. This was to be the most thoroughly equipped field ambulance yet employed on the Turkish side, and was destined for Plevna, which place was known to be in great need of surgical aid. The ambulance was to be under the special patronage of the Sultan—who was supposed to take a great interest in it—and we were all invited to a

meeting of the Committee one day for the purpose of being presented to His Majesty, but something prevented his attendance, so we were denied that honour.

We were all anxious to proceed up country and find a field for our labours, but we now began to have our first experience of Turkish procrastination; for although the Executive of the Red Crescent Committee were pushed as much as possible by Mr. Kennet and Baron Mundy, we were detained a week in Constantinople before our appointments were settled and we received orders to start.

The Red Crescent was a Turkish society, started soon after the outbreak of the war, for the relief of the sick and wounded, but which up to that period had done comparatively little work—not, however, from want of funds, as it received large contributions from India as well as from Turkey. Its Committee, being composed of Turks, Levantines, Armenians, and Greeks, contained the very best elements for the development of fraud and intrigue, and some members, wishing to secure the posts of surgeons for native friends of their own, threw

every obstacle in the way of our appointment. Things reached a crisis when a motion was actually proposed at one of the meetings that English surgeons should not be appointed without having first passed an examination conducted by the Turkish medical authorities. The motion did not meet with any support, however, on Baron Mundy stating that he had no doubt the English surgeons would be quite willing to do so if their examiners would, in turn, submit to be examined by them.

Medical education in Turkey is but in its infancy, and the great mass of the Turkish surgeons whom we met during the war displayed but scant knowledge of their profession. The veneration of the Turks towards the dead which greatly exceeds that shewn by them towards the living—has greatly interfered with the study of anatomy; and it is only during late years that dissection has been allowed to a limited extent.

There is only one medical school in the Empire, the Military College of Medicine at Constantinople; but the course of study is said to have been much improved of late years.

There are eight permanent military hospitals in Constantinople, capable of accommodating about 2000 patients; and there is a military hospital in all the large towns throughout the country. But there is nothing corresponding to our civil hospitals; and outside the large towns the priests are, as a rule, the chief attendants on the sick. The attendants in the hospitals are all males, female nursing being entirely unknown, and we found that the dressers and attendants were usually selected from the soldiery without having had any special training. The Turkish surgeons, as a rule, contented themselves with administering medicines, and seeing that the dressers daily cleansed the exterior of wounds and applied fresh dressing, apparently quite oblivious of the fact that a limb was full of pus, or that a bone was fractured. There were, however, some notable exceptions to the rule, men of a superior stamp, most of them Greeks or Armenians, who had really a fair knowledge of surgery, having studied at the continental schools, and medical practice in the large towns was chiefly in the hands of these men.

Probably the fatalistic ideas of the Turks have much to do with their backwardness in the healing art, for when a man and his patient both firmly believe that whether a fractured limb be left alone or a splint be put upon it, the result will invariably be the same, "as Allah wills it," there is little likelihood of much progress being made. An amusing story is told in this connection. An Ottoman official of high standing, in conversation with an Austrian gentleman one day during the war, said,-"" Do you know the history of my country? Do you know that for centuries we went on from victory to victory till we forced our way up to the very walls of your own Vienna? We had not then in our armies one ambulance or one medical man. Why should we have any now?" The Austrian retorted,-" I can see but little difference between your old and your new systems. In those days you killed your soldiers without doctors; you now kill them with."

Our time in Constantinople did not hang at all heavily on our hands, everything from the dogs to the dancing dervishes being alike new and entertaining. We visited with keen interest

the hospitals at Scutari, the scene of the noble labours of Florence Nightingale, and also the beautiful English cemetery where are buried so many of our countrymen who died of wounds or sickness here. One could not but remark the numerous monuments which marked the graves of surgeons, and amongst them the fresh grave of Meyrick, a young English surgeon who had died of dysentery in the Shipka district about a fortnight before, and whose body had been brought down by Mr. Kennet and interred here with becoming honour.

Dr. Pinkerton and I had introductions to a Glasgow man who had been in business as a shipping agent in Constantinople for several years, and we accompanied him one afternoon on a visit to his residence at Kadikeni (the ancient Chalcedon), a suburb situated on the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus. After dinner and a bath in the waters of the Bosphorus, we smoked and walked about the place till late in the evening, when our friend saw us safely on board a caique, telling us the exact fare we should pay, so that we might not be swindled. On landing at Galata, my companion tendered

the fare, which was indignantly refused by our two boatmen, who gesticulated and talked in such an excited fashion as soon to collect a crowd around us, most of whom also joined in the dispute. Of course we could not make anything of one another, but Dr. Pinkerton was determined not to be done, and still held out : the rejected fare, the crowd increasing and becoming more excited every minute. Matters were beginning to look serious, when we were relieved by an English gentleman who was passing stepping forward and enquiring at us the cause of dispute. We were much mortified to find that we had actually been trying to cheat the boatmen, by offering them a coin about onefourth the value of that we had been instructed to give. It is at no time very safe to get into a dispute in Constantinople after dark, and especially at this time, when there was a considerable amount of fanatical excitement about, so we were very much relieved at getting safely out of this one, for which we were entirely to blame. But this matter of the coinage is a great puzzle to the stranger in Turkey; the coins are legion, and the caimes or paper money then

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in circulation, the value of which fluctuated from time to time and in different towns, added greatly to the difficulty.

My legs having "hardly ever" embraced a horse before, I was looking forward with no little anxiety to our journey up country, which I knew had to a considerable extent to be prosecuted on horseback. Our dragoman having arranged to take us for a ride round the outskirts of the city one day, I was careful, when the ponies arrived, to put all feelings of false pride away, and secured the least pretentious and most docile looking one I could see. Nevertheless, I found great difficulty in maintaining my equilibrium, and considering the nature of the streets we had to traverse, the pony certainly deserved great credit for the fact that we did not part company. The dragoman, who was keeping a watchful eye on me, expressed the opinion to one of the party that I would not be two days on the road to Plevna without "coming a cropper." This gentleman being waggishly inclined, gravely informed the dragoman that I held a commission in the British cavalry, to which the dragoman

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made no response, but simply looked at me and shrugged his shoulders in a manner highly expressive of his opinion of that branch of our forces.

There were none of us sorry when on the Saturday after our arrival we received instructions to start for Adrianople, the first stage on our journey. The following morning we were conveyed in caiques across the Golden Horn to the station of the Roumelian Railway, and at 6 A.M. we bade farewell to Constantinople, little thinking the fortune of war would prevent our seeing that city again.

## CHAP. II.

Turkish railways—A dreary country—Slow travelling with lively companions—Adrianople—The hospitals—Lady Strangford and her nurses—Turkish procrastination—The Balkan and Rhodope mountains—Philippopolis—The Stafford House Club—Dr. Stoker —The hospitals—Hanging of Bulgarians—Advance Guard sets out for Plevna.

THE Roumelian railway is the principal line in European Turkey, the others being the Rustchuk and Varna railway, and a short line from Salonica to Uscup in Macedonia. It extends a distance of about 300 miles, having its terminus near Tatar Bazardjick, about 20 miles beyond Philippopolis. The original contract provided for the extension of the line as far as Sofia, but it is said that Baron Hirsch, the contractor, found that the latter part of the contract being through mountainous country, would not pay him so well, and therefore quietly ignored it.

The defective railway communication was severely felt during the war, as the rough roads became very much cut up, and delayed greatly the passage of troops and material. Thus stores had to be conveyed through the Balkans on pack horses, or in oxen arabas, and so slow was the rate of progress that it took about three weeks to reach Plevna from Tatar Bazardjick, a distance of some 150 miles.

There can be no doubt that a great revolution is in store for Turkey when the country is opened up by the junction of her railways with the continental system, which she is now under obligation to carry out. It will then be possible to reach Constantinople from London in three days, and the increase of visitors and of trade which is sure to follow will do much to improve the country.

There was but one train daily each way at this time, and we found the rate of travelling quite in keeping with other Turkish customs, in there being a total absence of any unseemly hurry about it. The train went no further than Adrianople the first day, and took over thirteen hours to reach that city, a distance of about 160 miles, much time being put off at a few small stations by the way.

The scenery between Constantinople and Adrianople is not at all interesting. After passing the low ranges of hills which rise from

the Sea of Marmora, our way lay across the vast Roumelian plain, which is about as dreary a district as can be found in all Turkey. Swamps, and uncultivated land covered by rich natural grass, alternate with immense tracts of dense scrub-wood, the remains of former forests, and the dreary, brown hue of the plain is relieved only by the dim contour of distant mountains, and by numerous artificial tumuli, probably having their origin in the frequent battles of which in bygone ages this plain was the scene. Occasionally we would pass patches of cultivated land, maize seeming to be the chief crop, but these were quite unfenced and exposed to wandering herds of cattle. Large tracts of country, however, were passed without seeing the least sign of cultivation or of life, the villages and stations being situated at long distances from one another. The country must have been magnificently wooded at one time, but the forests have been ruthlessly felled for firewood and other uses, without the least attempt having been made to replace them-the idea of providing for posterity having no place in the philosophy of Turk Greek, or Bulgarian.

The carriages were as comfortable as those we are accustomed to at home, but the day was intensely hot, and the depressing effect of the dreary country would have rendered our journey decidedly monotonous, had it not been for the freedom allowed us of moving along the footboard to pay visits from one compartment to another, the occasional ten minutes for a constitutional at stations, and the novel behaviour of a section of our fellow-passengers. The train was chiefly occupied by troops on their way to the front, four or five hundred swarthy blue-gowned Egyptians (who proved themselves such cowards that the Turks soon packed them home again), and a small body of Circassians. The latter seemed to amuse themselves thoroughly, but without any respect to the feelings of their fellow-passengers, by shooting out of the windows at such tempting marks as the telegraph wires and posts, cattle on the plain, and even the engine as it went round a curve. One could not but sympathise with the guard, who seemed to feel it his duty to come along the footboard periodically and address an indignant protest to them, even at the risk of

being carried off by a stray shot. We were told that this was a common amusement with the Circassians and Bashi-bazouks, and that on several occasions cattle, and even peasants in the fields, had been wounded.

We arrived at Adrianople in the evening, and found that we had a drive of about two miles from the station to the city, where we put up in two very ricketty and dirty houses, dignified with the high-sounding titles of "Hotel d'Amerique," and "Hotel de l'Europe," but affording about as good accommodation as can be had in any part of the interior of Turkey.

The city is situated at the junction of the rivers Maritza and Tundja, and like most Turkish towns, looks pretty from a distance, the little houses being hid from view by orchards, poplars, and cypresses, above which peep out the minarets and domes of over a hundred mosques. But on entering, we found the streets, as usual, narrow, rough, and dirty, and with the exception of the mosques and a few other buildings, the houses are mainly constructed of wood.

Adrianople is supposed to have a population of about 70,000, and a considerable trade is

carried on, chiefly in wine, silk, otto of roses, tobacco, Turkey-red dye, &c.; but business seemed to be in a bad way at this time, a large number of the shops being closed. It was founded by the Roman Emperor, Adrian, in the second century, being built on the site of the ancient city of Orestis, the capital of the kings of Thracia. Taken by Amurath I. in 1361, it was the residence of the Turkish Sultans until the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, and the old palace of the Sultan Selim, built in the fourteenth century, still remains, though in a dilapidated condition.

We remained here two days assisting the four Stafford House surgeons who were working in the hospitals. There were over 2000 sick and wounded in the city, chiefly from the Shipka district, and the large military hospital and private houses in which they were lying were in fairly good condition, though very crowded. Most of the cases had been previously under treatment in Philippopolis, and so were chiefly in the convalescing stage, or were injuries of a minor degree of severity. The transport of the sick and wounded from



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Philippopolis was conducted by Dr. Barker, a Stafford House surgeon, who had half-a-dozen railway vans fitted up with beds, and another as a kitchen, so that he was able to supply them with nourishment by the way.

On the evening after our arrival we dined at Lady Strangford's, and afterwards inspected the comfortable hospital of about eighty beds which she conducted, with a surgeon and four English nurses. These were the only female nurses we saw in Turkey, but I believe a few Sisters of Mercy, sent by the Queen of Saxony, served in the hospitals in Constantinople. That Lady Strangford, in her private hospital, assisted by her staff, succeeded in shewing results as to the comfort of her patients and their chances of recovery that were quite unapproachable in the best and most carefully conducted hospitals where there was only the usual male nursing, any one who had the pleasure of visiting her hospitals can abundantly testify. It is to be hoped that her good work will bear fruit, and that ere long female nursing may become an institution in Turkey.

We saw here a good example of that pro-

crastination which is the curse of Turkey. When General Gourko, shortly after the crossing of the Danube, made his famous raid through the Hankoi Pass, and was burning stations on the Philippopolis line, the Turks began in haste to fortify Adrianople, but no sooner were the Russians forced to retreat than all work was stopped, and at the time of our visit the earthworks still remained in an unfinished condition.

Our journey to Philippopolis occupied from 9 A.M. to 7 P.M., though the distance is only about 120 miles. As we neared our destination, the plain, which showed signs of better cultivation, began to get closed in on either side : on the right by the Balkans, while away on the left lay the loftier and more rugged mountains of the Rhodope range. The Balkan range of mountains—the Mount Hæmus of the ancients—extends from Cape Emineh on the Black Sea in a westerly direction to the borders of Servia, a distance of nearly 300 miles. It forms the watershed between the streams flowing northward into the Danube, and those flowing southward to the Ægean

Sea, and some of its higher summits attain a height of about 6000 feet. The Rhodope range extends southwards from near Sofia to the Ægean Sea, and is a much wilder and grander mountain mass than the Balkans, its chief summits attaining an elevation of about 9000 feet. The Turkish name of this range, "Despoto-Dagh," means "mountain of parsons," there being a considerable number of monasteries scattered about its valleys and slopes. These monasteries belong to the Greek Church, and some of them are very wealthy and of immense size; one known as the Rilo monastery being able to accommodate upwards of a thousand pilgrims at one time. They have large estates belonging to them, and enjoy a very independent position, the Porte not interfering in their affairs, civil or ecclesiastical, so long as they pay the taxes or tribute. The most remarkable, however, of these monastic republics in Turkey is to be found at Mount Athos, near Salonica. This peninsula of land -about thirty miles long by five miles broadis possessed by some twenty monasteries, in which live about 6000 monks and hermits, who

make their own laws and live according to their own fancy. No female is allowed to visit this happy land, a prohibition which extends to animals, and as even the presence of cows or poultry would profane the monasteries, the milk, butter, and eggs used by the monks are imported from the neighbouring islands.

Philippopolis, the chief town of Eastern Roumelia, is curiously situated on and at the base of three granitic rocks which crop out suddenly from the plain, and command the passage of the river Maritza. From this situation it was called by the Romans "Trimontium," and its Greek name is probably derived from Philip of Macedon. Almost totally destroyed by an earthquake in 1818, it is now a flourishing place, containing about 40,000 inhabitants, and having a large trade in wheat, maize, rice, skins, tobacco, wine, otto of roses, &c. There is nothing picturesque about the town, and it is one of the dirtiest and most unhealthy in Turkey, being surrounded by low, marshy ground, on which rice is extensively grown.

This neighbourhood would be a rich one for the archæologist, there being many Roman and

Greek remains, and ancient coins can be had in great profusion, a recent traveller having found a coin of Philip of Macedon actually passing current among the medley of coins which are in circulation in the neighbourhood. There being no accommodation in the town beyond that of the Turkish khan, we took up our quarters in the house occupied by the four Stafford House surgeons who were working here, which they had christened the "Stafford House Club." This was also the headquarters of Dr. Stoker and his party, who were then conducting the transport service between Shipka and Philippopolis, a distance of about forty miles. Dr. Stoker had been in the country about a year, and spoke the language well, though with a strong Irish accent, so that he was exceedingly well suited for conducting transport work. He had about thirty light covered carts, each capable of conveying three wounded men, and it was quite a sight to see him marshalling his force of native drivers and setting out on a journey.

The "Club" was a very tumbledown house, with bad sanitary arrangements, and its accommodation was severely strained by the arrival

of our large party. I well remember on the evening of our arrival, sleeping, or rather trying to sleep, with ten others on sacks of straw, in a room measuring about 20 ft. by 16. not a pleasant experience with a temperature of about 80°. So oppressive was the atmosphere, that after suffering for some time, a number of us rose and moved our beds to a balcony, where we slept with more comfort.

We commenced work at Philippopolis, it being intended that we should not proceed further till the arrival of Baron Mundy with the stores of the ambulance. The Turks had several hospitals in the town, containing about 2500 sick and wounded, but the most serious cases, and those requiring operation, were nearly all under the care of the Stafford House surgeons. One of the surgeons was down with fever, and as there had been a large influx of cases recently from Shipka, the hospitals were in such a bad condition, that to one accustomed to our well-ordered institutions it was quite sickening to work in them. A large number of the cases were still lying just as they had arrived, on the floors of private houses and

mosques which had been utilised as hospitals, and the odour in some of these houses was almost unbearable.

Another disagreeable feature of life in Philippopolis at this time was the frequency of executions. Large numbers of Bulgarians, charged with having taken part in the rising, or with having aided the Russians, were lying in the prisons, and scarcely a day passed without some of them being hanged. Capital punishment was there deprived of all the formalities we are accustomed to associate with it, and reduced to the roughest form, the prisoner being simply strung up to the first projecting beam or pole in the streets, and left dangling for hours. We could scarcely walk out without coming on the body of one of these unfortunate men, having a paper affixed to it stating in Turkish the crimes, imaginary or real, for which he had suffered. There can be no doubt that many of these men deserved their fate, but the greater number received but scant justice, and the Governor of Philippopolis, Ibrahim Pacha, was said to be anything but particular as to a full enquiry being made into the merits of the case. Still, we

should remember that the Turks had both an invading enemy and a rebel population to deal with, and make some allowance for the disorder of the time. Our own mode of dispensing justice during the Indian mutiny, when whole batches of rebel sepoys were blown from the guns, and the wholesale shootings after the suppression of the Jamaica insurrection, were quite as barbarous, though held to have been justified by the necessities of the case.

The unhealthy character of the town and of our work began to tell on us in a few days; several were ailing, and one or two were actually down in bed. I was not sorry, therefore, when a telegram arrived directing Dr. Mackellar and myself, with a dresser, to start for Plevna at once, the remainder of our staff being directed to remain at Philippopolis till further orders. At the last moment, Dr. Sketchley, one of the surgeons stationed at Philippopolis, who had been feeling ill for several days, determined to accompany us, as he was very anxious to get to the front, and hoped his condition would improve after getting free of the unhealthy atmosphere of the town.

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## CHAP. III.

Tatar Bazardjick-We do business and take coffee with the Governor-An instrument of torture-Zaptiehs--Our cavalcade-Painful impressions-Bulgarian arabas-Trajan's Pass-The Khan-Sofia-The hospitals-Russian wounded-The sick man-I remain as nurse and cook-Eight days' misery-Return to Philippopolis.

Our small party of four, accompanied by a dragoman, left Philippopolis about six p.m. of 26th September, and after another slow journey of two hours' duration arrived at Tatar Bazardiick. The towns seemed to become poorer and more unsavoury the further we proceeded, and it was only after considerable hunting that we found a somewhat superior khan in which to take up our abode for the night.

As we had now to leave the railway and betake ourselves to the roads, which, at no time very safe in Turkey, were then infested by bands of marauding Circassians and Bashibazouks, our first duty was to call on the Governor of the town, and request an escort for ourselves and stores. This we were able to do at once, it being still Ramazan; and although

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it was near midnight when we called, we found no difficulty in obtaining an interview.

It was a fine moonlight night, and when we entered the courtyard of the Konak, or Government house, we found the ground thickly covered by sleeping soldiers, amongst whom we had considerable difficulty in threading our way. These men had just arrived that evening on their way to the front, and apparently no better quarters had been provided for them. One could not but think of the hard times in store for these poor fellows, and of the large proportion of them who would probably leave their bones to bleach among the Balkans.

We found the Governor a very courteous old gentleman, and our request for an escort was granted at once. While we sipped the customary supply of black coffee and smoked cigarettes, he conversed with us through our dragoman, appearing to have high hopes of his countrymen thrashing the Russians, and speaking in very grateful terms of the British surgeons. One could not but see, however, that he would have extended a far more cordial welcome to British soldiers, and it was quite evident from his remarks that he expected England would yet interfere, and not altogether desert her old ally.

We were up betimes the following morning, having horses to buy, and talegas to hire for the conveyance of the stores which had been supplied to us by Mr. Cullen, the agent of the Stafford House at Philippopolis. We bought three fairly good though small horses, at prices ranging from  $\pounds 5$  to  $\pounds 9$  each; but with that delay which seems essential in Turkey, it was the afternoon before the two zaptiehs who were to escort us succeeded in bringing to our lodging place the three talegas which we had hired to convey the stores. These talegas are simply flat boxes, with a leather roof, placed on high wheels, and quite devoid of springs. They are not unsuited for the rough roads, and the Turk manages to make himself fairly comfortable sitting cross-legged on a mat spread over some straw on the floor of the vehicle. But the stranger, to whom this is an impossible attitude, has to extemporize a seat out of straw or wraps, and then he finds his head brought into unpleasantly close proximity with the roof, which,

being usually studded over with white porcelain headed nails, acts in conjunction with the jolting as a very effective instrument of torture. In fact, every jolt of the vehicle will make him heartily endorse the description of the talega given by Colonel Baker in his work "Turkey in Europe"—"An instrument of torture devised to shake out the teeth and batter in the skull."

About three p.m. we mounted and set out on our journey to Sofia, escorted by the two zaptiehs, who were certainly as ruffianly-looking "protectors of the peace" as one could imagine. These zaptiehs are a mounted police, one of whose duties is the protection of travellers and merchandise on the roads. Zaptiehrie stations are found at intervals of about twenty miles on most of the main roads, and at these a change of escort may be had. The men do not appear to be furnished with any regular uniform, as their dress is generally most varied and picturesque, and though provided with a good rifle, they carry their kummerbunds or belts full of antiquated flint-lock pistols and long knives, while a sharp scimitar usually hangs at the side. They are mounted on small but wiry horses,

capable of enduring much fatigue, and as the pay they receive from Government is quite inadequate, even when paid, to keep themselves and horses, the rural population has to make up the deficiency. In fact, these men are but licensed robbers, living upon the inhabitants, Mussulman and Christian alike, with impunity, and it was quite customary to see them riding into the yards of the houses demanding food and assisting themselves to fodder without the least formality.

Our journey to Sofia, a distance of 75 miles, occupied two days and a-half. We were all on horseback but Sketchley, who felt unable to ride, and lay in one of the talegas suffering much from the jolting over the rough roads. I had been somewhat anxious about this long ride, and the nature and seat of certain painful impressions which did make their appearance on the second day can be easily surmised, but I got on much better than I anticipated, and had become quite a horseman by the time we reached Sofia. The first twenty miles of our journey lay on a good level road across the plain with the Balkans on our right and the

great Rhodope range on the left. This part of the country appeared very fertile and better cultivated - rice, maize, and tobacco being grown largely-and we passed numbers of oxen arabas laden with the small grapes which thrive so well in Turkey. The araba, the ordinary rural cart of Turkey, is quite a masterpiece of vehicular construction, being made entirely of wood without an iron nail in it, wheels and axle being of the same material. They are chiefly made by the Bulgarians, cost about one pound sterling, and are drawn by yokes of oxen or buffaloes over the rough roads at the rate of from one to two miles an hour. The wheels are of very rough construction, often of unequal size, and the monotonous creaking they make as they pass along the roads lingers long in the memory.

We passed the first night at the village of Yeni Keni, at the foot of a spur of the Balkans connecting it with the mountain mass of the Rhodope, and separating the plain we had hitherto been traversing from the more elevated plain or basin in which Sofia lies. The pass through this range is known as "Trajan's

Gate," and the remains of old fortifications are still to be seen in it, this being the route by which the old Roman highway from Pannonia to Byzantium passed. The numerous tumuli scattered over the adjacent plains bear witness to the many fierce struggles which have taken place for the possession of this pass, which is the true gateway of Constantinople.

The scenery in the pass is very beautiful, the mountains, though not of great altitude, being well wooded with dwarf oak and beech, the highest point the road reaches, near the village of Ichtiman, being about 3000 feet above sea level. Game is said to be plentiful in this neighbourhood, and deer, chamois, bears, wolves, and jackals may be found among the higher slopes of the Rhodope.

The road in many parts of the pass was very narrow, rough, and dangerous, winding close to the edge of precipices, and most of the rough wooden bridges spanning the mountain streams were so riddled with holes that we had to exercise great care in guiding our horses over them. The roads in Turkey are generally in very bad condition, especially in the wet season and after thaws, but the extra traffic which the war had entailed had rendered them worse than usual at this season of the year. Most of the principal roads have been constructed at great expense during the last twenty years, but as they are never systematically repaired, their condition deteriorates much more quickly than would be expected from the limited amount of traffic on them.

Many of the villages in this neighbourhood presented but bare walls and blackened rafters, having been destroyed by the Turks in suppressing the rising of the previous year; and at one of these villages in the pass we saw a number of neat wooden huts, erected by the agents of one of the English Relief Committees for the homeless Bulgarians.

We passed some half-dozen small Bulgarian and two Circassian villages by the way, and spent our second night in a khan at the hamlet of Vackarel. There is very little accommodation for travellers in Bulgaria, and those who wish comfort must carry their own bedding and food. The khans in the villages are, like the rest of the Bulgarian houses, constructed of wattle and

mud, and contain usually two apartments, one serving as kitchen and salle à manger, the other as bedroom. These apartments are mud-floored, and quite destitute of furniture, except, perhaps, a few three-legged stools, and sometimes an uncushioned wood divan along one side of the room to serve as a bed. Little of a palatable nature can be had to eat; the bread is coarse, dirty, and badly baked, and everything else is cooked with such an abundance of oil or grease as to be very distasteful, to a Scotch palate at least. Turkish coffee can always be had, but milk seems to be a scarce commodity; and the wine of the country is usually almost undrinkable, being spoiled by want of skill and care in preserving it. The horse has certainly the advantage over man in these places of entertainment, for large stables are usually attached to them, and there is always a plentiful supply of fodder to be had. It must be acknowledged, however, that the proprietors of these establishments were not at all exorbitant in their charges; our night's lodging usually cost about twopence per head, and any food or drink which might be had was correspondingly cheap. Having been

supplied by Mr. Cullen with a case of tinned meats and other good things, and carrying sacks, which we filled with straw and used as beds, we were able to rough it comfortably. The one thing which annoyed us more than any other was the vermin which infested these houses. Do what we might, the fleas would assert themselves, and usually succeeded in keeping us awake the greater portion of the night.

After passing the large village of Ichtiman we began to descend into the valley or basin in which Sofia lies. This valley is about twentyfive miles long, and is bounded on one side by the Balkans, and on the other by the Rhodope mountains, prominent among which towers the peak of Mount Vitosh, rising behind the town to a height of about 8000 feet. It is a very fertile district, raising large quantities of wheat, barley, and maize; but there are no vines, the elevation being too great for their successful culture.

Sofia, the chief town of Bulgaria, is situated on the river Isker, a tributary of the Danube, and has a population of about 30,000, Turks, Bulgarians, Greeks, and Jews, the latter section of the community being largely represented.




The town was built by the Emperor Justinian on the ruins of the ancient Sardica; but there is not much evidence of Roman grandeur to be seen now, it being a large but poorly built place, with the streets as narrow, badly paved, and in wet weather even more dreadfully muddy than those of the other towns we had visited. The Konak, however, was a large and substantial building, and there were also a fine Bulgarian church and school. The town presented a considerable air of prosperity and life, it being the centre of a large and rich district, and having a flourishing trade in grain, hides, and wool. One of the chief trades is the dressing of sheep skins, which are largely worn by the Bulgarians during the winter season; the wool being next the skin, forms a happy hunting-ground for a very multitudinous parasitic population.

Sofia will probably become a place of great importance when the railway system is completed, for from it diverge some of the most important roads of the country—one leading along the Morava Valley into Servia, another (the one we had come by) along the Maritza into Roumelia, a third by way of the Isker to the lower Danube, and a fourth down the Struma into Macedonia. The roads in this neighbourhood are much better than in many parts of Turkey, Midhat Pacha, when governor of this district, having done much for their improvement. We attracted much attention as we rode through the town, being the first English surgeons who had entered it. We took up our quarters in a café kept by an Italian, and which, though scarcely up to the high level of the Adrianople hotels, was very much in advance of the ordinary khans, there being actually a rough attempt at table d'hote at six p.m.

We found about 2500 sick and wounded in the town, most of whom had come from Plevna, but as the communication had been interrupted by the Russians, none had arrived during the last two or three weeks. It was probably due to this that we found the hospitals in better condition than at Philippopolis. There was a large military hospital, and the Konak and some other buildings had also been transformed into hospitals, the chief faults in them all being that they were much overcrowded, and that the latrine accommodation was exceedingly bad.

In one of the hospitals we found four Russian soldiers who had been picked up wounded at Plevna. They were in a small room by themselves, seemed quite comfortable, and, on our dragoman enquiring at them, stated that they had been well treated. It has been said that the Turks rarely took prisoners, and indeed we saw few others; but it must be remembered that the Turks were for the most part acting on the defensive behind entrenchments, and had seldom the opportunity of taking prisoners.

Although assured in Sofia that we would have great difficulty in getting into Plevna, then nearly surrounded by the Russians, we determined to push on the following day. When the morning came, however, it was evident that Sketchley, who had gradually been growing worse, would not be able to proceed further, and that he was suffering from an attack of typhoid fever. It being necessary that some one should remain to take care of him, I consented to do so, and gave up, much to my grief, the immediate prospect of getting into Plevna.

Our friends having departed, I was left alone with my sick companion, and my existence in

this wretched café during the next eight days proved a very trying one. During that time I scarcely left the little room, measuring about 14 ft. by 8 ft., in which we slept; in fact there was little inducement to do so, for there was not a soul who could speak English in the town, and my linguistic attainments were not of a high order. Poor Sketchley lay in a semi-unconscious and delirious condition, and I had not a scrap of literature but a Turkish grammar with which to beguile the time. The nights were even more trying than the days-short snatches of sleep, out of which I would be awakened by the ravings of my friend; and when morning broke I was glad to rush out of the pestilential atmosphere and snatch a breath of fresh air at the door of the café. It was some relief to the monotony, however, that besides acting as nurse and physician to the sick man, I had also to become his cook; for, after many vain trials, I found that the culinary genius of our Italian landlady could not produce anything more tempting and nourishing than some greasy maccaroni and thin watery soup, so at last I was forced to obtain the raw material, descend to the lower regions, and

prepare beef-tea myself, a process which our landlady evidently regarded as a great waste of good meat.

I had been expecting the arrival of our ambulance every day in vain; but on the ninth day Sketchley had so far recovered, and was so anxious to get back to the comforts of Philippopolis, that I determined to return with him. Having by the aid of our landlord hired a talega, drawn by three horses, we left Sofia early in the day, rested that night in a khan by the way, and starting at daybreak the next morning arrived in Tatar Bazardjick about six p.m.

There being no train till the following day, we determined to go right on to Philippopolis by road, where we arrived about nine p.m. During the journey we had nothing to eat but hard-boiled eggs, of which we had taken a supply with us, washing them down with coffee from some of the khans as we passed along. My companion lay stretched out on the straw all the way, and it was a source of wonder to me how he stood the journey of over 90 miles. I felt thoroughly worn out when we reached Philippopolis, and we were both so sore and

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stiff that we could scarcely get out of the vehicle, while I am sure it would have rejoiced the soul of a phrenologist to have had the reading of my bumps. We quitted our talega for the hospitality of the Stafford House Club with heartfelt thankfulness; and I am happy to inform the reader that my friend Dr. Sketchley was none the worse of the long journey, but made a steady though slow convalescence from his exhausting illness.

# CHAP. IV.

Left behind, but in good company—Colonel Coope—Baptiste and "The Solemn Oak"—Lost in the Balkans—A dreary ride—A night in a Circassian hut—Parting with our brother—Ichtiman—We fall in with the ambulance, and hear of its disasters—Arrival at Sofia.

I now found that the ambulance had left Philippopolis the day before, and that we must have passed it in Tatar Bazardjick, where they were to spend a day in buying horses. It had been detained all this time waiting the arrival of its *chef* and stores, as Baron Mundy, through intrigue or jealousy, had been detained in Constantinople by the Sultan, on the plea that his services would be more valuable in organising the hospitals there, and the post of *chef d'ambulance* had been conferred on Dr. Sarell, a Levantine, having the leading practice in Constantinople, and a member of the Red Crescent Committee.

We had often afterwards much cause to regret this change, for we found our new leader too deeply imbued with the customs of the country to make working under him a pleasure, and our ambulance did not accomplish that amount of good which it might have done under a more energetic leader.

I went on to Tatar Bazardjick the next evening, and found that the ambulance had started that morning, but that three gentlemen had awaited my arrival, having been apprised by telegram of my return to Philippopolis. One of these was Col. Coope, formerly of the Fusiliers, who had come out to Turkey a few months before to take up the position of Brigade Inspector in the new corps of Ottoman Gendarmerie being organised by Col. Valentine Baker, and intended to supplant the existing force of zaptiehs. The outbreak of the war had put an end to the organisation of this corps, and Col. Coope, weary of doing nothing, and observing the great want in the Turkish army of any provision for removing the wounded from the field of battle, had attached himself to our ambulance with the intention of forming a corps of fieldbearers to pick up the wounded as they fell.

Mr. Cullen, the agent at Philippopolis of the Stafford House Committee, who was going to Sofia to make arrangements for starting an

hospital there, formed another of our party, the third being Mr. Walton, a merchant in Constantinople, who had come up mainly with the intention of seeing the country.

We had with us a servant of Mr. Cullen, Baptiste by name, who proved an invaluable acquisition, being such an excellent forager and cook that we lived like lords all the way to Sofia. Of grotesque appearance, with stunted body and large head, his nationality was a matter of conjecture; in fact he pretended not to know it himself, and he could speak a little more or less of almost every language. Mr. Cullen had picked him up keeping a small café in Philippopolis, but he had had many ups and downs in life-among other experiences, having reached the rank of Major in the Egyptian army, in which he had served fifteen years. Besides looking well after our creature comforts, he contributed much to the enjoyment of our journey by keeping us continually in amusement with his oddities.

Mr. Cullen had bought a diminutive and preternaturally solemn-looking pony, which I rode to Sofia. This pony was supposed to have a great stock of endurance, and Baptiste, bringing his ready wit to bear on his small stock of English, christened it "The Solemn Oak," a name which struck every one as being wonderfully appropriate.

We left Tatar Bazardjick shortly after midday of 12th October, and it was sunset when we reached the village of Yeni-Keni, at the foot of Trajan's Pass. The drivers of the two talegas and the zaptieh wished us to remain here for the night, but as we were anxious to overtake the ambulance, we determined to push on to Palanka, a village in the pass, said to be about an hour-and-a-half's journey further on. Distance is measured by hours in Turkey, a most uncertain method, as we often found, but we calculated this meant a journey of five or six miles.

Colonel Coope and I were on horseback, and shortly after beginning the ascent of the pass we rode ahead, soon losing sight of the talegas containing our friends, and of the zaptieh escorting them. We had scarcely travelled a mile when suddenly it became very dark, and a furious hailstorm came on, the wind

blowing the hail so painfully in our faces that we could scarcely keep our horses' heads to the road. Soon the hail changed to rain, and although wrapped in waterproofs, it was not long till we were wet to the skin, and I began to feel the water running down my legs and collecting most unpleasantly in the soles of my boots. It was so dark that we could scarcely see past our horses' ears, and I soon lost sight of my companion, his horse being a faster walker than "the Solemn Oak." Our position now was anything but a pleasant one, separated from our escort on a strange mountain road which ran close to the edge of precipices, and the windings of which we were unacquainted with. The only plan was to give our horses the rein, and although we felt rather nervous going over the wooden bridges, from which we knew from experience there were sure to be some planks missing, we got on without mishap, but gradually becoming colder and wetter.

After journeying about six miles, and seeing no signs of the village, we began to fear we must have passed it; but coming suddenly on some Bulgarian araba-drivers huddled round a fire at

the side of the road, we inquired of them, and were informed that we were still about an hour's distance from Palanka. We were somewhat surprised at this, but continued on our weary way, little thinking that they meant an hour's distance in the opposite direction. For another hour we crawled on in the darkness and the rain, and I was beginning to feel quite benumbed, when at last we were delighted to hear the barking of dogs, and soon after saw a small village a short distance off the road. Towards this we at once made our way, but were greatly disappointed when we saw from the character of the houses that this was not the place we were in quest of, but one of the few Circassian villages in this neighbourhood, certainly about the last place we would have chosen to seek hospitality in.

Since the year 1864, when the Circassians were, with great cruelty, driven out of the Caucasus by the Russians, large numbers of them have emigrated to Turkey, and there are estimated to be about 200,000 now in the country. They were granted land to settle on, and every assistance given them by





the Porte; but they have proved a thorn in the side of Turkey ever since. Born robbers · and freebooters, they are the terror of their neighbours, Turks and Christians alike; and the influence they have obtained in Constantinople, by the introduction of their women into the harems, enables them to snap their fingers at such law as exists in Turkey. The men are, as a rule, tall, handsome, and of wiry build, but, at the same time, fierce and lawless-looking; and their chief accomplishments are horsemanship and thieving, to both of which they are trained from infancy. Their social condition much resembles that of our Highland clans in the last century. They have a regular system of chieftainship, and an organisation by which large numbers of them can be collected at a given point within a short time. Their dress consists of a round cap of sheepskin with a cloth top, a large coat of grey cloth reaching below the knee, and fitting tightly at the waist, short trousers of the same material, and sandals of untanned hide. They usually carry a small armoury of weapons of various kinds, and those who were attached to the army as irregular

cavalry were armed with Winchester repeating rifles.

Such were the people we had stumbled among; but, being unable to better our condition, we put a bold face on the matter, and attempted by means of the little Turkish we had at command to get shelter in the first house we came to. The owner of it, however, seemed not to understand our version of the language, for after a short parley he slammed the door in our faces. At the next house we tried a warmer reception awaited us, for the owner came out with a rifle in his hand, which he kept at the ready with the muzzle pointed toward us while we attempted to explain to him our need of hospitality. He repeated frequently that the village was a Circassian one, evidently thinking such information would be sufficient for us, but at length, after considerable hesitation, and a consultation with some one in the interior, he took our horses, stabled them in a little outhouse, and introduced us to his domicile. This consisted of two small mud-floored apartments, having an aperture less than three feet in height in the wall between them. At one end of the

apartment we entered was a large bell-shaped wooden chimney built out from the wall, under which our host lit a fire of logs, and placing a rush mat on the floor before it, signified that we could rest there for the night. In the other room we could hear a woman talking volubly to our host, probably his wife scolding him for having taken strangers in, or, perhaps, as we fondly hoped, enjoining hospitality upon him, for besides being tired, cold, and wet, we were desperately hungry. After some time we were pleased to see our host appear with a wooden basin of goat's milk and some brown bread, which we soon disposed of, an operation which at once rendered our stomachs and our minds easier, knowing, as we did, that a Circassian can usually be trusted after having broken his bread with a stranger.

The news of our arrival had evidently spread, for several Circassians had by this time entered the house, and their animated conversation about us, in an unknown tongue, did not render us any more comfortable. After some time, however, they left the house, our host retired to the other apartment, and we endeavoured to get

some rest. Col. Coope lay down on the mat before the fire and was soon asleep, but I felt too cold and wet to follow his example, and occupied myself most of the night in keeping up the fire and endeavouring to dry my wet boots, from which I found it impossible to withdraw my feet.

The night passed slowly, but as soon as daylight appeared our host led us out to our horses and told us to hasten, probably afraid that if his fellow-villagers got hold of us they would not respect our persons and property as he had done. Having bestowed a liberal "backshish" on him, and telling him, in the Circassian fashion, that he was our brother for life, we set off at a smart trot, congratulating ourselves on having escaped so well out of what was certainly a nasty position.

After a ride of two hours we arrived safely at the village of Ichtiman, where we found the ambulance party just getting ready to start, and not at all in a good humour, as Dr. Sarell had gone on to Sofia and left them to shift for themselves. Their journey so far had been full of troubles, Dr. Sarell having brought from

Constantinople large quantities of stores, and four heavy and cumbersome ambulance waggons, which were not at all adapted for the passage of the Balkans. Already two of them were *hors de combat*—one having broken down, and been left for repair at Yeni-Keni; while the second, in the attempt to turn a sharp corner in the pass, had rolled over the precipice, dragging two horses to destruction with it. In addition to these disasters, young Denton, one of the dressers, had fallen from his horse in the pass and broken the bones of his forearm; so altogether the opening performance of the ambulance had not been an exceedingly brilliant one.

We did not start with the ambulance, but determined to await our friends from whom we had parted company the previous night. They arrived about mid-day, and were overjoyed to meet us, having spent a night of much anxiety on our account at Palanka. Mr. Cullen knew well the ill-repute of this neighbourhood, and the zaptieh, who was responsible for our safety, had been turned out into the storm and rain to search for us, with many threats as to what would be his fate should anything have befallen us. The poor fellow had never returned, being either too frightened to do so, or having himself met with some misfortune.

M. Baptiste went on a foraging expedition, and quite outdid any of his previous performances, having, within a short time, a capital breakfast before us, consisting of roast fowls, eggs, wine, &c., although we had heard the members of the ambulance growling at being unable to obtain anything but a few eggs in the village. Our appetites were equal to the meal, and we enjoyed it thoroughly after the privations of the previous night.

We started again in the afternoon, and spending the night in a blockhouse by the way, reached Sofia without further adventure at noon of the following day.

## CHAP. V.

Dr. Sarell and his Assistants—A moonlight ride and a hard bed— Tashkessen—Kamarli—The Orkhanieh pass—Sufferings of the refugees—Orkhanieh—News from Plevna—Osman Pacha and the English Surgeons—Sufferings of the sick and wounded in Plevna—Chefket Pacha not musically inclined.

AT Sofia I met for the first time Dr. Sarell, the chef of our ambulance. I had heard no very good reports from those who had already had some experience of him, and after events shewed him to be very destitute of that energy and organising power which is essential in the leader of a field ambulance. He had brought with him nearly a dozen Levantines and Greeks, acting as interpreters, secretary, storekeeper, cook, &c., most of whom proved themselves but an encumbrance to the ambulance, being most unpractical men, without any knowledge of the work, or of the mode of travelling or living in this part of the country. Between these men and the surgeons a bad feeling grew up very soon, and continued all the time the ambulance

held together, being fostered by the marked favouritism shewn towards them by Dr. Sarell.

After a needless delay of two days in Sofia we received orders to be ready to start early the next morning, having now to change the direction of our journey and proceed northward through the Balkans. We were ready, but Dr. Sarell was not, and it was about six p.m., and we were beginning to weary much for dinner, when that gentleman gave the word to set out for Tashkessen, where we were to spend the night. We had a very pleasant journey, however, it being a lovely moonlight night, and the road across the Sofia valley being good, we were able to keep up a smart trot most of the way. With our ambulance waggons, and about twenty talegas containing stores, we formed quite an imposing cavalcade. Our journey, however, was not without its little mishaps; another of our cumbersome ambulance waggons broke down, a talega capsized in a ditch, much to the astonishment of Dr. Pinkerton, who had been comfortably esconced half-asleep inside it, and I had my temper and the skin of my knuckles

rather ruffled by my horse coming down on his knees and pitching me clean over his head. I had been forced to part with "The Solemn Oak" in Sofia, and my new steed had evidently been overwrought of late, for he stumbled frequently during the journey, and at last took this unfair advantage of me just as we reached our destination.

It was about eleven p.m. when we reached Tashkessen, a small village situated at the foot of the Balkans, which flank the Sofia valley, and we could find no place of accommodation but a deserted khan, where we were all glad to get lying down on the hard earthen floor, though without many wraps, as it was impossible to find our baggage in the darkness. I was desperately hungry, but having been detained a little by the mishap to my horse, missed a service of boiled eggs, and could get nothing but a piece of dry black bread, off which I was forced to be content to make my supper.

We were up at daybreak the following morning, and after a hasty breakfast renewed our journey. First crossing a low range of hills we descended into a valley about ten miles long

by two miles broad, on the further side of which lay the entrance of the Orkhanieh pass. The mountains at the entrance of the pass attain an elevation of about 5000 feet, and we found the ascent very steep and difficult, the road being cut zig-zag fashion in the side of the mountain, with very sharp and awkward turns. At the summit of the pass we came on an earthwork commanding the road, and observed others in course of formation on the mountains on either side. This was Kamarli, where Mehemet Ali and Baker Pacha afterwards made a good stand against the Russians, and with which fate had decreed we should have a more intimate acquaintance. We now began the descent of the Orkhanieh pass, a beautiful defile, winding for about fifteen miles round range after range of hills, and terminating in the small plain or basin in which the town of Orkhanieh lies.

The scenery of the pass was very beautiful, the hills being densely covered with oak and birch; the autumnal tints adding much to the beauty of the scene.

At different points on our journey from Tatar Bazardjick we had passed small bodies of





refugees, but we now found this pass so crowded with them, and with supplies proceeding towards Plevna, that we could scarcely make our way among them. The scene from the summit of the pass was a most confused one; the narrow windings of the road, as far as the eye could reach, being crowded with men, women, and children, with oxen-arabas, toiling up the steep ascent, whilst, in the opposite direction, another stream of arabas was descending, conveying food, forage, and ammunition to Plevna. The roads were so cut up and crowded that these unfortunate people, of whom we estimated having passed about 30,000 between Sofia and Orkhanieh, could not travel more than from six to ten miles a-day with the oxen-arabas, containing such of their goods and chattels as they had saved. Their poor, half-starved oxen could scarcely draw the arabas up the steep and muddy roads; and frequently some of the oxen would fall, worn out, or an araba would break down or become fixed in a rut, causing a complete stoppage of the whole line for a time. Large numbers of their oxen died, and at frequent intervals we would come upon their

carcases lying by the roadside, being torn to pieces by the savage mastiffs which abound in the neighbourhood of all villages in Bulgaria. Clothed in rags, short of food, and having to sleep out without adequate covering night after night, the sufferings of these unfortunate people must have been terrible. Fever was rife among them, and the old men and women and the children were cut off in large numbers by the exposure. The numerous freshly-made graves by the roadside testified to their sufferings, and, to my mind, spoke more eloquently of the horrors of war than any battlefield.

We arrived in the afternoon at Orkhanieh, a small town containing about four hundred houses, and situated about 45 miles from Sofia and 25 miles from Plevna. It is beautifully seated in a small basin entirely surrounded by mountains, and presents the usual appearance of a Turco-Bulgarian town. The main street, a long, straggling thoroughfare, full of ruts in summer, and ankle-deep with mud in winter, contains usually the konak, the mosque, the Bulgarian church, and the chief khans. The goods in the shops are exposed on a broad

counter or slab, the window being without glass, but protected by a large wooden shutter fastened on hinges above, which is raised during the day, and forms a protection from the sun and rain. Off the main street branch narrow lanes leading to the outskirts of the town, where are situated the patches of cultivated land, and the folds into which the common flocks of the inhabitants are driven at night.

We found the army of Chefket Pacha encamped outside the town, that General having just returned with the greater portion of his troops, after pushing a convoy of food and ammunition into the closely-invested town of Plevna. We had intended establishing an hospital here, and leaving a small staff in charge of it, while the main body went on to Plevna, but on arriving we were met by our two companions, who had just returned from that town, and our intention was modified by the news brought by them.

After leaving me at Sofia, Dr. M'Kellar and the dresser had overtaken Chefket Pacha's troops on their way to the relief of Plevna. The gallant Osman had now kept the Russian forces at bay for over two months, but the communication having been practically cut for several weeks, his supplies of food and ammunition were becoming short. The Russians were not, however, in sufficient force on the road to withstand the advance of Chefket Pacha, and he succeeded in getting into the town after a few unimportant engagements.

Along with Dr. Bond Moore, a Stafford House surgeon attached to Chefket Pacha's force, Dr. M'Kellar had an interview with Osman, but they were advised by him to return to Orkhanieh or Sofia, as he intended to transport all his sick and wounded to these towns. Dr. Moore protested against the men being hurriedly removed such a distance without proper arrangements, and stated that the English surgeons were willing to remain; but Osman replied, "If you wish to see any fighting, or my batteries, you are welcome to remain here as long as you like; but if you want to help my wounded go to Sofia and help them there."

The condition of the 6000 sick and wounded men then lying in Plevna was most deplorable.

The town is but a small one, and though all the available buildings had been turned into hospitals, they were extremely overcrowded, the men lying in their clothes, huddled together on the floors. There were only one English and nineteen Turkish surgeons in the town, and as they were quite unable to overtake the work, a large proportion of the men must have been left to their own resources. They were but scantily supplied with biscuit and rice, and as fever, smallpox, and dysentery had broken out among them the mortality was very high, our surgeons having counted in the yard of the principal hospital twenty bodies, the mortality of the previous night.

Osman Pacha may well have been glad to get rid of this mass of disease and misery; and, unfit as most of the cases were for the rough journey, the sending of his sick and wounded to Sofia, even in the absence of proper transport, was probably the wiser course, considering the probability of siege and famine before him. Dr. Ryan, who had been with him all the time in Plevna, considered that, from both a military and a sanitary point of view, the immediate transport of the sick and wounded was a justifiable measure.

It might have been better, however, had Osman retained the services of the English surgeons then in the town, for in a short time it was again completely surrounded, and the sufferings of the sick and wounded who would accumulate up to its fall must have been very terrible.

Quite an erroneous impression of this affair was communicated to this country by some newspaper correspondents, and excited much comment and indignation at the time. Thus, in a letter from the correspondent of the Standard, dated October 15, 1877, the following occurs :--- "An unpleasant incident occurred yesterday, illustrating to its full extent the contempt for everything and anybody European which characterizes Osman Pacha. On the demand of Chefket Pacha, who was going to take the command at Orkhanieh, Dr. Bond Moore, the director of the Adrianople Stafford House Hospital, had joined the relieving forces, with several volunteers and a considerable amount of stores, there being, according to the

avowal of Chefket and Kiazam Pachas, the most complete want of adequate medical assistance, both with their troops and at Plevna. Dr. M'Kellar, delegate of Baron Mundy for inspecting the Turkish hospitals, had also repaired to Orkhanieh with six English surgeons. Two German and two English doctors in the Turkish service had been directed by Temple Bey, surgeon-in-chief of the hospitals at Orkhanieh, to reinforce this medical staff. These gentlemen on arriving collectively reported themselves to Osman Pacha, who, instead of offering them assistance in any way, coolly told them that their services were not needed at Plevna, and that they had better go back at once to Sofia, as he did not intend to keep any wounded at Plevna, and considered himself amply provided with surgeons. The lowest estimate I have heard of the wounded actually in this town is four thousand five hundred, not counting the sick-six thousand is nearer the truth. There are, in all, nineteen surgeons, most of whom, as is usually the case with the Levantine doctors in the Turkish service, are neither skilful nor energetic. The

hospital arrangements are most wretched. Osman Pacha did not hesitate to refuse and to order away a body of surgeons who in every other country would have been received with open arms."

This letter, besides containing some inaccuracies, gave rise to the impression that the surgeons had been very badly received by Osman Pacha, and had, indeed, been ordered out of Plevna. Such was not the case; he was quite courteous to them, but held that their services would be of more use in the towns to which his wounded were to be sent.

The house in Orkhanieh in which most of us took up temporary quarters was an empty one, recently deserted by some Turkish family, and was in close proximity to that occupied by Chefket Pacha. The evening after our arrival a number of us were trying to beguile the time before going to bed by singing together some songs, bringing near to us the dear old land. We were not in very hilarious spirits, and our conduct was certainly anything but riotous, so our astonishment may be judged of when a messenger arrived from the Pacha, asking,

"Whether the English doctors had come out in the cause of humanity, or to sing?" Evidently the saying, "Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast," did not apply to our friend Chefket Pacha.


#### CHAP. VI.

Arrival of wounded from Plevna—Their neglected condition—Unbidden guests—Work in our hospitals—A strange superstition—A party set out for Telliche—A horrible sight—Circassian atrocities—Battle of Telliche—A hot position—Col. Coope and M. Lorando made prisoners of war—A loss to our ambulance—Exaggerated rumours.

WE were roused early next morning by the arrival of the first convoy of wounded from Plevna, and during all the ensuing week several hundreds were brought in daily. The only hospital in the town was one recently opened by Temple Bey, principal army medical officer in this district, formerly surgeon of the 18th Royal Irish in the Crimea, but for the last twenty years in Turkish service in Constantinople. There was very scant accommodation in the town, but having obtained the Konak and some other houses as hospitals, we detained some 250 of the most severe cases, such as we thought would scarcely bear further transport. As all the other cases, numbering about 5000, were dressed and sent on to Sofia, it can be understood that we were not at all idle during that week.

These poor fellows were all conveyed over the rough roads in the little oxen-arabas which had gone up under Chefket Pacha's convoy laden with food, forage, and ammunition. They had already been three days on the road, and would, probably, be other four or five in reaching Sofia, having the difficulties of the Orkhanieh pass to overcome. Their sufferings must have been intense, for the nights were now becoming very cold, and they had to sleep out in the arabas without covering, while they had no regular supply of food beyond a scant quantity of bread or biscuit. It is almost unnecessary to add that a large number died by the way. The state these men were in is almost beyond belief. Most of them had been wounded in the heavy fighting of the first attacks on Plevna-four, six, or eight weeks before,-yet many had still the bullets and fragments of shell in their wounds; compound fractures of the worst kind had never had a splint on them; maggots of an enormous size swarmed in many of the wounds, and could only with the greatest difficulty be removed. Many of the men were reduced to the last stage of

emaciation from prolonged suppuration, diarrhœa, dysentery, and inadequate food, and all of them were, indeed, pitiful spectacles. One could not but contrast the condition of these poor fellows with that of the sick and wounded of our own army in time of war, and think how thankful the latter should be for the care and comfort of which they are the recipients, even when circumstances are most adverse.

The clothes of these unfortunate men hung in tatters about them, and were actually swarming with vermin, of which, as can be understood, it was impossible for us to escape receiving a liberal share. In fact, this was one of the greatest discomforts we had to endure, and gave us many an hour's earnest occupation at night.

During the first week or two we were scarcely out of the hospitals from morning to night, having to do everything ourselves towards getting them in order, the few soldiers given us as hospital servants proving worse than useless. We were unable to get the houses prepared in any way before taking in the patients, and, at first, they were literally

"chambers of horrors;" but gradually we got them into better order—the men were taken off the floors and laid on hay-stuffed mattresses, clean shirts and drawers took the place of their filthy clothing, and the poor fellows were made as comfortable as they could be under the circumstances. It was touching to see how grateful they were for all that was done; they would have kissed our hands, and invoked the blessing of Allah on us all day.

The diet we were able to give them was not very nourishing—though better than they had been getting—and consisted mainly of the Government rations of bread and pilaff, *i.e.*, rice stewed with small pieces of fat; but what gave us great pleasure was being able to distribute amongst them from our stores a quantity of tobacco, a treat they seemed to prize above everything else. Tobacco is everything to the Turk, and it was quite wonderful to see the change from sombre wretchedness to glad contentment effected by the distribution of a few packets of Turkish tobacco and cigarette papers. It is a question worth consideration whether smoking, which is such a solace, and even a

necessity to many, might not be more freely allowed in our civil hospitals; of course, under definite regulations as to time and place. I believe its soothing effect and the contentment it affords would assist the surgeon in his work, and it would, at least, do much to lighten the weary hours of a long hospital confinement.

A large proportion of our cases urgently required operation, that being the sole chance left of recovery, though, in many instances, but a slender one. Before operating it was necessary, by order of the Sultan, to obtain the patient's free consent; and though many availed themselves of our services, there was a considerable proportion who persistently refused, preferring to die. This aversion to operation arose from the Mohammedan belief, that as they die so will their bodies re-appear in Paradise; and as the loss of a limb was a mode of punishment under the old Mohammedan law, they dreaded appearing before their prophet in a maimed condition.

Chefket Pacha had established for the defence of the road between Plevna and Orkhanieh three imperfectly fortified positions,

occupied by a few thousand soldiers, while he himself, with about twelve thousand men, lay nearly inactive at Orkhanieh. These positions, situated at the villages of Telliche, Gabrovitza, and Lukovitza, were certain to be the scene of fighting ere long; so, with the intention of getting as near the scene of hostilities as possible, and of establishing a dressing post at some point about midway between Plevna and Orkhanieh, a party, consisting of Dr. Sarell, Dr. Pinkerton, Dr. Vachell, Mr. Douglas, a dresser, Col. Coope, M. Lorando (one of the Levantine officials), and three servants, left Orkhanieh about mid-day of 23rd October. They were unable to get further than the small village of Poma-Keui the first night, but on reaching Lukovitza the following day they heard heavy firing, showing an engagement was going on not many miles distant. They busied themselves obtaining a house in Lukovitza, and preparing it as a dressing station, in charge of which Dr. Pinkerton was left, the remainder of the party going on the following morning. On reaching the principal position at Telliche, five miles further on, they found fifty wounded men

from the engagement of the previous day, in which the Russians had been repulsed; though, on the same day, they had captured Gorny Dubuik, the first position on the road, three miles from Telliche, and the same distance from Plevna.

Telliche was garrisoned by about four thousand men, with four six-pounder field guns, under the command of Ismael Hakki Pacha; and, although the Russians had been repulsed, it had been at considerable cost, the hill-side on which the redoubt was placed being covered with corpses.

Having reported themselves to the Commandant, by whom they were cordially received, the surgeons set to work and dressed the wounds of the fifty men who were lying in the deserted khan of the village, and sent them off in oxenarabas to Orkhanieh. Evidently considering discretion the better part of valour, Dr. Sarell determined to return, M. Lorando consenting to wait with the surgeons as interpreter until a dragoman should be sent from Orkhanieh.

Having finished their work, our men picked out the most commodious house in the village,

on the roof of which they fixed a long pole bearing the Red Crescent flag, while within the house they made themselves as comfortable as possible by rigging up four stretchers as beds. In the afternoon, on receiving permission from the officer in command, they went outside the breastwork to view the Russian dead. About fifty yards from the breastwork they were horrified by coming on the bodies of some three hundred of the Imperial Guard, a large number of these being stripped naked, and terribly mutilated. Some had their heads cut off, some their ears and noses; and on examining the wounds closely it was evident that many of the poor fellows had been murdered after having fallen wounded.

Such a sight was enough to disgust even the most ardent Turcophile; but it is only just to exonerate the Turkish garrison from any share in this crime, and state by whom, and under what circumstances, it had been committed. It had been entirely the work of a body of Circassians, whom our men had met on the road, wearing the gold-laced uniforms of the Russian Guard, and carrying their Berdan rifles, which they were offering for sale. When one remembers the dreadful cruelties which these people suffered at the hands of the Russians only a few years ago, and the intense hatred with which they regard the people who drove them from their homes, such acts of retaliation, though by no means justified, cease to be so much wondered at.

Early next morning the Russians, under General Gourko, again attacked Telliche, and this time in much superior force. Having succeeded in placing their batteries in position on three sides of the village, they poured in on its little garrison a cross-fire from no fewer than ninety-six pieces of artillery. For five hours the Turkish soldiers bravely sustained this terrible fire, which soon disabled their guns, and was working dreadful carnage among them, the men being actually blown to pieces in the trenches. Chefket Pacha was known to be on the march from Orkhanieh, but for some inexplicable reason he remained inactive all day at Gabrovitza; and Hakki Pacha was at length forced to capitulate.

Our men, under the leadership of Col. Coope,

were busily engaged during the bombardment, and had to carry on their work amid great danger-their house, despite the Red Crescent flag floating over it, being not exempt from its share in the bombardment. Indeed, a battery of six guns opposite seemed to make the house its special target, and one of the party had to be told off to watch this battery and give the word when it fired, all then throwing themselves on their faces beside the patients. Fortunately every one escaped unhurt, and after the capitulation they were brought before General Gourko, who was very courteous to them, and promised they would be sent to Rahova, a town on the Danube still in Turkish hands, and there set free. They were then formally constituted prisoners, their revolvers taken from them, and a guard of Russian soldiers placed over them, under charge of whom they were marched the following day to Bogot, the headquarters of the Grand Duke Nicholas.

The Grand Duke appeared very anxious to make out that they were English officers and combatants. But Dr. Vachell and Mr. Douglas had papers proving they were surgeons;

and after some detention, during which Douglas was nearly carried off by dysentery, they were sent on to St. Petersburg, from whence they returned to England. It fared worse with Col. Coope and M. Lorando. They had no papers to shew their connection with the ambulance, and the Colonel especially incurred the Grand Duke's suspicion from having been an English officer, and at the same time holding a commission in the Turkish Gendarmerie. Hakki Pacha and the surgeons certified that they were there solely in connection with the ambulance, and they shewed the Red Crescent brassards on their arms; but the Grand Duke was not satisfied, and ordered them both into Russia as prisoners of war. They were taken under guard to the town of Novgorod, suffering great indignities by the way, and being treated there with shameful severity until 4th January, 1878, when, through the intervention of Lord Augustus Loftus, our ambassador at St. Petersburg, they obtained their liberty. Shortly after his return to England, Col. Coope published a very interesting account of his adventures, under the title of "A Prisoner of War in Russia."

Dr. R. Pinkerton, apprised of the disaster at Telliche by fugitive Circassians and Bashibazouks, made good his escape to Orkhanieh the following day. Our ambulance staff was thus reduced by four, in this the first engagement we had participated in, and our number was still further reduced by the departure at this time of Dr. M'Kellar for England, his engagements at St. Thomas's Hospital demanding his return.

Our first news of this disaster was entirely derived from fugitives, who, of course, did not make matters appear any less serious than they were. We were informed by some Circassians that the Russians had taken the place by storm, and massacred all the garrison, and that our friends had met the same fate. We were, consequently, in a very anxious frame of mind for several days; but Chefket Pacha, at Dr. Sarell's request, sent a *parlementaire* to make enquiries regarding them, and our minds were much relieved on learning that, though prisoners, they were safe and sound.

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#### CHAP. VII.

Result of the battles of Gorny Dubnik and Telliche—Life in Orkhanieh —Refugees—Good qualities of the Turkish soldier—Weak points of the Turkish army—I leave for Tashkessen—Our hospitals there —A guard of honour—Difficulties with our hospital servants—We entertain Mehemet Ali—A poisoning case.

THE battles of Gorny Dubnik and Telliche, though but comparatively small events in themselves, may almost be looked upon as having been the turning point of the whole campaign; for, as the result of them, the Russians obtained a thorough command of the Plevna road, and the fall of that beleaguered town was therefore only a matter of time. The Turks had allowed the golden opportunity to slip. Any attempt to relieve Osman Pacha and his gallant army would now be a matter of the greatest difficulty, and famine would ere long accomplish the submission of the brave hero on whom the Russians had, as yet, failed to make the least impression. For this disaster, Chefket Pacha was mainly to blame; and his mismanagement of the defence

of the Plevna road has certainly destroyed any reputation as a general he may previously have possessed. The posts he established on the road were very imperfectly fortified and poorly garrisoned; and had he, instead of remaining inactive at Orkhanieh with twelve thousand men and six batteries of guns, divided that force along the road, he might have proved a real support, instead of a snare, to Osman Pacha, and the result of the campaign might have been very different.

Chefket Pacha had now returned to Orkhanieh with the bulk of his force, and was busying himself throwing up earthworks on the plain outside the town. The Russians contented themselves during the next three weeks with completing the investment of Plevna; and as there was little fighting beyond occasional skirmishes on the road, we did not obtain many additions to the cases already in hospital. We had by this time got settled down, and made ourselves more or less comfortable in some of the many unoccupied houses, the town being now deserted by nearly all the Mussulman inhabitants. Our cook had taken up his quarters in what had

formerly been the meeting place of the Jews resident in Orkhanieh; but the synagogue had certainly nothing very ecclesiastical-looking about it, consisting as it did of a single whitewashed earthen-floored apartment, measuring about 25 by 14 feet. This served both as kitchen and mess-room; and here our cook, who was a Greek of Greeks, catered for us wonderfully well, the food supply being always plentiful, though somewhat wanting in quality and variety, and consisting mainly of bread and beef, varied by bread and mutton. Our greatest want was vegetables, which appear to be very scarce in Bulgaria; and, as Dr. Sarell had omitted to obtain a supply of the native wine, we were obliged to drink water, which, being very bad, no doubt accounted for the chronic diarrhœa from which most of us suffered more or less.

Living should not be very expensive in Bulgaria, for we were able to buy sheep and pigs at about five shillings each; fowls and geese at from eightpence to a shilling; and turkeys at about eighteenpence. These may have been somewhat exceptional prices, however,

as most of the Mussulman inhabitants, before leaving, were glad to get their live stock disposed of. Our life at this time was far from being unenjoyable. Assembling in our messroom at eight a.m. for a cup of coffee, we then wrought in the hospitals till one p.m., when we had lunch. The afternoon, unless there was any special work, was usually spent in riding round the camp, or along the Plevna road, and at seven p.m. we again met for dinner. Two of us took night-duty in the hospitals weekabout, a period we were always glad to see the end of—the atmosphere and the sights and sounds of the hospitals being anything but exhilarating.

At this time the whole face of the country was covered with refugees fleeing from the villages around Plevna, and they were passing through Orkhanieh with the arabas containing their belongings in an almost unbroken stream from morning to night. A complete block took place in the Orkhanieh pass, the road through which was fearfully cut up, and a number of the refugees were forced to remain there a whole fortnight, exposed to the cold, and reduced to

great straits for want of food. Many would have perished had it not been that we managed to get supplies of bread and flour sent into the pass and distributed among them.

One could scarcely comprehend the panic which led to the migration of the entire Mussulman population; but doubtless it was as much the dread of being left to the tender mercies of their Bulgarian neighbours as of the hated Muscovite, that forced them from their hearths and homes. The Bulgarians had already shewn, notably in the Shipka district, that they could quite equal the Bashi-bazouks in cold-blooded ferocity when circumstances placed it in their power.

We had good opportunity during this time of becoming acquainted with the Turkish soldiers, and of admiring the many good qualities we observed in them. In the hospitals we found them to make capital patients, bearing their hard lot with exemplary cheerfulness, and being very grateful for any little kindness shewn them. The chief anxiety of many of them was to know when their wounds would be healed, that they might get back to fight the "Muscov" again.

In the camp their conduct contrasted favourably with that of the irregulars, their discipline being most marked, while they wrought at the heavy work in the trenches with a cheerfulness and alacrity which would have done credit to the soldiers of any nation. The upkeep of the Turkish soldier must cost little compared with that of the soldiers of other European nations. The pay of the privates is 25 piastres per month, equal to about  $1\frac{1}{2}d$ . per day, and even this paltry pittance is sometimes as much as two years in arrears. His uniform is usually made of coarse dark blue serge, and consists of a short jacket, a vest buttoning at the side, and breeches, loose and baggy above, but fitting closely below the knee. The head-dress is the fez, and the feet are but poorly protected by sandals of untanned hide, boots, as a rule, being confined to the officers. The men were nearly all armed with the Peabody-Martini rifle and sword-bayonet, and the cartridges in use were carried in a waist-belt or fixed in little pockets sewn on the front of the jacket. Each man carried on his back a canvas sack containing his extra ammunition and biscuit, and a tin

water-flask, while every tenth man bore a pan used for cooking for himself and comrades.

I have often admired and wondered at the enthusiasm and cheerfulness of these men while suffering the greatest privations among the Balkans, and I can fully endorse the opinion of Col. Baker and other competent judges, that the Turk may safely be said to be among the finest material for a soldier that is to be found in any part of the world. Even with all its disasters, the past campaign has been somewhat of a revelation to Europe, shewing what a vitality the "sick man" still possesses, and that the Turkish nation has not yet become utterly effete, but still retains some of those qualities which once made it the terror of all Christendom.

The great weakness of the Turks lay in the want of good officers, and in the great amount of jealousy which existed amongst those in the higher commands, each general appearing to act mainly for the success of his own hand, without much regard for the result of the whole campaign. No doubt this arose in part from there being no General-in-Chief, and no thorough preconcerted plan of action; but in





A BASHI-BAZOUK.

many cases jealousy was the main factor, as, for instance, when Suleiman Pacha refused to join hands with Mehemet Ali, who was constantly urging him to do so, and persisted instead in uselessly sacrificing the best soldiers of Turkey by hurling them against the Russian positions in the Shipka pass.

Another great weakness of the Turkish army consisted in the large proportion of irregulars-Bashi-bazouks, Circassians, and others-who were utterly undisciplined and perfectly untrustworthy when there was fighting to be done. These were the men who brought discredit on the regular troops by such acts as that related in the account of the battle of Telliche, and by going about pillaging and murdering the helpless Bulgarians. The literal meaning of Bashibazouk is a light-headed or foolish fellow, and, certainly, the irregular troops to whom the name has been applied seem to have little thought for anything or any one but themselves. Their ranks are filled with the scum of many different races, and our experience of them in the Crimea proved them insubordinate and of little value.

As there were rumours of a forward movement of the Russians, and as our position at Orkhanieh was becoming rather precarious, Dr. Sarell determined to remove the most of our patients and stores to Tashkessen, a village near the positions the Turks had prepared at Kamarli. Dr. Pinkerton had been there for a few days preparing hospital accommodation, and on 15th November I left Orkhanieh with two dressers and a convoy of wounded, to take charge of the new hospitals, as, much to my regret, Dr. Pinkerton's engagements made it necessary that he should now set out on his return journey to Glasgow.

The only buildings we could obtain in this village were three very large stables, which we thoroughly cleaned out, whitewashed, and fitted with rough wooden beds for about 150 patients. They were old buildings, with earthen floors; and, though we had a couple of stoves fitted up in each, were wretchedly cold and draughty, as the poor fellows who occupied them during the severe weather of the next six weeks must have experienced.

We were evidently regarded as individuals of

great importance at Tashkessen, for the officer in charge of a regiment encamped there sent two of his men to stand guard at the door of the house we had requisitioned as a dwelling-place. The sole occupation of this guard seemed to consist in saluting us as we entered or made our exit from the house-a procedure which, though flattering, became at last so monotonous that we could stand it no longer, and sent word to the officer that we would drop the dignity, and release the poor fellows from their arduous labours. About half-a-dozen soldiers were also detailed to assist us in the hospital work; but the chief assistance they rendered was in occasionally raising our tempers to about boiling point. It was certainly somewhat provoking, after shouting your orders in what you considered the best of Turkish, to find the action evoked, or the article brought quite different from what you had desired. It was very amusing to watch one of the dressers, who was not gifted with the patience of Job, when a provocation of this kind occurred. Turkish terms of derision, freely mingled with familiar English words more profane than

complimentary, were hurled at the mute offender's head, accompanied by such energetic gesture that the sedate Turk would stand entranced, probably wondering if the "Ingiliz hakim" (English doctor) had not gone out of his mind altogether.

A week after our arrival we had the honour of entertaining at luncheon Mehemet Ali, who, recalled from the Lom, was on his way to take the command at Orkhanieh, the mismanagement of the defence of the Plevna road having got Chefket Pacha into disgrace. A German by birth, Mehemet Ali's career had been a somewhat romantic one. When a boy, he ran away to sea, but being ill-used on board, escaped from the vessel by swimming ashore when she was lying at Constantinople. He adopted the Mohammedan religion, and became a protegé of Ali Pacha, under whose favour he rose rapidly in the army, finally attaining the rank of General. He was certainly the most gentlemanly and humane, and probably the most skilful, of all the Turkish generals; and one cannot but regret his cruel murder by Albanian insurgents, which occurred about a year after.



MEHEMET ALI PACHA.



Dr. Sarell happened to be in Tashkessen that day, and made great efforts to entertain our guest. The stores were ransacked, and delicacies produced, the existence of which we had hitherto been entirely ignorant of. Our *ménu* on this occasion may interest the reader—mulligatawny soup (Crosse & Blackwell's), a turkey, two fowls, pilaff, sardines, omelette, Bass's beer, port wine, and whisky.

Such a feast was to us, however, a rare experience, and I think we must have punished all the Bass, as we neither before nor after saw another bottle. Dr. Sarell seemed to think the delicacies and medical comforts in our stores were applied to their proper use when consumed in entertaining Pachas or other people of importance with whom he came in contact, and that neither the medical staff nor the patients should be the legitimate partakers thereof. Shortly after this he objected to my having issued allowances of wine and brandy to certain of the patients who were in a very low condition, and whom I had experienced much difficulty in getting to partake of the stimulant. Taking the patronising tone, he said-"You know these H

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men are not like the patients you have at home, they are not accustomed to stimulants; probably none of them have ever tasted them before." I made reply—" Well, I suppose you will acknowledge that neither have they been accustomed to fevers or compound fractures." Dr. Sarell made no reply, but interfered no further with my dispensing of stimulants.

A young Turkish surgeon attached to the regiment stationed at Tashkessen attended regularly at our hospitals, and seemed very anxious to learn something, looking on with great interest at any operations we had, and being quite pleased when we allowed him to assist in the dressing. His acquaintance with French was about as extensive and accurate as ours with Turkish, but by the aid of both languages we did manage to interchange a few ideas occasionally. It was my custom to visit the hospitals late every evening and administer hypodermic injections of morphia to several of the patients who were restless or were suffering great pain. On these occasions I was always accompanied by our Turkish friend, and I explained to him fully the dose and the mode of

giving the narcotic. Feeling out of sorts one evening, I entrusted to Fuad Effendi the giving of the injections, a mark of confidence which evidently afforded him great gratification. I was becoming somewhat uneasy about his long absence, when he returned and handed to me the syringe and the bottle of morphia solution. There should have been only a small quantity out of the bottle, and I was greatly alarmed to find it nearly empty, but the only remark I could get out of Fuad in explanation of this fact was "beaucoup pour morphia," "beaucoup pour morphia." Taking the culprit with me, I hurried down to the hospitals expecting to find several of the patients sleeping their last sleep; but to my great relief and astonishment, found that having been beset by entreaties for the panacea from all the patients, Fuad had, with most exemplary kindness and perseverance, gone round and administered a hypodermic injection to every one of them. Certainly there was much truth and force in his explanation, " beaucoup pour morphia."

### CHAP. VIII.

Visit to Orkhanieh—Taken for a spy—Fighting at Orkhanieh—Scenes during the evacuation of the town—A sad sight—Atrocities, Turkish and Bulgarian—Return to Tashkessen—Retreat of the Turks to Kamarli—Attacks by the Russians—Recall of Mehemet Ali—Our work at Tashkessen—Visit to Sofia—I meet Baker Pacha and Col. Burnaby—Death in the midst of life.

MEHEMET ALI was too late to save Orkhanieh. On 23rd November, the day after we had entertained him at luncheon, I rode to that town, having heard from some Bashi-bazouks that fighting was going on there. I found the pass still very crowded with refugees, and in several places indeed I made better progress by leaving the road and taking to byepaths through the woods. Being thus delayed, it became dark before I reached Orkhanieh, and while riding leisurely along within a few miles of the town, I was suddenly stopped by three cavalry soldiers, who rode forward out of the darkness and barred the road in front of me. With my imperfect knowledge of Turkish, we were a considerable time in coming to an understanding,

but at last I made out that they suspected me of being a Russian spy. I told them I was an Ingiliz hakim" (English doctor), but they were not satisfied until I took off my waterproof and shewed the Red Crescent brassard on my arm. Then they said it was "peki" (good), and becoming very friendly, asked for some tobacco, and advised me to hurry to Orkhanieh, which I did, congratulating myself on having had my brassard with me. Had I not been able to shew them this proof, I would have been put to considerable trouble, and might even have found myself in the same unpleasant predicament as a servant of Dr. Stoker, who was on the point of being strung up to a tree as a Russian spy, when some one fortunately recognised and vouched for him.

On arriving, I found that fighting had been going on around the town for two days, and that there was every probability of its being evacuated by the Turks on the morrow. The Russians, under General Gourko, had begun their forward movement from Telliche on the 16th, and having during the last two days captured the remaining positions on the Plevna road, had now obtained possession of the hills on our left flank. As the town of Etropol, among the Balkans on our right flank, had also fallen into the possession of the Russians on the 23rd, the position at Orkhanieh was no longer defensible, as by a turning movement the pass in our rear might be seized by the enemy, and Mehemet Ali and his army caught in a trap.

I took up my quarters that evening with Mr. F. Francis,\* a correspondent, who was then acting mainly for the *Illustrated London News*; and who, like all other correspondents, was a very genial companion. About four a.m. we were awakened by his Turkish servant rushing into the apartment in a state of great alarm, and exclaiming that the Russians were in the town. We jumped up, and proceeded to get our horses saddled, but only to find the alarm a false one, having its origin in some shots which had been exchanged between the outposts.

In the morning it was evident that the Turks were indeed about to evacuate the town. Our hospital contained a large number of wounded

\* Author of "War, Waves, and Wanderings."

men from the fighting of the previous days, and we were all occupied in getting them prepared for removal in oxen-arabas to Tashkessen. When I went up to our mess-room in the morning, I found the town in dreadful confusion; the Bashi-bazouks and Circassians taking advantage of the disorder to break into and pillage the shops and houses of the remaining inhabitants. The main street was full of these men busily breaking-in the doors of the shops with the butt-ends of their muskets, and making a speedy clearance of the few goods they contained; while the town rang all morning with the screams of Bulgarian women (and they can scream) giving vent to their fear and anger as they saw their goods disappear. The guard in the town was small, and quite unable to cope with the disorder; but I had much pleasure in running with them on several occasions to the assistance of these women, and helping to administer a sound thrashing to the rascals. Dr. Sarell's house, having the Red Crescent flag over it, was soon crowded with Bulgarians-men, women, and children-seeking refuge. In one of the rooms lay a miserable group, consisting

of a lad and a girl about sixteen or eighteen years of age, and three small children of from four to ten years. They had come from an outlying village, the scene of some fighting the previous day, during which their mother had been shot dead, the boy wounded in the leg, the girl in the arm, and one of the children in the foot. They were, indeed, a melancholy group, lying there houseless and parentless; and they brought home to us, perhaps more than any sight we had seen, the great misery and suffering being inflicted by this war. Indeed, I often felt ashamed of what seemed want of feeling, for the misery was so great and so common, and presented itself to us so much as an every-day feature, that we became in some measure callous to it, and viewed with but little concern scenes which at home would have wrung our hearts. This dastardly deed was said to have been committed by some rascally Circassians riding through the village; but I must place upon record the fact that this was the only example of the much-heard-of "atrocities" that I saw during all the time I was in Turkey. Unfortunately it has been but too clearly proved that

horrible excesses were committed not only by the Turks, but also by the Bulgarians, and even in some cases by the Russians; but I believe that, in many cases, the reports of these were greatly exaggerated.\* History tells us that even amongst the best disciplined troops it has often been difficult to restrain excesses in war time; and with the undisciplined hordes of irregulars, and the lax government of Turkey, it is not to be wondered at that war assumed often its most uncivilized garb. I can only vouch for the comparative freedom from such excesses of the district in which my time was passed; but it was the Shipka district which suffered most in that way, and there the Bulgarians and Russians were in part to blame for what occurred. There were "atrocities" on both sides; for, when Gourko descended with his flying column, the Bulgarians rose and murdered many of the Turks who had not made their escape, and pillaged and burned their villages. But they

\* The number of persons killed in the Bulgarian massacres was stated as high as 60,000. Careful investigations made by Mr. Stoney and Mr. Clarke in the early part of 1877, when the panic had worn off, proved the total number killed to be about 3,500, of whom 500 were Mahommedans.
had counted without their host, for Gourko's force was quite insufficient to retain his successes, and as soon as he was forced to retreat, the Turks returned and showed the Bulgarians that they were their masters in massacre as in other things. The whole of this district, the most fertile and beautiful in Turkey, was given over to fire and sword; and, between them, the inhabitants managed to nearly exterminate each other.

I left Orkhanieh about mid-day on my return journey to Tashkessen, bringing with me the wounded from our hospitals, and the same evening the Turks retreated to Vrachesi, a small village just within the pass. Our men remained here with them two days, during which they had some fighting with the troops under General Ellis, who had occupied Orkhanieh ; but, on the 28th, General Dondeville, advancing from Etropol, captured the heights of Greot, dominating the pass on the east ; and the Turks, being thus again threatened in the rear, were forced to abandon Vrachesi in hot haste, and fell back during the night on their positions at Kamarli. This journey was a very trying one for our men,

being accomplished during a snow-storm, and amid all the confusion of a retreating army. They were indeed glad to find rest and comfort in our quarters at Tashkessen.

The positions which Mehemet Ali now occupied at Kamarli or Arab Konak consisted of six redoubts, erected on ascending ridges of the mountains at right angles to, and commanding the road from, Orkhanieh. The lines extended across the mountains from east to west, a distance of nearly five miles, and the positions were naturally almost impregnable, the highest redoubt being at an elevation of 4,500 feet above sea level. The Turks were, however, very deficient in artillery, and even with the reinforcements brought up by Mehemet Ali, their strength did not exceed 20,000 men. A considerable portion of the troops who had been arriving of late were of inferior calibre, being members of the Mustafiz, or last reserve, for the resources of Turkey were now beginning to be strained, the actual available men falling far short of the numbers which existed on paper. Opposed to them was a force of at least 40,000 Russians,

which was soon largely increased by the arrival of part of the troops set free by the fall of Plevna.

The Russians, under General Dondeville, advancing from Greot, attacked the highest of the redoubts, situated at the eastern extremity of the lines, on the morning of 29th November. No fewer than five attacks were made on this redoubt, all of which were repulsed with great loss; and at length the Turks, sallying forth from their defences, drove back the enemy at the point of the bayonet, and brought the action to a close. General Ellis, advancing from Vrachesi, effected a junction with Dondeville's forces on December 1st, but no further fighting, beyond an interchange of artillery fire, took place till the morning of 3rd December, when an attack was made on the redoubt at the other extremity of the Turkish lines, to the west of the Orkhanieh road. The action took place on some wooded ground in front of the redoubt, and was contested till late in the afternoon, when the Russians, who had gained some ground, but had suffered severely, withdrew their guns. On the 4th and 5th December the Turks took the

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offensive, attacking the position held by Count Schouvaloff; but although they managed to enter the redoubt, they were driven back at the point of the bayonet, leaving the ground covered with dead and wounded.

Some days of foggy weather now intervened, during which the mountains were shrouded in mist, and in consequence hostilities were at a standstill. The Russians occupied themselves entrenching the positions they had taken up, it being evident that Gourko's advance over the Balkans was for the time barred, and that Kamarli would prove a difficult nut to crack. On the other hand, it became evident that Osman Pacha must be left to his fate, for it would have been utter madness of Mehemet Ali to have attempted any advance from the positions he now occupied. Mehemet was much blamed for having lost Orkhanieh and Etropol; but the mischief was done before his arrival, and there was no course left open for him but to fall back on and defend Kamarli. This course of action, however, did not meet with the approval of the wise Council of War who sat in Constantinople and controlled operations taking place

hundreds of miles from them. So, on 9th December, Mehemet Ali was recalled, and the full command conferred on Chakir Pacha, who had charge of a division under him. Mehemet seemed to have been expecting his recall, and indeed to be quite sick of the manner in which the war was being conducted, and this may have been the secret of the extraordinary recklessness with which he exposed himself during the actions at Kamarli; recklessness so apparent as to lead to the remark that he seemed to be courting death.

The casualties on the Turkish side during this time amounted to about 1000 men, and we had sometimes as many as 300 in our hospitals at once, as we had great difficulty in obtaining arabas for their transport to Sofia, nearly all the arabas in the district being pressed into the army service for the conveyance of supplies from Sofia. Three of our number were stationed in tents close to the redoubts at Kamarli, and joined with a few Turkish and three English surgeons in the army service in attending to the wounded during action. The cases were then sent down to the hospitals at Tashkessen, where

we managed to get them transported to Sofia by degrees. Our work here was very disheartening, a large proportion of the cases being severe shell wounds, which were quite hopeless without operation, but such was the aversion of the soldiers to this that many would persistently refuse consent, though told there was no other chance for them. We took turn about in conducting the transport to Sofia; and on 4th December I convoyed 150 wounded men to that town. On the road I was overtaken by a young Circassian who was conveying despatches to Sofia, and we at once became great friends, though our communication was carried on chiefly by signs. He insisted on our exchanging horses for the rest of the journey, but I cannot say I enjoyed the torture of the Circassian saddle, which is made of wood, with very high pommels in front and behind, a thick leather cushion being strapped between the pommels, forming a seat, out of which it is very difficult to rise. My companion did not seem to be in any great hurry to get his despatches delivered, and put me in mind of a child with a new toy, taking aim with his Winchester

repeating rifle at trees and other objects on the road. He insisted on my trying my skill on some trees, and laughed immoderately at my frequent misses.

At the hotel in Sofia, I was introduced to two notable personages-Baker Pacha, who was on his way to take command of a division of the forces at Kamarli, and Col. Fred Burnaby, who, occupying the position of a free lance, had in his mind the intention of attempting to penetrate into Plevna, an attempt from which he was fortunately dissuaded. They left for Kamarli at four a.m. next morning, but I was later in getting astir. When I went to the door of the hotel after breakfast, I saw about the strangest sight I had yet seen in Turkey. On a vacant square of ground opposite the hotel was being held the fortnightly horse-fair, which presented the usual aspect of busy life, characteristic of such events all the world over. Men were busy bargaining and gesticulating, while horses were being ridden furiously up and down, to the apparent danger of the bystanders. Amid this busy scene, and forming a strange commentary on it, hung the bodies of four unfortunate

Bulgarians who had been executed that morning, each being dressed in his ordinary clothes, and suspended by a thin rope from the centre of a tripod formed of poles. The scene was so strange and incongruous that I stood for a time spellbound, watching the crowd as they passed to and fro jostling against the bodies, and apparently paying not the slightest attention to them. "A la guerre, comme à la guerre;" but surely human life must have been held in low estimation where such an exhibition of levity and unconcern was possible.

### CHAP. IX.

Winter in the Balkans—A snowstorm—Dreadful sufferings of the soldiers—Self-inflicted injuries—Scenes at Kamarli—Our English colony—Baker Pacha—Col. Burnaby—Correspondents—An adventure—Christmas-day—Advance of Gourko over the Balkans— Cut off from Tashkessen—We get more than we bargained for— Retreat to Sofia—A disagreeable journey.

ABOUT the middle of December the weather became extremely cold and stormy, inflicting great sufferings on the troops in their elevated and exposed positions at Kamarli. Even at Tashkessen, 2,500 feet above the sea, we found the cold on some days almost unbearable; but what must have been the experience of the soldiers in the highest redoubt, without our comforts or housing? Furious storms howled up and down the mountain defiles. On some days hail and snow fell heavily, while the cold was most piercing, the thermometer indicating on some nights as low as 15° below zero. On 18th December a severe snowstorm came on, which lasted almost without intermission for three days, and was accompanied by a piercing

wind which seemed to freeze one's very vitals. During the snowstorm no less than twentyeight of the Turkish soldiers were frozen to death at their posts, a number of the troops at Kamarli being Arabs, ill-suited to stand such cold. Communication with Sofia during these three days was entirely stopped, and the bodies of several araba-drivers, who had been caught in the storm, were found lying in the snow beside their dead oxen. Our comrades on the plain at Kamarli had a very disagreeable experience; their tents were half-full of snow, and they were unable to keep a fire going, the wood being so wet that it would not burn. With considerable difficulty I managed to ride up on the third day to see how they were getting on, and found them just on the point of leaving for Tashkessen, as they could stand the cold and privations no longer.

Hostilities during these days were almost at a standstill; but both sides had now a relentless enemy in the weather, which, however, told most severely on the Turks, they being less inured to the influences of frost and snow, and not so well provided with food and other

comforts. The men were supplied with coarse grey cloaks and hoods, but their sandal-shod feet, and their ungloved hands, suffered greatly, a large number of the cases we were now receiving being frost-bite of the hands and feet. The huts they constructed at Kamarli, however, were wonderfully warm and comfortable, a sloping excavation being made into the ground, and roofed over with branches of trees. covered with turf. It was the long hours of duty in the trenches which did the mischief, frost-bite and chest complaints disabling a large number of the men, about a hundred coming down to our hospitals daily. So far reduced were many of these poor fellows, that it was not uncommon to see mules walking into the village with lifeless frozen bodies on their backs, the short journey having been sufficient to extinguish the small spark of vitality remaining.

Another point which told somewhat in favour of the Russian soldiers was the fact that they were elated and buoyed up by the feeling of success, and the consciousness that, though slowly, they were surely getting nearer their goal; whereas the Turks were now to some

extent becoming demoralised by the constant succession of reverses. The fall of Plevna on the 10th December had by this time become known, and its effect on the spirits of the soldiers must have been considerable.

Amongst our cases at this time there was a considerable proportion of gunshot wounds of the hand, and it was not very difficult to tell that some of these had been self-inflicted. Part of the troops were of an inferior class, irregulars, and old used-up men, members of the last reserve; and considering the extreme hardships they were suffering, and the feeling of despair which was becoming prevalent, it is little wonder that a number of such cases occurred. We were asked to pick these out, and send them back for punishment, but objected to act as a military police. Seven men were selected by the military authorities, and shot before the troops one morning as an example.

In the midst of this severe weather, however, we had occasional pet days, when the sun shone out brightly in a clear sky, and the snow-clad country presented a scene of great beauty. Such days were always taken advantage of by

the combatants at Kamarli for the bombardment of one another's lines, and if we were not too busy, some of us rode up to the positions and had a view of the operations; the Turkish officers being very ready to take us round the positions, and give us every facility for seeing any fighting which might be going on. I have a lively recollection of one such glorious day, when, with two comrades, I visited the redoubt at the western extremity of the lines. It was situated on a cleared space in a wood, covering the summit of the lowest ridge of the mountains about 1,000 feet above the pass. The Russian outposts were within 300 yards of the redoubt, and through spaces between the trees we could catch glimpses of their huts and of the men moving about. We received permission to go outside the lines to the advanced outposts, two soldiers being sent with us. Dodging forward amongst the trees, behind several of which were standing sentries muffled in their cloaks and hoods, we came at last to a rifle-pit in which about a dozen soldiers were lying gazing along an opening through the wood. Looking along this opening we saw, at about fifty yards'

distance, a Russian hut, with some others further distant, and soldiers passing to and fro. The whole scene impressed one with a sense of weirdness and of great beauty. The ground and the trees were heavily covered with snow, which, beautifully crystallised on the branches, sparkled like diamonds in the sun. On the cleared space on which we stood were scattered three or four hundred huts and tents, with soldiers busily engaged getting guns into position, carrying ammunition, cooking, &c. In front ran the Turkish line, the soldiers standing ready with their rifles and cartridges in the trench; further on the outposts, stationed behind trees; while through breaks between the trees we caught a glimpse of the Russian huts, with the smoke curling up from their fires. To our right lay the narrow defile of the Orkhanieh pass, on the other side of which were the mountains bearing the Turkish and Russian redoubts, between two of which a lively cannonade was going on. Behind us lay a valley on which sheep were peacefully grazing, and shewing no sign of war but for the tents with which it was dotted over; while further

away lay ridge after ridge of hills, backed by the snow-covered rugged peaks of the Rhodope mountains.

While the fighting was going on at Kamarli quite a small colony of Englishmen had made Tashkessen and Strigli, a small hamlet close to the positions, their headquarters. Baker Pacha had now command of the left wing of the army, and on his staff were Col. Baker and Col. Allix. Baker dined with us at Tashkessen on two occasions when returning from reconnaissances on our left flank; but though a great favourite with the soldiers and those who came in close contact with him, he was very reserved and quiet on those occasions.

Burnaby, closely attended by his faithful servant Radford, was everywhere where there was danger or any fighting to be seen, his colossal frame looking sadly out of place on a somewhat diminutive Turkish pony. He having retired early, with complaints of indisposition one night when up at our mess, I remembered to enquire as to his health when I saw him pass as I was performing my ablutions outside our house next morning. The answer brought vividly to my

mind his "Ride to Khiva," and the gratuitous advertisement given therein to the remedy in which he had so much faith—"Oh! all right, thanks. Took a Cockle's pill last night." No one was a greater favourite in the camp, and only those who have had the fortune to come in contact with him can rightly appreciate what a great loss the British army has sustained by his untimely death.

Three English officers, spending their leave of absence pleasantly and profitably in seeing a bit of actual warfare, also arrived; and with them Campbell, from Shipka, the gallant hero who led the battalion that stormed and carried Mount St. Nicholas, only six men of the whole battalion returning from the assault uninjured. Several newspaper correspondents also made the village their headquarters, and proved not the least entertaining of our company-Francis, Murray of the Scotsman, Schubert of the Standard, and Scarborough of the Morning Post. It was curious to note how the correspondents' opinions of what came under their notice were somewhat coloured by the politics of the papers they represented; those who

wrote for Liberal organs denouncing the Turks, and pitying and praising the poor Bulgarians; while those who wrote for Tory organs were severe on the Bulgarians, and spoke of the Turks as if "their very failings leaned to virtue's side." Some of Murray's articles must have been especially severe, for they had evidently brought him under the notice of the Turkish authorities - some sensation being caused among us by the arrival, on 12th Dec., of a guard, bearing a warrant for his arrest. The orders of the escort were to see him safely to Constantinople, but I never learned whether he was allowed to remain there, or had to leave the country. Murray took his martyrdom very resignedly, and we had a pleasant farewellevening before his departure, at which he sacrificed his remaining stock of whisky in brewing toddy for the company.

The village of Tashkessen contained a mosque (which was given up to us as a storehouse) and about fifty houses, and was very prettily situated at the foot of hills on the edge of the Sofia plain. The land around seemed to be very fertile, and the district must have been a thriving





BULGARIAN PEASANTS

one, there being no less than four good-sized villages within a radius of about six miles. The methods of farming employed by the Bulgarians are of the crudest kind, the wooden ploughs and other implements used being probably much after the same pattern as those used by our first parent. Manuring is little, if at all, carried out; yet such is the fertility of the soil that plentiful harvests result.

Two of our comrades at Kamarli went for a walk one day to a village lying to the east of the positions there, and while doing some exploring, were very much disgusted at being arrested by a party of soldiers on suspicion of being Russian spies. They were hurried off before some old pacha or caimacam, and as they had not their brassards on, nor anything to prove their identity, things were beginning to look unpleasant. The pacha could not understand how any one would take a long walk without a definite purpose, and said he was sure they could not be English doctors, "for they always rode good horses, and had a dragoman with them ;" rather a new definition of an English medical. Fortunately a Turkish surgeon turned up who had

seen them at Kamarli, and they were liberated with profuse apologies, after a few hours' detention.

We spent Christmas-day rather slowly, though we had a capital dinner, including an imitation of a plum pudding which our cook by special request prepared for us. We had been afraid of being on short commons that day, as our provisions had nearly run done, and the road was so bad that we could not get things from Sofia. One of our number went out on a foraging expedition to a village near at hand, and returned with three fowls, two small sheep, and a pig, the whole lot costing about twelve shillings, so our larder was well stocked for the festive season.

Previous to Christmas time we heard rumours of Russian Cossacks having been seen on several occasions among the hills on our left flank, and we never retired to rest without some dread that we might be roughly awakened by some of these adventurous gentry. It was quite evident that the Russians were making observations in that quarter, and Baker having made a reconnaissance on Christmas-day,

and finding signs of the enemy, strongly urged on Chakir Pacha the advisability of sending a considerable force in that direction. Chakir Pacha, who never displayed much ability, did not seem to comprehend the gravity of the situation, and sent only one battalion of infantry and a few hundred cavalry to take up a position among the hills on our left flank.

On 27th December, whilst at lunch, we were surprised to hear some musketry firing, apparently at no great distance, among the hills to the south-west, or, in the rear and to the left of Tashkessen. Hurriedly getting our horses, Dr. Rudduck, Dr. Smith and I, with our dragoman, rode in the direction of the firing, taking with us knapsacks containing dressings in case we should fall in with any wounded. We were joined by Captain Thackeray, and after crossing some rising ground we came in sight of two or three hundred Turkish cavalry slowly retiring towards the Sofia road, while the crest of the hill about two miles distant was covered with Russians. We retired with the cavalry to the road, and learned that the Russians had that morning attacked the position on our left flank

occupied by these cavalry and the battalion of infantry. The infantry had retreated by another road towards Sofia, and the cavalry now began to retire along the road towards the same town.

It was evident that the Russians were now attempting to turn the positions at Kamarli, a movement we had for some time dreaded, but as messengers had been despatched to Kamarli, we hoped troops would arrive in time to prevent the Russians obtaining possession of the road. We were not then aware that what we were witnessing was the completion of that remarkable passage of the Balkans by which General Gourko won such laurels. His progress through the Orkhanieh pass being barred by the obstinate defence at Kamarli-where, from the severity of the weather and the difficulty of supply, the Russian positions were fast becoming untenable-Gourko had for some time been on the outlook for another route by which he might manage to evade this barrier. This he found in an old road to Sofia, which, branching off in the neighbourhood of Vrachesi, passed through a narrow and difficult defile of the Balkans, lying about four miles to the west

of the positions at Kamarli. This road had disappeared, having been disused for many years, but on being carefully reconnoitred, and found free of the enemy, two battalions were sent forward, who, after several days' hard work, managed to make it somewhat practicable.

Having received large reinforcements from Plevna, General Gourko left Orkhanieh early on the morning of 25th December, but it was only after two days and nights of almost superhuman exertion that the passage was effected, the guns having to be dragged by the men up the mountain sides covered with snow, and in many places converted into a sheet of ice. The operations had to be conducted with the greatest caution and secrecy, the Turkish positions being so close at hand—but the Turks seem never to have imagined such a movement possible, and were taken quite by surprise.

After waiting on the road some time, and seeing no sign of an advance of the Russians, we began to return towards Tashkessen. We had not proceeded far when we met the first reinforcement from Kamarli, consisting of some 500 Bosnian cavalry, and were told that a large

number of infantry were to follow. The road between us and Tashkessen was obscured by a train of oxen-arabas conveying forage to Kamarli, while our view of the Russians on the left was intercepted by some rising ground, between which and the hills occupied by them lay a strath debouching on the road close to the village. Capt. Thackeray and Dr. Smith parted company with us here, riding over the rising ground to get a view of the enemy, while Dr. Ruddock, the dragoman, and I, proceeded along the road. We were riding along leisurely within a mile of the village, feeling quite secure, when suddenly we heard the rattle of musketry close at hand, and to our surprise found ourselves amid a shower of bullets. So unlooked for was this event, that for a minute or two we could not tell from what direction the unwelcome messengers were coming, and consequently did not know which way to run; but seeing some of the drivers and soldiers guarding the arabas who had escaped being shot running toward us, we concluded that we should follow the same course, and wheeling round, went off at full The road took a rise here, and we gallop.

could now see the bullets as they whistled past going thud into the snow in front of us. A few minutes took us out of range, and we escaped with no further damage than a flesh wound in the leg of my horse, and a bullet hole through the lappel of the dragoman's coat. The experience of those few minutes was not a pleasant one; but it was somewhat amusing, on looking round, to see how the instinct of self-preservation had the same effect on us all, causing us to duck and lie as flat as possible, the part most exposed to the enemy being that usually considered a safe one for giving or receiving chastisement. It was really a wonder we escaped so well, being spread right across the road, along which the Russians were firing. Unseen by us, a brigade of Cossacks had been sent down the strath to intercept the transport train, which they captured, cut the telegraph wires, and established themselves on the road close to Tashkessen.

Attracted by the firing, the Bosnian cavalry had now returned, and deploying on either side of the road, a smart little engagement followed ; but as there was danger of their being cut off in the rear, they soon began to retreat towards

Sofia. We waited on the road some time to see if our two companions would turn up, but as they did not, we concluded that they must have got back to Tashkessen, or fallen into the hands of the Russians. It was now evening, we were tired and hungry, and having come out hurriedly, without topcoats or wraps of any kind, were ill-prepared for a ride of nearly twenty miles on a bitterly cold night; besides, it grieved us sorely to think of our impedimenta left at the mercy of the Cossacks. However, it was quite clear that we were fairly done. There was no other course open but to follow the cavalry to Sofia; and a wretched journey it proved, the road being so heavy with snow, and so crowded with cattle, hay, and other material which had been on the way to Kamarli, but were now being hurried back, that we could scarcely proceed beyond a walking pace. It was bitterly cold, and to sit in our saddles was to run the risk of frost-bite, so we were obliged to get off and walk most of the way, dragging our tired horses after us.

When about half-way to Sofia we were considerably perturbed by seeing a large body of

men slowly filing across the country on our right, and collecting on the road ahead of us. Were these Russians? and were we, after all, to have the fate of being made prisoners, and perhaps marched away back over the country for the rest of the night? Great was our relief when we found they were Turks, being the battalion of infantry who had retreated from the position on our flank that afternoon. The poor fellows were quite worn out; most of them lay down asleep on the snowy road, and could only with difficulty be roused by the officers to continue their march. On reaching the covered wooden bridge over the Isker, about four miles outside Sofia, we were stopped by the guard, who had instructions not to allow any one to pass until the morning; but after explanations with the captain, we were allowed to proceed.

It was close on midnight when we reached the town, and we were indeed thankful to get into one of the hotels and have something cold to eat, and something hot to drink. As for bed, I never before felt it such a luxury.

# CHAP. X.

Battle of Tashkessen—Gallant fighting of the Turks under Baker Pacha—Capture of our comrades—We start an hospital in Sofia— Disorder in the town—Engagements outside Sofia—Evacuation of the town—A mournful procession—Neglected state of the hospitals —Entry of the Russians—Plundered by a Cossack.

OUR friends, Captain Thackeray and Dr. Smith, from whom we parted company on the road, managed, as we afterwards learned, to get back in safety to Tashkessen, though they had to run the gauntlet of the Cossacks' fire. The remainder of our staff withdrew with their patients to Strigli, but the Russians only paid a visit to Tashkessen, which was re-occupied by Baker Pacha that evening; our hospitals, and indeed the whole village, being almost destroyed in the fighting which followed. Most of our stores had to be left behind, the cook being most disconsolate over the loss of his stove and other utensils, apparently feeling that his occupation was now gone.

Baker Pacha having re-occupied Tashkessen,

took up strong positions on the semicircle of hills behind the village the following day. The design of the Russians being evidently to surround the army at Kamarli, and so cut off its retreat, it was of the utmost importance that the hills between Tashkessen and Kamarli should be held, covering as they did the only line by which the Turks could retire—the mountain road to Slatitza, and thence to Tatar Bazardjick. The defence of these positions by Baker, in the face of overwhelming odds, was one of the finest things that occurred during the whole war, and shewed, if any proof were required, that in him we have lost one of our best officers.

The Russians employed the next three days strengthening and extending their hold of the Sofia road, and getting the remainder of their forces and artillery over the mountains; but early on the morning of 31st December the whole forces under Gourko, Dondeville, and Ellis, made a concerted attack on the Turkish positions, so planned as to assail the enemy on both flanks, in front and in the rear. To General Dondeville was allotted the task of crossing the

mountains to the east of Kamarli, thus turning the Turkish right flank, and cutting off the retreat by the Slatitza road. But he entirely failed in his attempt, and had to retire to Etropol, leaving several cannon on the summit of the range, and having lost a large number of men from exposure. General Ellis engaged the positions at Kamarli, but the real strength of the attack was delivered against Baker at Tashkessen. Here, with his small force of 2,500 men and seven guns, he withstood from sunrise to sunset Gourko's attack with forty-five battalions of the guards, eight batteries of artillery, and three thousand cavalry; and although he had to withdraw from Tashkessen, and from the more advanced positions, when night closed in he still held the main ridge and saved the army at Kamarli. The troops under him fought with wonderful valour and enthusiasm, but suffered severely, it being found at roll-call that night that of the small force no less than 800 were killed or wounded.

Chakir Pacha and the troops at Kamarli retreated with their guns to Slatitza that evening, being followed by Baker during the night, so

that next morning the Russians found the nest flown. The subsequent good services performed by Baker in protecting Chakir Pacha's rear, in the fighting about Philippopolis, and in the arduous retreat through the Rhodope mountains, are matters of history.

This battle, of itself, is sufficient to show the wonderful capabilities of Turkish soldiers when led by good officers. These men were not in the best position, physically or morally, for gaining the victory, yet the few Englishmen who witnessed the battle were filled with admiration at the determined and enthusiastic manner in which they fought.

Our men remained at Strigli with the wounded, and were taken prisoners by the Russians next day. One of them, with two other English surgeons who had been in the army service, and Mr. Bell, a correspondent of the *Illustrated London News*, were very badly treated, being marched on foot, first to Plevna and then back again by the Shipka pass to Adrianople. The case of these gentlemen was the subject of some remarks in the House of Commons, and an apology was subsequently received from the

Russian Government for the treatment they had been subjected to. The other three of our comrades were sent to Sofia, and joined us there about a fortnight later.

Fortunately the greater portion of our stores had been sent to Sofia for safety some time before, so that we found ourselves with plenty of tinned meats and other luxuries to live on; but as our chief, Dr. Sarell, had gone on a visit to Constantinople, and was now cut off from us, we were left quite destitute of funds, save a few pounds of private cash. We were, in this respect, in a much worse position than the other English surgeons in the town, who had sufficient funds on hand to carry on their hospitals and meet any exigencies.

Prior to his departure Dr. Sarell had been preparing an hospital in Sofia, having fitted up a large private house with about one hundred beds. These we filled with cases removed from the overcrowded military hospital on the day after our arrival, so we lost no time in setting to work again. Two of our dressers having gone to Sofia with a convoy of wounded the day before we were cut off, our staff now consisted of

two surgeons and two dressers, with a dragoman, who acted as servant and interpreter, and we were reinforced a fortnight later by the arrival, under guard, of our three comrades from Strigli. The other English hospitals in the town were one under the charge of three Stafford House surgeons, and one belonging to Lady Strangford, who had removed here from Adrianople about six weeks before. There were in all over four thousand sick and wounded, the remainder being attended by surgeons in the Government employment, the majority of whom were Turks or Greeks.

The town was in a state of great disorder during the days which followed our arrival. The Servians, taking advantage of the difficulties which were besetting the Turks, had again declared war, crossed the frontier on 15th December, and on 28th December captured Pirot, within fifty miles of Sofia, and opened communications with the Russians under Gourko. A Russian column, under General Krudener, having been sent to follow the line of Chakir Pacha's retreat, the direct communication with Philippopolis was thus also cut, and

the only means of escape from the town was by the southern road through the Rhodope mountains to Kustendil, and thence into Macedonia, or to Samakov and the country beyond. This road, and the approaches to it, were now crowded with Mussulman refugees—young and old, rich and poor, endeavouring to escape from the dreaded and hated Muscovite with as much of their property as could be carried in oxenarabas.

On 1st January eight battalions of infantry, with eight guns, went out from Sofia and attacked the Russian force, under General Wilhelminof, which had advanced to Gorny Bugaroff, a small village about eight miles off on the Tashkessen road. After a combat of several hours, the Turks were defeated with heavy loss, and had to fall back to the bridge over the Isker, four miles outside the town. Here they were attacked the following day, and, after a short engagement, were forced to retreat on the town, some of the Russian regiments having crossed the river on the ice, and taken them on the flank. We were present at this engagement, which, though on a small scale,

was well worth seeing. It was a very gloomy, murky day, and the constant rattle of the musketry, and the shrieking of the shells, combined, with the lurid flames from a village which had caught fire, to make up a scene of considerable grandeur.

Sofia was protected by several earthworks on the eastern side, where the Tashkessen road enters the town; but, with true Eastern apathy, it had been left quite open and unprotected on the north. Gourko was not slow in discovering this, and, on 3rd January, proceeded with twelve battalions of Wilhelminof's division to the village of Kumanitza, lower down the Isker, where he intended to cross and attack the town on its most vulnerable side, every one supposing that it would not be taken without hard fighting and considerable loss.

We had quite made up our minds to participate in the unpleasantness of a bombardment, and to have altogether what Mark Tapley would have termed a "jolly time," during the next few days. There was much talk in the town of a desperate resistance being made, and orders had been received from Constantinople
to blow up the mosques, and burn the city, before allowing it to fall into the enemy's hands; orders which no doubt would have been carried out but for the large number of helpless sick and wounded lying in it.

On 3rd January it became evident that the Turks were about to evacuate the town, which, indeed, their small force of about 10,000 men could scarcely hope to defend for any length of time, while every day's delay would render retreat less possible. When we reached the hospitals on the morning of that day, we were astonished to find them in a great measure evacuated, every man who could walk or hobble having been ordered to get up and set out on foot. Some 3,000 sick and wounded men were thus cruelly and uselessly made to join in the hurried and arduous retreat of an army, and that on foot and in the depth of winter. I can explain this order only on the supposition that it was given with the intention of setting fire to the city, and that this intention was not carried out only on finding the large number of men who were unable to be removed. The procession of these unfortunate

men passing out of the town was certainly the strangest and most mournful that could be imagined. Gaunt, emaciated forms struggled along the snow-clad road, many of them actually hobbling along by the aid of crutches, all of them imperfectly clothed, some having but the thin hospital shirt and drawers with a blanket or an old overcoat wrapped round them, and the thin hospital slippers on their feet. Each man carried a couple of the hard biscuits supplied to the troops, but where or how he was to obtain his next day's food supply would have been a question difficult to answer. As I stood watching the mournful procession, I was surprised to see one of the men approach me, and seizing my hand cover it with kisses. I soon recognised in him a soldier whose arm I had amputated through the shoulder joint at Tashkessen about seven weeks before. I was sorry to see him in such a plight, but his stump was quite healed, and he seemed in good spirits, and was evidently quite delighted to see me again.

Fortunately a large number of these poor fellows were captured by the Russian cavalry

and brought back during the next two or three days, but many must have died exhausted by the way. Some were set on by Bulgarians and murdered; and it is to be feared that only a small proportion managed to complete the journey. Walking along the road a few days after we counted no less than six of their bodies lying within three miles of the town.

About a thousand sick and wounded, who were unable to move, were left behind; and as most of the Turkish surgeons and dressers were going off with the army we determined to remain. The hospitals had been left in dreadful confusion, nearly all the attendants having fled, and some of the patients distributed in houses throughout the town were quite abandoned, and would have perished there had we not gone round with one of our ambulance waggons, and, along with Lady Strangford's surgeon, carried them out of these houses and removed them to the general hospitals. Such scenes of horror as we witnessed that day are almost beyond description. In several of the houses we found dead bodies which had been lying two or three days alongside the living;

and during that night one of the hospitals was entered by some Bulgarians, and the throats of several poor fellows cut as they lay helpless.

I may perhaps be pardoned quoting in this connection the remarks of the writer of the "History of the Russo-Turkish War," published by Messrs. Cassels. In the description of the evacuation of Sofia, he says—"The occupants of the hospitals, however, were not entirely without help. Lady Strangford, with several English doctors, did all that was possible under the circumstances, with a devotion to humanity so noble in its simple heroism that it seems almost indecent to praise it. Yet, with their utmost exertions, they could only in some degree mitigate the enormous misery of the time."

There was a regular panic in the town during the day, the streets being a scene of great confusion, crowded with soldiers, artillery, stores, refugees, and sick and wounded men, making their way towards the Kustendil road. The Government stores were thrown open and arms and ammunition given away to all Turks who applied for them, and as a large number of irregulars were going about pillaging, our

position during that night was anything but a pleasant one. We could not venture to retire to rest, as the town was in an uproar all night, some Bashi-bazouks having set fire to it in several places; but there was not much wind, and by pulling down some houses the progress of the flames was stayed.

The town was completely evacuated during the night, and when we went out to the hospitals next morning, not a Turkish soldier was to be seen. Shortly after the Russians entered, having been informed by some Bulgarians of the evacuation. We had proceeded to the vicinity of the military hospital, which was on the outskirts of the town close to the Tashkessen road, and while standing there we saw a Russian officer, followed by about a dozen Cossacks, riding across a maize field towards the town. These were the first arrivals, and, on coming up, the officer addressed us in French, asking who we were, and immediately followed this question by asking, with much eagerness, if we could put him in the way of getting some sugar, the possession of that commodity seeming to be the matter most prominently in his mind.

General Rauch's column was the first to enter the town; but news of the evacuation had been at once forwarded to Gourko, and he arrived soon after. A deputation of Bulgarians, headed by the priests, bearing a salver with bread and salt—the Eastern symbols of hospitality and welcome—went out to meet him, and the church bells were ringing all day; but there was a great absence of that spontaneous enthusiasm which one would have expected, seeing that was the first time, since 1434, that a Christian army had entered Sofia.

The crowd of men and boys in the streets stood listless and voiceless, and it was mainly the young women who seemed to welcome their deliverers—kissing the hands of the soldiers, and throwing sprigs of evergreen from the houses. The Bulgarians had been busy all morning pillaging the Turkish houses, and the first detachment of troops joined in this work as soon as they entered the town. Gourko, however, took energetic measures to put a stop to this as soon as he arrived, and the town quickly settled down into some degree of order—a short religious ceremony being performed at the

principal church, and the soldiers celebrating their success by their favourite pastime of singing national melodies in chorus.

The surgeons who were at work in the military hospital were kept there under guard for several hours until the town had in some measure quieted down. We had been working in our own hospital, and while one of the dressers and I were making for our house to have some dinner, we had the misfortune to be set upon by a half-intoxicated and ferociouslooking Cossack, who induced us by the gentle persuasion of a loaded revolver to step into a secluded garden. Here he proceeded to despoil us, and as, apart from the danger of being shot by him in his excited condition, we knew that any harm done to him might result in our finding ourselves in a much worse position, we thought it the wiser course to submit. He commenced first with my comrade, and seeing what was going on, I made for the door in the garden wall with the intention of seeking aid, but just as I had my hand on the door he shouted out "sto!" which I took to mean "stop!" and as, on looking over my shoulder, I found that

he had me covered with his revolver, I was forced to step back in a most undignified manner. He now had it all his own way, and soon relieved us of our revolvers, watches, and purses, together with such little nicknacks, as my scarf and braces, which seeme l to take his fancy, and we had even to submit to the degradation of having our nether garments taken down and a minute examination of our underclothing made, evidently in the hope of concealed treasure being found.

We followed this knight of the road afterwards, found the colonel of his regiment, and having got a Bulgarian of some note to whom we had done a service to explain the matter, we obtained restitution of most of our property after some difficulty. The man had evidently been at others, as he was quite laden with booty, and it was a rich study to watch his face and observe the air of amazed innocence with which he viewed each article the search brought forth, as if he could not understand how they had found their way into his possession. Poor fellow! he must have been suffering from kleptomania, for he was shot by Gourko's

orders the next day, having then been found with a large sum of gold in his possession which he had stolen from some wealthy Bulgarian.

We had many a hearty laugh afterwards over this adventure, and were considerably chaffed by our comrades about the ridiculous figure we must have cut in the presence of the Cossack and his revolver. It is not every one, however, who has had the experience of being twice looted by the Russians within one week.





GENERAL GOURKO.

#### CHAP. XI.

Visit of Gourko to the hospitals—Neglect of the sick and wounded by the Russians—Life in Sofia—The Russian soldiers and officers— Their ideas of England and of the Bulgarians—Our Turkish servant—Scotch Whisky versus Vodka—A seasoned toper—Our hospital work—Departure of Lady Strangford and the Stafford House Surgeons—A providential dispensation—A prize of war—Our auction—A disappointment—Departure from Sofia.

ON the following day General Gourko, accompanied by Prince Tzereteleff, visited the hospitals of the Turkish sick and wounded, now containing about 1,500 patients. Gourko, who is the *beau ideal* of a dashing cavalry officer, was very affable to us, expressed his approval of our hospital, and informed us that rations would be supplied for the patients by the Russian Commissariat, and that we would in no way be interfered with in our work. We found this latter statement afterwards fully borne out, for what seemed to please the Russian officials most was that they should hear as little as possible about the occupants of the hospitals.

After such promises from Gourko we were considerably surprised to find the great difficulty we had in obtaining supplies for our patients.

Making every allowance for the situation, it certainly lays the Russians open to the charge of gross and inexcusable neglect, that during the first two days of the occupation the wretched sufferers in the hospital were not supplied even with bread. This resulted in great part from culpable inattention, as immense quantities of stores were left in the town by the Turks in their hurried retreat. We made repeated applications for food during this time, but were sent from one official to another till our patience was quite exhausted; and had it not been that we were able to supply some nourishment from our private stores, many of our patients would have died from sheer exhaustion. On the third day we were supplied with some sacks of flour, and after this we employed some of the convalescent patients to bake bread, which, though not a great success, sufficed to alleviate the pangs of hunger.

After the excitement and novelty of the

occupation had passed away, the town settled down into a state of rigid calm, and our life in it became very dull and monotonous, for we were now quite cut off from communication with home, and not a scrap of authentic news was to be had. Hitherto we had been receiving letters and newspapers, *via* Constantinople, at irregular intervals, but we had now to content ourselves with dubious rumours derived from some of the Russian officers. Thus, we heard that there had been a revolution and great disturbances at Constantinople, that England had declared war, and a host of other startling news, which, though doubtful, all the more excited our thirst for reliable information.

Gourko, with the greater portion of the army, had now left to follow up the retreating Turks, via Samakov, Ichtiman, and Tatar Bazardjick, and General Arnoldi had been appointed commandant of the town. The Russians patronised us very much at first, and several of the surgeons and officers frequently spent an evening with us; but though very affable and polite, I believe they really disliked us, as they do all Englishmen, and eventually we found that we had but

to scratch the Russian to find the Tartar. Thus, without making any arrangement with us, they appropriated to their own use all our ambulance carts and horses-about twenty carts and forty horses-and even our own riding horses, a direct contravention of the provisions of the Geneva Convention. They forced us to turn out of the house we occupied, a somewhat superior one, at very short notice, for the accommodation of some of their officers, and they also requisitioned our dragoman, leaving us without means of communicating with our patients or the townspeople. But the greatest insult of all was the manner in which they treated us in connection with our departure later on; and although some of the surgeons and officers who were so affable to us might have befriended us then, not one of them shewed any inclination to do so.

Sofia was, during this time, indeed, a most dismal place to live in. Keen frost was present during most of the month, and the cold at night was sometimes very severe, but between occasional partial thaws, and the heavy traffic, the streets were in a fearful condition with frozen

mud, ice, and snow. Few of the shops had been re-opened, but the cafés were crowded with Russian officers and soldiers from morning to night, with the result that food and drink had gone up to famine prices. A few Russian nurses had found their way here in the rear of the troops, but, with the exception of the wretched Bulgarian peasants pressed into the army service with their oxen and arabas for the conveyance of stores, scarcely any one but soldiers was to be seen in the streets. The Bulgarians were indeed to be pitied for the miseries which this war had brought on them. The Turks had not spared them, but had requisitioned their services and that of their cattle to the uttermost; and now that their "deliverers," the Russians, had come, even heavier services seemed to be exacted from them. Strict discipline was maintained among the soldiers, and their conduct, so far as we could judge, was very good, but we now occasionally saw soldiers under the influence of liquor, a sight we had not seen since setting foot in Turkey. Large numbers of the Imperial Guard passed through Sofia, and the men seemed to be in wonderfully good condition, considering

the hardships they had experienced in the Balkans and at Plevna. In point of physique and general appearance they seemed on a nearly equal footing with our regiments of the line, and they were all well armed with the Berdan rifle. The Cossacks, again, who were constantly going and coming, are an important branch of the Russian army which we may well envy, forming as they do a valuable irregular cavalry, kept up at small cost to the Imperial Exchequer, daring, hardy, rapid of movement, and withal fairly under discipline. The infantry which formed the garrison of the town, however, was composed of men much below the standard of those of the Guard, scarcely equal indeed to that of our Militia regiments.

The Russian soldier seems to be a good fighting machine, brave and stubborn, hardy, cheerful under the greatest hardships and privations, disciplined as a slave, but his great fault is that he is merely a machine, without power of reasoning or of spontaneous action. Serfdom may be abolished in Russia, but its spirit still seems to linger. The Russian soldier is quite incapable of governing himself, but yields a slavish obedience to his officers, and is treated in many respects as if he were a slave. It was surprising to us as Britons to see soldiers beaten with staves by their officers, as if they had been dogs.

The officers are but poorly paid, and in point of general education and scientific training seem much inferior to those of the British army. This is especially the case with those filling the inferior grades; but there is one point in which those of higher rank excel ours, that is as linguists. It was somewhat humiliating to us to find what a large proportion of them could speak French and German well, and there were even a few who had some knowledge of English in addition.

It was very amusing to us, however, at some of our evening meetings, to find what an imperfect and inaccurate idea of England and its Government they possessed. They expressed surprise that no Englishmen were being captured, as they were sure large numbers of them were fighting in the Turkish ranks, and I believe the officers were frequently questioned by the men as to what had become of the English.

Then there was no doubt in their minds that Turkey was supplied with all the money and arms to carry on the war by England. It was no use our pointing out that Parliament had not sanctioned any such expenditure; they seemed to think Disraeli possessed as much autocratic power as their own Czar.

Those of them with whom we conversed on the subject made no secret of their opinion, that the real object of the war was not the deliverance of the oppressed Bulgarians, but the overthrow of the Turkish power and the acquisition of Constantinople. They seemed to despise the Bulgarians, and spoke of them with the utmost contempt; and several of the officers confessed that they were surprised at the amount of material prosperity they had met with in many of the Bulgarian villages, giving one the impression that it was greater than they were accustomed to meet with among many of their own peasantry.

I felt the cold weather in Sofia very much, most of my wraps having fallen into the Cossacks' hands at Tashkessen. Fortunately I had sent my portmanteau down to our store at Sofia as a

matter of precaution some time before, and so was not left quite naked, but I was now without overcoat or good boots, and our funds were at such a low ebb that I dared not risk such extravagance as investing in any articles to replace them.

For the same reason we had to restrict our diet to the tinned beef, &c., in our stores, as we could not afford to buy fresh provisions at the prices they had now reached, and did not care about trying the Russian army rations, the only article we accepted from them being flour for bread. Fortunately we had a plentiful stock of tinned meat, and in the matter of liquor we were quite luxurious, having several dozens of whisky, brandy, and port wine on hand. We had a fairly comfortable house to live in, and when our dragoman was appropriated by the Russians, a young Turkish soldier, a mere lad about eighteen years of age, who had been taken prisoner at Gorny Bugaroff, was given us as a servant. His duties were not heavy, but he was very anxious to please us, seeming to consider himself fortunate in having such a billet, and we all became really attached to the

poor fellow, whom it was impossible not to pity in his loneliness. Like all his countrymen, his weakness was tobacco, and we used to supply him occasionally with a handful out of a large tin of Turkish tobacco which we kept open on our apology for a table. Frequently we forgot him, and our first reminder would be to see him sitting wistfully watching us smoking, with a hungry look upon his face, which there was no difficulty in interpreting. On such occasions the open tin, entirely at his command while we were absent, must have been a tremendous temptation, but all our observations went to prove that he never laid a finger on it.

Our experience of the Turkish peasantry and soldiers throughout was that they could have been trusted with anything, being, in this respect, much superior to their "Christian" neighbours, the Bulgarians.

Three Russian officers visited us one evening, and in shewing them hospitality we introduced to their notice some of our Scotch whisky, which, after tasting critically, they pronounced tolerable stuff, but not at all equal to vodka. One of them, however, shewed his contempt of

it so much as to nearly empty a bottle, becoming at length noisy, and finally quarrelsome, so that we were glad when we saw him assisted by his comrades down stairs and out of the house. We did not see him again for a few days, but he then spoke of our national drink with more respect, and said it was *dobra* (good). He shewed an inclination after this to come back frequently, which we, however, nipped in the bud, by representing that our stock of whisky had run done, and restraining his libations to port wine.

We were able, however, to supply one of our Russian visitors with something as strong as vodka. A young lieutenant came down in charge of the escort which convoyed our comrades from Kamarli, and as he had been very pleasant to them, we took him in and stood him a drink. There was some conversation as to what we should treat him to, when some one suggested that we should try him with some rectified spirits of wine, of which we had found a bottle in our store. With this spirit, 60° overproof, we nearly filled one of our drinking tins, capable of holding about half a pint, and

our guest, after saluting us, gravely put it to his lips, and drained every drop before taking it from them. We did not see or hear of him afterwards, but I would not wonder if he is still alive.

Our hospital work at this time was very disheartening. A large proportion of our patients were Arabs, suffering from frost-bite due to the exposure in the Balkans, and many of the cases were so severe as to involve the loss of the greater portion of both hands or feet. Large numbers of these men died, being reduced to the lowest ebb from the prolonged exposure and inadequate nourishment, and I fear that the after-existence of many who survived must have been an unhappy one. We had one female patient in the hospital, our first and only one, though women and children sometimes came to get advice. We found this one, a Turkish woman, waiting on us in the hospital one morning, but as we were without a dragoman we were unable to obtain her history. She was suffering from an abscess, which we opened and dressed, and she then made up a bed on the floor in one of the rooms among the men, where she remained when we

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left Sofia. The abscess was healed long before that, but she shewed no inclination to leave the hospital, probably having nowhere else to lay her head.

About the 20th of the month Lady Strangford and the Stafford House surgeons left for Constantinople, having transferred their remaining patients to the few surgeons in the army service who had remained. No obstacle was put in the way of their departure, but they were informed that they could not be allowed to go by the direct route, through the Russian and Turkish lines, but must proceed by way of Servia into Austria, and thence by sea. There being no railway, the whole journey to Belgrade, a distance of about 230 miles, had to be prosecuted by road, but the surgeons had horses, and the ladies were accommodated in talegas, so it was simply a fatiguing journey which they might expect to accomplish in about ten days. Two of our party also left about the same time, and obtained from the Russians one of our ambulance carts and two horses to convey them to Belgrade.

Our ambulance staff was thus reduced to

two surgeons and three dressers, who were now left the only Englishmen in Sofia. After a week or so, finding that between deaths and recoveries our work was becoming light, we also began to look about for means of taking our departure.

Want of funds was the great hindrance, and had it not been for the occurrence of what we could only look upon as a merciful dispensation of Providence, we would probably have had to remain in Sofia until the conclusion of peace, as future events shewed we could not depend on any assistance from the Russians. A Turkish officer died in our hospital at this time, and on his body we found, mirabile dictu, twenty-eight Turkish liras, equal to about £25 sterling. Any money found on the dead was always handed over to the Turkish authorities, and by a pleasant fiction was supposed to reach the friends through the medium of the Government, but this was the only occasion on which we had found anything beyond the value of a few pence or shillings. Having placed our position before the surgeon who had been put in principal charge of the Turkish hospitals, we obtained

the money on loan, giving in return a promissory note, which we signed as representatives of the Red Crescent Society.

Another stroke of good fortune happened us. While searching among our hospital stores one day we came upon a very large case, which, on being opened, displayed to our astonished gaze, not the usual parcels of old linen and bandages, but a quantity of goods apparently intended for some general store. The case had evidently got mixed up with our stores on the railway, and contained several flimsy portmanteaus packed one within the other, a lot of ladies umbrellas (value at home about 1/113/4 each), a large assortment of cloth caps, a roll of patent leather, several packages of boot pegs, a waterproof coat, and greatest prize of all, 500 vile but much valued cigars. The coat I appropriated to aid in keeping out the cold, and the cigars we smoked ; but, without even going through the usual formality of advertising, that "unless claimed within three days will be sold to defray expenses," we commissioned our former dragoman to quietly dispose of the remainder of the miscellaneous stock to some of the Jews in the

town. They were real philanthropists whoever sent out that case, and we drank to their health and blessed them frequently.

We had still a considerable quantity of tinned meats, condensed milk, brandy, whisky, and other stores remaining, and these we determined to dispose of, after setting aside a portion for our future use. Having given notice to the three rival hotel-keepers, we held an amateur auction at our house, and soon disposed of our surplus stock at "an immense sacrifice."

The total result of our financing operations was that we acquired a sum of nearly  $\pounds 50$ sterling, with which we hoped by careful economy to be able to reach Austria.

We now applied to General Arnoldi, the commandant of the town, for the loan of two vans and horses to transport ourselves and baggage to Belgrade, never doubting but that our request would be granted. Great was our surprise and disappointment on getting answer that they had neither horses nor vans to spare, and that the most they would do was to give us a passport, and an order on the Bulgarian and Servian populations we would pass through to supply us with relays of oxen arabas to convey our baggage.

The prospect of a journey of 230 miles on foot, and without escort, through an unknown country and people, in the depth of winter, was anything but a cheering one; but we could not afford to buy horses, and nearly every horse and vehicle in the town was already pressed into the army service. Acting on the maxim that "beggars cannot be choosers," we accepted two oxen arabas, on which we piled our baggage and the stores we had selected, and on 1st February, 1878, with lightsome hearts we shook the dust of the dreary town of Sofia from off our feet, and set out into *terra incognita*.

#### CHAP. XII.

Travelling under reduced circumstances—Difficulties of our journey— Our dietary—Dirty sleeping companions—Arrival at Pirot—In quarantine—Eight days' misery—My culinary achievements—Bulgarian belles—A marriage procession—On the road again—Nisch —We hire horse-arabas—Servia and the delights of civilisation— Flirtation under difficulties—Semendria and the Danube—Belgrade —Buda-Pesth—Vienna—Our disreputable appearance—End of our career.

It was after mid-day when we started on our journey, and the day was as gloomy and disagreeable a one as we had experienced for some time. Snow began to fall heavily shortly after our departure, and continued without intermission the remainder of the day; and as the road lay across an uninteresting plain, the prospect was not an inspiriting one. We were, however, in high spirits at getting free from the gloom and restraint of Sofia, and we contrasted with much amusement the difference between our present condition and that in which we had set out from the town three and a-half months before. We then formed part of an imposing





RED CRESCENT AMBULANCE No. 5 ON THE ROAD HOME.

cavalcade, with flags gaily flying; but now, how changed the picture! five miserable-looking individuals struggling along in the snow, having occasionally to put their shoulders to the wheels to assist the poor oxen along the heavy road, and escorted only by two ugly Bulgarian arabagees.

It is not my intention to harass the reader with a detailed account of our toilsome and wearisome journey, or of the constant difficulties which beset us by the way. The road was heavy with snow, and in some parts lay through mountain passes, with villages at long intervals, many of them in ashes, having been destroyed in the fighting with the Servians a few weeks before. We usually travelled about twenty miles each day, and as our oxen could only progress at the average rate of about one and a-half miles per hour, and there were frequent delays from the arabas breaking down, this entailed our walking from fourteen to sixteen hours daily. Having no guide but an imperfect map by which to make out places on our route, we sometimes miscalculated the distance, and so it was occasionally midnight before we straggled

into the village where we had fixed to rest for the night. We had not attempted the mysteries of the Slav tongue, and consequently were without the means of communicating with the Bulgarian and Servian populations, except through the little Turkish we had at command, and the language, like everything else pertaining to the Turks, was out of favour at this period. In the wretched khans we had to lie down on the mud floors in our clothes night after night, usually having as sleeping companions a number of filthy Bulgarian arabagees, who are about the most pertinacious snorers it has ever been my misfortune to have to listen to. We lived chiefly on bread and tinned beef, but our luxuries consisted of porridge, which I made every morning from a box of fine oatmeal we had found among the stores, and a tinful of tea morning and night. We had only a very small stock of compressed tea, the remnant of some which one of our number had brought out with him, and we always carefully preserved the leaves of the first brew and boiled them over again.

It was near midnight when we reached our

first resting-place, the small village of Slivnitza, about twenty miles from Sofia, and we had almost made up our minds to camp out, when we were made aware by the barking of dogs that the village was near. The khan here was a very poor one, containing only one apartment, which we had to share with about a dozen arabagees, who were evidently quite unaccustomed to such good society.

In the morning, when our fresh oxen and arabas arrived, we found that the latter were mounted on sledges, which enabled us to progress much more easily, as our road now lay over a range of mountains on which the snow lay very deep. During the latter part of the previous day I had suffered much from rheumatism of the hip-joint, and I now found the pain so severe as to prevent my walking, consequently I had to lie all day among our baggage on one of the sledges. This was quite a pet day, the sun shining brightly in a clear sky, and the reflection of its rays from the snow was very trying to our eyes. Shortly after starting we began to ascend, and at mid-day had reached an elevation of 2,500 feet above sea-level; and

as the scenery among the mountains was very beautiful, we all thoroughly enjoyed this day's journey. In the afternoon we entered a very pretty pass, and commenced to descend until we reached a fine fertile-looking valley, where we put up for the night at a prettily situated village named Zaribrod. We found a better khan here, and got a small apartment to ourselves to sleep in.

The rest and a good sleep quite cured my rheumatism, and I was pleased to find that I could walk with little discomfort next day. The road lay through a beautiful valley, with quite a number of small villages lying at the foot of the hills, several of them, however, shewing the desolating effects of war in their ruins and blackened rafters. We got along very slowly, however, the sledge-arabas being now rather a hinderance, as we had descended to an elevation of about 1,200 feet, and there having been a partial thaw, the road was very heavy for the sledges.

In the evening we came to Pirot or Charkoi, the first town from Sofia, from which place it is distant about fifty miles. It is a place of some

importance, containing about 17,000 people, and is prettily situated on the banks of the river Nissava. It was strongly fortified, but had been captured by the Servians on 28th December, after two days' hard fighting, the Turkish garrison retreating to Sofia after blowing up the powder-magazine, and causing a great destruction of property.

The town was full of Servian soldiers, and as we were rather tired when we arrived, having travelled eight hours without a halt, it was rather aggravating to be denied admission at the principal khan, which was full of officers. For nearly two hours we wandered up and down the streets, followed by a curious and somewhat hostile crowd, but after being refused at two or three other khans, we at length got quarters in a very unprepossessing one.

We had delivered our passport and the order for the oxen-arabas to the cavass who had been sent from the konak to find us quarters, but in the morning we were surprised to see no sign of the arabas, and on going to the konak were informed, much to our chagrin, that we could not have any, as cattle-plague had broken out
at Nisch, and oxen were not allowed to come and go between the towns. On asking for horse-arabas, we were told they had none, but that some would probably arrive from Nisch in two or three days, which we could have.

Day after day passed, and still no arabas; and on going to the konak every morning to enquire, we were met with what seemed to be a perfect storm of Servian invective from the officer in charge, all that we could gather from a Turkish interpreter being ever the same story, that the arabas would be sent in a day or two. We tried to hire horses but failed, and we had to yield to the inevitable, and remain cooped up in this town for eight days, during which time our existence was a miserable one. It would not have been so bad, though the delay was tantalizing enough, had we been in decent quarters, but the apartment in which the five of us had to sleep, cook, and eat, measured only nine feet square, and was situated over a yard which was such a sea of filth of all kinds that it required great caution to pick our way across it. The smell ascending into our room from this yard was simply sickening, and I cannot yet comprehend

how we escaped being laid down by fever. The apartment was a very dirty one, the walls once whitewashed being now about as black as the earthen floor, the compartments of the window frame were all filled up with paper, and there was not even one article of furniture. During the day we had a charcoal mangal on which we did our cooking, but we always put it outside at night, and the free draught through the window, though no doubt rendering the atmosphere more wholesome, made us feel very chilly.

Being heartily tired of our tinned beef, we took the opportunity while here of living on fresh provisions, and used to go out marketing, followed by an amused and sarcastic crowd of Bulgarians. It was, indeed, some amusement to ourselves doing the bargaining, and seeing one another laden with maize loaves, pieces of mutton, strings of onions, and other edibles. I had rare opportunities of developing my culinary powers here, and some of my efforts, such as the making of Irish stew, or rice soup, in a tin pail over our charcoal brazier, were crowned with great success, the only drawback being

that I burned a large hole in my trousers, which did not add to the respectability of my appearance.

The houses and shops in the town still displayed over their doors little flags with the Servian colours, which they had hoisted to welcome the conquerors, and there were the remains of three or four rude triumphal arches in the streets. The Bulgarians in this district seemed to be of a somewhat superior class to those about Sofia; the women, in particular, were not quite so ugly, and made more attempt at display in their dress. On market-days they wore what seemed long plaits of false hair hanging down nearly to their heels, but formed of twine plaited together. They also went in largely for coarse artificial flowers, and many wore belts round their waists with large alloyed silver buckles of curious manufacture. There were several workers in silver in the town, and some filigree work done by them was rather pretty.

One day, when out marketing, we saw a marriage procession going to bring the bride home. The groom and groomsman rode in front, followed by a man beating a drum, and another



A BULGARIAN BELLE.



playing on an instrument closely allied to the Highland bagpipe. Behind these came three oxen-arabas, filled with men and women, all of whom carried over their shoulders presents for the bride, consisting of socks, pieces of linen, and other articles of attire. It is said that the Bulgarians only get washed twice in their lives —the first bath taking place at birth, the other when getting married; and from their appearance and habits I can credit the truth of the statement.

On the morning of the ninth day we were delighted to find two buffalo-arabas awaiting us, but whether these animals were exempt from the disease, or whether the quarantine was no longer in force, we did not discover. We were overjoyed to get on the road again, and after two days' journey along the course of the river Nissava, we arrived on the afternoon of the third day at the town of Nisch, nearly one hundred miles from Sofia.

Nisch is a town of considerable importance in a military point of view, being near the Servian frontier, and was very strongly fortified, but it had capitulated to the Servians on 11th January, after a siege of three weeks' duration. The town is about half the size of Sofia, but the fortifications give to it a more important look. There seemed to be a considerable trade carried on in furs.

We had now been a fortnight on the road, and were already heartily tired of our journey. It caused us some dismay to think that if the same difficulties beset us we might be three weeks yet in reaching Belgrade, so we made up our minds to hire horse-arabas if they could be got in the town. Enlisting the services of the proprietor of the café where we put up, we were fortunate enough after a day's search to find a man who contracted to convey us in two two-horse arabas to Belgrade for the sum of ten pounds.

The remainder of our journey was thus comparatively luxurious, though it occupied the most of five days. The roads in the vicinity of Nisch were in a frightful condition, from the recent military operations; in fact, in some places the road had been entirely obliterated, and our arabas nearly came to grief on several occasions. A few miles from Nisch we crossed

the Servian frontier, and found the change to be one from semi-barbarism to semi-civilisation. The villages improved much in appearance, and we now met with fairly good inns, and had actually comfortable beds to sleep in. We spent the first night at Alexinatz, where we found a good inn, and had a capital supper and breakfast, which I think we enjoyed better than any meals we ever had before or since. We had forgotten, however, that now we were enjoying the delights of civilisation we would have to pay for them, and were rather dismayed when we found in the morning that our bill amounted to close on a couple of pounds, rather a startling contrast to our bills at the Bulgarian khans, which rarely exceeded two or three shillings for the whole party, including the oxen.

We passed through some beautiful mountain scenery, with extensive forests, and from what we saw of Servia I think it must be a delightful country in the summer. The Servians are a finer looking people than the Bulgarians, and we found them much pleasanter both to look on

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and to deal with. We did not think highly, however, of such specimens of the army as we saw; the greater proportion of the troops were evidently very raw and badly equipped recruits, and they never would have gained the success they did had the Turkish troops not been thoroughly demoralised by the reverses elsewhere.

Language has been defined as "the medium for concealing our thoughts," but our experience had led us to look upon it as being not at all a necessity for the revealing of our thoughts, and I was able to carry on a long and pleasant flirtation with a Servian maiden, the daughter of the landlord of one of the inns we put up at, the sole medium of conversation employed being the word "dobra" (good), and its negative "ne dobra."

Our path lay a considerable part of the way along the river Morava, which we crossed twice, and on the fourth day we reached the Danube, at the town of Semendria. We were considerably disappointed with the first view of this famed river, its waters being more muddy than blue, and the scenery, especially on the

Hungarian side, being very tame. In this town we renewed acquaintance with our old friends the unfortunate Turkish soldiers, of whom a large number were confined here as prisoners of war.

The road by which we travelled the following day lay close to the Danube, and in the evening we reached Belgrade, situated at the junction of that river with the Save. Here we were kindly received by Mr. Whyte, the first British Consul we had seen since leaving Philippopolis, and from him heard the first news we had received for two months. Belgrade is not at all a lively city, and we did not linger here, Mr. Whyte advising us to see the Turkish Consul at Buda-Pesth, and try to ascertain through him if our services would be required at Constantinople.

The following morning we took steamer down the Danube to Baziasch, from whence we went by train to Pesth. The Turkish Consul there advised us to go on to Vienna and see the Ambassador of the Porte, who would be able to settle our affairs better.

Our travel-stained and altogether disreputable appearance was now beginning to attract

considerable attention, and we were much humbled on reaching Vienna by being refused admission into the first hotel we applied at. This was not to be wondered at, seeing that I for one was walking on my stocking soles, my only pair of boots being held together by the laces; and I was so tanned by exposure to the weather, that on hunting out some former University companions who were studying here, they had some difficulty in recognising me. The first kind offices of these, my friends, were to hurry me off to a public bath and then to a hair-dresser; and as they insisted on my living with them, I am afraid these actions were not entirely of an unselfish character, being probably actuated by the fear that I might have brought some relics of Bulgaria with me.

The Turkish Ambassador communicated by telegraph with the Red Crescent Society, and learned from them that the war being now virtually over, our services would no longer be required. For the settlement of financial matters, which required immediate attention, as our slender store of money was just about an end, we were referred to the Ottoman Bank, and we also

received through the same agency letters of thanks for our services from the Society, and the pleasing announcement that in recognition thereof H.I.M. the Sultan had graciously conferred on each of us the Imperial Order of the Medjidie.

And here the career of Red Crescent Ambulance No. 5 came to an end, its remaining members taking leave of one another, and setting out for home by different routes.

# CHAP. XIII.

## CONCLUSION.

In the preceding narrative it has been my endeavour to present to the reader a phase of war but seldom brought before us-one portraying more its miseries than its glories. No doubt the Russo-Turkish war was one distinguished by its cruelties and horrors; but, with whatever refinements war may be prosecuted, it must always be full of barbarity. It is not only the combatants who suffer; and in this war especially, the wretched populace-Mussulman and Christian alike-endured, perhaps, more misery than did the armies in the field. If there is one thing that we, as a nation, may congratulate ourselves upon, it is that our insular position in great measure secures our land from invasion and its accompanying horrors.

The opinions I have formed of the people among whom these adventures happened I

would put forward with considerable diffidence, though I found them to coincide in great part with those of most Englishmen that we met. Our work left but little time, and our defective knowledge of the language gave but little opportunity, to study closely the condition and character of those by whom we were surrounded. Nor was the time a favourable one for such a study, for we found the country and its inhabitants not in their normal condition, but disturbed and changed in every way by war and intestinal feud. It has been the misfortune of Turkey that her condition has generally been brought prominently before the other nations of Europe only under such circumstances, and newspaper correspondents and readers are little prone to make much allowance for such disturbing influences. As well might the general prosperity and contentment of the people of Great Britain be judged of, by other nations, from the unhappy state of matters existing in Ireland or amongst our Highland crofters.

There is no European State of which we have even yet less accurate knowledge than of Turkey. Comparatively few travellers visit the

interior, and Constantinople is by no means representative of the country.

In attempting to form any just estimate of Turkish character it is necessary to draw a great distinction between the people and their rulers. There is a feeling in this country that the Turk is the incarnation of all evil-that he is cruel, savage, licentious, and fanatical. Such was not our experience of him. The Turkish soldier or peasant, as we met him in the interior, impressed us much more favourably than did the other races with whom we came in contact. We found him gentle and hospitable, greatly superior in truthfulness, honesty, and sobriety to either the Greek or the Bulgarian, with whom he contrasted favourably in his patience under suffering, and in gratitude for kindness shewn. The great defects of his character are indolence and apathy, which are, no doubt, the results of his fatalism, and do much to make him lag behind in the struggle for existence. He suffers as greatly as do the Christian subjects of the Porte from the effects of bad government, and in addition has to bear the burden of the compulsory military service,

with but scant recompense for the sufferings and hardships he has to endure.

I make no attempt to defend the corrupt government of Turkey. Still, I am of opinion that too little account has been taken of the immense difficulties of ruling this country, where there exist so many distinct and more or less hostile races, whose national jealousies are in many cases increased by religious animosities. The antipathy of the Greeks to the Slavs is as great as that of the subject races to the Turks. The dispute between their churches has caused the Bulgarian and the Greek to hate one another, while the Roman Catholic Slavs prefer the Turks to their fellow-countrymen of the Greek Church. It is as if we had half-a-dozen Irelands to govern instead of one, a task which, I am afraid, would puzzle all parties in the State.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, the progress made by Turkey since the early part of this century has been very remarkable, and, as was said by Lord Palmerston in 1856, "in the last thirty years Turkey has made greater progress than any nation in Europe." During the 202

reigns of Sultans Mahmoud and Medjid the Government was greatly improved, and many reforms were initiated, having for their object the improvement of the condition of the subject races. Unfortunately Sultan Medjid was succeeded by one of the most corrupt and incompetent rulers Turkey has ever suffered under. During the reign of Abdul Aziz venality became again rampant, the country made no progress, but became more and more involved in the financial difficulties she had entered on during the latter part of Medjid's reign; and those reforms, which had been begun, were either ignored or very imperfectly carried out. Sultan Hamed has proved himself more capable, but has not yet had much opportunity of improving his Government or country, the intrigues of Russia ending in the Bulgarian rising, and the disastrous war having put a stop to projected reforms, while the country has not yet recovered from the crippled condition she was reduced to by the war and its results.

"Venality, apathy, and procrastination are the causes of the short-comings of Turkey;"\*

<sup>\*</sup> Colonel Baker .-. " Turkey in Europe."

but the evils produced by these have not weighed on the Christian races alone. Backshish is the evil genius of Turkey, and where justice can be bought we cannot expect either security or order, and the weak will ever be at the mercy of the strong. The oppression which weighs so heavily on the Christian races of Turkey is not the outcome of fanaticism, but simply of incompetent and corrupt rule. Our natural bias towards the Christian races is apt to give rise to the feeling that the oppression we hear of them suffering must have its origin in, and be actuated by, religious antipathy and fanaticism. It is my opinion that little of it is so caused, but that it is the outcome of the rotten state of the Government, and that it weighs alike on the lower classes, be they Mussulman or Christian. The modern Turk is too apathetic to be fanatical, except in the presence of danger; and indeed of late years his religious tolerance has been remarkable. Let us see what two of our representatives long resident in Turkey have to say on this subject.

Writing in 1860, Sir Henry Bulwer, our Ambassador to the Porte, says : "Great changes

for the better have of late years taken place in this country. If we compare Turkey as she is with what she was twenty-five or thirty years ago, the change is marvellous. We are not to consider all the oppression which takes place in the provinces as oppression against the Christians, but often as oppression against the lower classes of the population, both Mussulman and Christian. The former, indeed, when of the inferior class, suffer perhaps even more than the Christians from the effects of the bad government, for the latter are usually in some degree protected by the foreign authorities." Consul Stewart, writing from Epirus in 1867, says: "The principle of religious liberty is here scrupulously respected. All the Christians in Epirus, with the exception of a few foreigners, belong to the Greek Church. The places of worship are numerous, the services are frequent, and some of their ceremonies and processions are attended with much public display, but they are never interfered with in their religious exercises. Complaints of disrespect or contempt towards their faith are rarely if ever heard; and during a residence of nearly six years in the country,

only two or three instances have come to my knowledge of indignity offered to Christianity."

These statements were as applicable to Bulgaria as to other parts of the Turkish empire. The condition of the Bulgarians in the years immediately preceding the rising of 1876, despite the many injustices they suffered, was by no means such as to cause a universal desire for the overthrow of their rulers. They had made remarkable progress during the previous twenty years in education and in temporal prosperity. The management of their educational and religious affairs was left entirely in their own hands; newspapers, printed in their own vernacular, circulated among them; and bibles and books in their own language were in the hands of their children. To which of the subject races of Russia could the same description be applied? The conduct of the Porte, during the dispute between the Greek and Bulgarian churches, was such as to merit the thanks of the Bulgarian nation. In 1767 Greek intrigue succeeded in getting the Bulgarian church placed under the jurisdiction of the Greek patriarch; the native bishops and

clergy were dismissed, and Greeks put in their places; whilst the Bulgarian language and literature were forbidden to be used in the schools. In 1845 several wealthy Bulgarians in the Philippopolis district began an agitation against the tyranny of the Greek church, and introduced bibles and books printed in the Bulgarian language into the churches and schools.\* The Greek patriarch and the Phanar brought every influence to bear on the Porte, in the hope of having this movement crushed; but, eventually, the Bulgarians obtained authority to open schools distinct from those of the Greeks, the first one being established in Philippopolis in 1850. Prior to this, reading and writing were rare accomplishments among the Bulgarians; but the spread of education in a few years was wonderful, there being, in the Sandjak of Philippopolis alone, in 1870, no fewer than 337 schools, with 16,500 pupils. In 1860 the Bulgarians of Philippopolis, again taking the lead, threw off their allegiance to the Greek patriarch, appropriated the ecclesiastical properties, and employed a portion of the funds

<sup>\*</sup> Colonel Baker .-. " Turkey in Europe."

for educational purposes. Much credit is due to the Porte for withstanding the influences which were brought to bear against the sanctioning of these changes. Eventually, in 1870, the Bulgarian church was again rendered independent, a firman being issued by the Porte authorising the establishment of a national Bulgarian church. The feeling of the Bulgarians in this matter is expressed in the following extract from a General Letter, issued by the Bulgarian Synod at the time :--- "And so, after many evils, after so much unjust suffering, after ten years of laborious effort, we see to-day the desire of our fathers, the toils and patience of the nation and of us all, rewarded and crowned under the righteous judgment and impartiality of the Imperial Government, . . . . the plain proof of the goodwill and love which the Imperial Government cherishes towards the Bulgarians."

We did not come much in contact with the wealthier and better educated classes of the Bulgarians, but the peasantry certainly did not impress us as at all a loveable race, being dirty in their persons and habits, dishonest, untruthful,

and ungrateful. I can fully endorse the estimate of them given by Archibald Forbes in the Nineteenth Century for November, 1877: " My experience of the Bulgarians, indeed, is that they have fewer of the attributes calculated to kindle sympathetic regard and beget genial interest than any other race of whose character I have had opportunities of judging. It tells, doubtless, in favour of the Bulgarian that he is in name a Christian, although his 'Evidences of Christianity,' so far as I have cognizance of them, consist chiefly in his piously crossing himself in starting to drive a vehicle for the hire of which he has charged double a liberally reasonable sum, after having profusely invoked the name of the Saviour to corroborate his asseverations that the price he asks is ruinously low. He cannot be denied a certain candour, which sometimes has a cynical flavour in it, as when he coolly tells a Russian, who, in the character of his 'deliverer,' is remonstrating against his withholding of supplies, or his extortionate charges for them, that 'the Turk was good enough for him,' and that 'he did not want deliverance.""

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They have certainly the advantage over the Turk in industry and perseverance, and they also possess the good characteristics of a strong national spirit, and a great desire for education. No doubt many of their evil qualities may have arisen from the oppression they have been subjected to for centuries; oppression which, probably, would be much more grievous in remote than in modern times. Yet such are their natural advantages that, in spite of all the oppression, they have prospered and grown rich.

Colonel James Baker, who travelled through the whole of Bulgaria in 1874, says :—" I never saw a country which looked less like the seat of rebellion. The people were prosperous, peaceful, and contented. . . . The idea of rebellion seems perfectly understood, and is cast aside as simply ridiculous, and merely the creation of intrigue from without. . . . I had not the slightest prejudice for or against either Bulgarian or Turk, and I ask my reader whether I had been travelling amongst a people ground down by oppression and cruelty until they were about to be goaded into madness and rebellion. To say so is a wicked libel."

The prosperity which they found among the Bulgarians was the cause of much astonishment to the Russian soldiers. A correspondent of the *Daily News* with the Russians, writing to that journal, stated, "That many of the officers had assured him that they had laboured under a profound misconception as to the state of the Bulgarian Christians. They live in the most perfect comfort; the Russian peasant cannot compare with them in comfort, competence, or prosperity. Personally, I may add, that I should be glad if the English peasantry were at all near them in those attributes."

To any one who has studied the subject, there cannot be the slightest doubt that the Bulgarian rising of 1876 did not originate with the Bulgarian people, but that it was brought about through the intrigues of Russia. Mr. Walter Baring, in his report on this subject, stated that there could not be the slightest doubt that the Russian Consul at Philippopolis had a leading share in creating the trouble. Promises of Russian aid in men and money were held out, and secret agents went about endeavouring to persuade the whole population

to join in the rising. A detailed scheme was drawn out by the leading conspirators, providing, amongst other things, for the burning of Philippopolis and Adrianople, the destruction of the railways and rolling stock, and the pillaging and burning of a large number of villages, the Mussulman inhabitants of which were to be massacred.

The people, however, did not respond to the extent which was expected by the instigators of the rebellion, and its premature outbreak, consequent on the disclosure of the plot to the Turkish authorities by one of the conspirators, insured its failure. We all know the lamentable events which followed. There being scarcely any regular military force in that part of the country, the authorities met the revolt by arming the adult Mussulman population, and giving them orders to shoot, burn, and destroy-orders which were only too well carried out by the rabble. The one foul blot on the Turkish Government in its relations to the Bulgarians is that, under its authority, such terrible atrocities were committed; and it is only a slight palliation of the crime to say that it was perpetrated

under panic, and mainly by undisciplined hordes, who were exasperated by the idea that like barbarities had been intended for themselves.

The Turks have had a severe lesson by which we may hope they will profit, but what may be the future of their country it is difficult to predict. I have no sympathy with the pessimism which argues of them as "unspeakable," nor with the bag and baggage policy which would drive them out of Europe. Such a policy could only be carried out by their extermination, for the Turks will not readily relinquish their hold on Europe. With all her faults, I would prefer Turkey to the grinding despotism of Russia. She has improved in many respects during this century; and if time and facilities be but allowed, I believe she will yet make much greater progress. It may be well to bear in mind that England is also a great Mahommedan power, and that the friendship of Turkey may yet prove of some value to her. It has been instructive to note the revulsion of feeling which occurred during the recent Anglo-Russian crisis, when an alliance with Turkey was not only

talked of, but anxiously hoped for, by many who but recently would have nothing to do with her.

I cannot imagine that England could ever look with equanimity on the prospect of Constantinople in the possession of Russia. When that day comes I am afraid we may say "goodbye" to our supremacy on the seas, and probably in other regions also.

Is it too much to hope that England may yet resume her old position as the friend of Turkey, and in virtue of her benevolent friendship initiate and supervise the introduction of those reforms which are so much required for the development of the country and the benefit of its subject races?

FINIS.

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