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Publication/Creation

London : E. Arnold, 1903.

Persistent URL

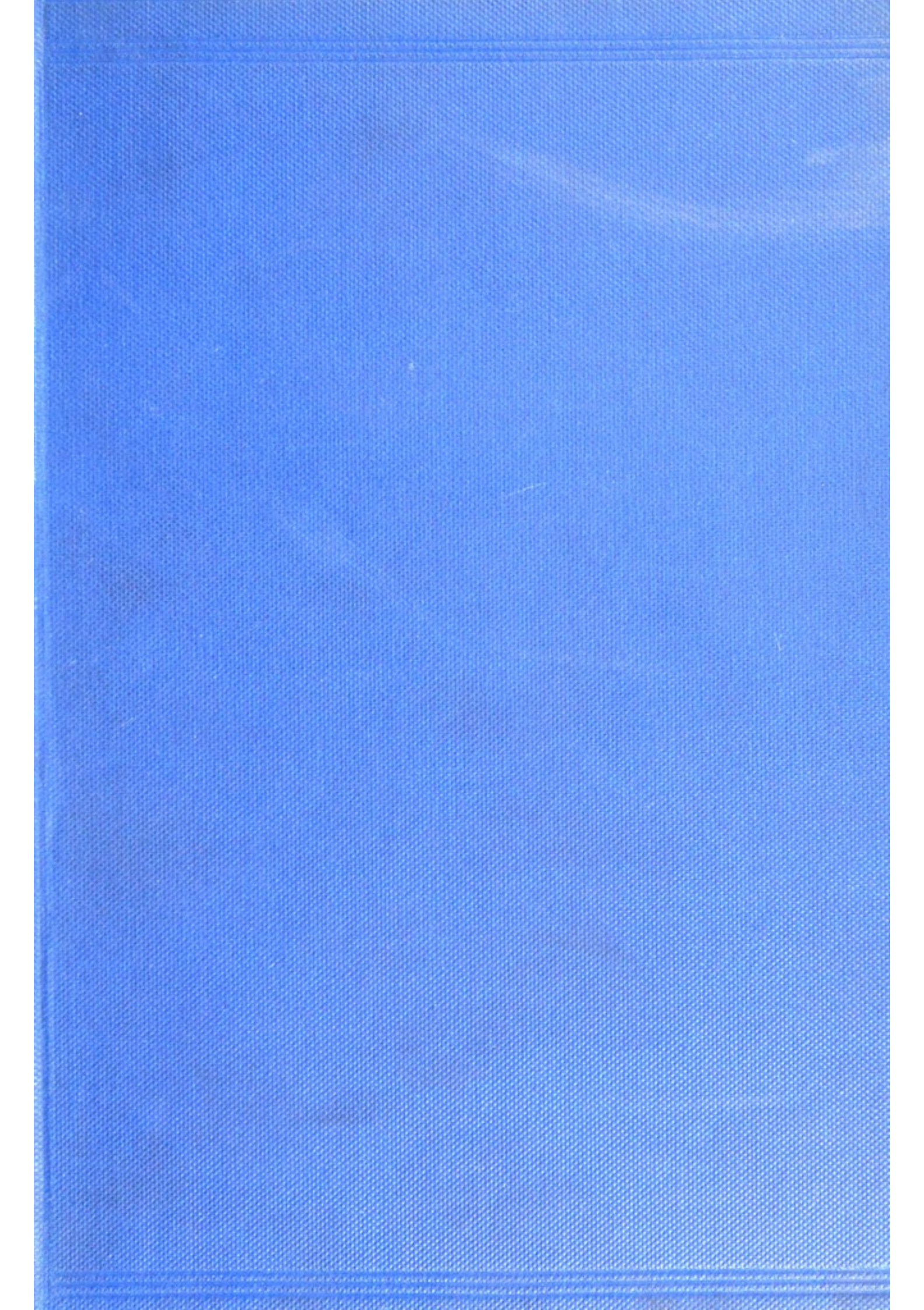
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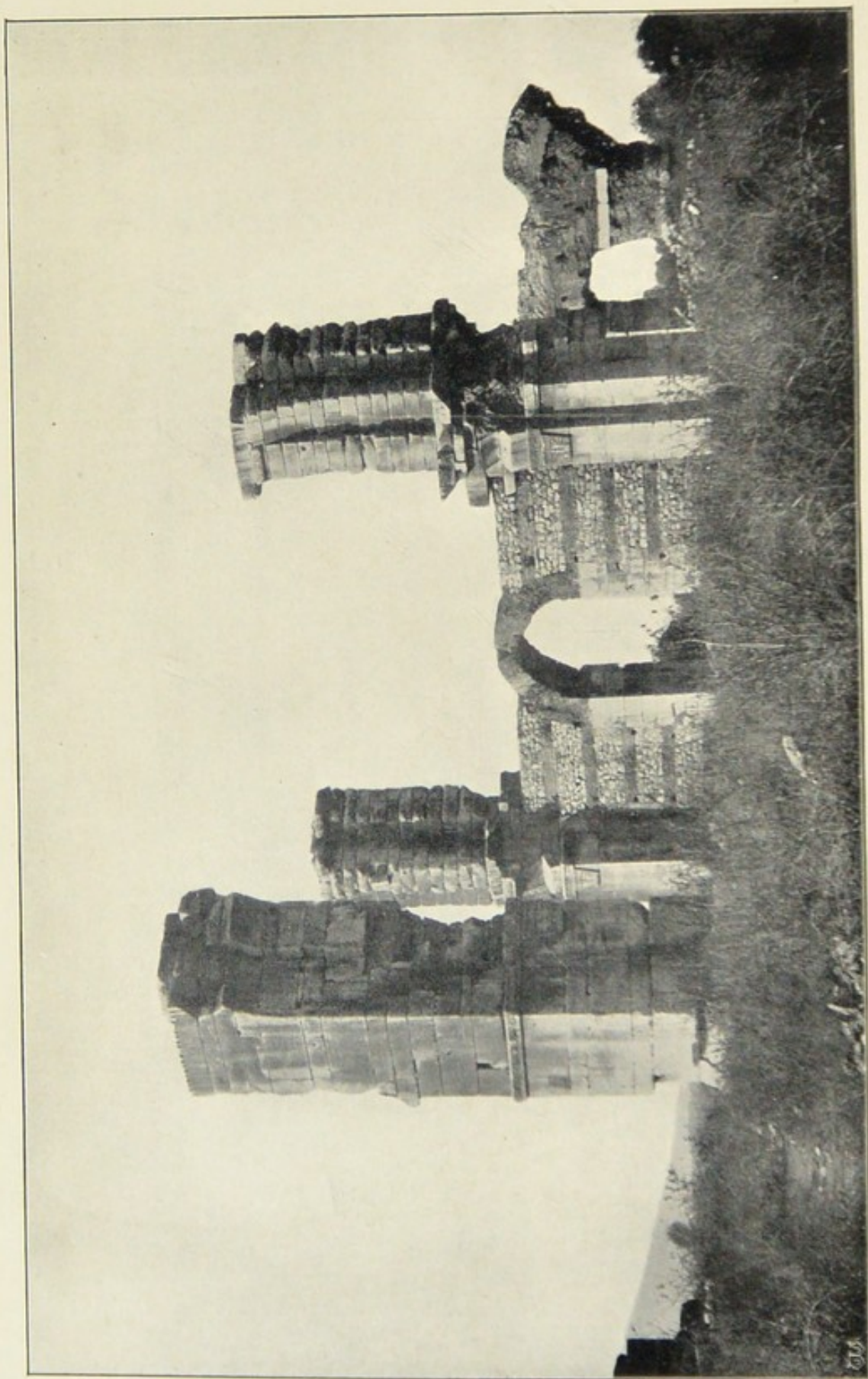
THE TALE OF
A TOUR IN MACEDONIA



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THE PALACE OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

THE TALE OF A TOUR IN MACEDONIA

BY
George Frederick
G. F. ABBOTT

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON
EDWARD ARNOLD

Publisher to H.M. India Office

1903

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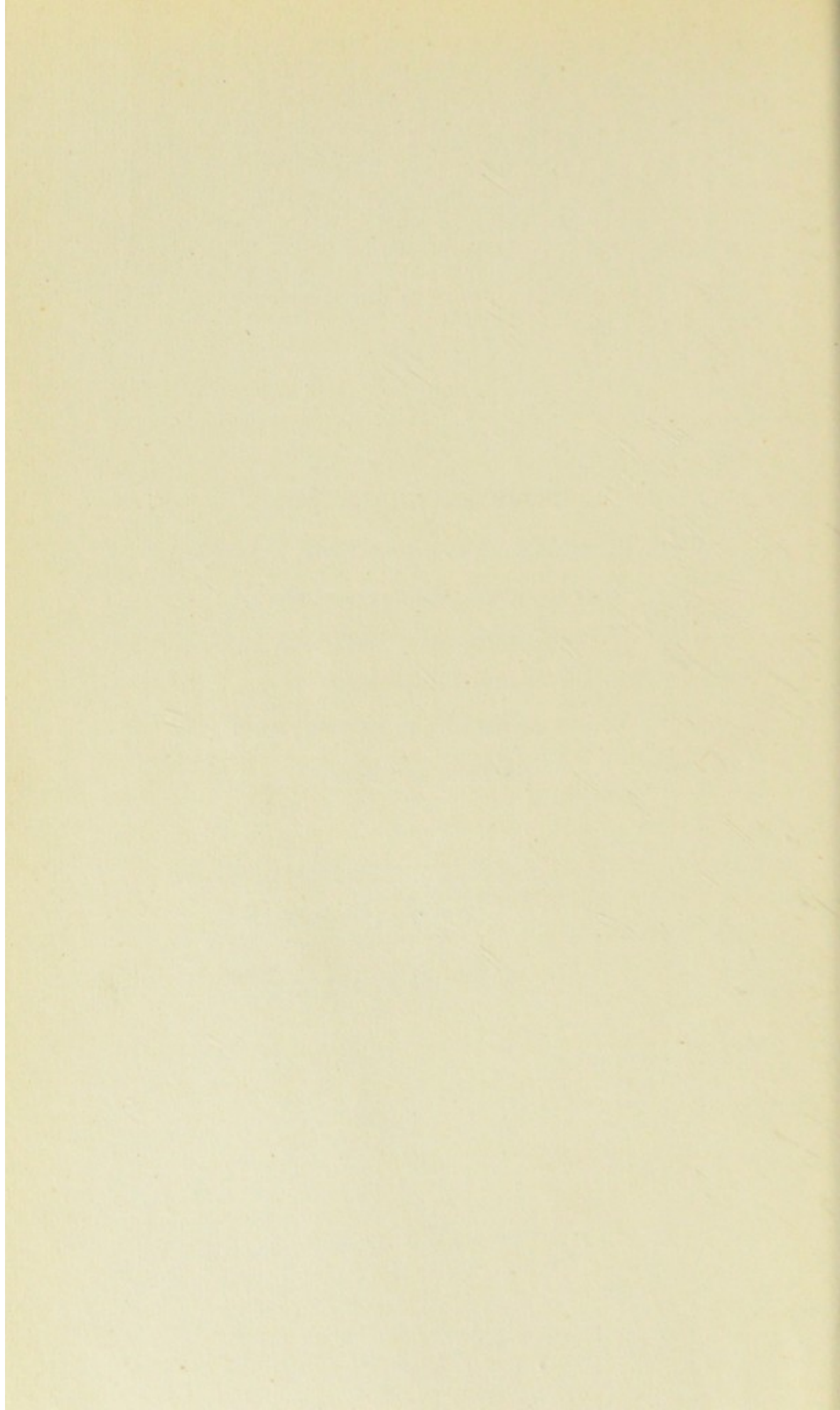
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TO
THEIR EXCELLENCIES
THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS
WHO SO GENEROUSLY CONTRIBUTED TO
THE ENJOYMENT OF HIS TOUR
THIS HUMBLE RECORD OF IT
IS GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED
BY THE AUTHOR

*"Doubtless the pleasure is as great
Of being cheated as to cheat."*

—HUDIBRAS, Part II., Canto iii.



PREFATORY NOTE

THE Tour, the tale of which is told in the following pages, represents part of an expedition to Macedonia carried out by the author, under the auspices of the University of Cambridge, with a view to studying the folk-lore of that country. The results of his researches are embodied in a special work which will shortly be published by the University Press. The present volume contains some of the explorer's adventures—if this be not too ambitious a description of his mild experiences—and observations on men, women, and Government officials. His aim has been merely to describe things as they presented themselves to his own eyes, without favour and without fear. In endeavouring to be fair to all he has probably succeeded in offending all. But “even Zeus himself, when he rains, fails to please every one.”

The author's best thanks are due to the editor and proprietors of *The Guardian* for their courteous permission to reproduce those parts of his narrative which have already appeared in their periodical.

EMMANUEL COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

January 21, 1903



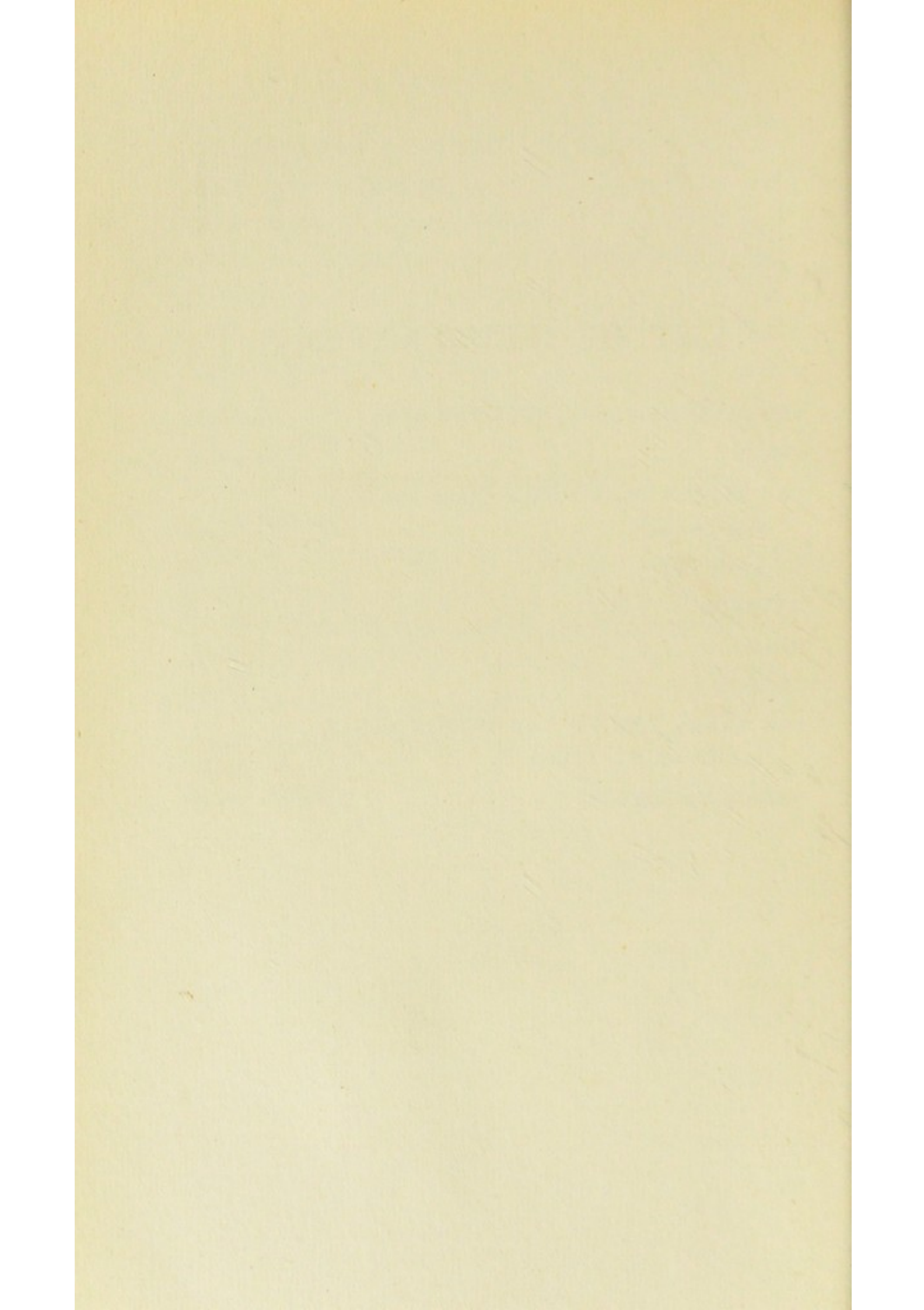
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THE TALE OF A TOUR IN MACEDONIA

CHAPTER I

ALONG THE BANKS OF THE VARDAR

August 27, 1900. — It was early morning when we crossed the Servian frontier. Soon after, the train drew up at Zebevtche, the first station in Turkish territory. The halt, though brief, was quite long enough to give one a foretaste of the joys attending on Turkish travel. Everything from a portmanteau to an umbrella, and from a hat-box to a French novel, had to be opened and carefully examined beneath the low roof of the barn-like building which did duty as a custom-house. Here the meek and mild French missionary's bag was rummaged for contraband arms. A little lower down an enterprising Austrian commercial traveller was forced to unfold his samples, in order to show that there was no dynamite concealed within them. Farther off, a middle-aged Swiss governess in smoked glasses was making frantic, though alas! fruitless efforts to explain to the Turkish official that a kodak was not an infernal machine, nor a German grammar a lampoon on the Sultan.

Having taken a bird's-eye view of the scene, I turned my attention to my own belongings. The first

portmanteau had been searched and found guiltless of treasonable matter, and now the *Youmbrouk Mudir*, or, as he loved to call himself, *Chef de la Douane*, was busy ransacking the second. He was just in the act of taking out and shaking a Norfolk jacket and some other articles of masculine apparel, which need not be more fully described, when he gave a start.

"I thought as much," he grunted in an ominous tone, but in excellent English, as he pulled out some newspapers and books which lay at the bottom of the box. "These things will have to be kept here, sir," he concluded, sternly.

In vain did I exhaust all my eloquence in an endeavour to convince him that the newspapers contained nothing fatal to the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, and that the books treated of nothing more inflammatory than love-making, with possibly a suicide thrown in here and there for effect. The *Chef de la Douane* refused to be convinced. Fortunately, at that critical moment, a miniature edition of Dante met the official's eye. He paused and patted the volume affectionately on the back, casting the while a look brimming with meaning at its owner. I suddenly realised that I was in the East, and in a would-be casual sort of way remarked that he could keep the book, if he liked. The threatening clouds rolled off the *Chef's* face in an instant, and his countenance was overspread with the genial sunshine of desire gratified.

"All right," he said, visibly unbending; "but," he added in an undertone, "you had better put the book in your pocket for the present, sir, and give it to me later on. I will come and see you off, sir."

While whispering this message of peace, the *Chef de la Douane* pretended to be investigating the re-

mainder of my luggage. Needless to say, the investigation henceforth was a mere matter of form. Dante had done duty as *bakshish*.

In accordance with our agreement the *Chef* met me at the door of my carriage, and proved that he was not devoid of a kind of grim humour by politely begging me to inscribe my name on the fly-leaf of the *Divina Commedia*, by way of a souvenir. I complied with his request and then handed the volume to him. He seemed to be exceedingly pleased, and promised faithfully that no harm would come to the batch of books and papers seized previous to our compact. He said that it was not possible for him to restore them to me on the spot, owing to the presence of his colleagues, but that he would forward them safely to Salonica, where they would be returned to me. I grieve to say that I never saw them again.

The *Chef* had from the first impressed me as rather a strange specimen of a Turk. His yellow flaxen beard and quick blue eyes had something foreign in them. Furthermore the fluency with which he spoke both French and English, and his appreciation of Italian poetry, were certainly not those of the typical Osmanli. So before parting I asked him what nation had the privilege of calling him her own.

"Sir," he replied with some emphasis, "I am a Mohammedan. My name is Mustafa Effendi."

Afterwards I found that, though his name was Mustafa, and though he was a Mohammedan, both name and religion were of comparatively recent growth, and that he really was a Pole by birth—one of those adventurers from the West who seek in Islam a way to a livelihood.

However, though obviously a smart man, Mustafa

Effendi was not well-versed in the Turkish custom-house regulations, or he would have known that Dante, owing to some uncomplimentary allusions to Mohammed, is a forbidden article of importation into the Prophet's dominions; a distinction which he shares with electric bells, rifles, tobacco, dynamite, Dr. Morrison's pills, type-writers, and other commodities of a revolutionary character, all of which, when detected, can be immediately confiscated, or, what is practically the same thing, appropriated by the custom-house officials. So, highly as I prized my *Divina Commedia*, I was not a loser by the transaction.

The journey from Zebevtche to Salonica is none of the most cheering. The speed of the train, such as it is, seems to decrease in direct ratio to the kilomètres covered, as though the rusty old engine were getting gradually tired and wanted a rest. Yet there is little apparent cause for fatigue. The train, like a lazy Turkish pony, stops instinctively, as it were, at every wretched shed dignified by the name of station, "taking each poor halting-place for the deeply longed-for goal." These wayside nuisances generally lie at an immense distance from the villages whose names they bear, and to the uninitiated traveller seem to have no reason for existing, unless it be to harrow his own feelings.

The refreshment room affords nothing more refreshing than a cup of thick sediments of barley, roasted and ground so as to look like a bad imitation of coffee, accompanied by a dirty glass of water. If the unsophisticated pilgrim, misled by false analogy, demands "drink," the above semi-liquids will be offered to him, and the *cafedji* will expatiate at great length on the "lightness" of the beverage and

its marvellous hygienic properties, not forgetting to charge an extra fee for the lecture. On the open space outside the café—there is no platform—some officials in uniforms of pre-Mosaic pattern stroll up and down, casting looks of mild astonishment at the train, as though it were the last thing in the world they expected to see there, or inserting their heads at the windows to ascertain what is going on within the compartments. A troop of ragged *hamals* lounge against the front wall of the building, or lie listlessly upon the bare ground, smoking and perspiring in the sun. These porters are mostly Ghegs, that is, North Albanians; tall bony savages with skulls clean shaven, but for a single lock of hair which grows on the crown of the head and gives them the appearance of a tribe of red Indians despoiled of their plumage. A little way from the station a pair of *zap-tiehs* stand at attention until the train is fairly off; then they salute and climb back to their thatched hut on a neighbouring height, to resume their watch, or maybe their slumbers. These men-at-arms are intended to protect the traffic from the attacks of brigands. It is to be presumed that they succeed, for I never heard of a train being held up in Turkey.

As the train crawls wearily on, it allows the passenger ample time to study the scenery, and, if he has been clever enough to rescue his camera from confiscation, he can even take snapshot views from the windows. A series of such views might form sometimes a picturesque, often an interesting, but hardly ever an exhilarating collection. The railway to within a few kilomètres of Salonica runs parallel to the Vardar, a slow and muddy river—"too lazy to keep itself clean"—which, as it proceeds towards its

predestined end, gradually gains in breadth and volume, though not in beauty. Homer must have been nodding indeed, when he pronounced the Vardar (anciently Axios) "the fairest of streams." Its banks are in some parts ornamented with sumptive-looking willows and *Agnus castus*; but as a general rule they exhibit a bare winding outline, unshaded by tree and unenlivened by the presence of man or beast. At this time of year most of its tributaries are dry, their waters having been sucked up by the scorching rays of the summer sun, and the river itself has shrunk into a mere brown thread, sluggishly meandering down the middle of its normal channel:—

"How changed from where it ran
Through lands where not a leaf was dumb;
But all the lavish hills would hum
The murmur of a happy Pan!"

One would fain hope, for the old bard's sake, that the Vardar in ancient times really ran amidst such scenes as those imagined by the modern poet; but, if it did, its taste has not improved with age.

Hills denuded of vegetation, and stern forbidding mountains, sparsely studded with dwarf oaks and shrubs, alternate with flat, ill-cultivated fields of barley, maize, flax, or cotton, and a few orchards gleam here and there. These last are irrigated by means of *tcharks*, antediluvian water-wheels which, as the water recedes, are left suspended from the thirsty banks, like the skeletons of some strange aquatic birds, bleaching in the sun. A flock of famished sheep is seen at rare intervals grazing sorrowfully in a parched meadow, and a few goats are perchance browsing on the dusty bushes

among the hills ; some head of cattle ruminates under the scant shade of a tree, while a forlorn mule or donkey may be seen roaming in solitary misery in the neighbourhood of a tumble-down cottage. These are the only signs of life for mile after mile.

But no ! If you look out towards the narrow white bridle-path which stretches at the foot of yonder cliffs across the river, you will see a shabbily-dressed peasant riding sideways on a decrepit donkey, while his wife trudges wearily behind barefooted, or rather wearing her shoes on her hands. "How shocking !" will perhaps exclaim the chivalrous tourist from the West. But, if he has an opportunity of questioning the lady, he will find that she at any rate sees nothing shocking in her condition. If she vouchsafes any answer at all, she will tell him that it is only in accordance with the eternal fitness of things that she should walk while her lord and master is riding. As for her bare feet and eccentrically-gloved hands, she is pretty certain to explain—as one of them actually explained to the writer : "Feet don't wear off, sir : shoes do !" What a promising field to the apostle of feminine emancipation does Macedonia offer !

There are only two towns of real importance on the line. The first is particularly interesting to the traveller, as it is the one place between Servia and the Ægean Sea where he can break his fast, without being at the same time obliged to break all the rules of decency. Here—provided he has duly notified his desire before crossing the frontier—he will find a luncheon waiting for him, ay, and a luncheon-table, too, supplied with all modern luxuries in the way of plates, forks, and spoons. This is a city variously called Uskub by the Turks, Skupi by the Slavs, and

Skopia by the Greeks. The latter name means a lookout place, or a mountain-peak, and most aptly describes the position of the town, perched as it is upon a lofty eminence commanding a wide view of the surrounding plain.

Uskub, economically as well as strategically, is the key to the vilayet of Kossovo, and, so far as the racial characteristics of its inhabitants are concerned, it presents in miniature a complete picture of the whole province. The population of the town consists mainly of Servians, Albanians, and Bulgarians, with a small but influential Greek minority, representing the commercial and industrial, as opposed to the agricultural interests. The country around is for the most part tilled by Slavs, and owned by so-called "Turks."

The mixed character of the population of the district is a cause of ceaseless strife. The struggle is of a twofold nature. In the western parts the Albanians harass the Servians, while in the eastern the Servians live on terms of mutual throat-cutting with the Bulgarians. This, however, does not prevent these two varieties of the genus Slav from occasionally combining against the Mohammedans, who in many cases are themselves Slavs, compelled to perform the rite of mutilation in days gone by, in order to escape a worse fate. Community of race and language, instead of obliterating, rather accentuates the difference in caste and creed, and begets a truly brotherly hatred. This gives rise to a lively, yet for Turkey by no means abnormal, state of affairs, as it leads to nothing more serious than a number of weekly murders. It is only when the ill-feeling culminates in a regular drawn battle, or a massacre on a more or less sensational

scale, that the Turkish authorities take official notice of it, and then the usual process ensues: the military intervene, and complete the havoc begun by the people. But as a general rule the Porte is only too glad to foment the rancour between the various elements among its subjects, and to allow them to tear each other in pieces to their hearts' content, so long as they do not make enough noise to wake the slumbering statesmen of Western Europe and provoke an intervention.

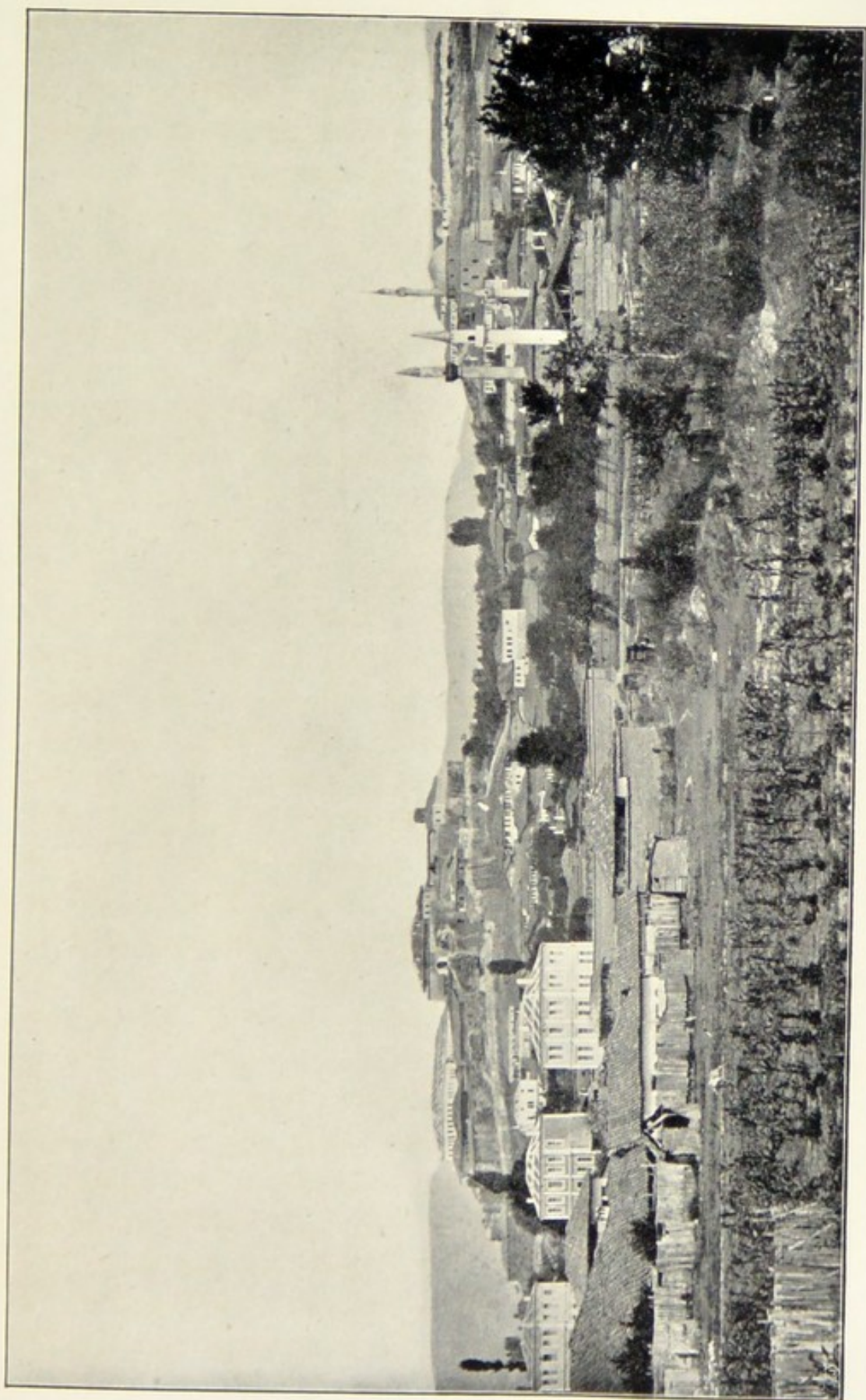
To the south of the above lies another polyonymous city. This is the town known as Veles to the Slav, and Velessa to the Greek, neither of which appellations conveys any distinct notion to the ordinary mind. The Turkish name Kiuprulu, or Bridgetown, though somewhat cacophonous, has the merit of emphasising one of the most striking features of the place. It is derived from the graceful, if rickety, wooden bridge which spans the Vardar, and serves as a hyphen between the two parts into which the town is divided by that river. The houses, picturesquely scattered over the gentle slopes, come down to the water's edge, and their overhanging upper storeys seem to lean over the banks in an effort to butt those on the opposite side. There are plenty of trees in the town, their rich green foliage setting off the white walls and red-tile roofs of the houses.

A few weather-stained minarets rear their glittering bronze crescents here and there in rivalry toward several church belfries, and the relative proportion between the crosses and the crescents shows that the Christian element preponderates, probably at the rate of two to one. The majority of the Christians call themselves Bulgarians—at least they did at the time

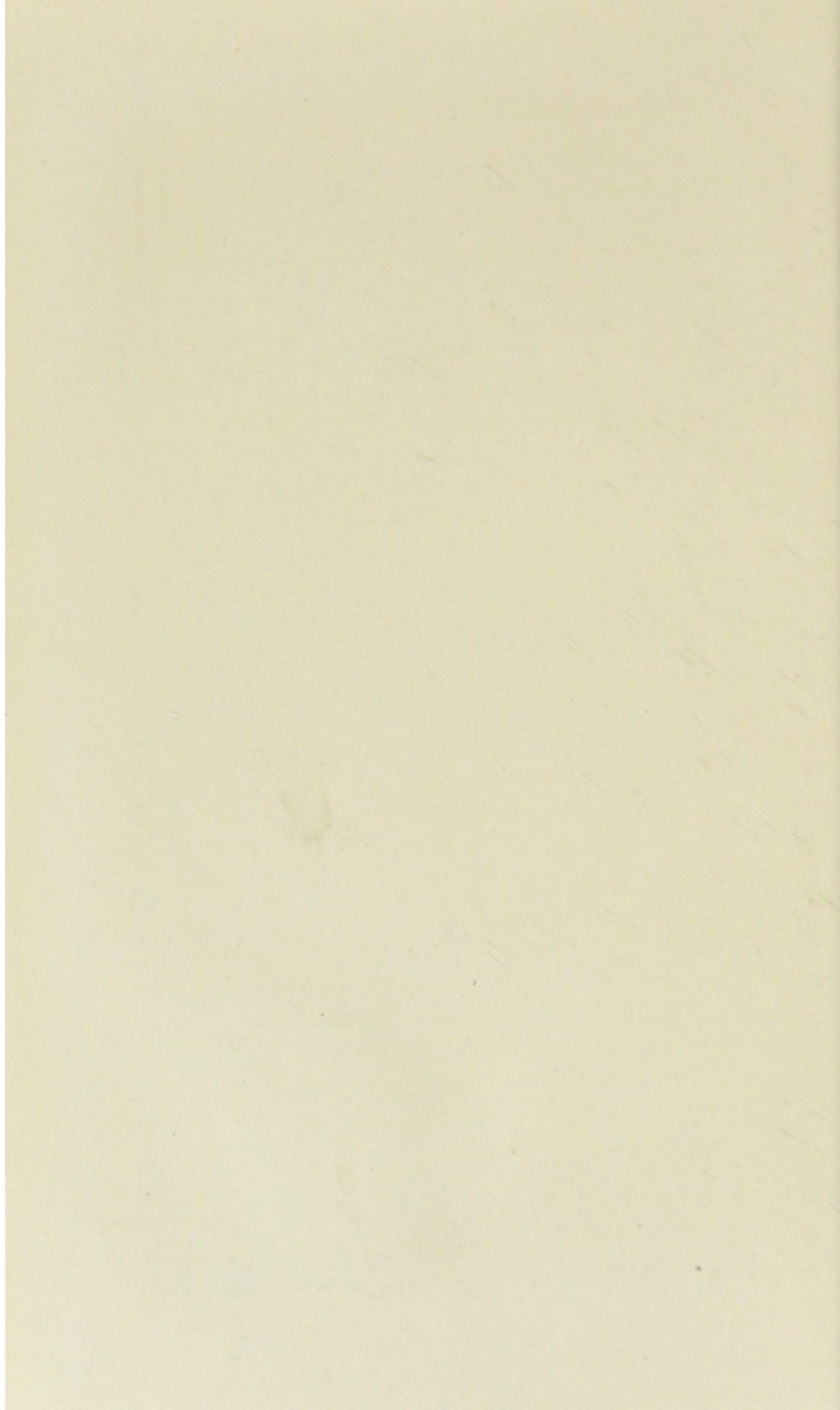
of which I am speaking; but it would be rash to assert that they still do so; for nationality in the Balkans is a variable quantity, largely depending on considerations with which sentiment, blood, or language have little or nothing to do. In direct antagonism to the Bulgarians stands a numerically small Greek colony, which here, as at Uskub, includes the wealthiest and most highly civilised of the inhabitants.

Towards evening we passed through the defile of Demir Kapu, or the Iron Gate. The sun was setting, and the stately rocks, rising almost perpendicular on either side, cast their shadows athwart the darkly-gleaming waters of the Vardar. A long vista of lofty mountains stretched from the farther end of the narrow pass, their peaks tipped with the lingering sunlight, while their lower slopes had already assumed a delicate purple tint. A short grey twilight followed, and then the stars began to twinkle in the sky. First one by one, then by hundreds and by thousands, until the dark-blue canopy seemed to throb with countless luminaries, each shining with a brilliancy distinct from that of its fellows; the whole, with the broad belt of the Milky Way stretching across from one end of the horizon to the other, presenting a spectacle seldom seen in northern climes.

If the lights of an Eastern summer night are dazzling to the eye, its voices are deafening to the ear. Nature seems to hold a Ramazan. Silent, dull and exhausted during the day, she recovers her strength and her spirits immediately after sundown. Myriads of frogs mingled their garrulous croaking with the shrill chirpings of the grasshopper, and the countryside was suddenly stirred to a liveliness which contrasted strangely with the deathly stillness of a



USKUB.



few minutes before. A faint reddish glare, rising above the sky-line from the south, indicated that, though slowly, we were certainly approaching Salonica, and soon after we entered the station—only one hour and a half behind time.

CHAPTER II

THESSALONICA PAST AND PRESENT

THERE are few cities in the Ottoman Empire more interesting than Salonica—interesting alike to the student and to the strategist, to the busy trader and to the idle tourist. Its excellent harbour has always rendered it a commercial centre of great importance and activity in the Levant, while its geographical position has often led to discussions as to whether it could not be made into a convenient calling-place between England and India.

These natural advantages have exposed Salonica to the rapacity of all the races which have at various times aspired to the possession of Macedonia. Founded by one of Alexander's immediate successors, it passed by turns under the rule of the Romans and of the Byzantines: it successfully sustained several sieges at the hands of the Slavs, was conquered by the Franks, recovered by the Greeks, and it finally succumbed to the Turks.

The history of the town and its vicissitudes can still be plainly read in the monuments bequeathed by each succeeding age. Every conqueror in turn has left behind him his autograph in characters of marble or stone. A huge circular building, now a Mohammedan mosque, dates from pre-Christian times. Originally erected for the cult of pagan deities, it was subsequently used as a church, dedicated to St. George,

and, after the Ottoman conquest, was converted into a place of worship of Allah. Until a short time ago a richly-carved stone in the enclosure of the temple was pointed out to the traveller as "St. Paul's Pulpit," and popular tradition maintained that it was from the steps of this stone that the Apostle of the Gentiles had preached the gospel to the Thessalonians. The "pulpit" has since gone to grace the rooms of a Western museum.

A triumphal, though sadly mutilated and begrimed arch, at the east end of the main street, is a relic of Roman civilisation, although archæologists cannot agree as to the particular emperor in whose honour it was raised. This is, however, a purely theoretical question, and does not in the least diminish the usefulness of the imperial monument, which at present affords shelter to a number of itinerant cooks and cobblers. A lane off this main thoroughfare leads into an open space, now surrounded by the paltry dwellings of the poor, but once the brilliant theatre of chariot-races, which drew crowds of sporting provincials to an exciting scene. This place, still called the Hippodrome, also witnessed one of those acts of barbarism which seemed to foreshadow the future fate of these lands. It was here that many thousands of Thessalonians, assembled in an unsuspectingly festive mood, were ruthlessly massacred by the legionaries of the Christian emperor Theodosius, in the year of grace 390.

Traces of the Frank occupation are to be found in the walls and fortifications which still gird the town on three sides. As for the rule of the Turk, it requires no memorial yet. Nor is it easy to fix on anything likely to perpetuate its memory, when it has become a thing of the past. The Turks, although they have

borrowed much and destroyed more, have built nothing—not even a jail. Nearly all the mosques, of which there is a great number, were Christian churches once, and to this day bear the names of their old patron saints. The “Seven Towers” and the “White or Bloody Tower,” the two principal prisons of the province, likewise were Byzantine fortresses. The public edifices due to Turkish initiative can be counted on the fingers of one hand—thumb not included: a *Konak*, or government house; a barrack, a military hospital, and a fountain exhaust the list of Ottoman contributions to the architecture of the city. All these buildings are quite modern, and have nothing characteristically Turkish about them save a look of neglect and premature decay.

Of the Byzantine churches of Salonica, which have been appropriated by the Turks, there are elaborate descriptions in the works of numerous *savants*, English and foreign, who have at different times visited the town. The present writer's object will be to confine himself to things not usually mentioned by *savants*. The mosque of St. Demetrius, the old patron saint of Salonica, is chiefly interesting to the unlearned as presenting a curious instance of compromise between the Cross and the Crescent.

A dark corridor leads from the body of the temple into a damp, earth-smelling dungeon, wherein the saint lies buried. A small oil-lamp hanging from the vault throws a dismal, flickering light upon a tombstone, which is thickly coated with the drippings of numberless tapers stuck upon it by devout hands in the course of many centuries. The same lamp illuminates a small picture of the saint which reposes against an empty wine-bottle. The *Imam* who con-

ducts the stranger into this mournful sanctuary explains that the lamp is always burning, and that, if by any chance it is allowed to go out, its extinction is followed by dire consequences to him.

"The blessed saint," says the *Imam*, with an immovableness of countenance which shows how often he must have told the story, "is apt to resent such neglect bitterly. Oh, how many are the times he has wreaked his wrath on my predecessors and myself in our sleep!"

The Christians of the lower class firmly believe in the *Imam's* veracity; for does not the legend flatter their religious *amour-propre*? Does it not prove their beloved patron's power? Above all, does not old St. Demetrius, in castigating the infidels, avenge to a certain extent the wrongs of Christendom on the bodies of Islam? In return for this sentimental gratification they readily and liberally, though rather illogically, contribute towards the keeping of the lamp alight.

On the saint's day (October 26 o.s.) many pilgrims repair to the tomb, light a candle, and pray beside it, and departing leave behind them donations in oil or money. The grateful *Imam* allows them to carry away from the shrine a handful of earth, which is supposed to be endowed with miraculous virtues for the cure of diseases.

A splendid view of the town and harbour can be gained from the summit of the hill on which stands the citadel, now tenanted by a colony of gipsies. A Greek church commonly called Tchaoush Monastir, or the "Captain's Convent," occupies a prominent position on the hill.

Through the enclosure of this church pass the

channels which supply the town with water from Mount Khortatch. The story runs that, when the Turks laid siege to Salonica, they experienced great difficulty in reducing the city, and that they finally succeeded through the treachery of the inmates of the monastery, who helped the enemy to cut off the water supply. I do not know that there is any foundation for this old tradition. Perhaps it is only an instance of the ill-feeling entertained by the people against monks and monastic institutions generally. Once in the course of a conversation about the monks of Mount Athos, a peasant astonished me by describing them, in a phrase more pithy than polite, as "men mostly fit for the rope and the stake"—a pretty vigorous denunciation of sainthood I thought it at the time, but I have since found that the fellow was by no means singular in his opinion.

In the same courtyard stands the turbaned tombstone under which reposes the Tchaoush, from whom the monastery derives its name. Who this hero was, or what he did to earn his notoriety, are questions to which the long-bearded Greek papas, now the sole occupant of the convent, could give no answer. Nor was I particularly anxious to get one. Leaving my host to go to his vespers, I walked to the narrow rock-ledge outside the gate and looked idly round.

The city spread from under my feet. Red and brown roofs, bronze-plated cupolas, and snow-white minarets lay sprinkled in delightful confusion over the slope, with bright green patches of foliage interspersed. The harbour sparkled beyond like a vast mirror reflecting the rays of the afternoon sun. Kara-burnu, a long rocky promontory, with sides seamed and scarred by the streams of immemorial winters, shot out on the

left, while Mount Olympus stretched its broad and majestic range on the right. As the sun declined toward the west, the outlines of the noble mountain grew clearer and clearer against the sky, and at last it stood out; a great dark giant with a diadem of sunlit snow glittering round his brows.

Yet a few short minutes and the whole scene is changed. The crimson glow of the sky has faded into a pale pink, which in its turn has yielded to grey, and soon mountain, sea, and sky are merged in one mass of gloom. The aged Turkish gun-boats in the harbour, and other less unhealthy-looking steam and sailing vessels, have hung out their lights, and the black waters beneath are streaked with quivering bars of gold.

The sight was calculated to send one into a dream of everlasting calm and repose. But there was no time for dreams or repose. The crooked, ill-lighted, and ill-paved lanes, which lead from the citadel to the lower regions, are no pleasant or safe promenade after dark, and prudence dictates a hasty retreat, ere common, peaceful citizens have retired to their beds, and the gentry, delicately described by the old poet as "day-sleepers" have quitted theirs.

CHAPTER III

A CITY OF MANY TONGUES

THERE are several thoroughfares leading from the quay into the heart of the town. But the most interesting of all is the one which runs through the bazaar, crosses the main street at right angles—or as near an approach to right angles as is consistent with Oriental love for the picturesque—and continues with a slight elevation up to the *Konak*. The first part of this street is roofed in, an arrangement no doubt highly agreeable to the Hebrew tradesmen whose shops and booths flank the sides. It creates an artificial dusk which, by concealing imperfections and toning down all colours to dim uniformity, conduces to optical delusion, and is otherwise beneficial to commerce.

As I walked between the lines of the gaily-bedecked shops, my ears were assaulted by enticing invitations to pause and inspect their contents. But I bravely resisted the temptation, and finally emerged into the sunshine of the main street. There I saw a sorry cur of uncertain pedigree brought to an untimely end by the wheels of the tram, was narrowly missed by a prodigious box, which tottered as if by magic across the road, and I gained the other side. From this point of vantage I looked behind to ascertain the mechanical laws, if any, which governed the motions of the mysterious box, and I discovered them in a pair of bare brawny legs belonging to a ludicrously small Israelite,

half-concealed beneath the load. The image of little David defying and defeating the Philistine giant rose in my mind, and then I understood something of the secret of the success which still waits on the diminutive sons of Israel.

In Salonica there are vast numbers of them. Official statistics estimate their strength at seventy thousand. But official statistics in Turkey, excellent as works of the imagination, make no pretence to realistic accuracy in matters of fact. A government *employé* once naïvely explained to me that as that curious exhibition of Oriental humour, popularly known by the name of census, is held with a view to taxation, it cannot reasonably be expected that the people should be very anxious to give in their names!

"Indeed, sir," he said, with the aloofness of a philosophical historian who speaks two thousand years after the events narrated, "it is the custom of the people, when the man with the register goes round, to telegraph his arrival from house to house by means of signals, such as broomsticks, bedsheets and the like, and so the *rayahs* have plenty of time to send their children, especially the males, out of the way."

He went on to describe an elaborate game of hide and seek solemnly played between the Revenue officers and the people, adding that, so far as the Salonica Jews are concerned, it would perhaps be nearer the truth to set them down as ninety thousand. "But, Effendim," he concluded, with a smile of amusement at my pedantic weakness for arithmetic, "what does it really signify, a few thousand more or less? it will be all one a few years hence. Allah is the only immortal One."

This enormous proportion of the chosen people, in

a town whose entire population does not exceed 150,000, is due to various causes. We know from the New Testament that a considerable Hebrew colony existed in Thessalonica at the beginning of the Christian era, as St. Paul found to his cost. Benjamin of Tudela also, that quaint old traveller of the twelfth century, mentions a Jewish community in this place. But few, if any, of the present members of the colony can claim descent from those ancient settlers. The majority of them are the descendants of the Jews who were expelled from Spain by Ferdinand and Isabella, and they still speak a kind of Spanish, much damaged by wear and tear, and picturesquely patched up with Turkish and other foreign elements. These Jews belong to the Sephardim sect.

The stream of emigrants was in more modern times further swelled by the influx of refugees, of the Aschkenazim variety, from Russia, Roumania, and elsewhere, for Turkey is a haven of refuge open to the persecuted of every colour and clime. So long as they suffer the tax-collector's shears to play freely upon their fleece, they are permitted to live and grow fat. How well this *régime* agrees with the Hebrew constitution is proved by the fact that the Salonica Jews have grown, and are daily growing, in number and riches, to the disgust and dismay of their hereditary rivals, the Greeks.

If the Jews are taken as the arbiters of the commerce of Salonica, the Greeks may fairly claim to stand as the chief representatives of its intellectual culture. In multitude and in wealth they are immeasurably inferior to the Jews, but what they lack in those respects is amply compensated by their literary tastes and love of progress. They maintain several

excellent establishments for the education of the young, the yearly attendance amounting to 2000 pupils of both sexes, apart from a number of boys and girls who frequent French and Italian schools for the acquisition of foreign languages. There are also many charitable institutions, which, like the schools, owe their existence to the munificence of native Greeks, who made their fortunes abroad, and, dying, bequeathed them to their birthplace.

Besides the Jews and the Greeks, Salonica contains a large Turkish population, and a very small number of Servians, Roumanians, and Bulgarians, as well as a Frank colony, in which the ubiquitous Teuton has recently become very conspicuous.

The Bulgarians run some schools in opposition to those of the Greeks; but although, in addition to instruction, they offer the potent allurements of free board and lodging, they cannot boast of any marked success. Their establishments, well advertised as they are, want the *prestige* of antiquity and the high standard of efficiency which their Hellenic rivals have attained, and their object seems to be rather political than purely educational. The Roumanians and the Servians are also attempting to promote their political interests by means of education, but the results have hitherto been even less encouraging than those obtained by the Bulgarians.

On the whole, Salonica may be said still to be what it has been for more than twenty centuries—a centre of Hellenic influence and civilisation. For, though the Turks equal the Greeks in number and the Jews surpass them, neither of those two races can be described as autochthonous. They both are mere residents—birds of passage, though likewise birds of

prey—the latter as money-makers, the former as “money-eaters.” As soon as Salonica passes under a new rule, the Turks will pack their goods and chattels and decamp. The Jews, unless driven away, will remain and continue in the peaceful pursuit of lucre, which is the alpha and the omega of their worldly ambition. The efforts of the Slavs and of the Roumanians to create a population to order are too artificial to deserve serious consideration.

In addition to these nationalities, Salonica harbours a colony of Mohammedans of Hebrew origin, known as Dunmehs, or “Converts.” This hybrid sect forms a link between the Turk and the Jew. They constitute a community by themselves. They neither give their daughters in marriage to the other Mohammedans, nor, except on very rare occasions, do they take wives from them, but they habitually intermarry among themselves. Both Jews and Turks despise the Dunmehs as renegades, and dread them as rivals; for the Dunmehs, in embracing the faith of the Ishmaelites, renounced nothing of the sharpness and aptitude for business which characterise the Israelite. On the contrary, they have improved those qualities by an infusion of the self-respect which distinguishes the Mohammedan.

Among the Turks there is a suspicion that the Dunmehs are only Mohammedans in appearance, but infidels at heart. It is said that they still observe Hebrew rites and festivals in secret, and they are accused of some of the most odious practices attributed in old times by the pagans to the early Christians, and by outsiders of all ages to new and unpopular sects. These charges are naturally difficult to substantiate, and in all probability rest on nothing more solid than

prejudiced mythology ; but, at all events, they indicate the feelings entertained towards the "Converts" by their neighbours.

The sect was founded by a certain Sabetay Sevi, who some centuries ago appeared in Adrianople as a prophet, pretending to work miracles. His pretensions, naturally enough, created a great deal of sensation. Some of his co-religionists believed in the new prophet, while others denounced him as an impostor. The agitation finally attained such proportions that the Turkish authorities were obliged to take cognizance of it. Sabetay Sevi was summoned to Stamboul and, so the story runs, was cross-examined by no less a person than the Sultan himself. In the Padishah's awful presence the prophet's courage failed him, and he hastened to save himself by declaring that his mission really was to convert the Jews to Islam. He was taken at his word, and was compelled to set the good example by turning Mohammedan himself. Three hundred families followed his lead, but Sabetay Sevi's prophetic instincts warned him that it would not be wise to return to Adrianople. Instead, he betook himself to Smyrna, directing his followers to migrate to Salonica and there await his arrival. They are still waiting. It is said that the descendants of those converts are to this day in the habit of sending a man round the quay every night with a lantern in order that the light thereof may guide this new Wandering Jew's steps to the shore.

Meanwhile the flock, on being deserted by its shepherd, found itself a prey to doctrinal difficulties, which gave rise to three minor sects led by three of the prophet's most distinguished disciples, each of whom felt convinced, and succeeded in convincing

others, that he, and he alone, held the Master's true teaching. The division still endures.

The Jewish gentleman to whom I am indebted for some of these details concerning the Dunmehs assured me that Sabetay Sevi was by no means a typical Hebrew. In his anxiety to show how a true son of Israel would have conducted himself in the circumstances which led to Sabetay's apostasy, he related to me the following story:—

THE HISTORY OF THE THREE PRECIOUS STONES

Years ago there lived in Stamboul one of our people who, by the blessing of Heaven and his own industry, had succeeded in accumulating a large fortune. Now, you know, sir, that in Turkey the worst thing, next to being a pauper, is to be a millionaire. So this co-religionist of mine thought when one day he received an invitation to present himself before the Sultan. He knew full well what that meant, but what could he do? His Majesty, after the usual prostrations, addressed him as follows:—

“O thou son of a dog, canst thou tell me which of the three religions current in my dominions is the true one?”

The Hebrew stood, or rather knelt, in silence for a long while, for he was aware that whatever answer he might make, it would result in his parting with his head: had he said “the Christian,” the Sultan would have taken it as an insult and ordered his execution on the spot; had he said “the Hebrew,” the same thing would have happened; had he said “the Moham-medan,” the Sultan would have given him the option between apostasy and the grave, and, of course, being a true Hebrew, he would have preferred the latter.

So he knelt on, musing ; but at last Jehovah, who deserts not those who rely on Him, inspired the old man with this reply :—

“ O mighty Padishah, thy question, in order to be rightly answered, requires a measure of wisdom which is not vouchsafed to thy worthless slave, or at least time for thought.”

“ I give thee twenty-four hours,” answered his Majesty.

At the expiration of that period the Hebrew was once more summoned before the Sultan, and then he spoke as follows :—

“ O mighty Padishah, I have spent the time which thou, in thy supernatural graciousness, deignedst to grant thy humble servant, in prayer and meditation, and this is the result :—

“ Once upon a time there was a great and powerful king who had three sons. He also possessed a diamond of unheard-of size and value. Wishing to spur his boys to progress, he one day called them to him and said :—

“ ‘ Whichever of you by the end of the year surpasses the others in book-lore and skill in the art of war, to him will I give this priceless stone.’

“ At the end of the year he examined the boys before the learned men and the great warriors of his kingdom, and found that none of them excelled the others, but they all were equally good. He, therefore, could not bestow the diamond on one of the three without being unjust to the others. In this perplexity he applied for advice to his Grand Vizier, and the Grand Vizier being an exceedingly wise man, counselled his master to have two counterfeit stones made so as to look in every point like the genuine

diamond. The Court jeweller undertook the task, and in a few days he produced three stones as like each other as are three eggs laid by the same hen.

"The king was highly pleased, and, calling his three sons to him, he presented them with a stone apiece.

"Now, O mighty Padishah, canst thou tell me which of those three boys received the true diamond, and which of them got the counterfeit ones?"

The Sultan was much impressed by the force of the argument, and dashing his *tchibook* to the floor, exclaimed:—

"*Mashallah!* thou speakest well, O Jew!"

Then he dismissed the old man with presents and molested him no more.

Each of the races enumerated above occupies a *mahallah*, or quarter, by itself, and, although they all live within the walls of the same town, they seem to know as much about one another as if they dwelt on different planets. Each nationality dresses, speaks, cheats, and worships after a fashion of its own, and quite distinct from that of its neighbours, and each of them cherishes a traditional antipathy to all the others. A parallel difference can be traced in their favourite pursuits. The Jews are mostly bankers, money-changers, peddlers, costermongers, tinkers, porters, and pickpockets. The Greeks are merchants, artisans, cabmen, café-keepers, scholars, and burglars. Hitherto there has been only one instance of a Hellene forgetting himself so far as to sell cabbages and tomatoes in the street, and he was a Protestant pervert. But, so far as human ken goes, there has been no example of a Hebrew attempting to handle a pair of horses or to break into a house.

Some of the Dunmehs also are given to mercantile pursuits, and these are known as *Bezestenlis*, or shopkeepers. But as for the genuine Turks, if one excepts the great landowners who reside in the town, the garrison officers, the policemen, and the government functionaries—in a word, the idle classes—it is not easy to account for the existence of the rest. Some of the humbler sort, it is true, keep shops and cafés, or serve as coachmen and carriers; but these form only an insignificant minority, when compared with their *confrères* of the other nationalities.

Beggars abound, and no creed or race can be said to enjoy a monopoly of them. So do dogs of all breeds, cross breeds and no breeds; and these nuisances, taken together, render a walk through the streets of Salonica an enterprise requiring some *sang froid* and a good stick.

Further, the three nationalities can be differentiated by their intellectual characteristics. In point of versatility the followers of Moses undoubtedly carry away the palm, leaving both the others far behind. The Jew is trilingual. He is equally at home in Spanish, Greek, and Turkish, and speaks each of these idioms indifferently badly. The Greek can express his ideas in two languages, Greek and Turkish. The Turk shares with the gods and the English the privilege of having only one tongue.

The order of classification would have to be reversed, if the three elements were subjected to an examination of a different kind. Measured by a moral, or rather manly, standard, the first would be last and the last first. The adage which associates physical purity with moral uprightness finds a curious illustration in Salonica. The Mohammedans, whatever may be

thought of them as rulers, are generally acknowledged to be extremely honest in their private transactions, and—always excepting the government officials, who have an immoral code of their own—scrupulously careful in the handling of truth. The Turk is too strong to do a mean thing, too unimaginative to invent the thing that is not. His vices, great as they are, are the vices of a race conscious of its might, and proud of it. These moral qualities are typified in a striking manner by the appearance of the quarters inhabited by Mohammedans. The streets are neatly swept, and the private dwellings, in point of cleanliness, present a wonderful contrast to the public offices.

On passing from such a quarter to one inhabited by Christians, one notices a certain deterioration in those respects, accompanied by a corresponding inferiority in the moral attributes which distinguish the Mohammedan. But it is only on reaching the Jewish quarter that one fully realises the depths of physical and other filth of which humanity is capable. The streets are littered with all sorts of rubbish in every stage of decomposition, and the air is fraught with all sorts of unwholesome odours. Great caution, and a certain amount of acrobatic skill, are necessary in order to avoid disagreeable surprises in the form of slop-pails or rat-traps emptied from lofty windows, and other accidents of an equally unexpected and unpleasant character. A look into the nearest Jewish shop will supply the inquisitive traveller with the moral of which the squalor of the streets and the foulness of the atmosphere are the concrete emblems.

After nine o'clock in the evening the town goes to bed, or, to be more precise, turns in. The shops have closed long ago, and only the cafés on the quay

remain open, waiting for some few belated loafers to retire. The streets are dark and deserted, and the silence of the night is only broken by the monotonous sound of the watchman's club striking the hours on the cobbles of the pavement, and now and again by the furious barking of some troop of homeless curs racing in the moonlight. About midnight, however, a double boom of cannon is heard from the citadel, immediately followed by the rattle of revolvers, and sometimes by peals of church-bells. But, unless the noise is very near your abode, you need not be disturbed. The tramp of feet under your windows, and the cries *Yanguin var!* will inform you that it is only a fire.

These nocturnal alarms are as regular in their occurrence as the crowing of the cocks. They average some eight or nine a week, and the good Thessalonians are so accustomed to them, that on the rare occasions when their slumbers are not interrupted by such an event, one hears on the following morning at breakfast the remark :—

“There was no fire last night!”

To which is invariably returned the answer :—

“No, but there is sure to be one to-night.”

The flimsy material of which the houses are built, and the small space into which they are crowded, added to the narrowness of the streets, would be sufficient to account for the frequency of conflagrations, were it not for one little thing: the house or the shop in which the fire originates in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred happens to be insured, and to belong either to a Jew or to a Christian. This circumstance, coupled with the fact that the property of Mohammedans—who do not approve of insurances,

as implying an impious want of confidence in Allah¹—seldom falls a prey to the flames, induces the thoughtful observer to shake his head.

In fact, these "accidents" may be said to throw a lurid light upon Hebrew and local Christian morality; and so seem to think the London insurance companies, which since the great fire of 1891 have abolished their Salonica agencies. That fire destroyed one-fourth of the town, including the whole Jewish quarter and the old Greek cathedral, and reduced to ruins the mosque of St. Sophia, one of the finest specimens of Byzantine architecture. But rumour, who does not always lie, whispers that on that occasion Vulcan came in obedience to an official summons to assist in clearing the ground for the execution of certain plans contemplated by an ambitious and impecunious municipal council.

¹ The views on Providence entertained by Turks and Jews respectively, and the extent to which belief influences the conduct of each, are well illustrated by the following anecdote: A Turk and a Jew were one day in a boat. Suddenly the weather changed, and a fierce squall arose. The Jew proposed that they should turn back at once. The Turk was for going on.

"Fear not, my friend, Allah is great," he said.

"Allah is great," retorted the Jew, "but our boat is small."



THE MOSQUE OF ST. SOPHIA.

(After the great fire of 1891.)



CHAPTER IV

AN EASTERN JUBILEE

THE 30th of August dawned with an overcast sky. Black clouds gathered all through the morning, and the air was stiflingly sultry. About noon, however, the long-brewing storm burst with a violence approaching to a tropical hurricane. The thunder rumbled on high, and flashes of forked lightning rent the firmament for hours. Through the rifts of the clouds Mount Olympus revealed its lowering brows at moments, only to withdraw them again behind an impenetrable veil of mist. An ancient Hellene would have said that Zeus, the cloud-compeller, sat frowning amidst the invisible heights and thence hurled his bolts broadcast upon a guilty world. Then the rain came down in sheets, turning the streets into angry torrents, and the room in which I was sitting into a miniature archipelago.

But on the following morning there was not a trace of the cataclysm left, except the mud in the streets and a distinct fall in the temperature. The waters were baled out of the rooms, and the sun smiled upon us with ironical cheerfulness. It was fortunate that the thunder-storm broke when it did. Had it held off for another twenty-four hours it would have nipped a great *fête* in the bud, and would have disappointed the public of Salonica. The 31st of August was the eve of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Sultan Abdul Hamid's acces-

sion to the throne of the Osmanlis, and the town was in a ferment of bustle and anticipation. Arches with inappropriately eulogistic inscriptions were erected, flags floated from the roofs of many houses, and many windows and doorways were festooned with lamps and ferns. Everybody was spurred to a demonstration of much unfelt joy by the example of his neighbours and, alas! by the fear of the police.

I was finishing breakfast when the blare of many trumpets, accompanied by the rolling of drums, the clatter of hoofs, and the rattle of wheels, compelled me to look out of the window. A long procession, headed by a formidable band and flanked by mounted troops, was slowly defiling through the street. It consisted of no less than fifty vehicles of all denominations and ages, closely packed with solemn little Turks between five and nine years old. They were all swimming in brand-new Frank suits, obviously meant to fit them at some future date. Their fezes were bedizened with threads of gold and glaring yellow flowers, and most of these young *effendis* held between their henna-tipped fingers cigarettes, at which they puffed with precocious satisfaction. They were to be circumcised at his Imperial Majesty's expense—a typically Mohammedan form of a largesse, and in this instance intended to commemorate by a life-long souvenir the fact that a Turkish monarch had actually reigned for twenty-five years unmurdered. No wonder that the elderly babies gave themselves such airs of importance.

September 1st.—As the calf stands to the grown-up cow, the bud to the full-blown flower, and the promise to its fulfilment, even so stood the eve to the great *fête* itself. The day began with a salute of twenty-five cannon shots from the fortress of Top-haneh, followed

by thanksgiving services in all the places of worship. As on the previous day, so now Greeks, Jews, and Slavs vied with each other in their hypocritical display of fervour, and prayers were everywhere offered up for the prolongation of the life of the most powerful, most serene, and most gracious sovereign, under whose mild and beneficent rule they have prospered so well.

A *Te Deum* was sung in the Greek cathedral, at which all the Greek clergy of the city officiated. It was a gorgeous and not unimpressive scene. The sun streaming through the windows filled the white interior of the building with a flood of light, against the brilliancy of which the flickering candles vainly strove to assert themselves. The silver- and gold-plated icons in the screen, the richly-broidered vestments of the priests, and the gaudy uniforms of the Turkish officials who assisted at the ceremony, glittered in the sunlight and enhanced the effect of the sonorous chants, reverberated on the lofty dome of the temple. The fumes of frankincense added a touch of mysticism to the proceedings.

At the close of the service the Metropolitan stood out upon the topmost step of his throne, between two deacons, each holding a three-branched silver candlestick burning close to the episcopal cheeks. From that uncomfortably torrid eminence the All-holy gentleman delivered himself of a flowery address, in which were set forth at great length the manifold blessings vouchsafed to the Ottoman Empire, and the inhabitants thereof, in the person of the reigning monarch. Abdul Hamid was compared, with unconscious humour, to the "life-giving sun, whose beams animate whatsoever they shine upon." His All-holiness spoke of the new roads, railways, charitable and educational institutions,

“which,” he said, with a pathetic effort at enthusiasm, “are so many new jewels added to his Majesty’s crown.” But he discreetly forgot to mention the Armenian massacres.

The whole thing was a melancholy farce. Of the blessings to which the prosy prelate referred, the roads are to be found only in episcopal panegyrics and sometimes in conventional maps; the railways are not Turkish except in their slowness; as for the institutions named, the Sultan¹ has as much to do with their foundation and maintenance as the Emperor of China; but he tolerates them, and to be let alone is in the East the greatest boon the subject can hope or pray for. The contrast between the hyperbolic tone of the bishop’s effusion and the apathetic attitude of the scant congregation was a source of relief to the spectator; the cheers with which the peroration was greeted were few, half-hearted, and manifestly uttered to order, and I left the church with the comforting reflection that there is some hope yet in a flock which will not go all lengths with its pastor.

The streets and bazaars outside were resplendent with a cheap magnificence by no means peculiar to the East. Green boughs and red flags, party-coloured lanterns and paper chains hung along and across the main thoroughfares, which, it being Saturday, were thronged by noisy crowds of Jews in holiday attire, idly strolling up and down and chewing pumpkin seeds. This is a characteristically Hebrew way of spending the day of rest. They hold it a sin to drive on the Sabbath, and they therefore walk the livelong day—within a radius of a Sabbath-day’s journey—leaving behind them interminable trails of seed shells. The Christian tradesmen, in spite of their anxiety to

appear loyal, contented themselves with decorating their shops without closing them. Saturday is a red-letter day for them, as it is the only day of the week on which they are free from Semitic competition, and they are naturally eager to make the most of it.

In the evening I hired a boat and, accompanied by a friend, rowed out into the harbour. The view of the illuminated town from the sea was superb and like nothing I had witnessed hitherto. From the water's edge up to the summit of the citadel there spread a scintillating amphitheatre, almost rivalling in splendour the heavenly vault with its myriads of stars. The minarets shot up slim and slender, their higher portions dimly discerned in the darkness, while their circular balconies stood boldly out radiant with rows of tiny tremulous lights. The White Tower in the eastern extremity of the quay was tastefully outlined with borders of coloured lamps, which made its battlemented walls and their reflections in the water beneath look like those of a castle in fairy-land, such as one loved to dream of in the days of long ago. Even the dreary and, in the daytime, ungainly barracks beyond managed to borrow some of the splendour of their surroundings. The open plain in front of them was ablaze with fireworks, while far away in the background, but looking deceptively near, towered grimly the conical peak of Mount Khortatch. The buzz of many voices talking, laughing, and singing—with an occasional deep-throated cheer from the troops—was wafted from the shore, and I rested gazing spell-bound, with one half of my being in Salonica and the other half in the capital of Haroun-al-Raschid, when lo! a firework of a different nature broke in upon my reverie.

A great cloud of red smoke suddenly rose from

the west end of the town, where the bazaar slept in darkness. Tongues of flame and jets of sparks soon followed, and a double boom of cannon from the citadel confirmed my suspicion that this was not a *feu de joie*. My companion, a resident of Salonica, observed calmly :—

“Some one has taken advantage of the holiday to set fire to his shop.”

Two hours later on my way home I met the fire-engines going to the rescue.

CHAPTER V

DANCING AS A RELIGIOUS FUNCTION

A LONG dusty road, with broad acres of Mohammedan tombs stretching on either side of it, leads from the Vardar, or western, Gate of the town to the Mevlevihaneh, the abode of the Dancing Dervishes. The ballet, though not advertised in the ordinary way, is extremely popular. On Mondays and Thursdays through the spring and autumn people of all sorts and sexes throng the Convent, and are freely admitted to the gallery, whence they can witness the performance, while refreshing themselves with oranges and lemonade, or anything else they choose to bring with them.

It was on a Monday, late in the season, that I followed a group of these playgoers, and I never enjoyed a *matinée* more thoroughly. The heat of the afternoon was tempered by the gentle breeze from the sea, and the shady cloisters of the Convent formed an agreeable contrast to the glaring light of the outside world. Having slaked my thirst at the cool fountain in the middle of the court, I proceeded to secure an advantageous corner in the strangers' gallery. Soon after commenced the performance.

The worshippers, having divested themselves of their flowing cloaks, stretched out their arms and began to revolve, at first slowly and rhythmically, but gradually warming to it. In a few seconds the hall beneath was alive with a host of figures reeling and

twirling round and round with ever-increasing rapidity, to the weird music of reed-flutes and cymbals—both instruments conducive to spiritual exultation. In a few more seconds their long white robes bulged and expanded like colossal parasols, until the whole mass merged in one immense cloud of calico, while their towering head-dresses assumed in the spectator's bewildered eyes the appearance of a large congregation of chimney-pots suddenly gone whirling mad.

After several hours of severe, but highly decorous and disciplined, waltzing, the mystic enchantment commenced to overpower the pious revellers. Their eyes closed by degrees, their heads drooped on their chests, their arms dropped to their sides, the white parasols flagged and shrank, and one after another the demented chimney-pots collapsed upon the floor in a state of utter exhaustion. The music has ceased, most of the spectators have departed, and nothing is to be heard except the short gasps of the white-clad figures, dimly seen through the gathering darkness lying prostrate below. They are in the full enjoyment of their *sema*, or communion with God.

In that enviable frame of mind I left them and returned home across the straggling cemeteries, over which the moon now shed her silver light, ruminating on the marvellous multiformity of human folly. Surely not uninspired was the idiot who translated Sophocles's famous line into: "Many are the awful things, and nought is more awful than man!"

This curious sect was founded early in the thirteenth century by a Persian philosopher and saint, whose name was no less—it could hardly be more—than Djelal-ud-din-er-roumi. This gentleman, among other things, wrote verses, worked miracles, and, according

to tradition, seems to have succeeded in abolishing distance. It is recorded of him that he could communicate with fellow-sages and saints across space without the medium of any material instrument. He could also transport himself at a moment's notice to the remotest regions of the earth, a form of exercise to which he is said to have been particularly addicted. Moreover, he instituted the picturesque, if somewhat eccentric, means of attaining religious ecstasy described above, and otherwise benefited mankind.

Those who are initiated in the mysteries of the Mevlevi doctrine maintain that its fundamental tenet is love, all embracing and all absorbing. Their dance is interpreted as a symbolic expression of the harmony of the universe, wherein the revolving monks represent the revolving stars of heaven, and their music the music of the spheres. The present writer, not being privileged with any acquaintance with the esoteric meaning of the Mevlevi mysteries, is unable to pronounce how far this exposition is correct, and how far it is merely ingenious. Nor, curiously as he has scrutinised the faces of several Mevlevis, has he succeeded in discovering in them that "expression of devout serenity," and those other angelic attributes, with which they have been endowed by the enthusiasm of a recent lady writer. To his coarser male perception the Mevlevi countenance revealed nothing more spiritual than the serenity which comes from intellectual vacuity assisted by a perfect digestion.

Nevertheless, according to all accounts, the Mevlevis are distinguished by a meekness of temper and a philosophic breadth of view which place them in a most flattering contrast to the orthodox Mohammedans, who cannot be said to labour under either of

those weaknesses. They are also described as appreciating European ways, although their appreciation has not yet advanced very far beyond the Platonic stage, except in the matter of the products of European distilleries. In this sense the Mevlevis can be truly said to have imbibed the spirit of Western civilisation.

Be that as it may, it is to be regretted that their quietistic habits and love of serenity prevent the Mevlevis from taking an active part in political affairs. Could they be induced to quit their Castle of holy Indolence, and mix in matters mundane, such solecisms as massacres, spoliations, and persecutions would perhaps be less frequent features of the Ottoman administrative style. For, despite their mysticism, or probably on account of it, the Mevlevis enjoy a prodigious amount of influence and popularity in the Mohammedan world. On the other hand, the history of Spain shows that the participation of monastic orders in the government of men is hardly an unmixed blessing, and perhaps the Christians of the East ought to be grateful to the Mevlevis for their abstention from politics. At present the sect enjoys the reputation of an interesting body of men, whose sole ambition seems to be to whirl through life and hop into heaven with the minimum of friction, a title to respect which might be forfeited by any departure from this innocuous programme.

CHAPTER VI

HOW I BECAME A FRENCH JOURNALIST

WHEN I applied to H.M. Consul for a passport into the interior, I found that the thing was not so simple as I had imagined. The Consul first endeavoured to dissuade me from my purpose by laying stress on the badness, or even absence, of roads and bridges, on the prevalence of brigandage and revolutionary agitation, and especially on the extreme suspiciousness of the Turkish authorities, who are averse to strangers spying the nakedness of the land and the misery thereof. I was solemnly assured that, if I escaped being drowned in some river, or assassinated by Bulgarian patriots, I was certain to be escorted to the nearest seaport by the police. On finding me obdurate, the Consul proceeded to inform me that the British Embassy at Constantinople had some twenty years before issued a circular to the effect that no British subject should travel in the interior, or, if he did so, he would have to travel at his own risk and peril, and should not count on the Ambassador's protection.

This last statement surprised me considerably. I knew that Europeans of other nationalities not only travelled without let or hindrance from their diplomatic representatives, but, if they came to grief, the Porte was held responsible, and I could not see why a British subject should be denied a privilege accorded to Germans, Russians, and Frenchmen. Afterwards I learnt

that the circular in question had been issued in consequence of the capture at that time by brigands of a Scotch gentleman of an enterprising turn. The Sultan had been made to pay the ransom, which, if I remember rightly, amounted to the respectable figure of fifteen thousand pounds Turkish. But there was a strong and apparently not ill-founded suspicion, shared both by the Turkish authorities and by the foreign colonies at Salonica, that the canny Caledonian was a not unwilling victim, and that he had in fact received a share of the spoil. Be that as it may, I felt that I had gone too far to retreat, and I told the Consul that I was ready to take the consequences.

The one thing needful was an excuse for travelling without arousing suspicion, something more intelligible to the Ottoman mind than literary research. This was furnished to me by the editor of a local French journal, who readily accepted my offer to travel as his correspondent. He forthwith dubbed me "Redacteur," and I, in return for this title, undertook to interview his subscribers in the interior and dun them for their subscriptions. I succeeded in collecting a few pounds for him, and though the sum was small, it evidently was more than the worthy editor ever expected to receive; at least so his warm expressions of gratitude intimated. That is all he wanted. Writing is not among the correspondent's duties in Turkey, as the only things that deserve to be recorded are forbidden subjects.

The first and chief difficulty having been happily eliminated, I proceeded to provide myself with some of the most indispensable necessities of rough travel. Among these were a box of powder to be used in defence against bugs and other nocturnal enemies, a



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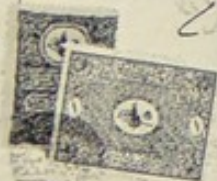
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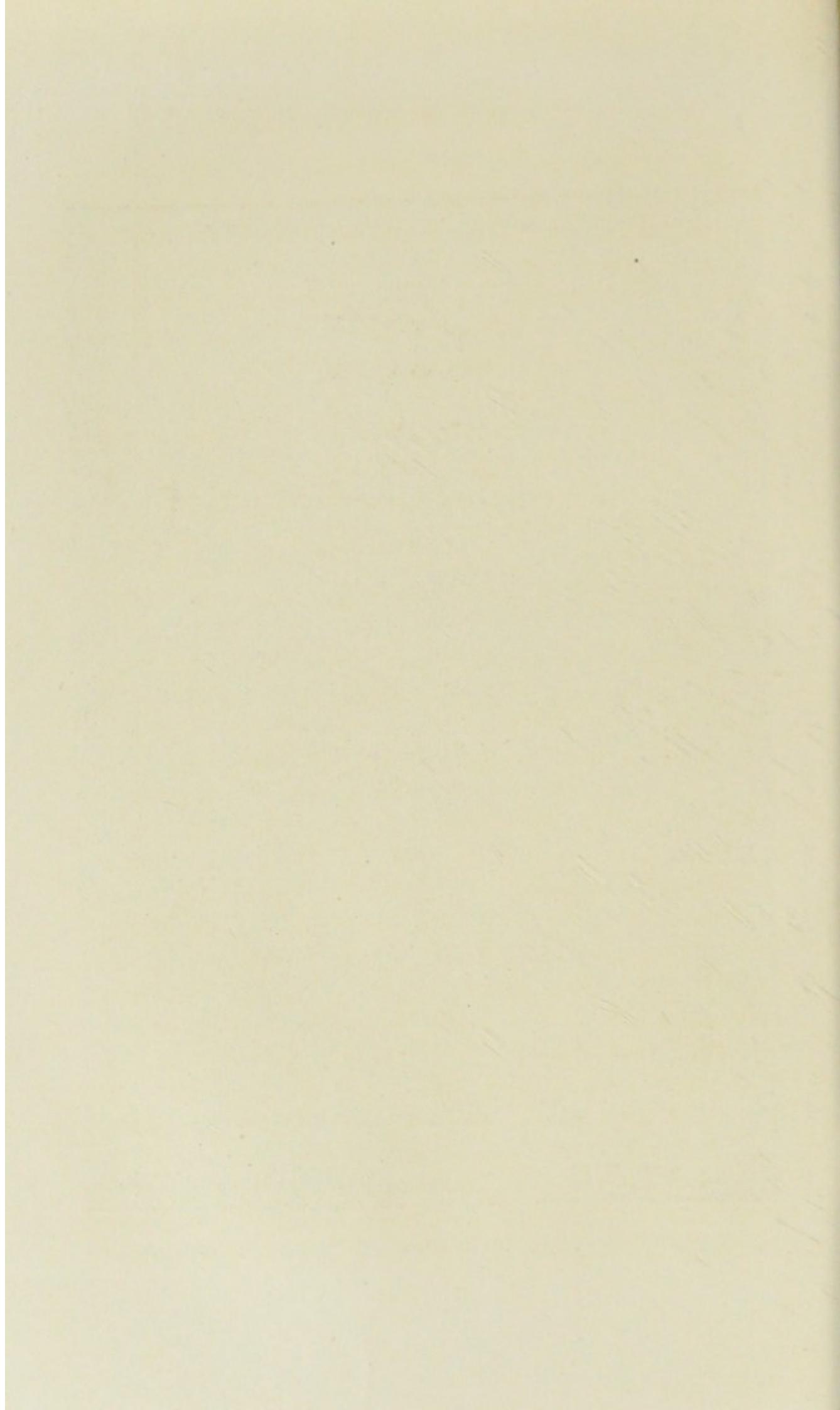
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bottle of quinine in anticipation of malaria, and a big, stout, iron-shod cudgel as a means of warding off the attacks of shepherd's dogs—an unsociable breed of brutes as dangerous to the wayfarer in Macedonia as their Italian cousins are to the tourist in the Roman Campagna. Furthermore, I procured letters of introduction to several people in the interior, trusting that they in their turn would supply me with introductions to others. My expectation was fully realised, and I never went to any town, village, or hamlet without a batch of these useful credentials in my pocket. This is the only way to see Macedonia. By no other means is it possible to come in contact with the people and get a true insight into the life of the country.

Strong in the possession of these weapons, I once more repaired to H.M. Consulate and asked for my passport. The Consul may have been somewhat staggered to hear me describe myself as *Redacteur du X—de Salonique*; but it was beneath his dignity to evince any sign of surprise, and he procured me a *teskereh* without further demur. This was a very imposing document, 16 inches in length by 12 in breadth, headed with a mystic design, which looked like a cross between a spider and a swallow, but in reality was the imperial polygram. The document, polygram and all, cost me five shillings, the cavass's *bakshish* included, and even as a mere literary curiosity was cheap at the price. It is an official recognition of my claims to the title of *ghazetdji*, or journalist, and it constitutes a far more flattering portrait of my person than the one presented by my looking-glass. Among other things, I am therein described as exceedingly tall, with light hair, and eyes recalling the azure

of the sky, whereas Nature has blessed me with a medium height (unfriendly observers might even call me short without being absolutely guilty of falsehood), black hair, and dark eyes. So remote is prosaic reality from the efforts of Turkish official idealism even in its cheapest form.

CHAPTER VII

FROM SALONICA TO SERRES

THE first part of my journey was of a comparatively unexciting character, as it had to be performed by rail. The train leaves Salonica at 5 A.M.; the consequence was that I had to make two efforts before I succeeded in boarding it. I had decided to start on Monday, September 10, and I did so, but on that day I got no farther than the station. On alighting there I found the train gone. There was no one on the platform except a tom-cat and a Turk. The former was washing his face on the top of a packing-case; the latter stood with a pyramid of luggage by his side, philosophically smoking his morning *tchibook*. He looked for all the world as if he too had missed the train, and was patiently waiting for the next, so I asked him when that was due. He took the pipe out of his mouth and stared at me, then put the pipe back into his mouth and stared at the cat; finally he answered:—

“To-morrow—please God!”

I imitated his stoicism and quietly returned to bed, the wiser for the reflection that it is only the early riser that catches the train in Turkey. Next day, to avoid a similar mishap, I impressed on the servant the importance of calling me before four o'clock in the morning. I made it the condition on which his *bakshish* depended, and went to bed confident that there was no

fear of my being allowed to oversleep myself. The result exceeded my expectations.

I was in the midst of a most fascinating dream—a murder, a mystery, a detective, and complications of a sentimental nature. I was just entering into a subtle psychological analysis when it began to thunder—at least, so I thought at first. The next, and true, impression was that some one was knocking at the door; then a voice—a sweet, small contralto—came through the keyhole:—

“Are you up, sir?”

I looked at my watch: it was 1.30 A.M.

“What the deuce do you mean by calling me at this hour?” I exclaimed, with some, I hope not quite irrelevant, irritation.

“You said you wished to be called before four, sir,” rejoined the voice through the keyhole.

“Go to the devil,” answered I, turning to the other side.

“I beg your pardon, sir?”

His meekness disarmed me.

“Go to bed,” I emended, and he went.

Afraid lest, if I fell asleep, I should miss the train again, I sat up reading till about four o'clock. Then I got up, ordered breakfast, and in less than half-an-hour was driving to the station. The early drive through the town was well worth the sacrifice of a few hours' sleep, including even a psychological dream.

It was a dark, chilly morning. The moon shone tearfully through a thin gauze of vapour, and a few stars blinked sleepily in the grey sky. The minarets and cypress trees of the mosques which we passed on the way loomed eerily in the twilight, and the rattle of the wheels on the cobbles of the pavement sounded

strange in the deep silence of the street. A few baker's shops, cook-shops, and coffee-shops were beginning to stir. Through the half-open shutters of one I caught sight of a line of spits and skewers slowly turning before a red fire, with bits of meat—the famous *Kebab*—steaming upon them. Shiny saucepans simmered in a row over the stoves on the counter of another. Near the end of the town we met several lumbering carts loaded with fragrant newly-mown hay and drawn by loosely-harnessed buffaloes; but apart from these tokens of life the world was fast asleep, and I envied it.

Some English maps do not mark the Salonica-Dede-agatch Railroad at all; others mark it as running across the neck of the Chalcidic Peninsula and then along the littoral to Dede-agatch. They are both wrong. The latter was, I believe, the original plan, but it was abandoned for strategical reasons, and the railway was actually built farther inland, beyond the range of naval guns, a precaution the wisdom of which was amply proved during the last Greco-Turkish War.

The train for some fifty miles runs in a northerly direction, first along the left side of the Gallico (anciently Echedorus), a fairly broad but shallow stream, which discharges itself into the Gulf of Salonica not far from the estuary of the Vardar. Herodotus states that when Xerxes marched through Macedonia on his way to Greece his army drank this river dry. Not a very difficult achievement, one would think, even for a moderately thirsty army at this time of year, but less easy in winter. In this respect the Gallico is like most of the rivers of Macedonia—a mere muddy canal in the summer, after the first rains it swells into a deep and impetuous torrent, overflowing

its banks and washing away whatever may chance to be upon them. Yet, in spite of these periodical deluges, there is one attraction which draws the needy peasants to its treacherous side, and that is nothing less than omnipotent gold.

One of the tributaries of the Gallico is even distinguished by the alluring name of Altin-deré, or Golden-brook. Close to this stream there is a village called Amber-Kioi, and its inhabitants, after a heavy rain, go forth in search of the yellow grains deposited by the flood on the banks. The quantity of the precious metal which they obtain, though insignificant in itself, is sufficient to reward them for their labour; they sometimes make as much as 1s. 6d. a day, which in Macedonia is good pay for ten hours' work.

The *modus operandi* is as simple and primitive as the profits are meagre. The most rudimentary method is to fill a shallow wooden tray with sand, pour water upon it, and then shake it vigorously sidewise and lengthwise, until the water has carried off the earth, and the minute grains of gold dust, being heavier, have settled at the bottom. A somewhat more advanced and complex process is this: A plank with notches, or steps fixed at intervals, is set up in a reclining position. The sand is heaped upon the topmost space, and the water is poured over it by means of a dry gourd attached to the end of a long stick. The earth is gradually washed off, while the ore is arrested by the steps. This operation is repeated again and again, and then the partly-washed gold is shaken in the wooden tray described above.

After a while the railway crosses the Gallico over an iron bridge, and for some distance continues along its right bank. A range of grey cliffs closes in the

view on this side, but on the opposite a broad undulating plain stretches to the foot of a far-off line of hills. Several *tchiftliks*, or farms, are scattered over this plain, but they do not impress one as enjoying a superabundance of prosperity. The land is imperfectly cultivated. A limited number of unenclosed wheat and maize fields, with the crop still standing, and a few poplar trees represent all useful vegetation. The rest is a dreary waste overgrown with lusty weeds. Here and there a quaint structure rises from amidst the waving corn. It consists of a rude platform littered and thatched with straw. The whole fabric, resting upon four high crooked poles, looks like the clumsy nest of some unintelligent bird. It is a field watchman's look-out place.

Farther off a thin column of smoke curls up from the hole in the roof of a shabby hovel which, in the company of other shabby hovels, sidles up against a two-storey house, forming with it three sides of an irregular square, with a court in the middle. The two-storey house is the farmer's dwelling, surrounded by the cottages of his labourers. In the court a flock of geese may be seen splashing in a muddy pool, or a number of fowls digging in a dunghill. These creatures, with a few sheep and cattle which pick up an economical living among the weeds on the waste yonder, form the sum total of animal life.

The sunrise, to which I had been looking forward, proved a failure; a red ball peeped for a moment over the hills; but it almost immediately ducked behind a bank of clouds, as if the sun were ashamed to show his face. A bunch of rays now and again shot through the rifts of the veil and gilded the plain; but the effort was spasmodical and unsatisfactory.

At 6.30 we stopped at Salmanli, a comparatively cheerful little station, with an avenue of acacias along the line, and a small copse of sombre pines and stately poplars a little way off. The clouds, which had been growing thicker and blacker as we moved northward, now dissolved into a dull slow drizzle, which promised anything but a pleasant time to the four English officers of the Mediterranean fleet, who got out here, followed by a gendarme and a quantity of hampers, bags, and kettles enough to victual a man-of-war for a week. They told me that they were going out shooting, and I wished them luck. A few minutes later, when the train started, I saw them from the window trudging perseveringly through the mud, with their guns on their shoulders, dragging their voluminous provisions after them—a typical English party in pursuit of pleasure.

The officers gone, I was left alone with another passenger, less congenial, but infinitely more interesting, than they. It was a Commissary of Police. I must seize this opportunity of observing that I never travelled in a Turkish railway carriage without having a Commissary of Police for a fellow-traveller. Either every other Turk is in the police service, which, considering the condition of the Imperial Treasury, is not probable, or these gentlemen must spend their lives in perpetual, though, so far as one can see, somewhat purposeless motion. The present specimen of the race was a young man with a jaundiced complexion, dark almond eyes, arched eyebrows, and a heavy black moustache. He made no pretence to a chin. He travelled with a batch of official documents tied up in a red handkerchief, which would have easily covered two-thirds of an ordinary billiard table; an old volume

of a Turkish magazine, which he must have read already, or else never meant to read; and a small French dictionary; and he was fond of exhibiting his white teeth and a fair ignorance of French. At an early stage of our journey he addressed me in that language with a note of interrogation at the end of the sentence, the purport of which, when it dawned upon me, reminded me of the Consul's ominous words about espionage.

The Commissary wished to know where I was going. I said "Serres." He further expressed the desire to become cognisant of my name, my age, my occupation, and the object of my journey, as well as how long I intended to stay at Serres. Then, apparently satisfied with the result of the cross-examination, and as if conscious that he had done a good day's work, he slipped off his shoes, stretched himself at full length on the opposite seat—using the batch of documents, magazine, and dictionary as a pillow—spread a second red handkerchief over his face and commenced snoring vigorously. When the tune had reached its highest pitch I was induced to look at the performer, and, incredible to relate, I caught a glimpse of a dark eye peering fixedly at me from under a corner of the handkerchief—a circumstance which upset all my preconceived notions regarding deep slumber; unless, indeed, Turkish Commissaries of Police share with hares and fairy monsters the faculty of sleeping with their eyes wide open. At any rate, the discovery made me keep mine so.

At seven o'clock we reached Sari-Gueul, or the Green Lake, a name applied to a diminutive sheet of stagnant water, as well as to the hamlet near it. The station, as is usual in such cases, was but distantly

related to the village, and might have borne any other name with the same degree of impropriety. It stood about an hour and a half's journey from the nearest human habitation, in the midst of a desolate district with an unproductive population consisting of a sleepy station-master and a pair of sleepy gendarmes. There was not even the feeble apology for a refreshment room found elsewhere.

Before we left this station our compartment received an addition in the form of a one-eyed gentleman of doubtful nationality. He had hitherto been travelling in a crowded second-class carriage and, availing himself of the stoppage, he proceeded to climb along the footboard outside in quest of comfort and pure air. These inestimable blessings he apparently discovered in our compartment, and after cocking his only eye in a manner meant to express intense satisfaction, he opened the door and stepped in.

"Nasty weather," he remarked to me in a kind of French, deliberately picking off the handkerchief, which he had spread over his fez in order to protect it from the rain, and wringing it out of the window.

Handkerchiefs, the critical reader must have observed by this time, play a much more prominent and complicated *rôle* in Turkey than they do in England. In fact, they are put to almost every conceivable use, except that for which they were intended by their maker. We have already seen a handkerchief used as a paper-case, a mosquito curtain, and an umbrella. Over and above these purposes, it sometimes does duty as a basket, a girdle, a turban, a collar, and last, but not least, it serves as a boundary line between the male and the female constituents of a ring of dancers, and supplies the leader of the dance with an effective

ornament for his spare hand. Thus many and various are the uses to which even the simplest article can be turned by the combined forces of necessity and ingenuity.

The country from Sari-Gueul onwards assumes a look of relative cheerfulness. The hills recede farther back from either side of the line, the plain expands, and a larger area of it is tilled. The few villages with which it is sprinkled wear an appearance of less pronounced poverty, and one could almost imagine that the very cows looked less melancholy.

In a field not very far off a peasant can be seen slowly walking behind a plough drawn by a team of oxen, whose faltering steps he regulates with a long prod. Both plough and team recall the days before the flood, and, if the evidence of a picture of Eden which I afterwards saw in a Greek church is to be relied upon, this method of agriculture must go even further back, to the golden age before the fall of mankind from its pristine state of innocence. In that work of art Eve is depicted in a fashionable blue silk gown, plying the spindle, while her lord, in similar attire, is quietly ploughing his solitary furrow with an apparatus of which the present specimen might well be the lineal descendant.

While I was indulging in these philosophical reflections, my fellow-travellers were snoring blissfully, and I hope honestly, in the opposite corners of the seat facing mine—knees bent at obtuse angles, and sole resting against sole. The jerk of the train, as it drew up at Kilindir, interrupted my cogitations and their slumbers. The Italian—for such he turned out to be—opened his unique orb, and the Turkish Commissary both his, and, resuming his sandals, stepped out into the rain.

Before starting on my journey I had had a fairly substantial breakfast, as breakfasts go in the East. But what with the excitement of the early drive, the keenness of the morning air, and the movement of the train, I now began to feel as though a second and enlarged edition of the repast would not be amiss, and I confided my sentiments on the subject to the Italian. I had been trustful enough not to take with me any provisions, except a few sandwiches and a flask of "House of Commons," relying on the railway stations for further supplies. But I was cruelly undeceived. The monocular Italian assured me that it was not worth while getting out, as the station could supply me with nothing eatable. Nor, he added, could I hope to have another meal till I got to Serres, as all the stations on the way were conducted on equally strict abstinence principles.

"But," he suddenly exclaimed, with a gleam of inspiration in his eye, "wait a moment!" and, spreading his handkerchief over his fez, he rushed out of the carriage.

"In less time than it takes to relate," as novelists say, he was back, hauling after him a basket of respectable dimensions into the carriage.

"I had left this in the other compartment," he explained. "There is here enough for two. My wife always insists on providing me with a breakfast fit, so far as quantity goes, for a whale."

While uttering these words of good cheer, he was busy spreading a newspaper over the seat. Then with a flourish of his hand, such as a king might use in bidding a brother king join him in a regal banquet, he said :

"Favorisca, signor!"

I was overwhelmed by this cordial treatment—so different from our own ideas of what is good form towards strangers—and begged to be excused. But he was so pressing, and so obviously sincere in his offer of hospitality, and, moreover, his wife seemed to be such an excellent cook, that at last, moved partly by a desire not to give offence and partly by honest hunger, I accepted the invitation, and added my own slender quota to the mess. My good Samaritan relished the sandwiches, but nothing would induce him to have any intercourse with the “House of Commons.”

“Excuse me, signor,” he answered gravely, “but I tried whisky once, and I swore that it should be the last time.”

“Why?”

“Well,” he replied, with an apologetic grimace, “it tastes—*sauf votre respect*—like bugs.”

I rejoined that I did not know what bugs tasted like, but that I pardoned him for the sake of his wife’s genius, and, being more cosmopolitan in my own tastes than he, I willingly accepted a glass of his Gumendja wine—an extremely thin, but not deleterious, beverage of native growth. In a bumper of this nectar I drank the health of the *illustrissima signora*, who had unconsciously laid me under such an obligation, and her spouse acknowledged the compliment with a courtly bow.

The meal, which included fish and fried brains and other good things, was wound up with some excellent peaches and apples from Uskub. But, long before we reached the dessert, I had been captivated by my host’s open-hearted kindness. It should be mentioned that he insisted on my using the only

tumbler first, and in every other respect, *ab ovo usque ad mala*, he was the personification of southern urbanity. He never asked for my name, and I, of course, did not like to appear more inquisitive. So that to this day I have no idea who my entertainer was, except for the information which he incidentally dropped, that he was an engineer employed on the line. His hospitality was manifestly prompted by the purest motives, perhaps strengthened by the Italian's good-will towards the Englishman. Nor is this the only time during my travels in Macedonia that I was indebted to an Italian for a meal—but that is another story.

Having touched upon the feelings with which Englishmen are regarded in this part of the globe, I am tempted to say a few words more on the subject. To the Turk, I am convinced from experience, an Englishman is an infidel dog, just like the rest of them, only he happens to have somewhat sharper teeth than most, and is therefore entitled to a certain amount of consideration. This is the view held by Turks of all classes, and in dealing with Turkish officials it is well to bear it in mind. An English gentleman in the presence of a Turkish Pasha need not, as some authorities maintain, "sit on the edge of his chair with his hands crossed over his stomach as a sign of respect." Indeed, that is the worst sitting posture he can adopt. It humiliates him, not only in his own eyes, but, what is worse, in the eyes of the Pasha. The Turk, despite his haughty demeanour and contempt for the *giaour*, is an intellectually weak animal, and nothing impresses him more than a firm and manly attitude. This is a trait in his character which is often ignored by people who ought to know

better. Hence the innumerable difficulties and diplomatic failures of western politicians in their dealings with the Porte.

The wax and wane of this or that European power's influence with the Sultan depends quite as much on the ambassador's personality as on the size of the power which he represents. The weight of a strong personality, everywhere great, is nowhere greater than in a country where so much rests in the will of individuals. Law in Turkey is but the shadow of a name. In reality it is the minister of the law who rules, and happy is the man who succeeds in mastering that minister. English *prestige*, as every one knows, has suffered much of late years in the Near East. The causes of this decline are partly political—we barked too much and bit too little over the Armenian and other questions—but, it should be said, more than partly personal. The *Civis Romanus* is no longer the redoubtable personage he was in Palmerston's day, yet there still survives the memory of the awe which he once inspired, and much can still be done by those who know how to turn that sentiment to account. The way of doing it, however, is not by "sitting on the edge of the chair with one's hands crossed over one's stomach," but otherwise.

With regard to the other nationalities in Turkey, the Bulgarians and the Servians are too much engrossed in their love for the White Tsar to care much for the English. Their confidence in Russia's might and friendship is such as to render them comparatively indifferent to the feelings of England. The Greeks are the only race in the Near East who entertain a genuine regard for the English. In my sojourn in the towns, both on the coast and in the interior of Macedonia, I

was amazed to find the South African War as common a topic of discussion as it was in England at the time, and the enthusiasm or the sympathy, with which the news of each good or ill stroke of luck that befell our arms was received, was such as would have astonished some British pro-Boers. People who in ordinary circumstances seldom read a newspaper, literally devoured the belated journals which reached them, and eagerly waited for fresh issues. Nor was their partisanship of the blind and unreasoning kind. Most of those with whom I discussed the question seemed quite alive to the chivalrous and sentimental side of the affair. "But," they said, "England's cause is the cause of civilisation, and no friend of civilisation can help wishing it a complete and speedy success."

An extreme and, in its expression, rather touching instance of this feeling of Anglophilia came under my notice at Salonica. Some of the English residents in that city pointed out to me the shop of a Greek shoemaker, and told me that its owner, when the war subscriptions were started, appeared before one of the members of the English colony, and after some hesitation explained that he wished to contribute something to the fund, but, being very poor, all that he could afford to give was this—and he produced from under his apron a pair of boots made with his own hands. That shoemaker was a happy man when he was told that his donation was accepted and appreciated.

But it would be idle to quote instances. Wherever I went I found the same atmosphere of sincere friendship for England and the English, and I have no doubt that it was to this circumstance that I owed in a large measure the many tokens of regard which rendered my

roamings in Macedonia more pleasant and less perilous than I had been led to anticipate.

Meanwhile, the train was moving at the rate of, I should say, thirty-five kilomètres (about twenty-two miles) an hour—a very creditable performance for a Turkish train—and soon after eight o'clock we reached Doiran, according to some the real Green Lake (Prasias) of the ancient Greeks. The station lies not far from the eastern shore, and from that point the passenger commands a good view of both lake and town. The latter is built at the foot of a black mountain, which rises on the farther side, and its wealth of trees and minarets stamps it at once as a place where the Blessed Prophet has a multitude of followers. The minaret is as sure a sign of the presence of the Turk as the coffee-shop is of that of the Greek. The Bulgarian is too unobtrusive by nature to possess a conspicuous badge. Both his religious and his political sentiments are alike lacking in colour, and do not call for loud expression, such as the pious Turk seeks and finds in his house of prayer and the expansive Greek in his house of palaver.

The lake is large, and its green, gently-waving waters, surrounded as they are by an amphitheatre of imposing mountains, present as successful a combination of land and waterscape as a tourist's eye can wish to see anywhere. It is, in fact, one of many pieces of magnificent scenery which makes one wonder how Macedonia has hitherto escaped the fate of Switzerland, North Italy, and other resorts dear to the man from Cook's and his flock. Is it that the good god Pan, to whom the peasants still do homage, has, in return for their worship, undertaken to protect their rural privacy from the profanation of the foreigner's

foot? This explanation, I fear, is too sentimental to be true; but a moment's cool reflection supplies the real reason. A country in which a Commissary of Police and a Colt revolver are the complete traveller's inevitable companions is not the most attractive or accessible hunting-ground to tourists of the "coupon" type.

The minarets of Doiran, though forming a conclusive proof of the creed of the majority of its inhabitants, are no index to their nationality. The population, Christian as well as Mohammedan, which is estimated at between seven and eight thousand, in common with most of the people along the railway line as far as Demir-Hissar, speak the Bulgarian language, although Turkish also is not unknown in the larger towns. To my queries concerning the nationality of these people I received two answers, contradictory in appearance, yet easily reconcilable by those who are familiar with Eastern ways of thought and expression. The Commissary, being a Turk, called them Greeks, or rather Romans, *Roum*. He was thinking of their religion. To him Christian and Greek were convertible terms. The engineer, being a European, called them Bulgars. He was thinking of their language. By a simple algebraical operation one gets the nett result, "Christians speaking a Slavonic idiom," which is as far as the cautious student can go with a clear conscience.

The railroad at Doiran quits its northerly course and turns to the east. The country which it traverses is both picturesque and prosperous. Culture improves apace, the fields are better tilled, and the hills are covered with trees. This improvement is partly due to the industry of the Slavonic peasantry of the district,

and partly to the abundance of water, rivulets and canals being in evidence everywhere. The monotony of the everlasting maize is here relieved by rice plantations and green shady orchards.

Akindjali, the first village after Doiran, at which the train stops for a few minutes, offers a marked contrast to those we have left behind. It is situated in a splendid valley hemmed in by rocky heights on both sides. As the train slowly sped between them, one could catch sight of the clouds nestling in the hollows of the mountains, or encircling them in a cloak of white mist, out of which emerged their jagged peaks, black and proud and defiant.

Another half-hour has brought us to Poroy. At the foot of yon frowning mountain, a long way from the station, crouches a confused mass of cottages with a few white minarets looming through the mist: this is Mohammedan Poroy. But behind the beetling brows of the mountain, though invisible from the road, there are two more Poroyes, one of them Greek and the other Bulgarian, or, I ought to have said, one orthodox and the other schismatic; so one gets here the whole Macedonian question in a nutshell—Slav pitched against Greek, and both faced by the common enemy, against whom, however, they neither can nor will combine. It is also a significant fact that the Mohammedan village occupies the fertile plain, while the Christians are relegated to the barren rocks.

Farther down we skirt a marsh besprinkled with islets of green rushes—one charitably hopes that this is not the thing marked in the maps as "Lake" Butkovo—and stop at Hadji Beylik, or the Pilgrim Bey's Domain, a small hamlet with a small station. Near the latter a few clumsy buffaloes tethered to their

clumsy carts are calmly chewing their fodder in serene indifference to the rain, which runs off their backs, making their black bristly coats shine with unwonted purity. Buffaloes seem to be the only thoroughly contented subjects of the Sultan. Their contentment is probably due to the thickness of their skins more than to the intrinsic happiness of their lot. Yet even buffaloes have been known to lose their temper, and then they are exceedingly dangerous.

Soon after, the train crosses the Struma and turns to the south-east, and in a few minutes we are at Demir-Hissar, of which more anon.

It is 10.10, raining harder than ever. My Italian friend bids me *addio* here, and vanishes into the mist, leaving behind him the memory of a good breakfast to me, and the remnants of the same to the Police Commissary, who accepts the gift with the eagerness of a Turkish Government official.

We pursue our south-easterly course with only one stoppage at Prossnik, a dismal little station with a pump and a couple of gendarmes outside. The village for once happens to be within hailable distance, and, despite the rain, it presents a very respectable and almost cheerful appearance. There is a decent-sized church with a low tiled roof; but, by way of compensation for its Christian humility, it rejoices in a tall square belfry, composed of four arches poised on the shoulders of one another. There are also some comfortable two-storey houses, in addition to a number of less pretentious dwellings and barns. Many ricks of corn can be seen piled in the open fields, a prosperity due in great measure to the vicinity of a tributary of the Struma and to the absence of a Turkish population.

The river at this point bends into the form of an obtuse angle, between the sides of which lies a perfectly level plain. In the middle of this plain stands the township of Djoumayá, also known as Barakli, or Lower Djoumayá, in contradistinction to Djouma, Balyá, or Upper Djoumayá, which is two days' journey from the former, near the Bulgarian frontier. The name of the place, derived from the Turkish word for Friday, is due to the market, which is held here on that day of the week, and which is frequented by the inhabitants of the whole district.

The town consists of some 1200 houses, which multiplied by 5—according to the beautiful method of reckoning population in the interior of Turkey—gives a rough total of some 6000 souls. Out of these, 5000 are Christians and the rest Mohammedan. The Christian community is largely made up of Wallachs and Bulgars, both of whom belong to the Patriarch's church, call themselves Greek, and support Greek schools attended by over 500 pupils of both sexes. The Bulgarian Exarch's propaganda is working hard to gain over this district, and with that view it has established in the town a school, which, however, can hardly boast twenty scholars, and those imported from outside. Pupils, unfortunately for the Bulgarians, do not propagate like plants, and the stock has to be kept up by continuous importation.

Djoumayá presents a phenomenon, by no means unique, of a Wallachian- or a Bulgarian-speaking population considering itself Greek. With regard to the Wallachs this is the general rule throughout Macedonia, Epirus, and Albania. The instances of Wallachs espousing the Roumanian interest are extremely rare exceptions. But on this intricate question of the dis-

tribution of the rival nationalities in Macedonia I intend to speak at greater length in the sequel.

A few minutes after 11 o'clock the train pulled up at the Serres station, and the first stage of my journey was accomplished.

CHAPTER VIII

SERRES

HAVING had my *teskereh* duly inspected by a Police Commissary, and my luggage searched for contraband tobacco by the fat Negro—not of the *Arabian Nights*, but of the Ottoman Régie—I hailed one of the stalwart Turkish cabmen who lay in wait outside the station, seeking whom they might drive. To my horror, instead of one there sprang a dozen of those giants, pushing, elbowing, pommelling and reviling each other for the possession of the prize, namely, my luggage. They did not trouble about my person, for their cabmen's hearts told them that whithersoever the luggage goes thither its owner is bound to follow. At last I brought the combat to an end by jumping into the nearest of several rheumatic vehicles—a feeble travesty of a landau, bristling with nails where no nails should be.

A quarter of an hour's furious jolting and jerking through a maze of ill-paved, half-deluged lanes brought me safe, though much shaken, to the Hôtel de l'Europe. A glance at the interior of the establishment satisfied me that there was little of Europe about it, except the name. For the moderate sum of $7\frac{1}{2}$ piastres (about 1s. 6d.) a night, I secured one of the two bedrooms which stood on the first and only floor, gaping at each other across a bare spacious hall with a spacious balcony at the further end. The house had evidently

seen better days. The room into which I was shown was an apartment of palatial proportions, its carpetless and undulating floor forming a kind of ocean upon which a few pieces of furniture floated, not unlike the broken-hearted survivors of a shipwreck. Its chief ornament was a trio of high-rouged, fly-blown French beauties, who leered indecently at me from their rickety frames—the three Graces in reduced circumstances.

Having established myself in the midst of this senile and comfortless magnificence, I proceeded to inquire about meals. My emotions can be more easily imagined than described when I found that there was no food to be had at the hotel nor, on that day, anywhere else in Serres. It was a fast-day in commemoration of the “cutting-off of the precious head of St. John the Baptist,” a day, in the words of the Greek calendar, to be kept in “idleness and starvation,” and no *restaurateur* would imperil his social and financial welfare—to say nothing of his soul—by opening his shop on that day. The Greeks are strict in the observance of the regulations of their Church, but I had never before met with so extreme and, subjectively speaking, so excruciating an instance of austerity: a whole town in a starving mood was a painful revelation to me. I remonstrated with the hotel manager:—

“Is it just, is it right, is it saintly, is it even humanly reasonable, my dear *Kyrie*, that I should condemn myself to the worst of deaths, because St. John some two thousand years ago allowed his precious head to be cut off?”

“It is not lawful to argue about such matters.”

“I do not wish to argue; I wish to eat!”

At last, by dint of patient persuasion and some silver, I contrived to obtain a little bread and cheese and some grapes. That was enough for the present. As for the future, St. John surely could not have his head cut off every day.

In this frame of mind, resigned, though not quite happy or even moderately satisfied, I stepped out upon the balcony and stared helplessly at the lofty flag-staff of the brand-new Bulgarian Commercial Agency opposite. So far as I can recall, thoughts of self-destruction were uppermost in my mind, but my heart yearned for a meal.

The waiter in his shirt-sleeves and in the familiar style peculiar to Greek waiters and to no one else under the sun, stood beside me, volunteering a vast amount of, I dare say, accurate and useful, but utterly irrelevant information about men and things—"and that gentleman in fez, *Kyrie*," he continued, pointing to some one passing under the balcony, "is Mr. G. of ——" Now, that was an exceptionally interesting piece of news. I had a letter of introduction to Mr. G. of —, and it was my intention to seek him out at the earliest opportunity.

"Run down and ask him to step in for a minute," said I.

But the waiter was a youth of resource and a hater of superfluous exertion. Instead of running down, he simply bent over the rail of the balcony and much to my annoyance shrieked at the top of a by no means melodious voice:—

"Mr. G. ! Mr. G. ! there is a stranger here as wishes to speak to your honour !"

Mr. G. was evidently accustomed to the ways of Greek waiters. He quietly looked round, nodded, and

in another minute was mounting the stairs. As soon as he read my credentials he said :—

“ I will send for your luggage presently. Meantime you will come home with me.”

I protested vigorously ; but protests availed naught against Mr. G.'s inexorable kindness. The removal was effected quite easily, as his house was only a few doors off. And thus it came to pass that I found myself installed as Mr. G.'s guest for an indefinite period.

Mr. G., though not a Greek, was married to a Greek lady, and his household was thoroughly Hellenic. They lived in a rambling old house at right angles to another rambling old house, which opened into the same courtyard and was occupied by Mr. G.'s mother-in-law and grandmother-in-law, and their united states of sons and daughters. It was a characteristic Greek household of the patriarchal, or rather matriarchal type ; for the heads of the first two generations were widows. There was Wisdom in that family, and Beauty, and Music, and Mirth.

The first was personified in the form of the grandmother-in-law, a large lady full of years and reminiscences, both of which burdens—notwithstanding the instability of her set of frankly false teeth—she carried with remarkable dignity and grace. She had travelled much. She had been as far as Salonica in the west, and Smyrna in the east ; not to mention a winter spent amid the snows of distant Odessa. And many were the tales she could and would tell of an evening—when her numerous progeny down to the fourth generation gathered round her—of the far-off lands which she had explored and of the strange manners of their inhabitants. Nor were her narratives always wanting in interest.

The imaginativeness of her race was only subdued, but not extinguished, by her age, and a few quaint bits of description that dropped from the ancient lady's lips still linger in my memory. Thus, for example, Russia in winter was "the country in which you can *see* your breath," and Smyrna in summer "a place where you can almost bake your bread in the sun." So much for Grandmother Wisdom.

Beauty was represented by two of her granddaughters. Mr. G.'s wife—a small olive-skinned brunette with a classic nose and great black eyes—was a most favourable specimen of Greek womanhood in its maturity; while her younger sister, fairer in complexion, and yet equally Hellenic in cast of features, exhibited the same beauty in the flower. Music and mirth were the common heritage of all the members of this model family, male and female, young and old alike, as will be seen from the way in which my first evening with them was celebrated.

Students of folk-lore are familiar with the startling effects sometimes produced in fairyland by the mere touch of a certain miraculous talisman. Well, the entertainment of that evening in felicity of conception and speed of execution was not unlike the work of such a talisman. The fast ended with the setting of the sun, and there followed a copious, though extempore feast, in which all the members of the matriarchal community participated, and also two or three specially-invited guests. One of these was a Greek schoolmaster from the interior—a young man equally remarkable for his wit and for his restlessness of temper, two qualities which made his scholastic career a source of many sorrows both to himself and to others. But on this occasion the jovial was the only visible

side of his character, and there is no need just now to dwell on the other.

As soon as dessert came on, the lively young teacher was called upon to oblige with a song. Without waiting for a second invitation, he burst into a patriotic ballad, which he sang with considerable skill and a prodigious amount of feeling, so much so that on looking round I perceived more than one pair of great black eyes glistening with infectious tears. The song had for its theme the last Cretan struggle and its horrors. It contained a spirited exhortation to the mothers of the warriors to mourn not for their sons, "for they had gone forth to fight for freedom," and concluded with the liberation of the hapless island and a prophecy of a similar deliverance for Macedonia and the other limbs of "Enslaved Hellas." All this in the teeth of a Government which taboos the classical names of the provinces, and considers Dante a dangerous article of importation !

My subsequent experience showed to me even more clearly the futility of all attempts to stifle national feeling. In the privacy of their homes, and when sure that there is no spy within earshot, the Greeks of Macedonia often give vent to patriotic sentiments, all the more fervent because as a rule they have to be suppressed by the dictates of prudence. Sometimes these expressions take the less poetical form of criticism and invective against the powers that be, and the things that are said on one of those occasions ought to be enough to keep his Sultanic Majesty's ears burning through all eternity.

The ballad was followed by many other songs of a lighter and less revolutionary character. Then a string band was improvised out of a violin, a guitar, and a

mandolin, and the vivacious pedagogue had an opportunity of showing that he could handle the amateur fiddlestick with the same ease with which he presumably wielded the professional birch.

Later in the evening some one suggested dancing. The hall was cleared, but not swept, and in the twinkling of an eye six or seven pairs were waltzing amidst clouds of dust, while the boards of the old house shook and creaked ominously beneath their feet; and the gifted schoolmaster, violin under chin, threaded his way between the whirling couples with an acrobatic dexterity that won my unqualified admiration.

And so the evening wore on in harmony undisturbed by a single note of discord, musical or otherwise, and when the party broke up, I retired to the room assigned to me to dream of fiddling schoolmasters and dancing dervishes.

During the night the sky cleared up, and on the next day it was quite possible to walk through the streets without fear of drowning. There are few towns in Turkey more thoroughly and delightfully Oriental in appearance than Serres: its narrow, crooked, silent lanes and blind alleys, with the projecting upper storeys of the houses often meeting in a close embrace overhead; its roofed bazaars perfumed with the drowsy spices of the East and always cloaked in mysterious twilight; the glorious green vines and purple wistaria trained across the roads; and the many mosques and *khans*, are all suggestive of a Haroun-al-Raschid world.

The town stands on the edge of a broad plain which stretches far to east and south, and is irrigated by the Struma and other smaller streams, which embogue into Lake Tachino. It is studded, though sparsely, with maize, barley, wheat, and cotton fields,

as well as with vineyards and a few tobacco plantations—a new and not quite successful experiment. The abundance of natural irrigation renders the environs of Serres a highly-favoured district, which under a commonly decent administration might easily be made into one of the most productive in South-Eastern Europe. Even as it is, such is the fertility of the soil that stakes newly cut and planted carelessly into the ground for the construction of fences put forth leaves, and thus a clumsily-built, artificial enclosure is in the course of a few weeks automatically transformed into a beautiful hedge.

With such advantages to start with, it is not surprising that Serres can boast several public gardens, which lie on the outskirts of the town. Their charm, it goes without saying, owes little to art: where Nature is so bountiful it would be foolish presumption for man to interfere with her work. It consists in a luxuriant vegetation unchecked by billhook, as it is unencouraged by spade. In these gardens the doleful cypress and the lofty poplar rear their graceful figures side by side, from amidst a number of humbler companions. Ancient plane-trees spread out their shadowy boughs over the turbaned heads of long-bearded, mute, and meditative Turks, who, with their shoes ranged in a row behind them, sit cross-legged beneath; telling the beads of amber rosaries, puffing at yard-long *tchibooks* or *narghilehs*, and quaffing infinite quantities of coffee. It is to be presumed that they are enjoying themselves, though they are too proud or too lazy to express their enjoyment by look or gesture or word of mouth.

To this self-same spot they come day after day, sit under the shadow of the self-same plane, and sip their

coffee with the self-same air of stolid satisfaction. This is what they call *keif*, a comprehensive term which has no equivalent in any European language. To them it represents the nearest approach to heavenly bliss possible on earth. We, in our imperfect vernacular, may translate it as a thoroughly passive enjoyment of life—the maximum of pleasure at the minimum outlay of energy.

Your true Turk has solved the problem of silent emotion. He has only a limited stock of words, and an even more limited stock of ideas. And yet he has something that is perhaps better than either words or ideas. He has a plentiful stock of sentiment, not indeed of the soft Western kind, but of the stern sort, which one sees, and shudders at, in the pages of the Old Testament. He feels the beauty of nature deeply, though it has never occurred to him that it is possible or necessary to express that feeling in words. He expresses it more emphatically by building his house on a site commanding a beautiful view, and by sipping his coffee and telling his beads under a beautiful tree. His feelings have not yet attained the level of utterance. Yet his taciturnity is of the kind that has ere now earned men a reputation for wisdom, and your genuine Osmanli is too wise to risk that reputation by opening his mouth except, of course, for the very elementary purpose of inserting nutriment. But for this total lack of sprightliness the Turks might well be described as a nation of bearded babies. There is, however, one emotion that no Turk is shy of expressing. That is wrath. When in that mood he is so eloquent that even a donkey can follow his meaning.

Further down along the Panaghia — the stony water-course which skirts the town—a row of weeping

willows seem to bend over the banks, anxious to mix their tears with the jejune stream, which at this time of year needs reinforcement sorely. The ruins of a fortress frown upon this lowland scene from the summit of the hill, which was once crowned by a citadel, before citadels went out of fashion. Still lower down may be seen the bare walls of a mosque burnt many years ago, but never rebuilt or repaired. The Turk, next to erecting a new building, hates nothing more than repairing an old one. *Laissez-faire* is his motto, and he acts up to it with shocking consistency. Everything — ruination included — is from Allah, and who dares oppose Allah's will, or who can stay His hand? So, when a building falls into decay, it is first piously suffered to go from bad to worse, and then it is abandoned. The materials are utilised for other purposes, as they are wanted. In like manner, when the spade accidentally turns up some ancient statue or inscription, it is allowed to remain exposed for some time, and then, if too big to be used *en bloc*, it is broken in pieces and used in lieu of bricks. Sarcophagi fare better. A hole bored in the back and another in the front suffice to transform the tomb of a dead hero into a water-cistern for the use of a living Pasha, while the lid, when turned over, makes an excellent and elegant wayside trough, where weary mules can slake their thirst and bless the man who invented sarcophagi.

As I turned from the contemplation of these ruins, my eye caught sight of a caravan of the last-named animals slowly ambling down the hillside, loaded with what I in my ignorance at first took for colossal hen-coops. On closer inspection they turned out to be *maffas*, or palanquins, carrying inside them Turkish

ladies, jealously guarded against the rays of the sun and the glances of men. Each mule bore one of these canvas cages strung on either side of the pack-saddle, and, as they swayed past, one could hear above the creaking of the *maffas* and the tinkling of the bells which dangled from the beasts' necks, the high-pitched tones of the imprisoned beauties, interchanging compliments, or maybe invectives, across the mule's back. They were returning to town from the heights of Lia Ilia, a summer resort, whither wealthy Mohammedans are wont to seek refuge from the scorching heat and the mosquitoes of the plain.

All this looks undoubtedly Turkish. But appearances here as elsewhere are deceptive. After a few days' sojourn in the place one finds that the Christians are quite as numerous as the Mohammedans. Only the latter, as usual, enjoy the advantages of union, while the former are rent by racial dissensions, intensified by religious hatred. The Greeks form here the bulk of the Christian element, numbering as they do about 18,000, while the Bulgarians, Servians, and Wallachs together barely amount to 2,000.

There is also a colony of Jews who, though few in numbers, are sufficiently fragrant to permeate with their national aroma both the market-place during the week, and the public promenades on the Sabbath. The very ground on which they tread seems to exhale Judaism. This is the great advantage which the Jew enjoys over common races. It is a subtle, penetrating self-advertisement, which he carries with him wherever he goes, and which no human nostrils can ignore. The Turk can only be seen, the Greek is both seen and heard, but the Jew appeals to one's sense of smelling as well. In Turkey this peculiarity is set down to

the sesame-oil, in which the Hebrews, owing to their horror of butter, are obliged to indulge to indecent excess.

I met one of these odoriferous gentlemen at Mr. G.'s one day, and the memory of the encounter lingered in my nose for a fortnight. I felt strongly tempted to address him in Coleridge's words: "Son of Abraham! thou smellest; son of Isaac! thou art offensive; son of Jacob! thou stinkest foully. See the man in the moon! he is holding his nose at thee!"

But I forbore. It was only ten o'clock in the morning.

CHAPTER IX

A STRUGGLE FOR SUPREMACY

SERRES supplies a centre of activity to all the propagandas which strive to establish claims to Macedonia. There are Bulgarian, Servian, and Roumanian missions, each and all of them intent on persuading the inhabitants of the district that they belong to one or the other of these nationalities. The work entails considerable expense, and it is not always attended by a profit proportionate to the outlay. The Roumanians in particular present the dismal sight of a people labouring for a lost cause, or rather struggling in vain to create a cause. Their field of exertion chiefly lies among the Wallachs of Djoumayá, a town mentioned already, about three and a half hours' journey to the north-west of Serres.

The Wallachs, like the Gipsies, are a race of unknown affinities, and it is a matter of wonder that no one has as yet thought to connect them with the two lost tribes of Israel, those standing ancestors of all races in quest of a pedigree. With this exception, few theories have not at various times been put forward to account for the origin of the Wallachs. Some consider them as the descendants of old Roman colonists and legionaries settled in the province during the Empire. Others claim them as the sons of Roumanian shepherds, who at some unknown period of the world's history crossed the Danube at the tail of their flocks,

and gradually spread over the Balkan Peninsula. This is an exceedingly plausible hypothesis. It only wants evidence to become a debatable theory. It is the view maintained by the Roumanians themselves, and it is upon this hypothetical kinship that the latter endeavour to build practical claims to the districts inhabited by the Wallachs. A third hypothesis, preferable to either of the above, both on account of its novelty and of its disinterested inconclusiveness, attributes to the Wallachs a Thracian origin, pretty much in the style of Molière's doctor, who explained his patient's sudden dumbness as being due to loss of speech.

To descend from the ethereal heights of conjecture to more habitable regions. The majority of the Wallachs lead a nomad life : some as shepherds, roaming with their flocks in search of pastures among the mountains in summer, and over the plains in winter ; others as carriers, constantly moving backwards and forwards with long strings of shaggy packhorses and mules. There are also considerable numbers of Wallachs permanently settled in various towns and villages, notably in the neighbourhood of Berat, in Albania ; at Monastir, Kalkandelé, Klissoura, Megharovo, and Niveska in Western Macedonia ; at Vlacholivado of Turkish, and Turnavo of Greek Thessaly ; at Metzovo, in Epirus ; at Djoumayá, Nevrokop, and other parts of Eastern Macedonia. The mountainous districts to the north of Gumendja and west of the Vardar are likewise studded with Wallachian settlements. All these Wallachs speak a dialect closely akin to low Latin, but largely mixed with Greek, and many of them are bilingual, employing Greek in business transactions and in writing generally, while on ordinary occasions they cling to their homely vernacular, pretty nearly as

many educated Scots cling to Gaelic, although English is equally familiar to them. A curious and perhaps not insignificant fact is that the Wallachs, when speaking Greek, do not betray the faintest trace of a foreign accent. Indeed, it is far easier to detect a North Briton, when speaking the language of the South, than a Wallach speaking Greek, which is by no means the case with the Greek-speaking Slav.

With the exception of their patois, everything else about the Wallachs—especially the civilised Wallachs of the towns—is Hellenic: their manners and customs; their legends and ritual songs; their commercial and intellectual life, and their religion are all thoroughly Greek, and on all questions touching nationality they are more Greek than the Greeks themselves. It is over twenty years since the Roumanian propaganda began to tamper with the Wallachs; but, as has been stated already, without any perceptible success. Few of the Wallachs have allowed themselves to be persuaded that they are Roumanians, and those, it is generally asserted, have yielded to other than purely historical arguments.

The vast majority of the race still adheres firmly to the Greek cause, and I have often seen Wallachs, in discussing the fortunes of the Hellenic nation, such as the Fall of Constantinople or the War of Independence, work themselves into a fine enthusiasm and move their hearers, as well as themselves, to tears. Surely this is hardly the stuff of which Roumanian citizens can be made. However, it is more than doubtful whether the Roumanians seriously contemplate the political conversion of the Wallachs. The geographical position of Roumania precludes the supposition that she aspires to territorial expansion in Macedonia.

The only possible explanation of Roumanian policy in this province is the desire to establish claims which, on the ever-expected and ever-deferred day of the dismemberment of Turkey, she may advantageously barter for acquisitions nearer home. There are Roumanian populations in Transylvania and other districts of Austria, on one hand, and of Russia on the other, both adjoining the Roumanian frontiers.

The claim of the Servians to this part of Macedonia is also a modern invention, which has done much to embitter their relations with the Bulgarians. Truth to tell, it is rarely possible to assign to the Slavs of Macedonia a distinct nationality with any degree of certainty. Their language is undoubtedly a Slavonic dialect, purer in the north, more and more mixed with Greek as it proceeds towards the south. Beyond this it is hazardous to go. A Macedonian Slav is equally intelligible, or unintelligible, to the Servian and to the Bulgarian. In some districts the resemblance is closer to one idiom; in others, closer to the other. But this resemblance does not always correspond with the vicinity of the one State or the other. Hence the impossibility of drawing hard and fast lines between the rival spheres of influence. Indeed, the Bulgarians will not admit that there are any Servians, or even Greeks, in Macedonia. To judge by their habitual way of talking of that province one would think that Macedonia is neither more nor less than an indisputable portion of the principality. The Macedonian peasants themselves—excepting those of the extreme south, whose Hellenic nationality has never been disputed—can hardly be said to possess any national soul, or, for that matter, any soul at all. If they are caught young by the Bulgarian propaganda, and reared in its schools, they

are imbued with the idea that they are Bulgarians. If the Servians are first in the field, they become Servians. The race is to the swift and to the rich.

In one and the same household one will occasionally find representatives of all the branches of the human family; the father claiming for himself a Servian descent, the son swearing that nothing but Bulgarian blood flows in *his* veins, while the daughters, if they are allowed a voice in the matter, will be equally positive that Helen of Troy or Catherine of Russia or the Aphrodite of Melos was their ancestress. The old mother is generally content to embody her national convictions in the declaration that she is a Christian. A true comedy of errors in which no one knows who is who, but everybody instinctively feels that everybody is somebody else. Verily no country ever was in such sore need of a herald's office, or of a lunatic asylum, as Macedonia. It may be described as a region peopled with new-born souls wandering in quest of a body, and losing themselves in the search. Roumanian, Servian, and Bulgarian agents are all scrambling for the appropriation of these erring spirits, while learned professors at St. Petersburg and Bucharest, Belgrade and Sofia, are busy manufacturing genealogical trees and national appellations for all and sundry of these bewildering apostles of emancipation.

Servian activity in Macedonia has become more conspicuous since 1896 when, following on the murder of Stambuloff, the Bulgarians attempted to push their interests too energetically. The Macedonian Committee then tried, as it has often done since, to call the attention of Europe to that province by inciting the Turkish authorities to atrocities. They failed, however, and by their action they only succeeded in

awakening the jealousy of the Servians, who made capital of the disfavour into which the Bulgarians had naturally fallen with the Porte, and obtained the recognition of a Servian Consul at Serres, and the right of establishing schools in various parts of Macedonia. The normal animosity between Serb and Bulgar has recently been accentuated by the recognition of a Servian Bishop at Uskub, a district which the Bulgarians, rightly or wrongly, regard as lying within their own sphere of influence.¹

But on the whole, the Servians and the Bulgarians, though their interests often clash, find comparatively small difficulty in reconciling them to mutual advantage. The great and far-reaching struggle, beside which the Bulgaro-Servian antagonism pales into a petty family squabble, is the struggle between Slav and Hellene: two forces not unequally matched, if historic *prestige* and intellectual superiority are allowed to counterbalance the bulk of numbers. And historic prestige, it should not be forgotten, forms in Eastern politics a far more potent factor than the ordinary Western mind is able to comprehend. The importance of this factor is nowhere more apparent than in Macedonia, and, of all parts of Macedonia, especially in Serres and the adjacent district.

In the town itself the Greek element is by far the most powerful, both on account of its overwhelming majority and its material and mental superiority. They maintain a first-class Greek gymnasium and other

¹ Though the appointment of the prelate in question was officially sanctioned as early as 1898, his actual consecration did not take place till 1902, owing to the bitter hostility of the Bulgarian Exarch, who, supported by an angry public opinion in the Principality, threatened to resign and to do all manner of unpleasant things. But the Servians, thanks to the aid of Russia, finally prevailed.

schools for boys and girls. The efficiency of the gymnasium was brought home to me in an amusing manner. I found the teachers in the habit of facetiously applying to one another the sobriquets of Bentley and Porson. I thereupon could do no less than retail to them some of the stock anecdotes concerning those scholars. One could imagine the famous Cambridge dons smiling in their sleep of ages at hearing their names employed as household words in the interior of Macedonia. It would have done Porson's humorous heart, in particular, good to listen to the Homeric laughter with which his Greek puns were received by people to whom Greek is not a dead dictionary-language.

On the thirst for knowledge displayed by the Greeks everywhere many travellers have commented, the last and not least of them being Sir Richard Jebb,¹ and indeed, it forms one of the most striking and most hopeful features of their national character. But at Serres I met with an illustration of this trait, which, were it not as well attested as it is, I should have hesitated to credit or to repeat. Opposite my host's house there lived two poor students, so poor that, in order to save the expense of a lamp, they used to do their lessons by moonlight, whenever there was a moon generous enough for the purpose. Mr. G. noticed this circumstance one evening by accident and, moved to pity, did his best to illuminate the path of learning for them.

Serres is also the see of a Greek bishop. The prelate reigning at the time of my visit was spoken of as an individual of exceptional ability and great force of character. The vigour with which he protected the interests of his community against the Slavs, and the

¹ "Modern Greece," 2nd ed., p. 117.

fearlessness which he displayed in his attitude towards the Turkish authorities, commanded the respect and admiration of his flock. It should be borne in mind that a bishop in Turkey, beside and beyond his purely spiritual jurisdiction, enjoys a considerable measure of political power. His appointment is made by the Patriarch, and sanctioned by an imperial *firman*. As the Patriarch is considered by the Porte the head of all the orthodox *rayahs* in the Sultan's dominion, so a bishop, in a smaller way, is the head of his particular diocese, and represents it in the local governor's council. Moreover, he exercises a pretty extensive judicial authority. All cases of marriage, divorce, and inheritance are tried before the Episcopal Court, and the Christians in matters of a civil nature need not go to the Turkish tribunals. This jurisdiction opens up possibilities for other than spiritual gain, which, when added to the perquisites derived from the ordination of priests, the management of church property, and the performance of various fee-begetting functions, makes a bishopric something well worth having. This is understood by the people, who do not usually grudge a bishop his opportunities, so long as he preserves some degree of moderation in exploiting them.

The bishop in question, to his diplomatic ability, joined a cupidity only equalled by that of a Turkish government official. The poor man had caught the *maladie du pays*—which is not home-sickness—in a very bad form. As a proof of the lengths to which he would go, heedless of public opinion, in order to secure a pecuniary advantage, was quoted the following fact. A short time back the lease of a farm belonging to the diocese had fallen in, and bids had been made by various would-be tenants. After having been in

the market for some months, to everybody's surprise, the farm was let for a rent considerably lower than the offers already made. The surprise developed into a different kind of emotion when it was found that his holiness was a sleeping partner in the concern.

This and other stories pointing a similar moral were frequently and freely discussed, and yet the bishop was not unpopular. "In these days of storm and stress, we want a strong captain, and when we have got such a one we must not be over-particular about the price." That was the general opinion. It must be noted, however, that prelates of the Greek Church are rarely loved of the people. Indeed, the cases of a bishop living on good terms with his flock are exceptional. As a rule a Greek community is divided into two camps: the bishop's friends and the bishop's foes—the party in office and the opposition—and when, as it not unfrequently happens, the latter get the upper hand, the bishop is greeted at church with the cry "Unworthy!" (ἀνάξιος) which is for him the signal to seek new pastures.

The explanation of the unpopularity of the higher clergy is to be sought in the fact that these ecclesiastics, who must be celibates, are chosen from among the monastic orders, which have never managed to hit it off with the laity. So much so that even money received from a monk is spent at once, for it is supposed to bring ill-luck to the recipient. When a bishop or a patriarch is deposed, he usually retires to the monastery from which he originally hailed. Like everything else in the East, episcophobia is a sentiment of ancient growth. In Byzantine times the higher clergy were hated because they discountenanced popular progress. The bishops being drawn, as they

were, from the monasteries, which owed their prosperity to imperial munificence, cultivated close and cordial relations with the Court, and favoured its efforts to extend the power of the Palace over the Church. After the Ottoman conquest they continued a similar policy, and perpetuated the causes of friction. The Patriarch was wont to purchase his throne from the Porte, and then to recoup himself by selling the bishoprics to the highest bidders. The bishops, in their turn, recouped themselves by ordaining, not the fittest, but the most liberal of the candidates for holy orders, and generally fleeced their flocks by illegal extortion.

A marked and pleasant contrast to the ill-feeling against this hierarchy of robbers is offered by the extremely good understanding which obtains between the laity and the secular clergy. The latter are generally married, and share all the experiences, joyful and sorrowful, that ordinary humanity is heir to. The parish priest, intellectually and socially, is often inferior to many of his own parishioners, and yet he is not despised for his want of rank or learning. The office is revered for its own sake, and part of the reverence due to the cloth clings to the person of the wearer. In the country the village priest may be seen tilling his own field, digging in his kitchen-garden, and engaged in all the other pursuits of an everyday farmer. He mixes with his fellow-villagers on a footing of equality without lowering himself in their eyes.

Broadly speaking, a Greek *papas* stands somewhere between the Roman priest and the Protestant parson. Without laying claim to any supernatural and quasi-divine position, he still is regarded as something more than a layman in black. The popularity of the lower, like the unpopularity of the higher,

clergy dates from older times than the Ottoman conquest, and it is due to a parallel cause. The hundred and fifty years' struggle between the palace and the people, which has often been represented as a purely religious controversy about the worship of images, was really of a political character. It was the policy of the emperors to gather in their own hands all the threads of administration, ecclesiastical as well as civil, and it was the aim of the people to resist all such attempts at centralisation. In its efforts the popular party was seconded by the secular clergy, and the two classes vindicated in a triumphant manner the independence of the popular church in matters of faith and worship. This alliance survived the circumstances out of which it arose, and the feeling of mutual good-will not only outlasted the Byzantine Empire, but became stronger after its fall. During the dark ages of Turkish oppression, and before the renascence of the Greek nation, the parish priest filled the place of a national schoolmaster, and whatever learning and Hellenic culture endured through that period of narcotic stupor is to be ascribed to these poor pastors. This is a service which the Greek people can never forget; nor can it forget the part which the priests played in the struggle for independence and the time of anxious anticipation preceding it. Common sufferings and common achievements have drawn the bonds, which bind Greek laity and clergy together, in a manner hardly paralleled elsewhere.

CHAPTER X

PREPARATIONS FOR DEPARTURE

My original intention was to explore the country south of the railway line before proceeding north. But I was obliged to modify my plan. I was told that it would be extremely difficult to travel north later in the year on account of the badness of the roads and the cold, which sets in early in those mountainous parts, and was advised to avail myself of the few remaining weeks of summer. So after a brief stay at Serres, spent in preparations and purchases, I hastened to resume my wanderings. My purchases included a crimson fez and two pairs of saddle-bags. The former as a talisman to ward off the evil eye of brigands, who would have certainly been moved to activity by the sight of a European hat; the latter as the most convenient receptacle for the scant paraphernalia of a *Redacteur du X—de Salonique*: port-manteaux are out of the question in rough travel.

The saddle-bags were procured for me by Mr. G.; but as to the fez, I insisted on buying it myself.

"The Hebrews will cheat you if you go alone," he said.

"No, they won't," answered I, and walked to the bazaar with the quiet confidence of the inexperienced.

I had not gone far when a crowd of Jewish shopkeepers assaulted me, all with one accord and with one voice placing their wares at my disposal. Socks

and scimitars, penny whistles and slippers, oranges, and trousers, and the things worn beneath, were simultaneously offered for my inspection. With some difficulty I extricated myself, and, followed by the whole tribe of Juda, halted before the premises of an ancient patriarch. The front of his booth was hung with strings of fezes of all sizes and various shades of redness. The patriarch instinctively divined what I wanted. Before I mentioned the word "fez" down came the strings.

"This is the article for your honour. Look how bright it is. Surely the juice of a pomegranate is not ruddier than this fez. Behold its shape; it is tall and comely as a minaret. It is the fez that all the Pashas wear. Our Moutessarif ordered a dozen from me only the other day."

I availed myself of the first pause to ask a question as to the price.

"Pay what you like, Effendim. I know a gentleman like you will not rob a poor wretch like me."

"I will pay you two metallics (one penny sterling), then," said I, facetiously.

"You are joking, Excellency," answered the Hebrew, reproachfully.

"What is your price?"

"Well, from strangers I always demand thirty piastres (six shillings), but from you I shall be content to accept twenty-five."

"I will give you five."

"No, let us say twenty."

"You can say twenty. I will say seven and a half. This is the last word"—and I moved off in the direction of another booth across the road.

The patriarch rushed after me and pulled me back by the sleeve.

"Say seventeen and a half, Excellency," he implored.

"No!"

"Fifteen."

"No!"

"Thirteen."

"Thirteen is an unlucky figure. I will give you ten."

"Very well. You are ruining me, but rather than see you cheated by that man over the way I will let you have it for twelve piastres."

So I bought my fez and then went to another establishment, where I had it ironed. Then I put it on, and strutted proudly to Mr. G.'s, feeling that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like me. On the way I met my host. He eyed me critically for a moment, and then asked:

"How much have you paid for it?"

"Twelve piastres for the fez and three for the tassel—fifteen piastres altogether," said I, expecting from him an apology for having disparaged my bargaining capacity. Instead, he burst out laughing.

"Why, my dear good fellow, the thing is not worth more than five piastres, tassel and all. Did I not tell you what would happen?"

In my diary I entered the transaction as follows:—

"5 p. for fez.

"10 p. for experience."

For the sake of convenience I also set my watch *à la Turquie*, as our own method of reckoning time is unknown in the interior. According to the Turkish way, midday is a movable feast, depending on the time of sunrise, but sunset is always at twelve o'clock.

Before leaving Serres I discovered that there was

a British Vice-Consulate in the town, and of course thought it a matter of politeness, as well as of policy, to let her Majesty's representative know that I was going to explore the district within his jurisdiction, and to ask him for information.

The staff of the British Vice-Consulate consisted of an Albanian *cavass*, who mounted guard at the door; a young Greek lady in a pink blouse, who sat at one window; and an old Greek gentleman in a black smoking-cap, who sat at another. Between the two windows stood the lion and the unicorn in their favourite attitude of rampant hostility. At my approach the Albanian *cavass* twirled his moustache—whether in deference or in defiance it would be hard to say. The lion and the unicorn looked as if they had just left off fighting to glare at me. I entered. The young lady offered me refreshments; the old gentleman offered me nothing, not even the information which I expected.

"I am going on a tour in the interior," I commenced, uncomfortably.

My words produced no visible effect on the Vice-Consular countenance.

"My grandfather is a little deaf, sir," explained the young lady; and her pale cheeks assumed for a moment the hue of her blouse. "You had better—better—"; she broke down, overwhelmed with bashfulness.

"—Shout?" I suggested, encouragingly.

"Yes, please, sir," she answered timidly; and I shouted:—

"I am going on a tour in the interior!"

"A tour in the interior!" echoed the young lady's grandfather, looking up in senile wonderment. "What is the use of going on a tour in the interior? I am

seventy years old, and have never yet been on a tour in the interior. There is nothing to be got in the interior, sir. No gold!" And "he hooked the air towards him with all his ten fingers at once" in perfect Dickens style.

We parted mutually mystified. He obviously thought me mad, and I, for my part, thought that the man who made Grandfather Smallweed British Consul must have had some sense of humour in him.

CHAPTER XI

DEMIR-HISSAR

MR. G. fortunately was able to accompany me part of the way on business of his own, and so we ordered a chariot to come round for us on the following day. It arrived full two hours before the time, the charioteer protesting loudly, with much rolling of eyes and twirling of moustache, and with many parenthetical appeals to Allah and his Prophet, that it was not a bit too early. When he realised the impossibility of convincing us, he promptly squatted on the door-step, left off rolling his eyes, but instead rolled a cigarette between his finger and thumb, and waited. Time is no object in the East.

At the last moment we were joined by the versatile schoolmaster of fiddle fame. During the past few days I had seen a good deal of this wonderful individual, for he was a great favourite with the G.s, and the more I saw of him the more deeply interested I grew in his personality. He was a most instructive study of a character not uncommon in these parts. He was, as I said before, a teacher in a village school, but teaching, I soon found, was only a relaxation with him : politics were the serious occupation of his life. In that village, as in many others in Central Macedonia, the feud between Bulgarians and Greeks raged fiercely, and our schoolmaster had thrown himself into the conflict with a zest to be found only in Greeks and Irishmen. The result

was that he came to be regarded by both parties in the light of an unmitigated nuisance, and he was deposed. At the time when I made his acquaintance he was bringing all the resources of his fertile genius to bear upon one object—his restoration. He said that he was travelling on business, meaning thereby political business, as it afterwards transpired, and that he would be glad of a lift; so we gave him a place in our chariot, and merrily rode out of town.

We found the railway station crowded with invalid soldiers on their way to Salonica, and pitiful they were to look at. Their shrunk, livid cheeks, and deep-set, lustreless eyes betokened intense suffering. Many of them were barefooted, others shod with peasant sandals. Their tattered uniforms—two-thirds of a coat and trousers to match—bore eloquent testimony to a long and weary service. And yet there was not the slightest indication of discontent. Were they called upon to march to battle on the morrow, they would obey the summons without a murmur, ay, and fight for their God and His representative on earth better than many a well-fed and well-clad soldier of the West. This is the greatness of Islam. Resignation, which in time of peace turns man into a block of wood, makes a hero of him at the sound of the trumpet-call to battle.

The train was due at 8.30—Turkish time—and, by the grace of Allah and the engine-driver, it arrived at 9.20. We booked to Demir-Hissar, which was to be our starting-point north, and took our seats. Our travelling companions were a party of young Turkish officers in print shirt-sleeves and boisterous spirits. They continually smoked, jested, and roared at each other's stories of gallantry, some of which would have made a green tomato turn red with shame—so said

the witty schoolmaster, and he evidently was an authority on tomatoes, as on most other subjects.

One of these merry blades was in command of a company theoretically engaged in the extermination of brigandage, which, nevertheless, appeared to be flourishing in the district. The name of one chief was especially mentioned with fear, not unmixed with admiration and envy. Dontsos was said to be at the head of a Bulgarian band, which had defied the authorities and terrorised the countryside north of Serres for no less than twenty-five years. This success, however, in justice to the authorities be it said, was not entirely due to his own prowess, any more than were the profits of his career exclusively confined to his own pockets. The authorities had a full share of both the glory and the gain. The only real sufferers had hitherto been the hapless peasants, some two hundred of whom were said to have perished at different times, partly for refusing to supply Dontsos with provisions, and partly for complying with his demands. The peasant in this part of Macedonia stands between Dontsos and the Turkish devil:

Both are mighty ;
Each can torture if derided ;
Each claims worship undivided.

The young spark already mentioned was alone believed to have, during his short career, squeezed over £T.300 from various natives under the pretext that they had been aiding and abetting the brigands.

At 10.20 we reached Demir-Hissar station, and after a lively argument we chartered one of the three quaint things on wheels, which stood outside. It was a hearse-like fabric drawn by three quadrupeds abreast,

small creatures, probably related to the equine genus, and not burdened with more than the minimum of flesh or harness. The other two vehicles, filled with the Turkish officers, followed behind. We moved off at a mournful pace, stumbling against stones, jerked over deep ruts, and splashing through pools of stagnant water, to the knell of the rusty brass bells which dangled from the horses' necks.

Our way lay mostly through an uncultivated waste, broken by four dry water-courses, across the gravelly beds of which we drove gingerly. At rare intervals we passed a hedge of dusty pomegranates enclosing a maize-field. A high ridge of mountains behind, a range of bare hills close on the left, and another far away on the right, embraced a valley which, but for a few Bulgarian and Turkish hamlets scattered here and there, would have presented as perfect a picture of the Valley of the Shadow of Death as can be found in a country not utterly devoid of a human population.

As we drew near the town a few tobacco plantations in blossom greeted our eyes, but failed to obliterate the general impression of desolation. For, not far from them there stood a vast Mohammedan cemetery, its headstones lying about in fragments, its straggling tombs overgrown with weeds, and offering an easy prey to numerous flocks of carrion crows. One of these at the sound of our wheels rose from amidst the habitations of the dead like a huge black pall—an ugly and revolting sight to us, but one to which the inhabitants are only too well accustomed.

Two sheer rocks—one of them capped by the crumbling ruins of an obsolete fortress—with a broad, rapid brook foaming down the middle, form a ravine between the narrow flanks of which is wedged the

town of Demir-Hissar, the "Iron Castle," so called by the Turks on account of the difficulty which they experienced in reducing it to submission five centuries ago. As we entered, a tribe of mountain goats, under the leadership of a long-bearded, long-horned, solemn old patriarch, crossed our path and saluted our nostrils with the rank, pungent odour to which the word hircine owes its particularly untranslatable meaning.

Having engaged two bedrooms in the best inn of the town, we strolled into a chemist's shop next door which was kept by a friend of the versatile schoolmaster. The chemist was a tall and fragile individual with a long face, the cadaverous pallor of which seemed to indicate a regular diet on the contents of his own shop, and was accentuated by an enormous pair of despondently drooping black moustaches. He received us with funereal cordiality and did the honours of his establishment in the way characteristic of the East, namely by offering us cigarettes and ordering coffee. In that shop I met another severed limb of the scholastic body: a second Greek master on the look-out for a post, which, however, being an unambitious and unversatile youth, with no taste or talent for a parliamentary career, he easily found a few days later. In the company of these two devotees of the Muses, who politely offered to act as my guides, I climbed the steep cliff on which stand the ruins mentioned before. These consist of a gateway and one or two stone walls. The ascent wound through the narrow and filthy lanes of the Gipsy quarter, but the view from the plateau, when once gained, was superb.

Immediately below and a little to the left lay the Turkish *mahallah*, spreading over one side of the

ravine, and forming by far the larger portion of the town. On the opposite slope stood the Greek quarter, numbering some two hundred houses—a colony from Melenik, to the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of which it belongs—with a sprinkling of Bulgarians, “just enough to make life worth living,” as one of my guides pleasantly remarked. Between the two quarters rushes the brook, aptly symbolising the gulf which separates the Cross from the Crescent, two forces existing side by side, and yet never meeting. From this height the stream could be seen meandering over the valley until it joined the Struma, which glittered like a long silver thread at the foot of the distant blue mountains in the south. The sun had just sunk behind the western wall of the valley, transforming the sky above into a sheet of gold, edged with pale green enamel, the glow whereof was faintly reflected upon the bosom of Lake Butkovo at the base of the ridge.

An interesting reminiscence of King Philip of Macedon still lingers on these rocks. On the slope of one of them there are two smooth slabs to which the inhabitants apply the quaint name of the “The Princesses’ Washing-boards,” narrating how in olden times the daughters of King Philip used to bleach their clothes on those slabs, just as the maids of Macedonia do at the present day. A big stone jar, discovered among the ruins of the fortress, goes by the name of “King Philip’s Treasury,” and to that king are also attributed by popular tradition the ruins of the fortress. When one considers the waves of barbarism which have swept over the country during the last twenty centuries, these memorials of the great king’s fame, slight and fabulous as they are, have an interest none the less real because

it is not antiquarian. They show that national consciousness is not dead. The glorious past still shines, though with a dim and fitful light, through the misery of the present.

Darkness grew apace, and soon the lights of the town began to twinkle in the depths of the ravine. A strong breeze from the valley wafted to us the notes of numberless frogs and crickets, softened and sweetened by distance. My two companions had all this time been sitting on the corpse of a gun which lay dead and deserted on the very edge of the plateau. They were absorbed in a political discussion in which the words patriarch and exarch, Greek and Bulgarian, orthodoxy and schism were frequently and emphatically pronounced. I interrupted the debate with the suggestion that it was perhaps time we should descend to lower levels. They offered no opposition as they could continue the argument on the way down, which in fact they did, ay, and long after we reached the inn, until they separated for the night. Even then it was easy to see that the subject was not dropped, but only postponed to the next meeting. No other evidence of their Hellenic origin was needed.

Our dinner that night consisted of some cutlets, which we owed to Mrs. G.'s forethought, reinforced by what the inn could offer—a flat loaf of brown bread, eggs, cheese, grapes, and vinegar, which in this district is called wine. This banquet was eaten from plates of tin and with forks of lead, both of which luxuries had to be specially ordered, and ordered more than once. For the officers who had travelled with us and stopped at the same inn, being Turks, naturally engrossed all mine host's attentions. I say naturally, for whether he neglected us or no he was certain to get his money,

and nothing but money from us ; whereas, had he not devoted himself heart and soul, kitchen and cellar, to his Turkish guests, he might have lost his money or got it substituted by something that he had not bargained for.

Dinner over, we went down to the stables to hire a horse for myself. Mr. G. had his own horse waiting for him here, and as for the versatile schoolmaster, he could not make up his mind whether he was going with us or staying behind. The ways of genius are many and uncertain.

The usual practice is to engage horses for the journey only. The *Keradji*, or muleteer, accompanies you, and at the end of the journey you pay him off. My *Keradji* turned out to be a very reasonable man. For a sum corresponding to little over four shillings he agreed to let me have a horse as far as Melenik. I was to form one of a caravan bound for that town, and "personally conducted" by himself and another muleteer.

This business satisfactorily arranged, we retired for the night. I secured my bedroom door, placed my revolver and note-book under my pillow, put the light out and myself into bed, fully resolved to go to sleep. But, alas for the futility of human resolves ! *Le voyageur propose, mais le Khandji dispose*. The pallet on which I lay was as hard as the "Princesses' Washing-boards," only not quite so smooth. It consisted of two planks resting on three packing-cases, and supporting a straw mattress covered with a coarse sheet, which among its virtues did not count immaculate purity. But the hardness of my couch would scarcely have prevented me, weary as I was, from carrying out my resolve, were it not for the legions of "nocturnal

enemies " of all arms by which I felt my body invaded. I then realised for the first time the meaning of a certain Hindoo form of self-mortification. Oh that I were a Brahman, to send my soul forth on a heavenly tour, leaving my senseless carcass behind, a prey to the enemy ! But it was not to be. Resignation was my only resource. Allah's will be done in bed as it is on the battlefield !

In addition to those insidious but inaudible enemies, there were noisy rats holding a race-meeting inside the hollow wall close to my ear, while from the stables under the window came an incessant concert of jingling harness, neighings and brayings, punctuated now and again by a thundering kick against the wooden partition. The whole animal kingdom had evidently conspired to drive me to despair.

However, notwithstanding the strenuous efforts of mine enemies, fatigue, my great ally, finally prevailed, and I sank into a deep, dreamless sleep from which I was roused at dawn by the shrill crowings of many cocks. I opened my eyes and lo ! rosy-fingered morn was smiling at me from over the shoulder of yon blue mountain.

It was 11.40—Turkish time. I got up and performed my matutinal ablutions in a tin basin which, after a long and laborious exploration, I discovered in the hinterland of the premises.

"*Dans la guerre comme dans la guerre,*" was Mr. G.'s cheery comment, when, on emerging from his own room, he witnessed my primitive attempt at a toilet.

Our breakfast was not a very elaborate affair either. A glass of hot milk—real milk, not the spuri-

ous concoction with which the civilised world would fain deceive itself—formed the main part of the meal, followed by a small cup of black coffee and the inevitable cigarette.

Having paid our bill, which altogether amounted to some five shillings, and given mine host a gratuitous lecture on the treatment of guests, we descended the stairs, or rather ladder, leading to the street. Mine host accompanied us to the door with many apologies:—

“They are Turks, sir; they are Turks,” he whispered, jerking his head in the direction of the room in which the officers still lay asleep, and there was a world of meaning in those simple ethnological terms.

We mounted our horses, which waited ready saddled in the street, and retraced our steps to the station. In three-quarters of an hour we managed to cover the distance which had taken us well over an hour the evening before, and found the rest of the caravan prepared to start.

Here I parted from Mr. G. and the versatile school-master, who were both going to Petritz, with a promise to meet them there in the course of a few days, and I joined the party bound for Melenik.

CHAPTER XII

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA

AND a pretty queer party we were. Mine was the only animal provided with a riding-saddle, and it seemed duly proud of the distinction. Not that, absolutely speaking, there was much room for pride. Riding-saddle is a misleading term for which the poverty of our language, when it attempts to embrace the vast variety of Oriental life, is chiefly responsible. What the thing really was cannot be expressed in a single word. Perhaps it would be best to describe it as a shaggy skin-covered seat, with high back-rest and high front-peak, and a pair of coal-scoops hanging from either side by way of a parody on stirrups. This was my mount, a grotesque combination enough, viewed by itself; but it was a masterpiece of art and comfort, if compared with those with which the horses and mules of the rest of the caravan had to be discontented. These were cheap plebeian pack-saddles originally constructed on the pattern of a pig-trough, but on second thoughts inverted into their present use.

The luggage was swung on the right and left of each of these structures, the intervening space was stuffed with cushions—for your genuine Oriental is like Nature herself inasmuch as he abhors a vacuum—and over all were spread blankets and things which for brevity's sake we shall call quilts. My fellow-

sufferers one after another scaled the perilous elevations thus constructed, and settled in precarious discomfort thereon. A gaunt old gentleman in brass-rimmed spectacles, a week's growth of grey beard on his chin, and an inverted flower-pot—what is commonly called a fez—on his head, bestrode one of these giddy heights. He also was a schoolmaster. A second beast with a big brass bell hanging from its neck, carried his spouse, the *Daskala*, or schoolmistress, as she was designated in courtesy, though her Greek, I fear, would not have stood a severe examination. A sweet young schoolmistress, who was the elderly pair's offspring, and another sweet, albeit a trifle corpulent, young lady, who was the offspring's bosom friend and colleague, sat on two lofty piles of bedding, with their skirts decorously spread before them and their toes pointing heavenwards, in an attitude of devotion, on either side.

Their *Keradji*, a Mohammedan armed to the teeth, rode a spare horse, while mine walked by preference, visibly armed with nothing more formidable than a stick, but within the folds of his girdle concealing a revolver and a knife, as I later on ascertained; the law of the land being that the faithful shall have the means of sending the infidel on a long voyage at a moment's notice, while the latter shall have no voice in the matter. The infidel, however, generally tries, and sometimes manages, to place things on a more logical basis. Meanwhile a frisky mule, loaded with empty wine-casks, set the young ladies shrieking on their tottering pyramids by impudently rushing between them and threatening to destroy their equilibrium with its clattering casks. My *Keradji* ran to the

rescue, and by an adroit and unsparing use of his stick—the mule was not his—saved the situation.

By this time the procession was fairly under way. Soon Panaghiotis, my *Keradji*, an intelligent-looking young fellow with a bronzed face and smile-loving lips, lifted his voice in an earnest, if not altogether successful, effort at melody. His Mohammedan *confrère*, considering the attempt as a challenge, forthwith struck up a Turkish love-song on his own account. The effect of this bi-lingual musical contest was not very agreeable to the audience, but it seemed to afford a great deal of pleasure to the performers themselves, and they continued it by fits and starts all the way, encouraged no doubt by the young ladies' ironical applause. So far as my unmusical ear could judge, the victory remained with the Turk—a fact which even Panaghiotis was obliged to acknowledge. But he bore his defeat with great good-humour, observing casually that "the organ"—thereby indicating his throat—"did not assist him"; and backing this apology with a confirmatory cough.

Long before we reached our goal, Panaghiotis and I were great friends. A cigarette politely offered by me and shyly accepted by him, and a sympathetic remark about his "organ" were the first links in the chain of our friendship, which, as we went on, developed at the rate of three miles an hour, that being our average speed of locomotion. He gave me a long and minute—let us also hope authentic—account of his life, from the moment of his birth to modern times.

As is generally the case with histories, the beginning of Panaghiotis's earthly career was enveloped in some mystery. He did not remember his father, who died when Panaghiotis was a tiny little mite; but he

cherished an affectionate, if somewhat hazy, recollection of his mother, who departed this life when he had already attained the mature age of six. Left an orphan, he was reared by kind relations, who sent him to school for a couple of years, and then put him out to service to an innkeeper. This event was the great era from which Panaghiotis dated his subsequent existence. Little by little—"bean by bean," as he graphically expressed it—he worked his way up to his present station of owner of two horses, and a donkey just now laid up at home with a bad leg.

Yet, though contented, he was not happy in his lot. He had an idea that muleteering was not the vocation for which he was meant by nature, though "what can man do? The Fates willed it otherwise at my birth." His brief scholastic career seemed to have left an indelible impression on Panaghiotis's susceptible mind. Perhaps it was not long enough to leave any indelible impressions on his body. At any rate, Panaghiotis carried away from school a lasting regard for learning. In tones sad, but in boldly figurative terms, he likened himself in his ignorance to "a man bereft of eyesight"; and he told me that a short time back, when he was at Serres, he availed himself of the opportunity to attend the public examination at the Gymnasium.

"Ah, what a thing knowledge is, sir!" he exclaimed, and his bronzed features were for a moment lighted up with a beautiful enthusiasm. "How I envied those lads, some of them no bigger than this stick, and they read old Greek faster than I can puff out smoke!" Whereupon, seeing that he had finished his first cigarette, I offered him another, and thereby won his eternal gratitude.

It was interesting to watch the growth of our intimacy. Panaghiotis differed widely from the muleteers it was my fortune to fall in with later on. He was rather reserved at first, and so far from pushing himself into notice, he waited for me to make the first advances. But as soon as he found out that I was not in any way connected with the Government, his heart opened unto me like a thirty-petalled rose in May. Before starting I had asked him if the road was good, and this led to a lively little game of "cross questions and crooked answers."

"Can it be anything but good, seeing that it is the King's road?" he replied, guardedly.

"Are you fond of his Majesty?"

"Who can help being fond of such a sovereign?"

There was a peculiar stress on the ambiguous word "such," and the searching look which accompanied it supplied the necessary commentary. I showed by a smile that I understood, and Panaghiotis grinned back his appreciation of my sagacity.

"And how many hours will it take us to get to Melenik?"

"Six, seven, or eight, as it may chance. It all depends on the state of the road, and," sinking his voice to a whisper, "on the brigands,"—and he laughed merrily at the sight of the effect of his words on me. I discreetly changed the subject.

"Is it possible to get good meat at Melenik?"

"Oh yes. You can have fresh meat every day! They slaughter for the troops."

And having by now got completely rid of his suspiciousness and his shyness, he proceeded to inform me that after the last Greek war the garrison had been reinforced, and that the troops were quartered in

the old barracks built "with Christian blood and Christian sweat" — the meaning of this confidential and somewhat sanguinary remark being that the barracks in question had been built by forced labour. Emboldened by my sympathetic attitude, he then launched forth into a philippic against the tyrant.

"Ah!" he concluded with a deep-drawn sigh. "Who knows? there may come a day when these barracks will shelter those who built them!" This is the hope that keeps despair alive in the breasts of Panaghiotis and all his compatriots. The least, and alas! the most, a stranger can do is to breathe a sympathetic "Amen!"

Meanwhile we struggled on at a foot-pace up the eastern bank of the broad muddy stream, called Strymon by the ancients, and now known as Struma, or Kara-soo. The latter word means Black-water and is the name given by the Turks to all rivers with indiscriminating impartiality. The mule track, rugged and broken, was flanked on the right by a ridge of steep rocks, round the stately crests of which circled rooks and crows cawing hoarsely, while from the crevices on the sides issued the melancholy cooing of the rock-dove.

One hour after our departure from Demir-Hissar station we halted at the foot of the highest of these rocks, where a limpid spring gushes forth from among the stones into a roadside trough made of one log of wood. We watered our horses at it, and while the animals imbibed the cool spring-water, Panaghiotis, the well-informed, pointed out to me with his stick some hollows in the rocks, explaining that those were the imprints of the hoofs and head of *Markokhalis's* horse. In compliance with my earnest request for more light, he favoured me with a legend which, as a true legend

should, clearly accounts for the origin of the spring, and also serves to perpetuate the memory of a great popular hero.

“Markokhalis,” began the *raconteur*, clapping his hands one over the other upon the top of his stick and leaning slightly forward, “was a hero who lived in the days of old when God was wont to grant superhuman strength to men like Alexander, Herakles, and others. This Markokhalis, though not a Greek, was almost as brave as any of them, and, moreover, he owned the most marvellous steed in the wide world. Once, when pursued by the Turks, he leapt with his steed from the opposite bank across the river”—the opposite bank at this point rises to a height of some 300 feet, and the river probably is over 400 feet broad—“and landed upon this rock, where you can still see the marks, and such was the shock that the rock split where the horse’s hoof struck it, and gave birth to this spring, at which your own steed has just refreshed himself. Hence this spot is called Markova Scala, or Marko’s landing-place.”

This is Panaghiotis’s account word for word, and, notwithstanding sundry poetical anachronisms, and the mythical colouring of the details, it contains, as many myths do, a kernel of historic truth. The hero whose name Panaghiotis hellenised into Markokhalis can easily be recognised as Marko Kralyevich, the Servian warrior, whose achievements, as well as those of his wonderful steed Sharats, form the subject of many a Servian folk-ballad. He flourished in the fourteenth century and played a considerable—though exaggerated by tradition—part in the last death-struggle of the Servians with the advancing hosts of Islam.

Behind these rocks, but not visible from the bridle-

path, lie two Slavonic villages, Radova and Poulioiva, and the whole district on both sides of the river is peopled by a Slavonic-speaking peasantry, poor, yet industrious, with sullen faces reflecting in their stolid rigidity the shadow of long years of slavery, and easily distinguishable from the mobile features of my Greek friend, philosopher, and muleteer, and of his compatriots of Demir-Hissar and Melenik.

As a general rule through great part of Central Macedonia one finds the Slav language predominating in the open country, while the Greek holds sway in the towns. But language is not an unerring guide to the explorer of nationalities, as there are large numbers of Bulgarian-speaking peasants who yet regard themselves as Greeks by descent, explaining that their speech is due to their contact with their Bulgarian neighbours: "They would not learn our language, so we had to learn theirs."

But the various races are so hopelessly entangled and intermingled in these midland districts, that it would not be safe or scientific to draw any positive deductions from appearances. After making due allowance for the explanation quoted above, we can only remark in general terms that the tiller of the soil, as often as not, is a peasant who, though he may call himself Greek, or Bulgarian, or Servian, according as sentiment or perchance interest, or the state of the political barometer, may prompt him, bears in his countenance the impress of a non-Hellenic origin. The farther north one moves, the more pronounced these characteristics become.

Soon after we left Markova Scala we came in sight of the *sali*, or ferry-boat, a clumsy raft worked by means of a rope stretched from bank to bank, and

supported by posts driven into the bed of the river. This is the highway of communication with the opposite side—not a very easy or safe road in winter, when the Struma swells and rushes with a fury of which its present current gave but a faint idea; but winter or summer, it constitutes the only means of crossing the river at this point, except swimming. As we passed, we saw the primitive conveyance with a freight of men and beasts all huddled together at its bottom, struggling unsteadily across the dark waters.

Two more hours of slow progress, enlivened by gossip about brigands and snatches of bucolic melody, brought us to the bank of the Bistritza, a tributary of the Struma, which, though it does not figure on some maps, is a river of considerable volume and fairly strong current, as we found in fording it. For this purpose the ladies were placed in the middle, a *Keradji* on either side, while the others rode across in single file, horse's nostrils breathing upon horse's tail. The water reached well over my stirrups, but it could not attain to the ethereal peaks upon which my companions were perched; yet the dread of a watery grave was upon the old *Daskala's* brain. She completely lost her *sang-froid* and all sense of dignity or proportion, and in shrill accents assured us that her last moment had arrived. She would never, never reach the opposite bank alive. The *Keradjis*, I grieve to state, laughed most unfeelingly at her, and even her horse, otherwise a very steady and well-behaved gentleman of mature years, so far forgot his manners as to shake his bell with additional vigour in expression of unseemly glee.

Fording is the usual method of crossing minor rivers in Macedonia. Bridges, even where they once

existed, have long since been swept off the face of the waters, leaving only vague memories behind them. This was the case here. Panaghiotis was positive that he had heard old muleteers declare that there was such a thing within their remembrance, but he would not swear to the fact from personal experience. "Many things existed in the olden times which exist no longer," he said evasively, using exactly the same words in which another Macedonian had expressed to me his reason for believing in the historic reality of dragons and other denizens of fairyland.

We had scarcely left this river before we came to another, but lesser stream, and had to go through the same performance with the same accompaniments of hysteric lamentations and ungallant laughter. A few more minutes' ride brought us to Koula, a private estate, where we dismounted for lunch.

The estate, though far from being in a flourishing condition, looked almost a paradise in our eyes, accustomed as they were to the dreariness and loneliness of the road. A square courtyard, formed by the labourers' cottages and some barns, with a bigger house in the middle of one side, and a few cattle-sheds, represented all that there was to be seen in the way of building. The big house was untenanted, as large landowners hardly ever reside on their estates; it is not safe. The most adventurous of them will sometimes run down for a couple of days' shooting, but that has to be done in all secrecy, no one knowing the date of their arrival or departure. This accounts for the wretched look of discomfort and dilapidation which is the common feature of all Turkish *tchiftliks*.

A rough kind of kiosk on the roof of a granary afforded us shelter from the vertical rays of the midday

sun, and in it we had a frugal vegetarian meal. We were in the act of discussing a melon when a peasant rushed up the ladder and urged us to hurry off, as there were rumours of Dontsos's band lurking in the neighbourhood. That these rumours were not unfounded was proved by the fact that, as I subsequently learnt, a quarter of an hour after our departure, a band appeared on the estate for provisions. This was the nearest approach to a *rencontre* with brigands I had in my tour. On the whole, I enjoyed the protection of the fortune that favours the foolhardy.

The kiosk which sheltered us was an object of historic interest in the country. It was in this place, as my companions informed me, that M. Zlatkos, the unfortunate Austrian Vice-Consul, of whose tragic end I had read in the English papers at the time, had been captured some three years before. I also gathered—what had not appeared in the newspapers—that the opinion prevailing in the country-side was that he had not been shot by the brigands, as it was officially given out, but by the gendarmerie who had been sent to his “rescue.”

The story of the Vice-Consul's mishap is a typical one. He had been carried off by a band and was held to ransom. The usual procedure in such cases is for the brigands to write to their prisoner's friends and demand a sum of money for his release, fixing the time and place for its payment. One or two of them are deputed to receive the ransom. On their return to the mountain den, the prisoner is released and escorted part of the way home. It is understood that the authorities will let the messengers go away unmolested, and that they will not pursue the band in the meantime, nor for some hours after the release of

the captive. Any breach of this compact is sure to be attended by the prisoner's death.

On this occasion, according to the story current among the peasantry, everything had gone on smoothly up to a certain point. The envoys had received the money and joined their comrades. The prisoner was released, and was climbing down the mountain alone. At that moment the gendarmes met him on their way to attack the brigands. Despite his unmistakable Frank dress and his shouts, they pretended to take him for one of the miscreants, and opened fire until they saw him drop dead. Then they took his body to Serres, declaring that he had been treacherously murdered by the brigands. It was added that the *motif* of this cold-blooded atrocity was to destroy the evidence which the prisoner could have given against the authorities, as they were suspected of having acted in collusion with the robbers, and shared the spoil. This is the local version of the incident, and a likely enough version it is in the opinion of those who are familiar with Turkish justice and her little eccentricities.

The narrative was not of a nature to encourage prolonged stay at Koula. So we despatched our lunch in all haste, left the ill-omened kiosk, gave a *bakshish* to the communicative peasant, and departed. The sun was in the middle of the sky, and the heat almost intolerable. There was the midday hush on the fields through which we rode, deepened by the intermittent chirping of the crickets in the bushes.

About an hour later we left the main path, and turning slightly to the right began to climb the uplands behind which Melenik lay concealed. The ascent can only be performed by a stony track from

18 to 20 inches wide, allowing just enough room for one horse to pick its way through. A range of cliffs rose on our left. On the right there yawned ravines and precipices so deep that one was forced to keep one's eyes averted in order to avoid giddiness. It is at such moments that one learns to admire the steadiness of the Macedonian horse, and I seize this opportunity of withdrawing anything that I may have said, or may say in the sequel, to the disparagement of this certainly unornamental, but extremely useful work of creation.

The old *Daskala* also, whose want of valour I have already made immortal, demands reparation at my hands. Whatever may have been her feelings toward rivers, these abysmal chasms had no terrors for her. Familiarity had bred a sublime contempt in the old lady's breast, and, while I was mentally composing my last will and testament, she regaled my ears with anecdotes about hair-breadth escapes and dire catastrophes that had befallen friends of hers in this place. She especially dwelt with great enjoyment on an adventure that had nearly cost her fair offspring's life on a previous trip.

At last, much to my relief, we gained the brow of the ridge, and thence descended into a valley green with cotton and sesame fields, vineyards, and orchards. A village in the distance attracted my attention, and Panaghiotis said that it was call Krommydova, or Onion-field—a Greek name with a non-Greek termination—pointing to the principal product of the district, as well as to the bewildering confusion of languages and races reigning therein.

A little way off on our left gleamed the waters of the stream of Melenik, emphatically called Potamos,

or "The River," which also during the summer does duty as a road. The last two hours of our pilgrimage were spent in a painfully slow and jerky ride between banks embroidered with vines, sadly spoilt by hail and disease. Both evils are regarded as signs of "God's Wrath" (*ὀργὴ Θεοῦ*), and this conviction paralyses all efforts at preservation. Fatalism is not, as it is commonly believed, monopolised by the Mohammedan, nor is it necessarily the outcome of Mohammedan influence. This particular form of it goes, at the very least, as far back as the age of the Cyclops :

"It is nowise possible to ward off disease sent by mighty Zeus," said the pious cannibals to their brother Polyphemus, who roared and writhed in agony—pious words, no doubt ; but of scant comfort to a poor giant who had just been compelled to part with his one and only eye.

The modern peasant's point of view is identical with that of the mythical Cyclops, and I do not think there are many scholars who will maintain that the Cyclops had come under Mohammedan influence ; at least there is no trustworthy evidence to that effect.

The broad bed of the river was half dry, and strewn with smooth white boulders, between which our horses had to pick their steps with the best grace they could. A number of noisy rivulets—the impoverished descendants of an opulent winter-flood—intersected this bed in all directions, meeting, separating, and chasing each other with much merry laughter. We had to wade through neither more nor less than eighteen of these truant streams, ranging from 12 to 15 feet in breadth, before we reached our destination.

The sun was bidding good night to the valley, as we entered Melenik, after eight hours of the most cheerless road it has ever been my lot to travel on, and through a country which, for the most part, looked alike forsaken of God and man.

CHAPTER XIII

ARRIVAL AT MELENIK

THE river at the entrance of Melenik splits itself into two branches, which also form the two main thoroughfares of the town. The banks, which grow steeper and steeper as one draws nearer, here shoot up to a great height. Their brows are furrowed with water-courses and their lower parts are honey-combed with wine-vaults excavated in the sides of the conglomerate rocks. The houses rush down one steep cliff and struggle up the other, their ample nodding eaves, hanging balconies, and bulging fireplaces rising tier upon tier up to the summits on each side. Some crooked lanes, mostly hewn in the shape of rough staircases, insinuate themselves between the houses. These are the by-streets of the town.

Melenik is an ancient Byzantine city, and it still retains many traces of its origin. The designations of its *mahallahs*, as well as those of its men and women, savour of dusty mediæval chronicles. Mourtzos is the name of a quarter; Palæologos, the name of a family. Comnena, Theophano, Lascaris, and other names familiar to the student of Byzantine history, are as common as our Tom, Dick, and Harry, and are in such perfect harmony with the *entourage* that they do not even provoke the feeble smile which is forced on one's lips by the corresponding use of old-world appellations in Southern Greece. Such an example of unconscious

humour as, "Oh, you naughty Klytemnestra, you are making poor Agamemnon (the drawing-room pug) squeal," is not to be had at Melenik. Here the antique is a genuine historic survival, not an academic revival.

There is a tradition that the first settlers of Melenik were political exiles from Constantinople, and some of the inhabitants claim descent from those distinguished criminals. Until quite recent years there was a very marked line drawn between the upper class of landed nobles (*Ἀφεντάδες*) and the lower orders of subjects (*Υποχείριοι*)—a distinction relics of which can still be seen in the architecture of some of the bigger houses. At one of them I was shown into a large reception room with the floor raised in part so as to form a dais. From this exalted elevation the nobles used on gala days to look down upon inferior mortals.

There also was in years gone by a strong feeling against intermarriage between the classes. Time, however, that arch-reformer and sweeper-general of cobwebs, has done much to obliterate all social barriers. As years went by, especially after the Ottoman conquest, many of the nobles fell into indigence, while others retained their wealth by embracing the alien creed and joining the ranks of the conqueror. Meanwhile, many of the artisans and labourers, who constituted the bulk of the subjects, rose to affluence, and thus the work of equalisation was accomplished. Yet the shade of the defunct *régime* still haunts the older households.

Many Melenikiotes still boast of the lustre, real or imaginary, of their ancestry, though few, if any, possess the means of living up to the style befitting such pretensions. Pride and poverty are frequently found in

grotesque alliance, and these haughty paupers of Melenik reminded me of the Italian aristocrats whom one meets scattered all over the Levant—men whose ancient genealogical trees are not substantial enough to afford them either shelter or fuel; men bearing names which are recorded both in Golden Books and in the books of bankruptcy courts; men whose pedigrees, unlike those of American millionaires, are immeasurably longer than their purses.

The town of Melenik is mainly Greek—an oasis of Hellenic language, culture, and tradition in the midst of a district occupied by a Slavonic peasantry: honest, industrious, and sober, but withal dull, inarticulate, and a trifle uninteresting. The town counts some three thousand inhabitants, all of whom, with the exception of the Turkish Government officials and their families, a few Bulgarians from the environs, and one or two of the ubiquitous Jewish traders, are genuine Greeks. Melenik is the see of a Metropolitan, whose jurisdiction extends as far south as Djoumayá. It owns a very good school for boys, in which nine teachers are employed; an equally good, though smaller, school for girls, led up the steep sides of Parnassus by the two sweet mistresses with whom I had had the privilege to travel; and a doctor with a Paris diploma.

The gaunt gentleman in brass-rimmed spectacles on our arrival was good enough to ask me to his house for refreshments—"a spoonful of jam," as he put it with truthful politeness. So having dismounted at the nearest *Khan*, and seen my saddle-bags safely stored away, I adjusted my fez in the approved fashion—a little on one side like the tower of Pisa—and set out in the direction of the schoolmaster's abode, very

proud of my appearance, and flattering myself that I looked as imposing as a prince of Sultanic blood. It was a delusion which was speedily dispelled, but so long as it lasted it was a source of genuine pleasure, and I like to cherish the memory of it.

The main street, or river-bed—either name will do—was lined with rows of shops, shanties, and booths which communicated with the level on which I walked by means of step-ladders, pulled up in time of flood. The coffee-shops were thronged with groups of Turks in official, though threadbare uniforms, and, as I strode past I had the mortification to hear the observation :

“*Boo Ingliz*—this is an Englishman,” which showed that neither my crimson fez nor my sunburnt face was sufficient to preserve my *incognito*.

This was a deathblow at my delusion, and I felt both hurt and humiliated. I now know what exposed me : it was my stride. Turks never stride : when at leisure they creep ; when pressed for time they saunter ; when they think, or wish others to think, that in their veins circulates the sacred blood of the Caliph, then they waddle. But they can no more stride than fly.

At last, after a long and weary walk uphill and downhill and sideways and across, I arrived at the schoolmaster's lofty aerie, and, having stepped straight from the street into the second floor, I found myself in a large draughty hall with rooms on three sides of it. Into one of these I was ushered, and having shaken hands with the old *Daskala* as ceremoniously as if we had not parted less than ten minutes before, I subsided on a low divan, which ran round three sides of the apartment. A row of small barred windows looked

out upon an endless gradation of tile-roofs and chimney-pots, and afforded a glimpse of the thoroughfare at an immense depth below. A second row of even smaller windows overhead looked out upon nothing at all. Their diamond panes were purely ornamental. In the middle of this wall yawned a capacious hearth, which jutted far into space on the outside, but from within presented the prim and proper appearance of a whited sepulchre.

The hearth in this sequestered retreat of mediæval homeliness is still the focus of family life. It is round the hearth that the members of the household cluster on New Year's Eve, eagerly watching the antics

“Of crackling laurel, which fore-sounds
A plenteous harvest to your grounds.”

It is upon the embers in the hearth that the maids of Melenik like to burn their cornel-buds, and draw nuptial omens therefrom. And, when those dreams are realised, it is the “hearth-corner” that the blushing bride pretends to pine for, as she is led with feigned reluctance to her new home. In short, is there any epoch of domestic history that the hearth does not recall and symbolise? As I gazed into the now vacant depths of the *Daskala's* hearth, a vision rose before my mind's eye: a vision of blazing logs and ruddy faces, a vision of a wrinkled old story-teller and a circle of youthful eyes, reflecting the glow of the fire and the adventures of the fairy hero.

The opposite corner was consecrated by a niche containing the holy icons, gold-plated and smoke-begrimed, the household gods of the modern Hellene, before which flickered the tiny flame of a lamp that knows no extinction. At right angles to this shrine

stretched a row of panelled closets and cupboards. In one of the former must surely stand rolled up the mattresses which in the evening are spread out: close to the fireplace in winter; in the breezy hall in summer. These constitute the Greek bed, movable as the sleeping mat of the dweller in the desert.

From one of the cupboards the sweet offspring had meanwhile produced a dazzling array of unsubstantial refreshments, which she presented to me upon a salver almost as bright as the *grands yeux noirs* of the bearer herself. I partook of these offerings of hospitality in the orthodox order: a small spoonful of jam, a tumblerful of limpid spring-water which made its receptacle sparkle with cold perspiration, a tiny glassful of arrack which looked like green chartreuse, but, alas! tasted differently, and a tiny cup of coffee, despoiled of its saucer. Then the old *Daskala*, who had been all this time smoking with the gravity and in the attitude of a Turk at prayer, pushed the tobacco-jar across the divan to me. I rolled me a fragrant cigarette, smoked it to an end, and after an elaborate interchange of conventional civilities retired to my inn for the night.

The bed of the Demir-Hissar *khan* had hitherto dwelt in my mind as the very bed-rock of hardship, the beau-ideal of discomfort. But I was now to learn that hardship, like folly, is not to be fathomed so quickly. When you have reached what in your blindness you take to be the bottom, lo and behold! your foot slips, and you find yourself precipitated into new depths and chasms undreamt of.

The front of the establishment was occupied by a low-roofed café, for which Nature herself had provided an imperishable floor. A limited number of

stools lay about in easy and unstudied confusion ; but they formed only a small proportion of the furniture compared with the multitude of empty petroleum boxes, which were indifferently used as seats or tables. At the back of this saloon stood the stables. Over the stables stood the guests' sleeping-apartments, and to one of these I was now led by the proprietor, who united in his own person the dual functions of *cafedji* and *khandji*. Our progress might have suggested a scene to the author of the *Divina Commedia*.

The innkeeper lit a small tin lantern armed with a prodigiously long wick, but no glass, and, bidding me follow him, led the way through a gruesome region, where I heard muffled snortings and undisguised brayings, and dimly saw many a pair of stupendous eyes gleaming with a blue light in the dark. I followed with timid step at a respectful distance, lest the evil smoke from the lantern should injure my lungs. Thus we reached the base of a steep and shaky ladder, and proceeded to mount the same. We had well-nigh accomplished the perilous ascent, when, woe is me ! my heel lost its hold on the slippery rung, I lost my balance, and—the rest can be described in the words of the poet :—

“ While to the lower space with backward step
I fell, my ken discerned the form of one
Whose voice seemed faint through long disuse of speech.
When him in that gloomy spot I espied,
‘ Have mercy on me ! ’ cried I out aloud,
‘ Spirit ! or living man ! whate’er thou be ! ’ ”

In point of fact, he was a mule.

Thus adjured, he stared at me for a full second, and then contemptuously turned to his manger.

The *khandji* stopped on the landing above and, holding the lantern over his head, bent forward, trying to peer through the nether darkness.

"Oh, it must be that accursed nail," he observed in the tone of a disinterested spectator. "It does not matter."

"Oh dear no," I answered feebly, picking myself up; I am only—looking for my watch."

Fortunately that was the only thing about me that was bruised. The rest had fallen upon a bundle of hay; a providential dispensation, which shows that an inn built on stable lines has its advantages.

Without further mishap I joined my guide. He drew a great key from his girdle and opened the door of the room that was to be my lair. Two beds on trestles stood in it. These, with a shelf running along one wall and a deal cupboard built across the corner, a lamp, and two nails doing duty for pegs, completed the inventory.

The price of the room was on a par with the style of the accommodation. The *khandji* claimed two piastres (rather less than 5d.) a night, and I was astonished at his moderation. My astonishment ceased when next morning I found that the usual charge was one piastre.

There being no table in the apartment, I had to use my bed for a desk in jotting down the few notes embodied in the foregoing description. But even that had to be done with the cotton curtains drawn closely and a cushion stuffed into the aperture of a broken pane, in order to avoid draughts and diplomatic complications. The consul's remarks about espionage still rang in my ears, and every day furnished me with fresh proof of their soundness.

I had not been more than half-an-hour at Melenik before I heard the police commissaries buzzing about in search of information. The arrival of a griffin or of a unicorn could not have created a deeper sensation; for, so far as the oldest police commissary could recall, I was the very first *Ingliz* who had taken it into his head to penetrate among the rocks of Melenik. But policemen were not the only individuals spurred to preternatural activity by the unusual event. Other enterprising souls had also been stirred to their depths.

While I was busy unpacking my bags that evening the door opened noiselessly, and in glided the figure of a cream-faced youth, with red hair, many marks of smallpox, two small eyes converging towards the bridge of a long, pointed nose, and no eyelashes to speak of. He grinned and bowed humbly as he entered. I stared at him in surprise. Whereat he grinned and bowed more humbly still, and then deliberately seated himself on the edge of my bed.

Ere I had time to recover my presence of mind, he had begun cross-examining me:—

“How are you?” quoth he; and his speech betrayed him at once for an Israelite.

I assured him that I was in my normal state of health. Not satisfied with this assurance, and probably encouraged by my forbearance, he went on:—

“And who are you?”

I answered him with a similar question, and elicited the following pertinent reply:—

“My shop is a few steps across the road. My name is Aaron, son of David, dealer in print calicoes, shirts, socks, flan——”

“Well, Mr. Aaron, son of David, dealer in print

calicoes, shirts, socks, and other things, I do not happen to be in need of you or your wares just at present, and should be obliged if you would step back to your shop across the road."

Unabashed and undaunted by this rebuff, the cream-faced youth continued in the path of impertinent interrogation, now and again interrupting himself to introduce an irrelevant allusion to his print calicoes, shirts, socks, &c.

Then I thought the time of words was over, and proceeded to action. Stepping up to the youth, I laid a hand on either of his shoulders, persuaded him to rotate once round his own axis, and then gently, but firmly, propelled him into the outer darkness, shutting the door on his back. Aaron, son of David, never troubled me again.

I would fain lock the door, but to my disappointment I found that it was constructed on strictly unilateral principles. In other words, the key was only made to turn on the outside, and nothing could induce it to enter the keyhole from inside. So I had to be content with such privacy as a rudimentary latch, assisted by the spare bed, could secure.

As soon as I put out the light, several bars of gold shone forth across the floor to intimate that nothing but a thin layer of planks, with wide interstices, separated my sleeping apartment from that of the mules, horses, and donkeys beneath. I heaved a sigh as I recalled the inn at Demir-Hissar. There the stable was under my window; here it was under my very nose.

Some Turkish soldiers occupied the bedroom facing mine, and their long-drawn, monotonous chanting gradually lulled me to sleep. The last sound I re-

member hearing, before I lapsed into unconsciousness, was the *muezzin's* plaintive call to prayers from the only minaret of the town:—

“There is no God but God, and Mohammed His Prophet!”

CHAPTER XIV

A SUNDAY AT MELENIK

THE day was just breaking when I was roused by the exhilarating blare of the bugle sounding the reveille. The numerous cocks of the town seemed to take a personal interest in the signal, and responded to it with a vigour which made a relapse into sleep a ludicrous impossibility. These emanations from the "lofty and shrill-sounding throat" rose above and dominated lesser noises, such as the cackling of numberless geese and the quacking of regiments of ducks. My first half-waking thought was that the earth had turned during the night into a world-wide poultry yard, with myself as its master. My second, suggested by the chimes of bells from the forty odd churches of Melenik, was that it was Sunday.

I got up and, having performed such a toilet as was possible under the circumstances, issued forth through the stable. Apart from the deafening uproar produced by creatures most improperly called "dumb," the town showed few signs of wakefulness. The Turkish horse-shoer over the way had not yet begun his day-long metallic tune on the anvil; and the Turkish *cafedji*, who kept a coffee-stall under the broad shadow of a hoary and gnarled plane-tree on the river bank, a few yards from the door of my *khan*, was only just igniting his brazier of charcoal. But in a few minutes this began to blaze cheerily beneath

the lusty bellowing of the Turk's lungs, and as soon as the long-tailed *imbriks* began to boil, I approached him to wish him Allah's blessing on the new-born day, and to order a cup of coffee.

While I was waiting for the beverage an urchin, with a wooden tray of superlative dimensions deftly balanced on his head, staggered past, and his shrill pipe informed all whom it might concern that his sesame-sprinkled buns were warm from the oven. This announcement concerned me at that moment more nearly than anything else, and for the modest outlay of a battered Turkish copper piece, corresponding in value to a halfpenny sterling, I became the owner of two rosy *semits* which, along with the steaming *kahveh*, supplied me with the best breakfast, at the price, I ever had, or am likely to have, anywhere on this planet, except in the interior of Turkey. There is little money in the Sultan's empire, but that little, like the famous music-hall army, "goes a very long way."

I was still sitting under the plane when one of the gentlemen to whom I had brought letters of introduction came to ask me to accompany him to the *Metropolis*, or Cathedral. I accepted the invitation with pleasure, and we went. The service was long and wearisome, and the chanting of the kind which once led a Greek wit to observe that, in the opinion of his countrymen, the best way to approach the Deity is through the nose.

Apart from this irritating feature, the ceremonies of the Greek Church are not wanting in grandeur, and a certain touch of mysticism, which one misses in the performances of the Roman Church. The vestments of the clergy are more magnificent, and those who wear

them are as a rule of a more imposing appearance. The air of awe and mystery is heightened by the fact that the altar is generally screened from the view of the profane, being only disclosed at rare intervals by the automatic withdrawal of a curtain, and still more rarely by the opening of the gilt "Fair Gate." At those moments the officiating priest appears standing on the step of the "Holy Table," and towering over him the thorn-crowned head of the Crucified One, surrounded with a halo of light from an invisible window.

The Cathedral itself was quite new, built out of the débris of the old Metropolitan Temple, which had been burnt down on New Year's Eve, 1895. This disaster had caused deep sorrow to the inhabitants, and even at the time of my visit, full five years after the event, it continued to be the subject of much comment and self-commiseration. It had involved the ruin both of the oldest church of the town and of the Metropolitan's residence, which stood close by, as well as the loss of several highly-prized treasures. Among these was a valuable episcopal mitre and a staff made of natural crystal bound with gold, a gift, according to tradition, of the Servian King, Stephen Dushan, or "the Strangler," under whose brilliant though brief reign (1336-1356) the Servian race had attained to a higher degree of glory and power than at any other period before or since, and dominated for a while the greater part of the Balkan Peninsula.

The origin of the fire had never been ascertained, and at the time of my visit three different versions were in vogue. The jingoes of Melenik attributed the calamity to the Bulgarians, the moderates to accident, and the superstitious to the wrath of the Almighty. This had been specially invoked by a holy archiman-

drite who had tarried in the town awhile, and, departing, had expressed his horror of the orgies of which the old Metropolitan palace was alleged to be the scene, in the form of an anathema and a prophecy that, like Sodom and Gomorrah of old, the Bishop's residence should be consumed by fire from heaven within four calendar months—a prophecy which was fulfilled to the letter. This theory found many supporters among the Metropolitan's opponents, whose name was legion. Even some of those who placed little faith in anathemas and prophecies agreed in attributing the conflagration to His Holiness's culpable negligence. Obviously, the episcopal throne in Macedonia is not altogether lined with roses.

After service we were joined by the Paris physician, who, in addition to his duties as municipal doctor, also was one of the Ephors, or Managers, of the public schools of the community. He introduced me to the staff of teachers, and we all together repaired to his house. Shortly after, I expressed the wish to call on the *Kaimakam*, or Governor, and was conducted by my numerous and self-appointed *cortége* to the casino—a quaint combination of club and café—which appeared to be his Excellency's favourite and habitual abode.

I found the great man sitting in the balcony, of course drinking coffee. Contrary to my expectation, and somewhat to my chagrin, he turned out to be quite different from the long-bearded, turbaned, rotund, and genial figure which one associates with a thoroughbred Turkish functionary. A physiologist would have probably described Gani Bey as an intermediate link between a man and a Turkish official. He was an attenuated youth of some thirty summers, with a clean-shaven chin, well-groomed moustache, a real frock

coat—not the clumsy travesty of one known as *Stambouli*—and a hauteur for which that item of civilisation obviously was in a great measure responsible. He spoke French and smoked ready-made cigarettes, both products of domestic manufacture.

My presence afforded Gani Bey an opportunity of airing his French, and he was accordingly grateful and gracious. He informed me in that language that he belonged to a Salonica family; that he had imbibed the nectar of Western culture in Stamboul; that Melenik, alas! was like neither of those great centres of gaiety, and he heaved a sigh at the recollection of the imaginary amusements which he had sacrificed on accepting a post in this dull place of banishment.

"*Mais, avant tout, le devoir, monsieur,*" he murmured, with the air of a martyr, and I wondered whether he meant that the whole *devoir* of a Turkish Governor consists in drinking coffee—and other things—in the balcony of a casino. However, I discreetly forbore to demand an elucidation.

We then spoke of the Paris Exhibition, and Gani Bey was greatly pleased to hear that I considered the Turkish pavilion the most extraordinary piece of architecture I had ever seen anywhere. This brought the interview to a close, and I salaamed myself out of the *Kaimakam's* presence with a promise to call again and give his Excellency further details about the pavilion.

My suite then insisted on conducting me round to the houses of the most notable citizens. Thus I found myself compelled to spend the whole forenoon eating jam, drinking coffee and arrack, and smoking endless cigarettes. But this triumphal progress, though somewhat irksome, and, from a medical point of view, rather

indiscreet, was not altogether void of interest. It enabled me to see the Melenikiote at home and at his best, free from the worries of week-day life, each arrayed in their holiday apparel, and anxious to please and to be pleased.

Wherever I went I met with a cordial welcome, and was most favourably impressed both by the cleanliness and order prevailing in each house, and by the simple, yet dignified manners of the people. During those brief visits there was not much time for an interchange of philosophical ideas, and our conversation necessarily turned, if not on the weather — southerners blessed with uniform skies and a keen sense of proportion seldom indulge in that inane topic—at least on the picturesque situation of the town and the healthiness of the climate, two advantages of which the Melenikiotes are justly proud.

I ventured to breathe my astonishment that so inconvenient a spot should have been chosen for the site of a town, alluding to the dangers from wintry floods. For, according to their own account, eloquently corroborated by the huge boulders I stumbled against as I walked in the street, when the snows begin to thaw on the surrounding heights, the insignificant-looking Potamos swells into an angry torrent, which rolls down the mountain-side with a roar heard miles away, carrying on its foamy bosom rocks fatal alike to life and property. I was told, however, that what are now water channels were once *bonâ-fide* streets, but that the river gradually changed its course owing to the destruction of the forests on the mountains. Old men and women still remembered the time when step-ladders were unnecessary, as the shops stood on the level of the street.

Of the Melenikiote ladies I carried away most pleasant memories. Not only on account of their beauty, although that was remarkable enough : pale, refined faces ; great chestnut eyes overshadowed by long-fringed eyelids ; pencilled eyebrows ; small rosy mouths and round chins. In the veins of some of these women might well flow the blood of long-forgotten beauties of the Byzantine Court — such as listened to Princess Anne's histories and politely stifled their yawns. Quite as remarkable as their personal charm was their easy self-possession and freedom from the inordinate bashfulness of most Macedonian women.

Indeed, Melenik, though in size smaller than many villages, is not a village. It is a city in the best sense of the word ; a city fallen on evil days, but in its tone still preserving that subtle, indefinable, and yet palpable, something which differentiates the dweller in a town from the country hind. The urban character of Melenik, owing to the distance of the town from all routes of direct communication with Western Europe, is thoroughly indigenous and homogeneous. There is one faint touch of cosmopolitanism, however. The men of the upper class, most of whom have travelled abroad, affect the European dress modified by the *rayah's* fez, the badge of thralldom. But the women are quite conservative. They dress in long flowing skirts and high-waisted bodices, undisfigured by superfluous jewellery. The younger sort may aptly be described as "lasses feat an' cleanly neat." Their hair is plaited in two long braids, which hang down the back and often reach far below the waist. A simple sober-coloured silk kerchief, pushed a little to the back, covers part of the head, allowing their glossy tresses,

parted in the middle, to show themselves in front. Women seem to occupy a higher social position at Melenik than in most other parts of Turkey, and it is generally the hostess who does the honours of the house, who welcomes the coming and speeds the parting guest with a handshake and a "Thank you"—for the distinction supposed to have been conferred by his visit, or at any rate for the friendly feeling which has prompted it.

At noon my escort left me in charge of one schoolmaster, who, as the Doctor-Ephor informed me, had been told off to be my cicerone throughout my stay—a task which he undertook cheerfully, for it meant a holiday, and which he performed admirably. Mr. A. was a well-read and far-travelled man. He had been to Egypt and France, and had spent a short time in London. The fog and the underground railway seemed to be the two things which had produced the deepest impression on his mind; but neither the one nor the other had prevented him from picking up, in his two weeks' rambles in the metropolis of Great Britain, more English than is the Greek which many an Englishman manages to muster in as many years of residence in Athens.

The quantities of the appetising arrack which I had been made to absorb during the morning, added to the bracing effect of the steep climbs which most of the visits entailed, had prepared me for something more substantial than merely æsthetic and intellectual pleasures. In short, I was hungry, and my keeper conducted me to one of the two cook-shops of the town. It was a narrow oblong room open in front. It laid no claim to either ceiling or flooring. The grimy rafters on high bore evidence of long ages of conscientious

and unremitting cooking, and likewise spoke volumes for the state of the chimney; while the nail-marks with which Mother Earth was studded beneath spoke with an equal force for the crowd of *habitués* who at some time or another must have satisfied the cravings of nature on the premises.

We perched ourselves on a high bench fixed against the wall, behind a long low deal table, which unfortunately was not fixed, so that I had to prop up my slanting tin plate with a piece of brown bread. For a shilling we had a gorgeous dinner; meat boiled with cabbages, tomato-sauce, and plenty of red pepper; a mysterious dish called *kabourma* and tasting like mutton chops saturated with paraffin oil; and we finished up with *ravani*, a kind of Turkish cake swimming in a sea of syrup. There were no grapes, owing to the "wrath of God" which had ruined the vines, but there was rosy wine from last year's vintage, a liquid that sucklings and babes might partake copiously of with impunity, or the strictest teetotaller indulge in to any extent without losing caste or being found out.

In the afternoon, under the guidance of Mr. A., I visited one of the typical old houses of which I spoke before. We knocked at a small stout door, thickly studded with broad-headed nails, and were admitted by an ancient gentleman in night attire—we had interrupted his siesta. He drew the bolt with which the door was fastened from within—a long heavy beam pulled out of one wall into a hole in the opposite—and then at the sight of a stranger fled, to reappear a few minutes later in more fitting array. He was a lively old man, with a short grizzled beard and a high forehead, deeply furrowed and

cross-furrowed in a way recalling the rocky banks of the Potamos. He rejoiced in the name of Kouropalates, which, albeit trying to the maxillary muscles, is a good old Byzantine name. But its owner gave Heaven thanks, and made no boast of it.

He showed us over the rambling old mansion of which he now was the only occupant. The raised daises, the *tchibook*-stands, the coffee-furnaces, the elaborately carved ceilings, and vividly-painted wainscots, the small windows of coloured glass high up in the walls, the numerous passages, trapdoors, and quaint *cul-de-sac* corridors, all spoke of a long-departed magnificence. The date inscribed in one of the rooms was 1750; but, to judge from the dark colour of the woodwork, the building might be considerably older. The lower walls of the house were of solid stone masonry. Their breadth and the disproportionately small size of the iron-studded door, suggested that the house was meant to serve as a fortress in time of emergency. The same hint of violence and need for self-defence was conveyed in a stronger form by the *kryvitsanos*, or hiding chamber, with which this, like most other houses of the same period, is provided.

These secret chambers, of which I saw several at Salonica, sometimes consist of a narrow apartment within a wall, access into which is obtained through an opening in the roof, cunningly concealed with a movable board. In other cases it is a cabinet behind an ordinary-looking cupboard, which, if you press a spring, falls back and reveals a secret closet. So numerous and various are the devices to which in bygone days the Christians of Turkey, like the Catholics of England, had recourse in order to save

themselves from persecution. For the same reason one finds many houses communicating one with another by means of small unobtrusive posterns, or "mid-doors" (*μεσοθύρια*), so that it is possible to traverse a considerable part of the town without once getting into the public street. All these features of old architecture are fast dying out, along with the conditions of life to which they owed their birth. The Turk still persecutes, but nowadays he does it with a refinement of cruelty, which would have made his ancestors of a century or two ago blush at the crudeness of their ways.

Melenik for a long time escaped conquest through an ingenious stratagem ; at least so the tradition runs. When the slowly advancing wave of Islam had reached the district, the inhabitants bethought themselves to build a mosque, with a lofty minaret, in a conspicuous part of the town. The sight of this symbol of Mohammedanism deceived the bodies of the invaders, who swept over the neighbourhood, into the belief that Melenik was already Turkish and therefore not worth plundering. When this farce could no longer be kept up, some of the leading nobles made terms with the conqueror, and by a timely surrender and conversion to Islam, obtained the right of ruling the district as feudal lords, and Melenik remained a hereditary fief in those families until the reign of Mahmoud II., when the feudal system was superseded by the modern administrative disorganisation.

The story of the trick by which the Turks were at first induced to spare the town, incredible as it may sound, is nevertheless probable enough, when we consider the unmethodical and erratic nature of the conquest of the Balkans. It also derives a

certain amount of support from the position of the mosque, which, as my informants pointed out, looks from west to east, as Greek churches do, and not towards Mecca—a mistake which can only be satisfactorily accounted for on the hypothesis that its builders were Christians as yet unacquainted with the ways of Islam.

CHAPTER XV

FURTHER RESEARCHES AT MELENIK

THERE is a surprising multitude of churches at Melenik; but, such is Eastern aversion to statistics, no one seemed to know the exact number. The *Kaimakam*, whom I tried to cross-question, dismissed the subject with a majestic sweep of the hand and an astronomical metaphor.

"There are as many churches in this town as there are stars in the sky," he said, airily.

"What does that mean?" I persisted, stupidly.

"I do not know," he answered, candidly.

And there the matter ended.

My Greek friends were less hyperbolic and yet equally mystifying. Seventy was the figure confidently quoted. But this is only a favourite *façon de parler*. Whether it is derived from the number of the translators of the Old Testament, or from the number of offences entitled to a free pardon, according to the New, it is impossible to say. In any case, seventy seems to possess a peculiar fascination for the Eastern mind. It denotes much or little, many or few, according to circumstances, the only thing which it can never, under any circumstances, denote being seven times ten.

For example, an aged man is spoken of as being seventy years old when he begins to look ridiculous. If his birth certificate does not bear out the statement, why, so much the worse for the birth certificate. Again,

when a man tells you, "I have told you seventy times!" it is an unmistakable sign that he is waxing dangerous. On the other hand, "seventy grains of corn," when applied to the crop of the year, indicates starvation. In the present instance, according to my cicerone—apparently the only man in the town who had taken the trouble to verify the popular assertion—seventy meant forty-five.

This figure gives an average of one church to each eighty-five individuals, infants and infidels included! It should be added, however, that most of these buildings are to be regarded as historical monuments of Byzantine excess of piety rather than as places of latter-day sober worship. Most of them are only ventilated once a year, on the feast of the saint to whom they are dedicated. During the rest of the time they are the melancholy abodes of insolvent spiders.

Some of these homes of intermittent prayer contain objects of interest to the visitor. At St. Stephen's I was shown three large folio manuscripts of the Gospels, written on fine parchment and bound in solid wood boards. One of them was richly illuminated, but they all seemed to have suffered much in the course of ages, and bore marks of hairbreadth escapes both from fire and from water. Considering the invasions, massacres, conflagrations, and robberies of which Macedonia has been the theatre before and after the Turkish conquest, it is a marvel that anything old should have survived at all. In the same church there are preserved some magnificent bishop's vestments, lavishly embroidered with gold and coloured silk. One of them had the genealogical tree of Jesse wrought in those materials down the front, each branch bearing a cluster of rosy patriarchs and pro-

phets. The delicate finish of detail, and the tasteful grouping of the figures and colours, evinced the art of no mean artist, whoever he was.

All these things I was shown by my circle of self-constituted guides, and many were the explanations I was called upon to improvise on all sorts of subjects I knew nothing about. To make matters worse, I was given clearly to understand that my dignity as a graduate of a great university depended on the confidence, if not on the intrinsic value, of my opinions. It was of no use my protesting that I was only a humble collector of fairy-tales and subscriptions for the *X—de Salonique*, and knew as much about manuscripts as their own bishop. They persisted in taking my solemn assurances as sallies of Socratic irony.

It was not a comfortable position. There were the ears of Melenik strained and the necks of Melenik craned in eager expectation of my utterances, and here was wretched I, taxing my ingenuity to meet the demand suddenly made upon my supposed stores of antiquarian lore. I was in the middle of a heroic effort to invent for one of the manuscripts a date ancient enough to satisfy the *amour propre* of the Melenikiotes, without endangering my own reputation for omniscience. The struggle brought big beads of cold perspiration on my forehead. I felt at the end of my resources. The ground was already slipping from under my feet, when lo! by sheer force of that mysterious entity which some call intuition and others luck, I hit on the very century assigned to the document by a party of Russian *savants*, who had explored the place a few weeks before, with no earthly object that I could gather, except to enhance the severity of my own trials. I had been charitably wishing that

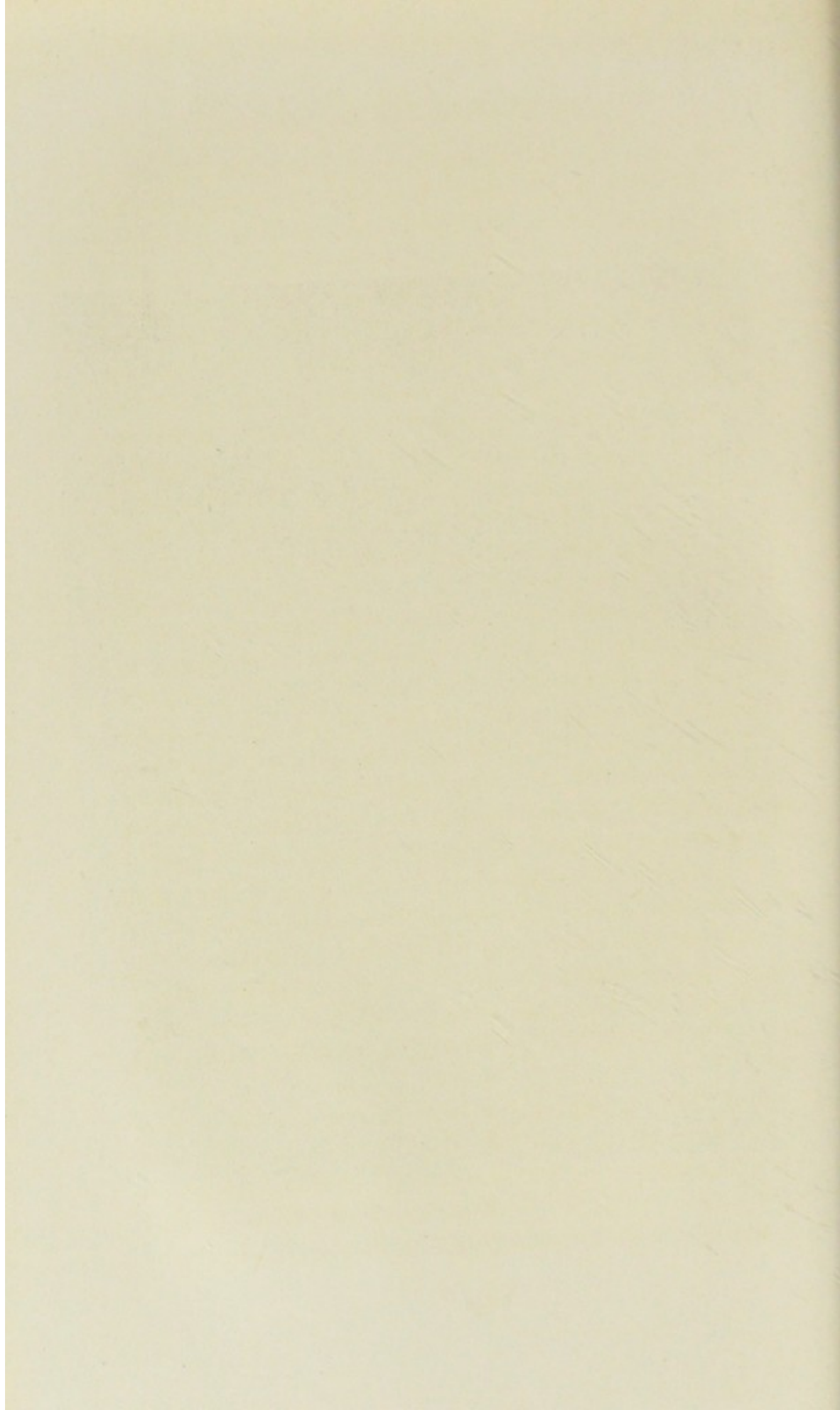
those Russian gentlemen had never been born, or at least that they had broken their necks on their way to Melenik—they were described as very indifferent horsemen—when their anticipatory confirmation of my haphazard guess altered my feelings towards them entirely. Having thus saved my face, I could more easily afford to insist that vestments lay beyond the sphere of my erudition.

Another chapel on the outskirts of the town contains a curious old icon representing the Holy Trinity as a human body with three heads sprouting from one neck. The weaker part of my companions were sorely scandalised, when they heard that this is the form under which the Hindoo triad (*Trimourti*) figures in some of the temples of India. But my own impiety was eclipsed and condoned by the opportune irreverence of my cicerone, who went so far as to suggest that it was a good portrait of Geryon, the three-headed monster slain by Herakles.

Several other shrines are to be found scattered round about Melenik. One of them is in the convent of the "Cave" (Σπήλαιο), a tiny place belonging to Vatopedi, the richest monastery on Mount Athos. Besides this, I visited the "Plane-tree" (Πλάτανος), and St. Nicholas. The latter preserves in its east end portions of the original Byzantine church, built in the form of a Greek cross. The upper end is extant, and the apse and sides are still covered with mouldy, blurred, old frescoes in the conventionally rigid style of Eastern ecclesiastical art. Quite close to this church stand the ruins of a fortress said to be of the Byzantine period. All these buildings are situated on giddy precipices easily scaled by the natives, who can walk on a fifteen-inch ledge of rock as comfortably as one



MELENİK.



walks on a smooth garden lawn. From one of these heights I saw a glorious sunset, with the Potamos and the Struma glowing far away at the foot of Mount Orvylos.

Some of the inhabitants spoke with vague enthusiasm of virgin forests and beautiful lakes among the lofty mountains to the north; but none could give me any exact information, as those regions are infested with brigands, and consequently inaccessible to peaceful mortals. As many as fifty of those lords of the mountains were said to be lurking in the immediate neighbourhood of the town at the time of my visit. The notorious Dontsos at the head of a band of fifteen especially figured as the villain of many blood-curdling tragedies. Another popular character was one to whom a capricious fate had given the name of Angelos, or Angel. He had been killed some time before by a secret police agent, who had joined the band, insinuated himself into the chief's good graces, and then betrayed him. His head had been brought to Melenik and exhibited for a day *in terrorem*. This rare instance of activity on the part of the authorities was ascribed to the energetic remonstrances of the Greek Bishop of Melenik, who had prevailed on his friend the Vali of Salonica to order the local *Kaimakam* to break up the band. "It is a case of either Angel's head or yours," said the Vali, and his subordinate swore a sonorous oath that, if a head must needs fall, it should not be his own.

Angel left a lasting souvenir of his ignoble career in the blackened ruins of a score of houses, which had been burnt down in one of his daring raids, and which were now the home of stray dogs and other outcasts of society. But he was by no means the last of the

brigands. Illustrations of the temerity of his successors abounded at every turn. A house in a state of utter decay was pointed out to me as the pathetic scene of a recent tragedy. Not long ago it was the home of a widow and her three sons, who by the sweat of their brows had managed to accumulate a fortune of some two thousand pounds, invested in land and live-stock. The brigands, after having fleeced them repeatedly, ended by killing one of the brothers, burning their granaries, carrying off their cattle, and, in a word, reducing them to penury. The old lady died of a broken heart, and was soon followed to the grave by her second son. The third still lives, a broken-down, half-crazy beggar.

The upshot of this state of things is that no Melenikiote worth robbing ventures five minutes' walk beyond the boundaries of the town. Those who frequent the markets held in the neighbouring villages of Sfeti Bratchi and Katoundja are obliged to do so under the expensive protection of a guard of gendarmes. And all this in a town which boasts a frock-coated *Kaimakam* with a turn for astronomy, and a military force over four hundred weak.

Wine is the chief product of the district, whose soil seems to be eminently suitable for the cultivation of the vine. Yet the inhabitants, in spite of the fertility of the soil and their own intelligent industry, barely manage to make both ends meet. The fear of the brigands often forces them to let their vineyards lie fallow, and the extortions of the tax-collectors minimise even such profit as there is. An old vine-owner told me with tears in his eyes that, after having been despoiled three times by the brigands and thirty times by the tax-collectors, he was at last obliged to

give up his vines entirely and reside in the town, relying on his skill in fur-coat making for subsistence.

The tithe on grapes is twelve and a half per cent. nominally. It is assessed while the fruit is still on the vines, and no man is allowed to begin gathering in before the tax-farmer's arrival. These worthies often insist on being paid in coin instead of in kind, basing their demands on a valuation which bears a closer analogy to their own cupidity than to the market value of the product. If the owner objects, the grapes are left in the open air at the mercy of the elements until he is brought round to a more reasonable frame of mind. The tax-farmer is absolute master of the situation, and he knows it. Complaints are unavailing, as the law-courts never fail to favour the defendants, and send the plaintiff away with a heavier heart and a lighter purse than were his before he crossed the threshold of the temple of Turkish injustice.

Apart from the tithe levied on grapes, there is a duty of fifteen per cent. on the wine pressed therefrom, and another fifteen per cent. is raised on the arrack distilled from the skins of the same. So the tithe on vines in reality amounts to forty-two and a half per cent., a sum in its turn indefinitely increased by the *bakshish*, which has to be given at every stage of the process from gathering in to distilling.

This is the general rule, but, like most general rules, it admits of certain exceptions, and one is not surprised or sorry to hear that extortion sometimes overreaches itself. The tax on arrack at the time of my visit amounted to nearly double the market value of the article taxed—a phenomenon which ceased to mystify me, as soon as I discovered that a great deal of the arrack consumed had been distilled surreptitiously,

and had never been taxed at all. Thus things somehow find their logical level: "There is a Providence for the robbed as well as for the robber," according to a local adage. Yet the cases admitting of self-adjustment are limited in number, and do not go far towards mending the position of the agricultural population at large. That position is the position of the proverbial ass—starvation in the midst of plenty. If the peasant eludes the brigands of the mountain, he cannot always elude the tax-collector of the town, and he is therefore compelled to subsidise both.

One thing that impressed me deeply about these peasants is their indomitable patience and undying confidence in the future. Their sense of justice revolts against the idea that they are destined to drag the chain of slavery for ever, and they still keep the torch of hope burning. It is the only light that redeems the infernal darkness of their lives.

Some of them are under the impression that the Church of Rome is responsible for their woes. "It was the Pope who delivered us up to the Turks, and it is he who still keeps us under the yoke," said an old farmer to me on one occasion. His somewhat apocryphal and sweeping assertion shows the deep impression left by the Fourth Crusade on the minds of the inhabitants of these countries. This is the crusade described by Sir R. Jebb, in terms none too severe, as "a marauding expedition by twenty thousand brigands, whose deliberate purpose was to divide the spoil of the Byzantine Empire, according to a prearranged plan, and who mocked the sacred ensign under which they marched by making it the pretext of an infamous design."¹

¹ "Modern Greece," p. 30; see also "The Fall of Constantinople in the Fourth Crusade," by Edwin Pears, LL.D.

There is no doubt that these marauders by the iniquitous capture of Constantinople sapped the foundations of Byzantine power, already rotten, and precipitated the end. The sufferings and the humiliations which those champions of Christendom inflicted on the unfortunate Christians of the East, were of such a nature that even five centuries of Turkish tyranny have failed to wipe off the bitterness thereof.

Another vivid illustration of the heritage of horror and hatred, bequeathed by those exemplary soldiers of the cross, came under my notice at Melenik. An old woman in scolding her son could find no stronger epithet to brand his delinquencies with than that of "O thou Latin, accursed Latin!"—a quintessence of abuse, my cicerone explained, equal in force to at least half-a-dozen ordinary expletives, and only used in cases of supreme gravity, of which the present appeared to be one.

Before leaving this delightful seat of rapacity, past and present, I had an interview with my friend the *Kaimakam*. I wanted to ask him for a couple of *souvaris*, or mounted gendarmes, not because I thought that, in the event of an attack by brigands, they would be of much use, but as being the only means of holding the authorities responsible, should the worst come to the worst. Had I not applied for an escort they might plausibly plead ignorance of my presence in the district.

Mounted gendarmes are an expensive necessity, as the traveller has to keep them and their horses, and on dismissing them he is expected to reward them with a gratuity, the amount of which depends on the traveller's quality and nationality. In this matter an Englishman is severely handicapped by a widespread belief in his

wealth. This belief is as deeply rooted as any other popular superstition. Nothing will persuade a native that you are not a full-blown milord, if not actually a prince of the blood, travelling *incognito*. Travel, except for commercial purposes, is considered to be an indication of one of two things—rank or madness, and one is often at a loss which of the two characters to prefer. To make matters worse, the idea is not confined to the common and comparatively harmless peasantry. It is shared by the brigands themselves, who seldom condescend to accept less than £12,000 as an Englishman's ransom.

These considerations, coupled with a picture of the horrors attending a detention in the mountains through the winter, prompted me to claim an escort. The *Kaimakam* readily promised me as many men as I wanted, and called up an officer to give the necessary orders. The officer gone, his Excellency informed me that by 12 o'clock (Turkish time) on the following day I should have my gendarmes. As it turned out, I did not avail myself of this dubious privilege. For in the course of the afternoon I discovered that a caravan was starting much earlier in the morning, and I decided to join it, as a less ostentatious and consequently safer method of travelling. Complete secrecy had to be observed, and no one knew of my intended departure except the invaluable Mr. A., who undertook to engage for me a mount in his own name. All these precautions were calculated to bring home to one the demoralising influence of the Turkish *régime*, and that night I puzzled myself to sleep with the conundrum: "Where do honest men go, if Turkish governors go to heaven?"

CHAPTER XVI

ON THE ROAD TO PETRITZ

September 19.—The day was just breaking as we set forth. I was mounted on a superb hybrid, which by the smartness of its kicks showed, according to the muleteer, the nobility of its lineage. Its only faults, if it had any, were self-consciousness and an embarrassing tendency to have its own way; both qualities said to be the last infirmities of a noble mule. I personally was inclined to regard them rather as the vices of a corrupt and perverted nature, but I said nothing, not wishing to wound its master's feelings.

My fellow-travellers were all substantial merchants, well mounted and well, though covertly, armed with the indispensable revolver, in defiance of the law which forbids the Christians to carry arms. As one of them said, "If the Sultan will not protect us, it is only reasonable that we should endeavour to protect ourselves," a proposition with which I heartily agreed. Our way at first lay through the partially dried up bed of the Potamos, but after a while we climbed over its right bank and in a short time reached another tributary of the Struma. As we forded it, I asked my companions for its name.

"Oh, it comes from somewhere far away," answered one of them, with characteristic precision.

"What is its name? Hasn't it got a name?" I insisted.

"What kind of a name would you expect it to have? *Na*, it is a river," he rejoined, amazed at my stupidity.

It was not the first time that I had been baffled in my efforts to improve my geography. To a native a river is "the river," a mountain "the mountain." Beyond that he neither knows nor cares to know. So I jogged on sad and unenlightened.

And now we came in sight of the Struma itself, which, though it here expands to a considerable breadth, is fordable in three different places. At this season its chocolate-coloured bosom is dotted with a number of sandy islets which in winter disappear beneath the waters. We forded it with no further damage than a heavy splash, and gained the other bank. The country on this side of the river formed a delightful contrast to the desolate district which I had traversed a few days before on my way north. The land wore a less sullen mien, and it seemed to greet the coming dawn with a genial smile. The mountains cast long shadows across the plain, flocks of sheep and goats grazed here and there on the slopes, the cows looked less like the lot which figures in Pharaoh's second dream than any I had hitherto seen in Turkey, a herd of big, heavy buffaloes was driven to its pasture by a tiny maiden of some ten summers, and the notes of a shepherd's pipe came ever and anon from behind a hill, floating on the morning breeze. Apparently inspired by the idyllic character of the environment, one of my companions broke into song, the subject of which, as far as I could make out, were the adventures of six nuns. It was upon a balmy morning like the present that the saintly maidens, according to the poet, had gone forth to bathe. But on emerging from the

waters they found themselves in as embarrassing a predicament as ever confronted bathing maidens. A wily wight, concealed behind a clump of willows, had watched them go into the stream and had cunningly stolen away their garments. Nor would he surrender his booty unconditionally.

Thus "we with singing cheer'd the way."

A little later we forded the Strumnitza, a third tributary, which flows into the Struma from the west, waded through a marsh, and entered a *tchiftlik*. Many more marshes lined our path—unwholesome yet not unbeautiful sheets of water—sown with green rushes and dwarf willows, and peopled with numerous colonies of loquacious frogs. The day was now drawing towards noon, and the grasshoppers chirped shrilly in the blackberry bushes, birds twittered in the trees, a turtle-dove was now and again heard from amidst the thick foliage of an elm, and a long-tailed magpie flew chattering over our heads.

The *tchiftlik* was the property of a Mohammedan, and as we rode through it we saw several groups of Turkish women engaged in picking cotton in the fields, or seated in a ring before a hut shelling maize. At the sight of breeched humanity they hastened to pull the white *yashmak* over their faces, but, daughters of Eve that they were, they could not resist the impulse of stealing a timid glance from behind its folds. Male labourers were also at work in the land, some digging, others ploughing with a pair of oxen, or an ox and a buffalo yoked together in grotesque and uncomfortable fellowship.

A turn in the road, and Petritz burst full upon the scene. It is a straggling township spread over the nether slopes of a high, thickly-wooded range, which

forms the western boundary of a broad, square valley. The mountains above the town are mantled with chestnut and pine forests, and the plain, which stretches before it, is covered with fields of maize, wheat, barley, oats, and rice, as well as with a few cotton and tobacco plantations scattered here and there by way of variety. Orchards also abound, rich in melons and water-melons, pears, peaches, and figs, not to mention the gay green vineyards yonder. The bleached skull of a defunct ox rose at intervals from amid the green vegetation, like a ghostly sentinel from the vale of Acheron. Its dark gaping nostrils, empty sockets, and curved horns, fitted it admirably for its gruesome task of scaring away evil spirits and greedy crows.

It was market-day (Wednesday), and the dry, gravelly water-course, which here also forms the main thoroughfare, was alive with buyers and sellers: a motley assembly, presenting a highly-coloured panorama of national costumes and dialects, features and faiths. Besides the familiar Turkish official in threadbare uniform, and the equally familiar figure of the Greek tradesman, there were Bulgarian rustics in shaggy goatskin caps and sheepskin jackets, rubbing shoulders with Wallachian shepherds in white kilts and long blue cloaks; Konians in shabby brown breeches mingled with shabbier gipsies from a ragged encampment outside the town. Lambs and kids were slaughtered, skinned, and quartered on the spot, and their blood trickled dark and ghastly between the smooth white boulders in the river-bed—a veritable massacre of the innocents on a reduced scale.

Cattle, fruit, fowls, vegetables, salted fish, and cheap jewellery were exhibited on every side. The babel of tongues was swelled by the inarticulate bray-

ing and bleating of hairy quadrupeds, the cackling and crowing of feathered bipeds, and by the din of bells and the clang of chains. As heterogeneous a conglomeration of sounds and scenes, colours and forms, as ever furnished the stuff for a maniac's dream.

Through this pandemonium I wound my way to the *Khan* (where my friend Mr. G. of Serres lodged). Arrived there, I found the entrance blocked by a crowd of peasants standing in a ring round two pedlars, who, with their wares spread before them in the street, were engaged in a loud disputation.

"I tell thee, He was a Bulgar."

"Christ a Bulgar! why, thou onion-headed simpleton, all the world knows that He was a Greek!"

This repartee, which I heard as I dismounted, gave me the clue to the subject under discussion.

As I elbowed my way through the crowd, the disputants caught sight of me, and both with one voice appealed to me to act as umpire.

"You are a stranger, sir," they said, "and a *tchelebi*—man of culture"—that was evidently a tribute to my Frank dress. "So we shall leave the question to your decision."

A deep silence fell upon the assembly, and the whole countryside looked eagerly at me. I, finding myself suddenly called upon to pronounce an opinion on so weighty a matter, paused, stroked my chin meditatively for a minute or two, and then slowly and deliberately said:—

"It is commonly supposed that He was a Jew."

A roar of laughter greeted my answer.

"Get away, sir, you are mocking us!" said one of the disputing pedlars, red with anger.

"You are a merry one," said the other, and he

laughed loud and long to show that *he* was not too dull to see the point of the joke!

This was only a laughable instance of a by no means laughable state of things. Patriotism with the majority of these people seems to be a form of national disease. To the Macedonian jingo all questions, from philology to theology, are matters within "the sphere of practical politics." The Greeks, being more intellectual than their neighbours, are the greater offenders in this respect. Their irritability without a doubt is largely due to the state of perennial and passionate antagonism to which the Greek nation has found itself exposed for centuries. From ancient times to the present day it has been surrounded by alien races thwarting its free development, endeavouring to rob it of its inheritance, and often endangering its very existence. A Macedonian farmer of that nationality once put the matter to me in forcibly figurative terms:—

"We Greeks, sir," he said, "are like so many ears of corn standing in the midst of weeds and tares of all sorts. They do their best to starve and to choke us. Yet, by the grace of God, we somehow contrive to shoot up and bear fruit."

Petritz is one of the places in Macedonia where the feud between Greek and Bulgar has attained its fiercest aspect. The struggle for racial supremacy between Slav and Hellene, a struggle as old as the hills, is here, more than anywhere else, identified with and embittered by the religious strife which rages between the followers of the Bulgarian Exarch and those of the Greek Patriarch—the schismatic and the orthodox parties. This animosity pervades and poisons all the relations of life, private no less than public.

A Greek will on no account speak to or shake hands with a Bulgar. Nor will a Bulgar patronise a shop kept by a Greek. The antipathy between the two nationalities amounts almost to physical repugnance. It far exceeds any feeling of enmity that either of them may entertain towards the Turk, who has ground them both to the dust during five centuries of the most unmitigated oppression imaginable.

Party passion from the market-place is often carried into the very bosom of the family. At Petritz, as in other parts of Macedonia, I found many a house divided against itself, some of the members of the family espousing one cause, while the others supported the opposite. Not that the division is always based on sincere discrepancy of political or religious views. Patriotism in too many cases can be described as purse-deep. The Bulgarian propaganda spares no effort and no expense for the acquisition of proselytes, and many of the adherents of the Bulgarian party at Petritz and other districts of Central Macedonia are in receipt of a monthly salary. This is one of the methods adopted by these latter-day fishers of souls; a practical method enough, though rather expensive and not invariably successful. There are even in Petritz men who will not sell their souls for silver. For the conversion of these, another and sterner as well as cheaper metal is employed. A highly respectable inhabitant of Petritz assured me that for some time past both methods had been tried on him. He had been offered £T.6 (about £5, 8s.) a month if he would join the Exarchic fold—this apparently being the market value of a first-class Macedonian soul—or a free passage to immortality by an early conveyance, should he refuse. He refused, and ever since had

been living in constant fear, which was fully justified by the fate of others.

By a judicious combination of these two methods—corruption and intimidation—the Bulgarian propaganda has already succeeded in weaning more than three-quarters of the Christian population of the town from the mother Church. They have appropriated one of the two places of worship and, at the time of my visit, were striving hard to gain possession of the other. This, besides the bustle of a market-day, was a second cause for excitement. A third incident added still further to the ferment in which I found the place. Several acts of brigandage had been reported from the environs, and the *Kaimakam* at the head of all the military force, regular troops as well as gendarmes, had gone forth in pursuit of the miscreants, leaving one mounted gendarme to guard the *Konak*.

An Italian engineer, who was supervising the construction of a bridge at a short distance from the town, had been attacked a few nights back and had barely effected his escape into Petritz. The *Kaimakam*, unable to protect him and unwilling to run the risk of a foreigner coming to grief in the district under his jurisdiction, had packed him off to Salonica under escort. The local Governor's anxiety to save the engineer can easily be understood when it is remembered that a foreigner's ransom generally costs the Sultan between £10,000 and £15,000, and the local Governor his post, unless he can manage to refund the sum at once by squeezing the peasants hard. The achievement is not impossible; but, in spite of the official's zealous exertions, it requires time, and the Sultan will brook no delay. When, however, a mere *rayah*, native Christian or Jew, falls into the

brigands' hands, no one troubles to raise a finger on his behalf, and he is left to perish or ransom himself, as the case may be. It is only after he has bought himself off that the authorities begin to take an interest in him. "Ah," says the *Kaimakam*, rubbing his hands in high glee, "you have ransomed yourself, my good man, eh? I am very glad to hear it. Fancy, I never thought you were so well off as all that! Come now, if you are able to satisfy the voracity of those ravenous wolves, surely you will find no difficulty in satisfying the moderate appetite of your lawful Governor." Should the liberated captive fail to appreciate the logic of this appeal, the *Kaimakam* has another argument ready at hand. "O thou infidel cur," he will say, shaking his fist persuasively, "who art thou that thou shouldst insult his Majesty's Government by paying tribute to the brigands? Is this thy gratitude for our forbearance in allowing thy head to grow between thy shoulders? Tribute to the brigands, indeed! and such a sum, too, as though the brigands were respectable, officially appointed Kaimakams! Off to prison with him!" This does not claim to be a report of an actual dialogue, but it is a faithful summary of scenes, which form the everyday topic of conversation in the coffee-shops of Petritz and other seats of Turkish misrule.

The attack on the Italian engineer was the first of many even bolder raids, which obliged the *Kaimakam* to take the unprecedented step of exchanging his sofa and *narghileh* for a hard Macedonian saddle and a pistol. He was cashiered for this breach of discipline. But this was later on. What concerns us at present is the story of his campaign. The expedition proved a wild-goose chase. As might have

been expected, the brigands did not wait for his Excellency. After having spent the night at Tsaritsani, a village three and a half hours' journey to the north-west of Petritz, feasted and made merry at the expense of the villagers, they departed leaving behind them no other message than the cold ashes of a bonfire. His Excellency was naturally disappointed at their want of courtesy; but, being a determined man and an ambitious, he could not think of going back empty-handed. When he found that no brigands were to be had, he captured the village notables, who had been the unwilling guests of the brigands, and who had apprised him of the presence of the latter as soon as they safely could. These wretches were dragged at the tail of his Excellency's retinue into the town, and thrown into prison.

If any faith is to be placed in common report, they were tortured in a horrible manner. The account which reached me from more than one quarter was that they were flogged until the blood began to flow from their backs, and then boiling oil was poured into the gaping wounds. I am not in a position to vouch for the accuracy of these statements. I can only say that they were received by everybody without any expression of surprise. Bastinado and the thumbscrew are not things of the past in Turkey, as is commonly supposed. Both these expedients and others, suggested by the ingenuity of a rapacious tyranny, are frequently employed for extorting evidence from stubborn or innocently ignorant witnesses. If the victims are well-to-do people, torture is not wasted, as they are made to pay for their release. In the present case at all events the notables were certain to prove themselves worthy of the treatment; for it was the middle

of the threshing season, and they would be anxious to go back to the occupations on which their year's income entirely depended.

In addition to the prisoners already mentioned, Said Bey—in justice to him be it said—brought with him a lame country fellow, officially designated as a “suspect.” That he had anything to do with the recent outrages no one pretended. His only crime, so far as I could gather, was his lameness. In the cross-examination he was reported to have stated that he was a peaceful inhabitant of Tsaritsani, who some time ago had met with an accident while engaged in a harmless attempt to lift a farmer's cattle. That would have been sufficient to account for his lame leg. But one of the soldiers swore that he recognised in him a member of the band, with which he had had a skirmish two years before. In fact, the lame one was accused of having received his wound during an attack on a wealthy Bey's estate, and of having been hiding in the neighbourhood all this time, waiting for his wound to heal, and for an opportunity of joining his comrades. It was further supposed that the latter would have taken him with them during their recent expedition, had the *Kaimakam* not been so energetic. The lame one soon relapsed into his native obscurity, out of which his Excellency's eye for effect had lifted him for a moment to adorn his triumph. But the incident with which his lameness was so artistically linked deserves further notice. One evening I had a graphic account of the whole affair from the lips of the very Bey who had figured at once as the victim and the hero of the drama, and this interview will form the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVII

TABLE-TALK OF HADJI DEMIR BEY

OUR host was a survival of the old feudal *régime*, and he still practised some of the virtues, and many of the vices, of his extinct class. Hospitality was one of the former, and it was to his habit of keeping open house that I owed the opportunity of making his acquaintance.

His name, being interpreted, signified the Iron Pilgrim, and his appearance did not belie it. Hadji Demir Bey was a man over sixty years of age: a tall, sparely-built Osmanli completely wrapped in silk draperies and solemn decorum. His nose—long and aquiline in shape—indicated a domineering disposition; his deep-sunk grey eyes wore the calm and haughty look of one accustomed to a first-class seat in this world, and assured of like accommodation in the next. Now and again, however, they would sparkle with a light of no heavenly origin. In fact, Hadji Demir Bey was reputed to be one of the most fanatical Mohammedans in the district. But he knew well how to control his feelings. On ordinary occasions he disdained not the society of infidels. He would mix with them, eat with them, and alas! even drink with them. All this in spite of his gold-broidered turban and title of *Hadji*, both souvenirs of a weary pilgrimage to Mecca, and badges of supreme holiness. Perhaps on these occasions he, like many another saint,

issued a special dispensation to himself. Or, haply, he allowed himself to indulge in the wicked ways of the infidels with a mental reservation to wash off the stain in their own blood on one of those opportunities which Providence—personified in the Padishah—periodically offers to the faithful. However that may be, he availed himself of our presence at Petritz to invite us—Mr. G. and myself—to dinner.

Previous experiences of Oriental hospitality had imbued me with the conviction that a dinner with a Bey, if it is to be followed by no fatal consequences, must be preceded by a rigorous fast. Accordingly, I abstained that day from food almost as scrupulously as if I were a Roman Catholic preparing for holy communion. But experience is no safe guide in a land where the unexpected rules the affairs of men, and I was justly punished for my presumption.

On repairing to the Bey's dwelling we were told that the house was full of Mohammedan guests, who, our host feared, might be shocked at the sight of unbelievers. He therefore begged us to follow him to a cottage adjoining a mill on his estate. He led the way up a narrow, rickety step-ladder into a dark little room. The miller, a Bulgar of gigantic stature, was ordered to bring in a tin lamp, which he deposited upon an empty petroleum case. This table and a few rush mats spread over the floor constituted the whole furniture of the apartment. We sat down cross-legged upon the mats, and the Bulgarian giant placed before us the first course. It consisted of a bottle of arrack, a jug of water, and a jar of tobacco.

It was a still, moonless night. The stars winked knowingly at us through the small unglazed windows of the room, while upon its mud-plastered walls our

shadows danced fantastic figures, elongated and complicated by the flickering light of the lamp. The silence was made audible by the monotonous "tak-it, tak-it" of the hopper, which sounded with curious distinctness above the murmur of the mill-stream outside. Without seriously impairing my chances of a blissful immortality, I can assert that a more weird entertainment I never assisted at before or since. The saint had evidently issued an exceptionally liberal dispensation to himself that evening. For hour after hour he went on filling and emptying his glass, filling and refilling his *tchibook*. He only interrupted himself occasionally to enforce his example upon us with a fervid exclamation in praise of the beverage and the tobacco, accompanied by a pious thanksgiving to Allah for His goodness. The fumes of arrack and native ferocity gradually wrought their wonted work. The old pilgrim's eyes began to flash, his nostrils dilated, and he launched into a sparkling description of the fight with the brigands already alluded to.

He told us how he, with his two servants, had held out for six hours against a band of forty who had laid siege to his house. How he had scorned their summons to surrender; how they assailed his fortress; how they were repulsed; and how at last they carried out their threat and set fire to it. "The flames were all round us, licking the walls and leaping up towards the sky. It was a dark night like this, but you could see yonder mountains by the light of the fire as clearly as you see the palm of your hand. We retreated to the stable below, and, throwing the gate open, whipped the horses out. How frightened the poor creatures were! By Allah the Compassionate and Merciful! methinks I can still hear their neighing. There was

a bitch in the stable, too, lying upon the straw with her puppies. Oh, how they whined and howled, enough to break a heart of stone! When I opened the gate she lifted her children between her jaws, and one by one she carried them out through the flames. But as she was coming in for the last, a bullet hit her, and she fell dead at my feet. Then I closed the gate again and, digging a hole through the wall, made up my mind to fire my last shot and then perish beneath the ruins of my house. But Allah is great. He directed my aim. Off went the rifle, a scream came from without, and then all was silence. The brigands picked up their wounded, and made off in haste. I had not prayed in vain. My last bullet had hit their chief. Praise be to Allah!"

He broke off as abruptly as he had begun. He drained his glass, filled it, drained it again, and then shut his jaws with a snap. The fire went out of his eyes—it had long since gone out of his pipe. Now he refilled and relit it, and set about surrounding himself with clouds of smoke. The blood-curdling nature of the narrative accorded well with the savage shabbiness of the dingy room and with the stern physiognomy of the narrator.

It was near eleven o'clock before the Bey reached the bottom of the arrack bottle and of the tobacco jar. Then he bethought him that we might have something to eat. He clapped his hands, and forthwith the Bulgarian giant made his appearance from the nether regions, like a genie at the summons of a wizard. He brought in a huge tray containing half a lamb roasted with rice, and placed it in the middle of our circle. We got up and followed our host to a disused fireplace, and there one after another we washed our

hands with water poured upon them by the giant from a ewer, which looked ludicrously small in his enormous hands. This ablution was not an empty ceremony, but a performance of absolute necessity, as I found as soon as we took our places round the steaming meat. There were neither knives, nor forks, nor aught else in the form of an artificial auxiliary to the apparatus provided by nature. The bread was broken in scriptural fashion, and the meat was mangled by our host's talon-like fingers after the fashion of a bird of prey breaking a long and rigid fast. To make bad worse, the Bey insisted on conferring marks of favour on me in the shape of choice morsels, which with implacable liberality he piled on my side of the tray. Yet I felt nothing but gratitude towards him. Hunger is no friend to fastidiousness, and it now appeared that I had not fasted in vain.

The pilgrim knew, by hearsay, enough of European habits to suspect that the proceedings might perhaps impress me as somewhat primitive; as for their looking anything worse, it certainly never entered his hallowed head.

"Knives," he explained in all seriousness, "should never be used to cut bread with. Bread is a gift from God, and it would be a sin to wound it with steel."

His abhorrence of forks was accounted for in a similar way: meat also is a divine gift.

"Besides," he added, "by using the fingers, which Allah has blessed us with, we enhance the pleasure of eating. For, in addition to the senses of smell and taste, we likewise satisfy the sense of feeling."

The absence of plates was also satisfactorily, albeit mystically, explained:—

"As there is one God and one Prophet, so there

must be one dish, of which we must all partake in common amity"—and, adding example to precept, he proceeded to scoop a handful of rice out of the tray and convey it to his mouth.

I could have wished that there were a little less of symbolism and a great deal more of conventional decency in the arrangements; but, of course, I said nothing, and only tried to scoop up the rice with the neat dexterity of which our host seemed to be such a consummate master. My efforts caused him great amusement, and earned for me his compassionate interest. I must confess they were not entirely successful.

A second ablution followed at the end of the meal, which, to judge by the gurgling and rattling which issued from the pilgrim's vulture throat, must have afforded his saintly stomach unspeakable enjoyment. These utterances, tabooed among us, are regarded by the Turks as the very quintessence of good-breeding, and to my horror my companion, Mr. G., appeared to be not only an adept, but also an enthusiastic practitioner of the art. He afterwards explained to me that, as I did not know how to do it, it was his duty to do it for both, or else our host would have conceived a very poor opinion of European politeness.

Though, naturally, we refrained from commenting on the pilgrim's breach of the precepts of the Koran anent drink, he seemed to feel that his conduct stood in need of vindication, and he accordingly volunteered to edify us with the following homily:—

"You have surely heard of Nasreddin Khodja?"

"Who has not heard of the great sage? The whole world rings with the renown of his wisdom," answered courtly Mr. G. I remained candidly

bewildered; but, in obedience to an eloquent nudge from my companion's elbow, I shook my head vigorously in the affirmative, though, as a matter of fact, the gentleman in question was a perfect stranger to me at the time.

"Well," pursued the pilgrim, after having secured the ear of the House, "in my opinion, which ought to carry some weight, seeing that I am a man ancient of days, and have been to holy Mecca——"

"Indeed it does, O Bey!" This from Mr. G.

"In my opinion the wisest thing Nasreddin Khodja ever uttered was on a certain occasion, which is as follows. On one of the days, a poor parishioner of his came to Nasreddin and said: 'O Khodja, I have lost my ass. So may Allah prolong and prosper thy life, help me to recover the beast, or, the Blessed Prophet be my witness, I shall verily starve.' The Khodja, whose heart was as soft as——"

"His head," I ventured to suggest.

"——a well-ripened melon," emended the Bey, severely, "took compassion on the poor peasant, and promised to assist him. Next Friday, after sermon, he stood up in the pulpit and, addressing the congregation, said: 'Oh ye true believers, is there any one amongst you who has never drunk coffee or arrack, who has never smoked *tchibook* or *narghileh*, who has never played at cards or dice, who has never indulged in any pleasure whatsoever? If there be such a one, let him step forward.' The believers, assembled in the mosque, each and all reviewed their past lives mentally, but none durst step forward; for they had all been, at some time or another, guilty of the sins enumerated by the Khodja. At last one stepped boldly out of the crowd and said: 'Behold me, O Khodja, I have never

in my life tasted drink or smoke. I have never gambled nor indulged in any other pleasure whatsoever.' When Nasreddin heard this speech, he looked round and said: 'Where is the man who has lost his ass?' The peasant stood up. Then the Khodja, pointing to the speaker, said: 'Behold the animal which thou seekest.'

"That is exactly my opinion on the subject," concluded our host, and we, as in courtesy bound, applauded his breadth of mind.

Perhaps I ought to mention that the sage, so aptly quoted by the Bey, is a fourteenth-century worthy—half moralist, half buffoon—on whom are fathered all sorts of humorous stories and witty sayings, many of them strongly flavoured with the spirit known to us as Hibernian. These anecdotes, swelled by constant additions, are very popular all over the Mohammedan world, and have afforded innocent merriment to countless generations of Turks, Persians, Arabs, and Egyptians. A translation of them would suffice to absolve the Oriental mind of the inability to appreciate the ludicrous side of things, which is generally imputed to it by ignorant Occidentals. A Turk has many sins to answer for, but want of humour is certainly not one of them, though he is unequal to the exertion involved by laughter. His humour is of a passive character, and he likes to take his jokes sadly.

The moon was setting—in the dialect of civilisation it was about twelve o'clock—as we left the Bey's abode. The Bulgarian giant escorted us home with a lantern of proportionable dimensions in one hand and a rusty revolver in the other.

Dyspepsia was my bedfellow throughout the ambrosial night. My dreams were many and incongruous;

brigands and giants figured largely in them; but the din of battle was diversified by the occasional brayings of an abstemious ass. Beneath this turmoil I was dimly conscious of a low intermittent tune which, without exactly being either the sound of flute or the screaming of bagpipe, seemed to combine the peculiar characteristics of both instruments. In the morning it turned out that it was due to the exertions of an orchestra of orphaned kittens, which some neighbour had cast out to perish under my windows. It must have been the act of a Christian.

The Turk is proverbial for his kindness to four-legged creatures. His affection for cats especially is such as any old maid would rejoice to witness. This predilection for feline creation is traditionally traced to the founder of the Moslem faith himself. It is related that the Prophet was once summoned to attend a council. But he found that, if he rose from his couch, he would disturb the repose of his favourite puss, which was purring on his sleeve. He solved the problem in his characteristic manner: If the cat would not depart from Mohammed's sleeve, Mohammed's sleeve would remain with the cat. He drew his scimitar and amputated from his garment the limb appropriated by the animal.

CHAPTER XVIII

A CHRISTIAN FAIR

NEXT day was the eve of the Feast of the Panaghia—in ecclesiastical parlance the Nativity of the God-mother—one of the principal festivals of the year. All day long caravans of rustics from the neighbouring villages streamed into the town, some mounted on mules, others on horses or donkeys. The women generally walked with their infants slung across their backs, and their shoes in their hands. Their hard-featured faces, tanned by the summer sun and pinched by the frost of winter, and their air of weariness indicated anything but a festive frame of mind. To me they looked like a troop of wayworn pilgrims doing penance, rather than like a party seeking pleasure.

Many of these women had the sign of the cross tattooed between their eyebrows. At first I took this to be a misguided attempt at personal embellishment; but I was subsequently informed that it was a brand imprinted in early youth, so that they might be identified as Christians and reclaimed as such, should they be abducted by a Mohammedan and forced to join his harem. Prospective abductions of girls of tender age are not uncommon. At Salonica I met an elderly Mohammedan fortune-teller who mystified me by frequent allusions to the Virgin Mary and Christ. After a few leading questions she confessed that she was a Thessalian by birth, and that her late

not-lamented lord had carried her off from her parents' home, when she was about twelve years old. She had a brother living at Athens, and, were it not for love of her son and fear of her daughter-in-law, both staunch Mohammedans, she would join her brother and "save her soul by a timely return to the faith of her fathers."

Before the split of the Christian community of Petritz into two hostile factions, the festival used to be celebrated on a common ground. But now the Bulgarian section insisted on holding it in the quadrangle of the church, which they had wrested from the Greeks. Their perversity roused the wrath of the latter; for the quadrangle in question is the common burial-place of the town, and revelling among the tombs was regarded by the Greeks as a desecration. They, therefore, petitioned the *Kaimakam* to put a stop to the scandal, pointing out that it might lead to a disturbance, the consequences of which could easily be foreseen. The *Kaimakam*, however, was on that day away on his famous campaign, and the Police Commissary was either unable or unwilling to interfere. So the Bulgarians were allowed on the eve to dance over the remains of their own, as well as of their opponents' ancestors to their hearts' content. But on the following day the authorities obliged them to let the dead alone. The policy of the authorities was supposed to have been dictated by the desire to keep on good terms with both parties, from both of whom they had accepted a bribe. The result, of course, was that they earned the cordial anathemas of both.

In the evening Mr. G. and myself visited the scene of the merry-making, where we were soon joined by the versatile schoolmaster, who was in his native element here, and by an Albanian gentleman in the

government service, who was introduced to me as "the only man in the Sultan's employ who had never been known to 'eat money.'" The man acknowledged the doubtful eulogy with a grin, which showed how much he deserved it. In the company of these curious representatives of a unique political situation I explored the *paneghyri*.

Booths for drinks and stalls for sweetmeats stood ranged round the sides of the open space. Lambs were roasted whole on spits extemporised out of rude stakes, and then the rose-coloured carcasses were flung upon wooden dressers, dissected, weighed, and sold piecemeal. Meat even in this comparatively prosperous district is by no means an everyday luxury. Bread and onions or fruit constitute the ordinary peasant's usual diet. This compulsory vegetarianism, coupled with the strict fast enjoined by the Church as a preparation for all great feasts, goes far to account for the carnivorous impetuosity displayed by the people on festive occasions.

Parties of men were scattered here and there, eating, drinking, and smoking by the light of torches, or even in the dark. The women were dressed in gaudy tunics and long heavy cloaks, so cut as to allow the embroidered borders of the nether garment to exhibit their red splendour to advantage. Flowers, natural and artificial, adorned their headgear; and strings of silver pieces were plaited into their long braids of hair, dangled over their foreheads, jingled round their necks, and glittered on their bosoms. Their waists were encircled with girdles, buckled with massive silver clasps. One would have thought, what probably was the case, that these maidens carried all their dowry about them. Notwithstanding this weight of wool and metal, they

danced with great perseverance and an air of truly Christian resignation. Bagpipes—the favourite instrument of the Bulgarian—supplied the local equivalent for music. Round this squealing band a wide circle footed it slowly and exceedingly stupidly. Both sexes were represented in the ring; but they were rigorously separated by the barrier of a handkerchief. The dance consisted of one step forward, one backward, and one to the side, without any variation whatsoever. A melancholy refrain *Sospita Yanno, Sospita Yanno*, drawled out in sleepy and sleep-begetting tones, accompanied the sad measure. This continued far into the night.

But the young ladies' unwearied efforts were not wholly wasted. Many a youth's heart was moved to matrimonial yearnings by their grace, or their capacity for enduring fatigue, or perhaps by the jingle of their silver coins, and ere the evening was over many a match was arranged between bridegrooms and brides' parents. There was nothing peculiar in these bargains, except the nature of the merchandise. In one case the bridegroom agreed to pay for the maid of his choice £T.3; in another he beat his future father-in-law down to £T.2½. The average price of a Macedonian cow is, I believe, £T.5.

Long after the dance had broken up, and the music ceased, the carousal continued with unabated vigour. Wives, lantern in hand, now came in search of their erring partners:—

“Come home, and don't you get drunk as you did last year,” I heard an old lady behind me exhorting her worse half. Neither her eloquence, however, nor her pertinent allusions to a former catastrophe appeared to have any effect on her besotted spouse.

"Let me finish this bottle first. I have paid for it," pleaded the culprit, appealing with the ingenuity of the inebriate to his wife's practical side. I am glad to be able to report that he carried both his point and his liquor as a man should.

The *Kaimakam* had ordered an officer of police to see us safely home with a couple of *zaptiehs*. It was only a quarter of a mile's walk to our inn; but his Excellency knew the negative value of our persons too well to allow the least margin to chance. Our escort, though well armed, was not provided with a lantern, and our walk consequently was a series of stumblings against stones, plungings into puddles, and exclamations suitable to the occasion. But no accident befell us.

The proceedings on the eve were only a feeble preamble to the ineffable glory of the feast itself. On the following day the women of the town made their appearance on the public dancing-ground, and their superior radiance utterly eclipsed the rustic dancers of the previous evening. In lieu of the cumbrous cloak, these dames and damsels were attired in long puffed skirts with richly-embroidered aprons hanging in front. Gilt belts girt their waists, and coins of gold, instead of plebeian silver, adorned their necks. Their hair, deeply dyed with henna, was parted in the middle, and three braids hung behind from under the folds of a shiny silk kerchief. But their principal claim to admiration undoubtedly lay in the short fur-lined jackets in which they stewed comfortably despite the stifling heat. Thus caparisoned they danced the slow sleepy step described already. The male portion of the ring, however, seemed to be less inanimate than on the evening before. The gentlemen hopped in front, first

on one leg and then on the other; they kicked gracefully forward, backward, and sideways; they swayed to and fro, and so the chain moved on by jerks, which grew fainter and fainter, dying out in a timid half-step ere they reached the female ranks. New-comers joined by degrees, and the chain slowly developed into a glittering serpent of many coils.

The day ended without bloodshed, and the aspiring schoolmaster was mad with grief.

CHAPTER XIX

A MOHAMMEDAN FÊTE

A FEW days after my arrival at Petritz I had an opportunity of assisting at a Mohammedan ceremony of an exceptionally solemn nature, namely, the circumcision of three sons of the head Mullah, a sacred personage whose position in the Mohammedan world, broadly speaking, corresponds to that of a Christian bishop. The ceremony was, as usual, accompanied by great rejoicings in the Turkish fashion, which has nothing to do with gaiety or laughter, or any other unseemly exhibition of emotion. Strict, stern, stony decorum is the keynote to all Turkish fêtes, and this one was no exception to the rule.

We repaired to an open space on the outskirts of the town, where the sports were to take place, and found the happy and reverend father with the *Kaimakam*, seated between two rippling fountains under the wide-spreading boughs of a colossal plane-tree. The Major of the Gendarmerie and other high officials were sitting on either side. Beyond this row of civil, religious, and military notabilities were spread rush mats for the accommodation of inferior guests, who sat cross-legged, feeling, I suspected, much happier than their betters, upon whom dignity forced the discomfort of an upright posture on European chairs. A miscellaneous mob of soldiers, schoolboys, and idlers of all persuasions squatted at a respectful distance upon

the bare ground ; while many little girls in petticoat-trousers, and hair, finger-tips, and nails resplendent with henna, sprawled gracefully in the dust. The victims of the scissors, from six to nine years of age, sat stiffly behind their father, arrayed in new Frank suits, and fezes glittering with tassels of gold thread and strings of golden coins.

After a period spent in silent and thoughtless meditation, accompanied with volumes of smoke, we heard a terrific rumbling and shrieking from the west :

"Massacre?" whispered I to my companion, anxiously.

"No, music," he answered, with a noble composure.

At the first sound of the band a herald sprang up, and in tones stentorian announced that the *pehlevans*, or wrestlers, were coming. A pole, hung with silk handkerchiefs and sashes, was produced and planted close to the plane-tree, and a big ram, with long spiral horns clothed in gold-leaf, was tied to the trunk of the tree. These were the prizes for the victors.

Meanwhile the uproar grew quite ear-rending. It issued from a couple of monster drums and a number of reed-flutes. The first thundered and the second shrieked under the lusty handling of a party of gipsy musicians, who seemed to be convinced that harmony depended on the amount of sound produced within a given space of time. Perhaps their pay did.

While the band made noise, three champions entered the arena. They stripped to the waist and tucked up their breeches, assisted by admiring friends. Their toilet completed, they began to pace round and round, scanning each other with furtively fierce looks, after the manner of pugnacious cocks taking each

other's measure before they engage in mortal combat. Then they proceeded to test each other's muscles and joints, with the air of a farmer critically examining the limbs of a horse in a country fair. As a result of this investigation one of them dropped out, and the remaining two interlocked their arms in a firm grip. One of the combatants was a gipsy, a slim, copper-coloured lad, while the other was a Turk, equally slim, but cream-coloured. The struggle did not last long. Both the athletes, as if by tacit agreement, sank to the ground, then they both rose to their feet, lifted each other up in the air, and ended by coming round to us with fez in hand. It was evidently a draw, and possibly a sell.

Then a second pair arose: a gipsy and a Turk again, both well-developed, sinewy men. They grappled and tugged at each other, until they both fell prone upon the sand. Streams of blood soon began to flow from the cuts on their foreheads inflicted by the sharp stones which lay scattered over the arena. Their seconds wiped off the blood and moistened their lips with water; after which they resumed their position on the ground. The gipsy was now on top; but he could not claim the victory until he had turned his adversary over on his back, a condition with which the latter did not seem anxious to comply. Thus they remained rigidly fixed for many long minutes, and the sweat began to ooze out in big glittering drops upon the gipsy's swarthy neck. Their muscles strained and swelled, their chests heaved, and their breath came and went in deep hoarse gasps; but neither would relinquish his hold. After a while, however, the gipsy took advantage of a momentary relaxation on the other's part and floored him. Whereupon the

spectators expressed their admiration with an appreciative ha!

Many more pairs wrestled and lost and won. There came many more "locked intertwinings, and deadly blows of the forehead, and groans," yet the long strife did not tire the spectators. Hour after hour dragged tediously on, until the sun began to decline toward the west, and I began to wax hungry. So I prevailed on Mr. G. to slip away to dinner, and leave the rest to continue the performance by moonlight.

Besides the Mullah's children several other boys of poor co-religionists were on that day initiated into the mysteries of Islam at the Mullah's own expense. The ceremony corresponds to the Christian baptism in solemnity, only it takes place at a much later period of a child's life, and, of course, is confined to one sex. It commences at the mosque in the presence of the Imam, who reads the prayers suitable to the occasion, and, altogether, performs the spiritual part of the operation; while the surgical part is entrusted to a barber. For barbers in Turkey are not the humble, hair-splitting pygmies whom we know in modern Europe. A Turkish barber still is an exalted individual, embodying in his own person the threefold attributes of tonsor, dentist, and surgeon. In other words, he shaves your head, draws your teeth, sets your bones, and upon occasion assists in the religious operation which the Mullah's children had just undergone. Meanwhile, the boy's attention is distracted, and the little fellow is lured into the faith by expedients analogous to those by which an English child is lured into having its photograph taken.

CHAPTER XX

THE PEOPLE OF PETRITZ

My residence at Petritz proved prolific of interesting experiences. Every day and almost every hour brought with it something new, something that presented to my view a fresh aspect of the life of the place.

By this time I was thoroughly inured to early rising, and was always up in time to watch the sun emerge from behind the mountains and spread his crimson mantle across the valley and over the opposite ridges. From my window I could see the interior of a house over the way. The front of the hall was quite open, and only sheltered by a low railing. No matter how early I rose, there always were two or three women in the hall hard at work carding wool, spinning, and weaving. The grating of the cards, the creaking of the loom, and the whirr of the spinning-wheel reached me from the distance, mingled not unpleasantly with the cooing of the turtle-dove, which was the prevailing note of the place. For Petritz, though twice the size of Melenik, is essentially rural in its appearance and in the ways of its inhabitants. The streets are usually packed with sheep and goats, cows, donkeys, and geese. Women lounge about knitting thick woollen socks with enormous steel needles, while gipsy children in the brown garb bestowed on them by Mother Nature, sprawl in the thin stream which trickles down the main thoroughfare.

The houses make no pretence to architectural style, but are simply and unaffectedly ugly. They are built of rough boulders, picked from the river-bed and cemented together with mud and straw. The ground floor is paved with earth, and it is always used for the storing of produce and the stabling of cattle. Piles of yellow melons and pumpkins rise from the ground, and close to them an ox or an ass may be seen chewing the cud of resignation. The upper storey is reached on the outside by a ladder-like stair reeling heavenwards, and it serves as the home of the family. But even in this domestic sanctuary one not unfrequently finds the rafters thickly hung with rich golden cones of maize, or with strings of onions and garlic drying in the draught; a really picturesque though not exactly fragrant kind of tapestry.

The district is famous for the production of a peculiar species of a big, hard-skinned, red grape, which ripens late and lasts long into the winter. A large export trade in this and other fruit is carried on, and has recently received an additional stimulus by the construction of the Salonica-Dedeagatch Railway. This modern improvement has already shifted the centres of commerce in Macedonia, and it is fast obliterating many old and familiar landmarks. Inns once flourishing have fallen to decay, and townships once of the first importance have been relegated to a secondary rank. On the other hand, localities until yesterday obscure have suddenly risen to eminence. Petritz is one of these fortunate upstarts, and its inhabitants are making the most of their opportunities. Despite political agitation, extortion, brigandage, *kaimakams*, policemen, and other blessings of Turkish

administration, the place shows signs of great and growing prosperity.

The population is half Mohammedan and half Christian. The latter, as has been stated already, is largely Bulgar, and is distinguished by the patient thrift and unenterprising industry peculiar to the peasantry of that race. Their ways are slow but sure. They are emphatically sons of the soil, to which they seem to be as firmly rooted as are the trees and maize-stalks amid which they live. Their faces are careworn, sunburnt, and deeply furrowed; their backs are bent with continuous stooping. The gift of eloquence is not theirs; but, in revenge, they are endowed with a capacity for steady, unremitting toil which their more brilliant Greek neighbours possess not. The young Greek peasant's ambition is to betake himself as early as possible to the biggest town within his reach, and to become either a scholar or a tradesman, but at any rate to become a townsman. The Bulgar never dreams that there is a world beyond the limits of his farm, or, if he happens to have a hazy notion of its existence, he feels no desire to join it. There is good, solid, though somewhat coarse, stuff in these Slav-Tartar hinds, and under a less shocking *régime* they would no doubt develop into extremely useful and productive, if unornamental, members of society.

The Mohammedans of Petritz are for the most part mere circumcised Slavs, differing from their Christian neighbours only by the mode of life imposed upon them by their creed. Their women are kept in much stricter seclusion than is the custom among the Mohammedans of comparatively civilised centres like Constantinople and Salonica. Few of them are to be seen

about in the streets, and these are only seen in the sense in which a mummy is seen before it is divested of its multitudinous wrappings and bandages. They are always muffled up in a way which allows nothing but a glimpse of a bare ankle and an infinitesimal fraction of one eye to flash on the surface. Over and above the ordinary *yashmak* and *feredjé* these miserable victims of a jealous convention have to wear a kind of night-shirt, drawn closely over the head, with a pair of short sleeves swinging behind. Sometimes the breeze fills these appendages, making them bulge out and bob up and down, not unlike the ears of an ass in a state of spiritual exultation. If they see a male passenger, and especially an unbeliever, approaching, these ladies politely turn their back to him and stand still, with their nose flattened against the wall, until he is out of sight.

In the cosmopolitan towns on the coast things are a little better. There, owing to Western influences, the impenetrable *yashmak* has dwindled to a thin, transparent veil, through the delicate texture of which it is easy to obtain more than a glimpse of the face which it covers without concealing. Nay, the owner of a beautiful countenance will, if time and place permit, occasionally volunteer to gratify the stranger's æsthetic curiosity to the full. A soft, not unmusical voice, ending in a silvery ripple, makes you, unless, indeed, you are a monster "begot of an ancient oak or a rock," turn round. The picture which meets your eye is not likely to be soon effaced from your memory. Imagine a long oval face of a whiteness which defies the plumage of the swan; a pair of black fathomless eyes, in which laughter and mischief wrestle for mastery, peering at you from beneath the pent of the

most exquisitely curved eyelashes that poet ever dreamt of; and a pair of rosy lips parted to reveal a double row of shining pearls. Now enclose this face in the frame of an arm, such as Phidias might have chosen for a model, gracefully uplifted in the act of holding the veil over the smooth low forehead, and—the curtain has dropped, the vision is gone.

Ere you have recovered the use of your tongue, the owner of the wondrous visage is round the corner. You follow, you see the end of a flowing cloak vanish behind a door, you quicken your pace, and you hear a smothered chuckle issuing from a lattice window aloft. This is as high as the infidel may aspire to climb in the fair *hanoum's* favour, and this is all the veracious historian has to tell. Sensational interviews with the mysterious inmates of the harem are only possible in the realms of the *Arabian Nights*, and in the narratives of professional travellers.

CHAPTER XXI

AMONG THE GIPSIES

DURING the whole of my stay at Petritz the authorities did not cease to take a profound and most irritating interest in my doings. The innkeeper had daily interviews with the Commissary of Police, who evinced the greatest possible anxiety concerning the manner in which I employed my time, the persons whom I met, and so forth. He was especially consumed by an unholy desire to know whether I made use of such suspicious articles as maps and notebooks. On the day following the feast his solicitude for my welfare culminated in a polite request to depart, as he could no longer guarantee my safety. I entreated him not to trouble himself on that score, intimating that I was not yet ready for departure. There were two or three things which I wanted to see before leaving the place.

One of these things was a gipsy camp outside the town, and I took an early opportunity of visiting it. A dozen tents formed an avenue of squalor and misery such as I should never have believed compatible with the existence of human beings. Each tent consisted of an old coarsely patched and repatched blanket strung over a pole, which rested at either end upon two crossed sticks. Under this roof lived a family of black-haired and black-eyed creatures clad in many-coloured rags—black, red, blue, white, yellow, and

green—which, indeed, “seemed to speak variety of wretchedness.” The hollow cheeks of the inmates suggested starvation. But starvation is the normal condition of life in Turkey, and somehow the people manage to starve comfortably on to very venerable ages, unless the authorities take it into their heads to accelerate the pace of Nature.

The wise woman of the colony did the honours of the camp. She was a large loathsome lady of between fifty and a hundred years of age. Her coarse raven locks, straggling from under a yellow kerchief, encircled a wizened face, out of which protruded a nose so long and so substantial that it seemed to have been reared at an expense ruinous to the rest of the face. A pair of keen, scintillating eyes and a firmly set mouth completed her remarkable physiognomy.

She, of course, offered to tell me my fortune, for which she employed both the Greek term (*moira*) and the Turkish (*fal*). I willingly accepted her gracious proposal, and she forthwith whipped out of the recesses of her bosom bunch after bunch of amulets, old coins, shells, blue glass beads, and many other quaint things. Out of this heterogeneous collection, she picked one shell, and into the crevice thereof she inserted the piastre which I gave her as a preliminary fee. She then fixed her eyes upon it, and after a few minutes of profound and impressive silence, delivered herself to this effect:

“You are a stranger in this land and will go away soon. You belong to a family of six. But for some time past you have been living far from your friends.”

The number of the members of my family was the only point that might have inspired a boarding-school

young lady with some faith in the prophetess. It happened to be quite correct.

After a long string of similar statements, some of which were perfectly true, but at the same time such as one might venture to make without any great claim to divination, she favoured me with a variant of the classical story :

“A dark-eyed maiden is dying for love of you. But you care not for her”—and the soothsayer heaved a vicarious sigh on the absent unfortunate’s behalf. I gallantly echoed it. Then she pursued in the whining sing-song peculiar to the women of her race and trade. “When you quitted your home, a woman and her daughter cast dust after you and pronounced a spell, from the effects of which I alone can deliver you.”

“Oh, that is really interesting. How will you do it?”

“By concocting a counter-charm which you must make the maid drink, or pour outside her door. It will only cost you five piastres.”

I answered that I could not think of troubling her ladyship to that extent, but gave her another piastre, in return for which she bestowed upon me a benediction in four different and impartially broken languages: Greek, Turkish, Bulgarian, and the queer dialect of her own people: a truly polyglot piece of womanhood, though, alas! no prophetess.

Colonies of these world-wanderers are to be met with in many parts of Macedonia. Their aggregate number, owing to the roaming habits of the race, and the Turk’s incurable contempt for statistics, is difficult to estimate; but in all probability it does not exceed ten thousand. And yet the gipsy, like the Jew,

never fails to make his presence felt in a degree out of all proportion to his numbers. Very often they pitch their tents in the neighbourhood of towns and villages, attracted thither by fairs and markets, but not unfrequently they are found permanently settled in the towns, chiefly in the suburbs or within the walls of the old disused citadels. These settlements are generally known as *Ghiuftika*, or gipsy quarters.

But whether nomadic or stationary, these “able-bodied lackalls” constitute a people marked off from other peoples by colour, physique, and mode of living. Time and place, which mould other races, have no effect upon these children of unknown parents: as they were in the beginning, are now, and, it is to be feared, ever will be. In the midst of slavery they are free: too humble for oppression, too poor for extortion, too unambitious for extermination. Their habitual, though sullen and often ironical, submissiveness to the Turk further assists their immunity from persecution. This last trait of the gipsy character is illustrated by a widely-known anecdote:—

A Turkish grandee upon a frosty winter day meets a gipsy vagrant in the street. The Agha is wrapt in rich furs, the gipsy is half naked. Between this ill-assorted pair ensues the following dialogue:

Agha.—Wherefore tremblest thou, O gipsy?

Gipsy (shivering).—It is for joy at beholding thee, my lord.

Agha.—Wherefore do thy teeth chatter?

Gipsy.—They are playing a tune for thy entertainment, my lord.

Whereupon the Agha, gratified, throws a handful of gold to the wily vagabond, who goes away rejoicing.

Glibness of speech and suppleness of manner are

two of the most prominent characteristics of the race, both extremely useful qualities in a country where the rule is by the popular muse acknowledged to be : "Steal that thou mayest live, and rob that thou mayest grow wealthy."

The gipsies never appeal to the native courts of justice. All disputes amongst them are settled by the chief or headman of the tribe, or by a freely chosen arbiter. At Salonica I was told that some years ago a Greek of that town, named Yanni, had acquired so great an influence over the gipsy colony in the citadel, that he often acted as a magistrate amongst them, and was looked upon by them as a being of a superior order. My informant could not say whether Yanni owed his ascendancy to any supernatural powers, or to mere superiority in the arts of eloquence and tact so highly esteemed by the gipsies.

In early youth their women are remarkable for a weird kind of beauty. But this is soon withered by hardship and constant exposure to the weather. An old, or even a middle-aged Turkish gipsy, is the most terribly repulsive wreck of womanhood imaginable. Their ugliness and untidiness are proverbial, and nurses are in the habit of frightening children to silence by the bare mention of the "gipsy woman." Unattractiveness, however, is a blessing which a race proud of its purity and passionately attached to freedom, as the gipsies are, ought to appreciate keenly in a country where beauty so often is a passport into that worst of prisons—a Turk's harem.

The men, on the other hand, retain their masculine good looks to a fairly advanced age. Their lives, spent as they are, mostly in movement and in the open air, favour the development of muscle and nerve. They

are distinguished as prize-fighters (*pehlevans*), and as producers of a particularly formidable kind of instrumental music. These two accomplishments make the gipsy male a valuable auxiliary to a Turkish fête. But these are mere relaxations compared with the serious occupations of the gipsies. They are blacksmiths and tinkers by inheritance, and their wares, though extremely primordial in pattern and workmanship—survivals of antediluvian non-art—are in high repute amongst the peasantry and the lower classes in the towns. To this traditional trade they join the manufacture of sieves, baskets, rush mats, and rude agricultural implements. In the season of harvest they also condescend to assist the farmers as day-labourers. When reaping is over, groups of gipsy men, women, and children may be seen gleaning in the fields. The proceeds of all these trades are supplemented by indiscriminate pilfering, which, though seldom, if ever, amounting to open brigandage, renders a gipsy colony an object of dread to the small farmers of the neighbourhood.

The females are famous as fortune-tellers, as skilful promoters of love, and as mendicants of an exceptionally persevering type. On feast-days they are fond of going about the streets playing the tambourine and dancing. These performances are often accompanied by strident essays in vocal melody and unconventional poetry, of which the following may be taken as a fair sample:—

GIPSY DANCING SONG.

“Bebo, bebo, bebo,
Tu menchate candró beshtó!”
“Ami te beshtó
Caske holinate?”

“ Kako, kako, kako,
 Tu caraste candró beshtó ! ”
 “ Ami te beshtó
 Caske holinate ? ”

TRANSLATION.

(*Mutatis Mutandis.*)

“ Aunt, aunt, aunt,
 Into thy hand a thorn has entered ! ”
 “ And if it has entered,
 Whose concern is it ? ”

“ Uncle, uncle, uncle,
 Into thy foot a thorn has entered ! ”
 “ And if it has entered,
 Whose concern is it ? ”

A fastidious critic might object that the composition has little rhyme and less reason to recommend it.

I will not attempt to defend it. Nevertheless, it may be urged, as an extenuating circumstance, that it is original and characteristic. Besides, it should be borne in mind that the wild gesticulations and contortions of the body, which accompany the words, take off much of their apparent tameness, and produce anything but a soothing effect upon the spectator's nerves, especially if the performance is seen by the red light of a camp-fire in a mountain-girt Macedonian valley.

The song is also interesting as a specimen of the dialect. This differs surprisingly little from the Romany spoken by the gipsies of other countries. How slightly this curious relic of a language has been affected by local influences is still more apparent in the following common sentences :—

Nik avri te vakraa tu mia lafi—Come out that I may speak to thee a word.

Mi ka beshá manga te pias pantch okades mol—
When I sit down I require to drink five okes of wine.

This last phrase, by the way, may be said to possess more than a purely linguistic value for the student of gipsy life; five okes is equal to about two and a half gallons.

Among the sixteen words which make up the above two sentences there is only one Greek (*mia*, "one"), one Turkish (*lafi*, "speech"), and one Turkish with a Greek formation (*okades*), the last one being the name of a measure. All the rest are common to the Romany the world over.¹ This jargon is used by the gipsies amongst themselves. But in their relations with the Gentiles they employ the language of the latter, which they speak with equal fluency and indifference to grammar.

In the course of my rambles through Macedonia I heard several gipsies speak Turkish, Greek, or Bulgarian with native purity of accent, but that is only the case with those who have dwelt long in the midst of Turks, Greeks, or Bulgarians as permanent settlers. The majority of wandering gipsies are very imperfectly acquainted with any but their own fragment of an idiom.

Such are the manners and such is the language of Turkish gipsies. With regard to religion, it may be doubted whether they have any in theory, although in practice they profess a profitable kind of eclecticism. Some call themselves Mohammedan and others Christian—that is, at moments of excitement they

¹ Here are some more examples collected at random: *draha*, grapes; *matchô*, fish; *latchi*, good; *mentcha*, pudendum feminine; *avella*, he comes; *dad*, father. All these words are to be found in the vocabularies affixed to George Borrow's works on the Gipsies of Western Europe.

appeal to Mohammed or to Christ, according to the creed prevailing in the district which is their home for the time being. But neither the Koran nor the Gospel seems to have produced even a skin-deep impression upon them, and they, like all eclectics, are consequently scorned as outcasts by the genuine followers of both religious systems.

CHAPTER XXII

SOME MELANCHOLY COMEDIES

THE versatile schoolmaster, who has so often figured in the pages of this narrative, appears again, and, I fear, not for the last time. As I have already mentioned, he was now at Petritz, intriguing hard to recover his scholastic throne. He was the mainspring of many a subterranean mechanism which entailed risk to life and limb. He knew that the Bulgarians were thirsting for his blood, and he very considerably avoided giving me more of his society than was safe for me. "It is not well that you should be seen in my company, sir," he said once, with a look worthy of a younger Brutus; "I have many enemies, and I do not wish my friends to share in my unpopularity." I record this speech with all the greater pleasure as what, in my character of a veracious historian, I am going to relate presently does not reflect much credit on this amazing personage.

Supple and slippery as an eel, my schoolmaster managed to insinuate himself into all cliques, without really belonging to any. A professed foe of the Bulgarians, he had a Bulgarian wife. A fervent hater of the Turks, he was on familiar terms with the powers that be. He knew intimately every functionary, official Pharisee and Scribe in the place, and he was a favourite with the officers of the garrison. To one or two of them he even gave gratuitous lessons in

music. He feasted with them, fiddled with them, fraternised with them, and abhorred them from the very bottom of his shallow heart. Moved partly by vanity and partly, no doubt, by the wish to oblige me, he offered to introduce me to some of his grand acquaintances at the barracks. I gladly seized the opportunity of getting a glimpse of the Turkish soldier at home, and one fine afternoon we repaired to their quarters.

Two black gentlemen from Crete—my companion's particular friends and disciples in fiddling—received and showed us over the premises. They both spoke perfect Greek, and were curiously proud of their accomplishment. They professed a sovereign contempt for the ordinary one-language Turk, and to my question whether they were of Soudanese extraction—a fact which their ebony faces and splendid physique proclaimed loudly enough—they stiffly answered: "We are Cretans, sir, bred and born!"

My schoolmaster was in great form, and improved the occasion by treating me to an exhibition of a talent for which, profound as my admiration for the resources of his intellect was, I had not hitherto given him credit. While the officers pointed out to me the various parts of the building, my companion kept up a running commentary, enlivened and illustrated by gestures, winks, nudges, exclamations, and asides. The following is a specimen of the performance:—

1st Officer.—"These are the stables. They are not finished, you see——"

Schoolmaster.—"No, they are not finished. (*Aside to me.*) Neither are they likely to be ever finished."

2nd Off.—"—For lack of funds."

School.—"Exactly, for lack of funds," tapping his

off-side pocket in a manner intended to indicate to me the abyss down which the funds had disappeared.

1st Off.—“They have been built by voluntary contribution.”

Myself.—“H'm, I believe most public buildings are built by—er—voluntary contribution, are they not?”

1st Off.—“Yes, you see——”

School.—“But in this case the people have surpassed themselves in their liberality, have they not?” with a furtive wink at me.

2nd Off. (*uncomfortably*).—“Yes, they have done pretty well.”

School.—“They have all contributed to the uttermost of their ability,” nudging me.

1st Off. (*hurriedly*).—“Yes, yes. But perhaps you would like to visit the——”

School.—“High and low, rich and poor, they have all given as much as they could afford, and more.”

2nd Off.—“But still it was not enough, as you see——”

School.—“No, of course not, it was not enough. (*Aside to me.*) It never is enough.”

Thus, partly by pantomime and partly by innuendo, the voluble politician managed to carry on a *double entendre* dialogue, which for ingenuity of invention and sustained force of execution surpassed anything of the kind I had ever seen off the stage. Poor Turkish officers, and poor Greek schoolmaster!

On our way from the barracks I ventured to hint to my companion that his performance, clever as it was, was perhaps somewhat wanting in manliness. He understood me clearly, but answered calmly and without the slightest sign of resentment:—

“We are obliged to treat them like that, or life

would be an impossibility in this country. Fortune has given to the Turk the teeth and claws of a tiger. To us she has given the wits of a fox. Each animal must fight with its natural weapons, and who can blame us, if we make the best use of ours?"

There was enough of truth in this retort to silence me at the time, and to supply me with food for reflection. If one cannot admire, at least no one can help pitying these people. The tyrannical yoke under which they live forces them to prostitute their fine intelligence to the end of self-preservation. It is a *régime* peculiarly well calculated to foster the growth of parasitism. The free-born citizen of a great state can scarcely realise the position of inferiority which the native Christian occupies towards the Mohammedan in Turkey. *Giaour* and *Kiaffir* are two of the very first words which a Mohammedan child is taught to pronounce. These epithets and a great many other terms, mostly derived from the names of the less cleanly members of the animal kingdom, form the Turk's habitual mode of address toward a Christian. Whenever representatives of the two creeds are gathered together, the Christian is expected to take a back seat. If a Christian approaches a circle where Turks and Christians are sitting in company, he must salute the Turks first. All Mohammedans, and more especially those in the Government service, military or civil, from the proudest Pasha down to the paltriest policeman, consider themselves entitled to be treated as princes. Officers and privates alike insist on being saluted by a title of honour. So that, as a Christian *Kodjabashi*, or village headman, once half-bitterly, half-humorously observed to me: "If they all are generals and marshals, sir, where are the common soldiers?" At the

least provocation the Turk may proceed to knock the Christian down. In that case the policy recommended by experience is silent submission. An action against the aggressor would, in addition to the blow, bring a fine upon the plaintiff. If the Christian retaliates on the spot, he is promptly punished for assault. In the circumstances, pliability is a quality assiduously cultivated. Having originated as a matter of necessity, it has come to be regarded almost as an accomplishment. The principle of Christian humility is inculcated by many adages of this kind: "A stick that bendeth, breaketh not;" or, "A bowed head is spared by the sword."

After a short sojourn in the Sultan's dominions one begins to understand that Juvenal's *Græculus esuriens* is not a creation of the satirist's imagination. He will still find many a man who, "If you say 'I am hot' (provided you belong to the dominant race), will begin to perspire." It is no figure of rhetoric, but a sober statement of a commonplace fact, that no Christian dares to say "No" to a Mohammedan. The slightest contradiction is often sufficient to bring about a quarrel which may cost the offender his life. The attitude of abject submission to the Turk is well described by the local proverb:—

"Doth the ass not fly, sirrah?"

"Yes, my lord, it doth fly."

One day, while travelling in a railway carriage, I had an opportunity of realising how deep lie the roots of this fear of the Turk. My fellow-travellers were a Turkish captain of cavalry and a well-to-do Christian merchant. In the course of conversation the officer remarked:—

"I suppose you've heard the news about Crete. It is to be given back to us."

"Yes, most illustrious general," answered the merchant, meekly. "I have indeed heard it, and rejoiced exceedingly thereat. Heaven grant it may be so!"

Soon after the officer got out at a station. Thereupon the merchant, turning to me, asked:—

"Did you hear what the unbaptized swine had the impudence to say?"

"Yes, my friend," I replied. "But I also heard you agree with him most cordially. Is it true that you have heard such a rumour about Crete?"

"No! I never heard anything of the kind, and, what's more, I don't believe he did either. But what would you? He is a Turk."

The above and other dialogues which I heard at various times reminded me of the inimitable scene between Hamlet and Polonius:—

Ham.—"Do you see yonder cloud, that's almost in shape of a camel?"

Pol.—"By the mass, and 'tis like a camel indeed."

Ham.—"Methinks it is like a weasel."

Pol.—"It is like a weasel."

Ham.—"Or like a whale."

Pol.—"Very like a whale."

A Turkish Hamlet might well exclaim—

"They fool me to the top of my bent!"

But he does not. He is too dense to see that he is fooled, and too fond of servile adulation, however fulsome, to mind its grotesqueness.

It must not be imagined that the people are insensible to their degradation. How keenly they feel and resent the cringing and fawning which they are compelled by stern necessity to practise can be amply

gathered from their private conversation. When amongst themselves and secure from espionage, they give vent to their feelings in pretty strong language. The *Kodjabashi* already quoted spoke to me one day as follows :—

“This is no life, sir. We are slaves. Patience is our only resource. Hope of succour there is none. We have been suffering for the last five hundred years, and none of the kings of Christendom has held out a hand to rescue us. But the day of reckoning shall come, as sure as there is a God on high !”

He ended by imploring me not to divulge what he had said.

CHAPTER XXIII

FAREWELL TO PETRITZ

BEFORE leaving Petritz I called on the *Kaimakam* to ask for an escort. The Konak, or Government House, is a large old-fashioned building with a large courtyard in front. As I entered I noticed a number of storks, the favourite bird of the Turk, strutting about with an air of severe dignity, apparently contracted from long association with official circles. A broad stone staircase led to the first storey, which was occupied by the offices of the police. Groups of rustics squatted along the corridor, waiting for the convenience of Turkish justice. On the window-sills lounged *zaptiehs*, and other loafers of a nondescript character lay about on the floor, sleeping or smoking. The *Kaimakam's* office stood on the second storey, and thither I and the versatile schoolmaster, who had volunteered to act as my interpreter, were shown by a *zaptieh*.

We found his Excellency in a lofty apartment, with a vaulted ceiling covered with pictures of kiosks and mosques, cypress-trees and tombstones, and other designs dear to a Turk's eye. He was sitting in an ample arm-chair behind a table littered with cigarette ashes, spent matches, and a few papers. He rose slightly as he returned our salaam, and requested us to be seated on two sofas on either side of his throne. We had scarcely taken our seats when the *Kaimakam* clapped his hands and ordered coffee and cigarettes.

Soon the *cafedji* appeared carrying a tin tray suspended from a tin arch, and, having left his slippers on the mat outside the door, walked barefooted across the room and presented the refreshments to us.

My companion did most of the talking, as Said Bey did not know a word of any Christian language, and my own Turkish could not be trusted for a sustained conversation. His Excellency, however, would now and again turn towards me and salaam with a smile which was meant to be pleasing, but which had absolutely nothing to do with the conversation. I smiled and salaamed back in an equally courteous and irrelevant manner. Things went on in this fashion for a long time. The schoolmaster talked of the crop, of the festival, of the circumcision of the Mullah's children, but never alluded to the object of our visit. To make matters worse, I was unable to signal to him my feelings owing to the *Kaimakam's* frequent pantomimic attentions. At last my companion who, I fancy, rather enjoyed the situation, to my great relief said:—

“This gentleman, Excellency, wishes to leave to-morrow,”—that brought another smile and salaam from the *Kaimakam* to me,—“and although, of course, the roads are perfectly safe——”

“Perfectly safe,” echoed the *Kaimakam*, with a fresh smile and salaam.

“—Thanks to our august sovereign's paternal solicitude for the welfare of his subjects,—may Allah prolong his days for ever!”

“May Allah prolong his days for ever!” repeated the *Kaimakam*.

“Amen,” said I, forgetting myself for a moment; but his Excellency took no notice of my slip, but smiled and salaamed benevolently as usual.

"Yet," pursued the schoolmaster, "perhaps it would be—h'm—just as well—h'm——"

"Quite so," agreed the *Kaimakam*, yawning.

"I mean there is no harm in making assurance doubly sure," plunged the schoolmaster desperately, and encouraged by the *Kaimakam's* sleepiness proceeded. "We Christians have a story——"

"Yes?" interrogated the *Kaimakam*, pricking up his ears at the mention of the word story, and in his eagerness to hear it he forgot for once to smile and salaam to me.

I took advantage of this welcome omission to observe to my interpreter in Greek:—

"Don't you think we are rather wasting time?"

"This is the style," he replied, without showing on his countenance what the purport of my remark was, and then turning to the *Kaimakam* he explained:—

"This gentleman is so interested in stories that he is pressing me to tell this one."

"Of course, of course, do by all means. I should like to hear it too!" rejoined the *Kaimakam*, smiling and salaaming his affable approval to me.

"Well," began the incorrigible rascal, "I should be loth to waste your Excellency's valuable time——" At that moment a *kiatib*, or scribe, lifted the *portière* and came into the room in his socks.

With low and intermittent obeisances he smoothly glided up to the *Kaimakam* and presented to him several yards of paper cut in strips and covered with slanting lines of hieroglyphics. His Excellency did not even pretend to read them, but forthwith produced his seal, moistened it on the tip of his tongue and, having inked it with his little finger, proceeded to affix it to the documents. The *kiatib* salaamed to

the floor, gathered up his strips of paper, and stepped backwards to the door, where he resumed his slippers and vanished behind the curtain.

"Well?" said the *Kaimakam*, with a little sigh of relief at having got rid of the interruption.

"Once upon a time," commenced the schoolmaster, with a malicious look at me, "there was a captain of a sailing vessel. Now it befell that his ship became infested with rats. 'Tis a strange thing, Excellency, but rats do get on board ships. How they do it is not known to me. Perhaps they climb along the cables with which ships are moored to the shore, perhaps they swim. In any case, there were on this captain's vessel more rats than was good for him and his cargo. So one day, when he was lying in port, he bethought himself to send for a priest and ask him to exorcise the vermin away. The priest came, brought some holy water with him and duly performed the ceremony. As he was going down the gangway the captain said, 'Well, my father, art thou certain that the rats will go away after the exorcism?' 'Who can be certain of anything in this uncertain world, my son?' answered the priest. 'Everything lies in the hands of God. But great as the efficacy of holy water undoubtedly is, I should, if I were thou, get a cat or two on board as well. There is no harm in making assurance doubly sure.'"

The *Kaimakam* laughed heartily and copiously when he saw the point of the story, which he did not do for some minutes. The schoolmaster remained mute and impassive until the *Kaimakam* gave him the signal, and then he dutifully joined in the laugh. The *Kaimakam*, having wiped his eyes on a corner of the table-cloth, expressed the desire to hear my

opinion on the subject. I then gravely parodied Voltaire's words for his Excellency's benefit, and said through the interpreter:—

“There is not the slightest doubt, O *Kaimakam*, that holy water and prayers are capable of putting to flight a legion of rats, if the ceremony be accompanied by a sufficient number of cats.”

Thereupon his Excellency nodded wisely, and resuming his official serenity, said:—

“I shall see that the gentleman has two mounted gendarmes early in the morning.”

A final smile and salaam sealed the great man's words.

I got up. But we could not go even then. A visitor had just walked into the room, and until he had exchanged salaams with the *Kaimakam* it would have been rude for us to move. While this ceremony was going on, I had time to comment mentally on the mysterious connection between shoes and social rank. The *cafedji* had come in barefooted, the *kiatib* in socks, but this individual in both socks and shoes? He must, therefore, be a more important personage than either of the rest—a conclusion corroborated by the attentions which the *Kaimakam* upon the newcomer.

At last we left the Konak, and I breathed once more freely. My companion explained to me in a confidential whisper that in Turkey verbosity is the soul of wit. We parted on friendly terms.

CHAPTER XXIV

BACK TO SERRES

It was still quite dark when Mr. G. and I started off from our khan, and, accompanied by our mounted gendarmes, plunged into the hollow lane which leads out of the town of Petritz. Having narrowly missed several pitfalls, and just escaped being jammed in between a buffalo-cart and an orchard wall, we gained the open road. About an hour later dawn began to show her rosy fingers over the horizon. A pale yellowish tint first suffused the sky in the east; the banks of purple clouds which hung over the mountains were suddenly edged with crimson, which rapidly spread and transformed them into masses of gold; then the fiery disc of the sun peeped between the rocks; a bunch of beams shot upwards, a jet of dazzling light issued from the depths of the ravine and played for a moment over the plain, gilding the opposite hills. Next moment hills and plain alike were bathing in a flood of sunshine, and the coolness of the morning was succeeded by the mild heat of early forenoon. Not long after we came in sight of the Struma, and henceforth our road ran parallel with the right bank of that river. The path was so steep and narrow in parts that it was well to resist the temptation of gazing into the muddy stream which flowed at a great depth beside us. We passed

several *karakols*, or wayside guard-stations, perched on the heights along the bank, and finally reached the *sali*, which I have already described. We got on board, men, horses, and all, and the ferryman began to manipulate the rope. But we had not got more than half-way across, when something went wrong with the mechanism, and the raft would neither advance nor retreat. For a few minutes we remained afloat in mid-stream, and at last we had to coax our horses into the water, which came up to the saddle, mount them, and wade to the bank. The rest of our way was the same which I traversed in the opposite direction going to Melenik.

Five hours after leaving Petritz we reached Demir Hissar station, dismissed our gendarmes, and took the train to Serres.

On the road I had an interesting talk with the gendarmes, and elicited from them many details about their lives and prospects. Of all the much-abused servants of the Turkish Government none probably deserve greater commiseration than these gendarmes. The *zaptieh*, or foot gendarme's monthly pay is 150 piastres (about £1, 7s.); the *souvani*, or mounted gendarme's, is 250 piastres (about £2, 5s.). Out of this the latter has to keep his horse, as well as himself and family. But it is not often that even this pittance is paid to them. On the present occasion our gendarmes complained that they had not touched a piastre for eight months, and others with whom I came in contact during my tour made a similar statement. Some time afterwards I discovered that these arrears were due to the fact that the *Defterdar*, or Financial Agent of the Vilayet, was in the

habit of putting the money out to interest on his own account, and only paying the gendarmes when convenient to him. Meanwhile the poor fellows are obliged to rely for subsistence on *bakshish*. The day on which they are told off to escort a foreigner is a red-letter day in their calendar, though even out of this *bakshish* they have to give a share to their officer, who allots the job to the highest bidder. Their other resource is bribery, and what they can squeeze out of the peasants. No wonder that they would rather share the proceeds of brigandage than suppress it. Self-preservation is the strongest of Nature's laws, and it will assert itself in spite of all sense of duty—if the Turkish gendarme can be supposed to have any—when the latter spells starvation.

A similar inadequacy and irregularity of payment is the chronic grievance of all officials, except the very highest, who, as has been seen, know how to pay themselves with interest. This is the root of their proverbial and incurable corruptibility. Penury and Power are two bad schoolmasters, and it is more than doubtful whether any human official, if placed between the means of easy enrichment on one hand, and certain misery on the other, would long hesitate which of the two alternatives to choose. Moreover, posts in the Government service are treated as objects of commercial speculation. The favourites at Yildiz Kiosk sell them to their own favourites. As their own tenure of office is precarious, they are naturally anxious to make their fortunes while the sun of imperial favour shines, and they consequently sell the same post to as many successive customers as they con-

veniently can. These subordinates, in their turn, knowing that their reign depends entirely on the pleasure of their patrons, try to realise a competence as speedily as possible. This accounts for their cupidity, and also for the plethora of officials in the country. The effect of this multiplication of money-eaters on the peasantry is simply ruinous; far more so than locusts, murrain, and malaria taken together; for these come and go, while the Government official is always with them. As an instance, I will mention the plain of Langaza, about two hours' journey from Salonica. I remembered the district as one of the most prosperous in Macedonia, the plain ministering abundantly to the simple needs of a population taught to expect nothing and content with little. During the present tour I found it almost a desolate waste. Families once comfortably off were reduced to beggary, and many a respectable household could afford nothing more substantial for supper than a piece of dry bread made from maize and a draught of water—a meal which, for want of a candle, had to be eaten by the light of the wood-fire. The people, one and all, attributed the decline of their fortunes chiefly to the recent establishment in their midst of a *Kaimakam*, in lieu of the humble *Mudir* of old, and to the consequent increase in the staff of Government robbers.

On reaching Serres, I was informed that the *Moutessarif* had been in a state of great alarm concerning my safety, and had wired to the *Kaimakam* of Melenik, ordering him to send me back under escort. Fortunately the telegram did not reach that official until several days after my departure, or I

should have been denied my most delightful visit to Petritz, a circumstance which shows that delay in the transmission of despatches is not always an unmitigated evil.

The *Moutessarif's* anxiety was amply justified by the stories of bloodshed which I heard every day. Some of them are eminently characteristic, and will help the reader to form for himself a picture of the state of things. That he should fully realise the horror of the situation is more than can be expected. Even to me, who lived in the midst of it, many things sounded incredible and unreal at first, until they became too familiar to be even interesting.

At Veshnik, a village one hour and a half's journey from Serres, a band of brigands—organs of the Macedonian Committee—waylaid the four sons of a Greek priest, killed one on the spot, wounded another, and carried off the remaining two. A few days after, I heard that on the father's delay to pay the ransom they sent him the head of one of his two captive sons.

An even more sanguinary occurrence was reported a few days later. An old miller in another village was visited by a brigand, who asked for a "suckling kid," a bowl of milk, butter, and flour. The miller, who by-the-bye was said to be 120 years of age, had not lived through more than a century without learning something. He called his two sons, and bade them take a bowl of milk and a loaf of bread to the brigand, instructing them that, while one was offering these gifts, the other should fall upon the brigand and bind him hand and foot. This done, they forced him to confess what was the number of his accomplices,

and where they were hiding. Having ascertained that there were only two, they proceeded to the place and succeeded in shooting one down, while the other escaped. When the result was reported to the ancient miller, he—and this is the climax to the horrible affair—went up to his prisoner and calmly cut his throat.

CHAPTER XXV

TO THE SOUTH OF SERRES

ON a fine autumnal morning (September 27) I set forth from Serres on the back of an animal which its owner described as a horse. He himself bestrode a lowly ass, and was armed with a long thick cudgel which, he remarked with a grim smile, "might prove useful in an hour of need."

Thus mounted we crossed the Struma, which at this point pursues a less erratic course between fairly well-defined banks, clothed with willows and *agnus castus*. A drove of the familiar buffaloes were taking their morning bath in the stream. They looked at us curiously out of their big dreamy eyes, which were the only part of their bodies visible above water. I dare say there was sufficient excuse for their curiosity. The *Keradji* had tucked his legs up on the pack-saddle, and, thus squatting with his stick across his knees, led the way through the water. I followed closely behind, feeling my poor horse's feet slip at every step upon the smooth boulders in the bottom of the river.

When we emerged on the opposite bank, the muleteer turned sideways, with his feet dangling gracefully below his beast's belly, and entered into conversation with me. In a patronising tone he informed me that he had a son at school, and that he intended to give him as good an education as

could be got by mule-driving. His ambition went no further. Being a Greek, he regarded education as something good in itself apart from all utilitarian considerations. To my question what would he make of his son afterwards, he replied philosophically:

"He will become what God pleases. It is true," he added after some reflection, "that experience is superior to book-learning, but book-learning is also good: it opens a man's eyes."

Then happened the usual thing. The *Keradji* turned a little more towards the tail of his ass, and, looking up to me, asked:

"And what are you?"

I was not unprepared for this move, and thought to relieve the monotony of the journey by a little mystification at the muleteer's expense. But being only a freshman in the art, I rather bungled matters.

"I am a schoolmaster, my friend," said I, boldly and unblushingly, trying to look like one who is speaking the truth; "I am going to Nigrita to take my place."

"But there is no place at Nigrita," answered the *Keradji*, pricking his ass into a clumsy gallop. "All the posts are already filled."

"Oh, that does not signify," I rejoined, with an air of importance, "I have influence."

The *Keradji* looked impressed.

Unfortunately I went on to add what turned out to be a finishing touch, indeed, though not in the sense in which I meant it.

"You know I am the son of the Bishop of Serres."

I had forgotten for the moment that Greek bishops do not marry. The effect of my declaration on the muleteer's face apprised me of my blunder.

"What!" he gasped, pulling at his donkey's halter till they both stood still, the one gaping with mouth and eyes wide open, the other wagging its tail sympathetically.

"Oh, I see," said the *Keradji*, as soon as he had somewhat recovered from the shock, giving me a friendly wink. "Such things will happen. The flesh is weak."

I thought the only course was to stick to my guns. So, leaning over the saddle, I said solemnly:

"But this, you understand, is a secret."

"Oh, certainly, certainly. You can trust me," answered he, with a vigorous shake of his head, and the donkey confirmed its master's promise in a tone that set my teeth on edge.

Engaged in such edifying converse we traversed a level tract dotted with maize and cotton fields and a few clumps of dwarf pines, but mostly given up to the spontaneous growth of sturdy weeds. There also were several plantations of a kind of millet (*Ἀραβοκεχρί*), but the crop had been gathered and hung up to dry in bunches of small flat white berries, which when shelled and ground make an excellent substitute for flour, and are likewise used in cooking in lieu of rice. The maize fields presented a more picturesque appearance. The tall stalks, with their rich green leaves and yellow tassels fluttering in the breeze, formed a very pleasant object for the eye to rest upon. They also afforded a grateful shelter to a multitude of crickets which, as the day advanced, began to chirp blithely in the shade.

Farther on the *Keradji* reined or rather haltered up, saying that, if I had no objection, he would leave me for a while in order to call at a Turkish country gentleman's seat on a matter of business.

Half-an-hour later he rejoined me with a smile of satisfaction on his face.

"I have settled it with the Agha," he said, and then proceeded to explain the nature of his business.

"The other night," said he, "I turned my four horses out upon the meadow to graze as usual. But, as the Evil One would have it, while watching them I was seized with sleep. When I woke up I found two of the beasts gone. I looked for them all over the country, but could find them nowhere. I guessed that they must have been stolen by the Moadjirs settled close here. So I thought to myself: If I go straight to the Agha I may get them back."

"What can the Agha know about your horses, or is he a magistrate?"

"No, he is not a magistrate, but he is something better. He is the patron of those Moadjirs, and whatever they steal is concealed on his estate. So he, if any one in the world, is certain to know where my horses are."

"I should have gone to the police, if I were you."

The *Keradji* looked at me in astonishment, mingled with a certain amount of pity.

"The police! Why, if I went to the police, I should be made to spend in *bakshish* more than the animals are worth, and even then I am not sure that I should get them back. No, no; I know better than that. As it is, the Agha has promised to find them for me, and he only wants four pounds for his trouble. He first asked six, but he agreed to accept four."

Allah preserve us! I thought to myself, and tried to imagine an English country gentleman of the present day acting in the same way.

Cattle-lifting and horse-stealing were two forms of robbery of which the whole district complained, and they were both attributed mainly to the Moadjirs, or Mohammedan refugees, who have at different times flocked into the country from the various emancipated states of the Balkans, the latest additions being from Bulgaria. Hatred of Christian rule and inability to conform to the requirements of civilisation prompted them to quit their homes—if a Turk can be said to have a home—and to seek shelter under the Sultan's tolerant wing. In this manner large numbers of idle and destitute ruffians have found their way into Macedonia, where they lead a lawless life at the expense of their Christian neighbours. What makes them especially dangerous is the fact that, being Mohammedans, they are allowed to bear arms, while their victims are for the most part unarmed and defenceless.

About three hours after leaving Serres we reached Nigrita, the chief village of the district, and it was a relief to find oneself in a place requiring no greater linguistic attainments than a knowledge of Greek. The whole country south of Serres, with the exception of the Mohammedan settlements, is purely Hellenic. Nigrita is even free from the presence of the Turk. A petty governor (*mudir*), a scribe (*kiatib*), and a foot-gendarme (*zaptieh*) or two form the sum total of Turkish officialdom, and even these think it best not to reside in the village itself but at Sirpa, the small hamlet through which I was just passing. A mosque, a great plane-tree crowded with birds' nests, and a fountain trickling beneath—these were the unmistakable signs of Turkish authority.

There being no inn in the village, I relied for a

lodging on the hospitality of a poor but refined family to whom I brought a letter of introduction. The household consisted of two elderly maidens and their mother. The former taught in the village school, the latter complained of a chronic fever, which she was pleased to attribute to the malignant agency of the Spirits of the Air. They—I mean the ladies—received me with a hearty welcome, and prepared at once a repast of which they themselves were not allowed to partake. It was the anniversary of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, a day on which the faithful do nothing but sulk in hungry discontent, and eat nothing except vegetables boiled in water. But I, as a traveller and a stranger, was entitled to the indulgence accorded to such creatures by the humane proviso of Greek canon law. Nor had I reason to complain of the fare set before me. The menu included a course of small lake fish and a course of vegetable marrow, both fried in oil; brown bread, a water-melon, and grapes, all of excellent quality, and served up with a neatness for which my experiences in the northern regions of Macedonia had not prepared me.

With these kind-hearted folk—whose goodness it is as impossible for me to forget as it is to recollect their name, such is the bizarre constitution of the human mind—I stayed that day and night. But on the following morning a well-to-do Nigritan, who lay under an obligation to a friend of mine, claimed the privilege of entertaining me. My first hosts were loth to part with me, but as I plainly saw that they could ill afford the burden of an unpaying guest—they had scouted in the most uncompromising manner my veiled hints at remuneration—I decided to accept the Nigritan's pressing invitation and make his house

my dwelling for the rest of my sojourn in the district. I had daily cause for regretting my decision. My new host appeared to suffer from a peculiar sense of humour. After having enticed me to confess that eggs were an article of diet the very sight whereof I could not bear, he made a point of having eggs served up every day, both at dinner and at supper—boiled eggs, poached eggs, or fried eggs, sometimes with and sometimes without kidneys. At every appearance of the detested dish he used to crack his knuckles and remark in a genial tone :

“ Ah, that’s something that *you* cannot eat,”—and proceed to prove his superiority by devouring the lot.

Excepting this lamentable lack of delicacy, he was a tolerably good Christian, and proved of signal service to me in my folk-lore researches. He was the owner of a silk-weaving establishment, and his house from morning till evening resounded with the creak and crash of the looms, accompanied by the wearisome, but to me valuable, songs with which the workmen beguiled the tedium of their day-long toil.

The manufacture of silk is the chief resource of the district. The wealthiest of the inhabitants are colonists from Thessaly, who, according to a local tradition, migrated into Macedonia at the end of the eighteenth or the beginning of the nineteenth century, and brought with them the hereditary industry for which their old home was famous. Early travellers in Greece have left glowing accounts of the flourishing condition of the twenty-four villages on Mount Pelium, and notably of Ampelakia, a township which in the days before the invention of the spinning-jenny carried on a lucrative overland trade in dyed silk thread with Western Europe. Their descendants of

Nigrita cannot rival that prosperity. The silk industry has elsewhere attained heights of development beyond the reach of the hand-loom and primitive methods of dyeing still employed by the Nigritans. My host grumbled at the severe competition of European goods in the local markets, a competition encouraged by the wretched fiscal system of the country which favours foreign imports to the prejudice of native industry. Besides, the native manufacturer is handicapped by exorbitant taxation, want of security, want of means of transmission and constant spoliation, which render the conditions of the struggle still more unequal.

Notwithstanding these difficulties the Nigritans impressed me as enjoying a degree of comfort rarely found in Turkey. This is in great measure due to the absence of Turkish officials from their midst. This circumstance also seemed to have a marked effect on the temper and bearing of the people. They spoke and laughed and moved with greater freedom than most Macedonian peasants dare assume, and altogether appeared to suffer least from the benumbing influence of the Turkish yoke. There is an air of cheerfulness and modest self-reliance about the Nigritans which recalls the peasantry of Southern Greece. They are very fond of music and dancing, and every Sunday, as well as every feast-day, the open space in the middle of the village (*μεσοχώρι*) rings with the songs and rhythmic steps of the village maidens.

It was on the afternoon of the following Sunday that I witnessed one of these rural fêtes. Vespers were just over. The sun was declining toward the west, and the long shadows of the surrounding build-

ings fell across the serried ranks of the damsels who sat upon the ground in patient expectation.

The Nigritan women, despite the coarse work in field and vineyard, which they share with the men, contrive to preserve their fresh complexions, and when on festive occasions, like the present, they turn out in their gorgeous finery, it is impossible to detect in their countenances any trace of the hard and laborious lives which they lead on ordinary days. In this they differ widely from their Slav neighbours of the north. But, like them, they overdress in broad silk petticoats, embroidered aprons and short-waisted jackets, edged with yellow fox-fur. On their heads they wear a low red cap with a long blue tassel wrapped in transparent gauze, or a simple crape kerchief tied with a coquettish knot on one side. Strings of gold coins adorn their necks, and long gold rings dangle from their ears. All this ponderous ornamentation apparently has a nuptial purpose.

Behind this brilliant galaxy of shining silk and glittering gold stood a semicircle of village swains, absorbed in distant admiration. Their attire, simple, masculine, and sombre, seemed designed to set off the splendour of the feminine group. A silver chain across the front of a close-fitting dark silk shirt was the only jewellery displayed. A long-sleeved black jacket flung with studied carelessness over the left shoulder, and a fez pushed back gave them an air of irresistible swagger. So at least seemed to think the dark-haired damsels who, with eyes demurely fixed on the ground, awaited the arrival of the leaders of the dance. These at last appeared, a ring was formed, and then commenced the slow and uninspiring step which passes for a dance in the country.

After the dance the assembly dissolved into its constituent elements. The youths repaired to an open-air café picturesquely situated on two terraces along the slope of a hill. The damsels followed by themselves and took up their stations on the heights overlooking the café. The youths played at cards or backgammon, the stakes being coffee or Turkish delight, but never money, as gambling even on the lowest scale is considered vulgar. Now and again they would interrupt their games to order refreshments to be sent to their favourites among the fair crowd who, ranged in rows upon the rising tiers of the hill, amused themselves with gossip carried on in undertones. It was almost painful to observe the mutual restraint which the presence of each sex imposed upon the other. Few voices rose above a whisper. As for loud laughter or any other exhibition of mirth, it was a thing not to be thought of. As I watched this depressing scene, I mentally breathed a wish that the old French critic who accused the English of taking their pleasures sadly might have been with me.

But with the deepening shadows of the evening the feminine ranks began to melt away. Then a change, as great as it was gradual, spread over the youths. An incubus seemed to have been lifted off their chests. Orders for arrack began to be shouted, and there soon was a general manifestation of a desire to make up for lost time. The game tables and the petroleum cases, which did duty as such, were pushed off, and the groups waxed lively with a joviality which, though loud, was not rowdy. Some discussed politics, local and international, with a zest which amply compensated for their want of knowledge. Others told

stories, and a few "with whom the bell-mouth'd glass had wrought," struck up comic songs. I especially remember one party, the soul of which was a fat old miller.

He sat under a mulberry tree, surrounded by a convivial circle, who applauded his stories, encored his songs, joining heartily in the chorus, and plied him with drinks. The master of the revels accepted the proffered libations, and honoured every toast with the solemnity of incipient inebriation. His fund of humour kept pace with his capacity for assimilating arrack, and he illustrated his songs with mimic gestures which "shook every diaphragm with laughter." The performer himself was transformed with glee; his eyes vanished in the depths of fleshy ravines, his face rippled with smiles, and his white teeth gleamed through his grizzled beard.

Long after the other *habitués* had left the café this party continued enjoying what a favourite author of mine prettily calls "a short spell of recreative exaltation," and their simple spirituous strains filled the night air. They did not disperse until the yellow crescent of the moon rose from behind the hills to remind them that it was time to rest and prepare themselves for the sober tasks of the morrow. Then they staggered merrily down the slope, and their voices died away in the darkness of the village lanes.

So ended this Macedonian Sunday. From a Puritan's point of view it was not perhaps the ideal way of spending the Lord's Day. But, alas! the Macedonian peasant has more of the Pagan than of the Puritan in him. Though extremely religious, and even superstitious in many respects, these unregenerate children of Nature believe in enjoying their simple lives after

their simple fashion, and it is in social gatherings like the present that they seek and find an antidote to the sufferings which they have to endure.

These sufferings are of a manifold character. The district, owing to its situation in a broad plain, is less infested with brigands than are the more mountainous parts which I had traversed. For those lords of misrule, though passionately fond of highland scenery, entertain a providential contempt for a flat landscape, and seldom care to roam very far from their rocky strongholds. But this comparative freedom from professional robbers is more than counterbalanced by the abundance of the Mohammedan refugees, already mentioned, and by the hordes of Albanian and Wallachian nomads who during the winter leave their upland haunts, and with their herds and flocks wander over the plains in search of pasture and booty. One of these gentry had flourished for many a season in the district, and throughout the period of his reign no farmer dared to call his cattle his own. The operations of the miscreant extended far beyond the limits of the district, and oxen, cows, mules, and horses from far and near found their way to his headquarters. He carried on his transactions under the auspices of the Turkish authorities, who were sleeping partners in the business and shared the spoils. His career was at last cut short by the peasants themselves, who, having despaired of obtaining redress or protection from the Government, took the law into their own hands, and, in their own grimly picturesque phrase, "sent the robber to feed the crows."

Nevertheless the Nigritans keep a stout heart within them and, all things considered, make very creditable progress. They maintain two churches and

schools, attended by four hundred boys and two hundred girls, a very fair proportion out of a total population of four thousand. This is a sufficient proof of the progressive spirit which animates the people. At the time of my stay amongst them they were earnestly discussing a plan for reforming their educational system so as to meet the modern need for industrial and technical instruction—a need which is only just being realised amongst us. They even talked of sending some of their youths to Western Europe in order to study the latest improvements in the silk industry.

Unfortunately this spirit is not permitted to assert itself in any other way. The roads are in a deplorable state, and no public works of any kind are ever inaugurated. The Turkish municipality will neither erect such works nor allow the inhabitants to do so on their own account. This neglect is not due to want of funds ; for special taxes are levied on everything that can be taxed ; market-duties, slaughter-duties, weighing-fees, and imposts on all commercial transactions are regularly collected for the avowed object of bettering the condition of the district ; but so far as one can see, they only serve to better the condition of the collectors.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE NIGRITANS AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS

BESIDES the Nigritans proper, there is a quarter in the village occupied by a remnant of the ancient inhabitants, whom the colonists found here on their migration from Thessaly. The two elements, though both Greek, live on terms of mutual and unaffected disdain. The aborigines, even after the lapse of a century, still regard the others as outlanders, while the new-comers describe their exclusive neighbours as stupid, morose, and unsociable brutes. They apply to them the nickname of "jackals," and to their quarter that of "jackal-mahallah." It is a curious, yet exquisitely characteristic instance of the tendency of the Hellenic race to split into hostile sections. When there is no geographical barrier to excuse and explain the division, a purely historical accident, or the memory of some long-dead feud, is made to serve the purpose of disintegration. The Greeks have not yet learnt how to combine. "It is the essence of genius to be individual." In commerce as in politics they delight in units. Wealthy Greek merchants can be found everywhere. Commercial companies are extremely rare. You will seldom see over a shop an inscription indicating a combination of capital or labour. Yannis, Costas, Metros in the villages, or Pericles, Epaminondas, Achilles in the cities, like to be independent of each other in a small way, rather than to join forces for a greater end.

Competition comes more natural to the Hellene than co-operation.

Another cause which keeps the ill-feeling between the new and the old residents at Nigrita alive is the total absence of any foreign race upon which to exercise the talent for ridicule and vituperation which distinguishes the Greek above most of his fellow-creatures. At Melenik the satiric spirit of the people finds an outlet in written doggerel pasted during the night on the walls of the town. At Salonica and Serres I heard street urchins singing verses derogatory to the intelligence of the Bulgar, "the saltless and onion-headed." At Nigrita there is no Bulgar in the flesh. So the poor Nigritans have to content themselves with a substitute. Anxious not to be outdone by their brethren in wit, they have recorded their opinion of the hereditary foe by investing with the title of "Exarch" the useful and patient domestic animal elsewhere known as an ass. This ingenious expedient has done something to satisfy the craving of the Hellenic soul for antagonism, and the Nigritans are thus enabled to keep their wrath at the proper pitch by daily contact with its object. In like manner during the last Greco-Turkish war, when the Germans distinguished themselves on the wrong side of the frontier, Athenian cabmen were heard venting their Germanophobia on the backs of their horses, accompanying the castigation with the opprobrious names of Kaiser and William.

These aberrations of patriotic fervour notwithstanding, there is a great deal of shrewdness and practical common-sense underlying the Nigritan character. To say that they have their own opinions on everything that is in heaven above, or in the

earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth, after having said that they are Greeks, would be superfluous.

One of my earliest acquaintances at Nigrita was a grocer. He was a young man of some thirty years of age, and in every way the most extraordinary specimen of a tradesman that I ever met even in Turkey, where social classes are fused in a manner found in no other part of Europe, and where no man seems to be in his proper place or to be in any place long. This gentleman certainly was not in the place for which he was intended by nature. He was nowhere less at home than in his own shop, which appeared to be the last thing in the world he cared to bestow a thought on. Ancient cobwebs festooned the beams overhead, and modern cobwebs were woven by industrious spiders in every nook and corner. For Mr. Antoni, every minute spent in his establishment was a minute wasted. He was a keen sportsman, and he would often take his dog and his old gun and disappear for days together, leaving trade to take care of itself. He further possessed in a marvellous degree the "soul of mincing mimicry," and could whistle like a professional music-hall artist. All these tastes and accomplishments clearly marked Mr. Antoni out for anything but a village grocer. To me he was already a great source of amusement and amazement, when one day I discovered that to his other talents he added a profoundly philosophical mind.

I forget how the conversation had led up to it, when the grocer propounded this riddle:

"Do you think, sir, that it is possible for a man to go through the academic course in Germany and yet know not a word of German?"

"Well," I answered, "I should certainly think it rather difficult. But why do you ask?"

"Our doctor over the way has a German diploma, and yet he knows as much German as a newly-fledged cuckoo. He says that he has lost it all through illness."

Mr. Antoni paused, waiting for an answer.

"There have been instances of people forgetting things through illness," said I, guardedly.

"Yes, that's quite true—sense of identity and all that," rejoined the grocer, unsatisfied. "But," he pursued, shaking his head severely at the doctor's domicile across the road, "if this was one of those cases, along with the language he ought to have forgotten the science which he professes to have learnt through the medium of that language. The two things are inseparable. Do you not agree with me?"

I was at a loss for an answer. The grocer's subtlety no less than his vocabulary had left me speechless. My astonishment rose still higher when I heard my collocutor go into the subject of innate and acquired ideas, concepts, notions and what not, quoting Aristotle and Plato and German psychology. I availed myself of an interval to ask Mr. Antoni where he had picked up all that knowledge, and he informed me that he had attended the fifth form of the Gymnasium of Serres, adding reflectively:—

"Perhaps it would have been better for me had I been taught the properties of silk and cotton instead of the functions of the human mind. It took me two years to unlearn my Plato, before I could settle down to ordinary business."

"It does not look as if you had quite settled down yet," I answered, laughing.

"Well, *a life without a holiday is a long road without an inn*, as the old philosopher says."

Thus spoke Mr. Antoni, grocer, of Nigrita.

Of course it is not to be supposed that every peasant in Macedonia is a man who can quote Democritus and discuss psychology, but the fact that such men do exist among the lower classes is a circumstance significant of much. It shows that there must be something radically wrong with a *régime* which condemns such men to sell cheese and sardines across the greasy counter of a village shop.

Our discourse was interrupted by the entry of a little girl carrying two eggs in her hand:—

"Mother has sent me with these eggs—they are newly laid. How many reels of thread will you give me for them?"

This new question put psychology to flight. The philosopher was instantly metamorphosed into a plain bargainer. He held the eggs up to the light, closed one eye and examined them with the other, and then deliberately handed her two reels of thread in exchange.

Barter flourishes in a country which suffers from chronic bankruptcy, and now and again it gives rise to singularly humorous situations. For instance, the exchange of a new suit of clothes for a donkey is by no means an unusual occurrence. The same animal is also sometimes accepted by the Turkish Chancellor of the Exchequer as legal tender for the income-tax, as will appear in the sequel.

A good illustration of the financial chaos which prevails throughout the empire is afforded by the currency. So difficult it generally is to obtain small

change that copper pieces long obsolete in the larger towns on the coast still circulate in the interior. In some districts, like Nigrita and Sirpa, a local coinage is in use, bearing on the reverse the crescent, with the Greek letters ΝΣ engraved between its horns. In other places, again, the tradesmen are obliged to coin tin tokens in order to meet the demands of their customers.

The scarcity of copper pieces is simply due to the indolence of the Government and to their indifference to the interests of the people. But the confusion in the value of gold and silver, though arising from deeper causes, is no less bewildering to the stranger. The Turkish pound, he finds, in some districts is worth 100 piastres, in others 108, 112, or 120. This difference often applies to various trades in one and the same district. The Government offices follow one valuation, the innkeepers have another, the muleteers a third, and so on. Needless to comment on the multitude of forged money. No wonder that the profession of money-changer is a lucrative one, as the numerous dirty little tables kept by dirty descendants of Abraham at the corners of the streets amply testify.

These features, added to the fear of brigandage on the open roads by day, the darkness and dangers of the streets at night, and the barbarous picturesqueness of the country generally, carry the traveller back to a state of things which the modern European can only dimly realise, with a shudder, from the descriptions of historic novelists. A tour through Macedonia is, so far as I know, the best training for an intelligent appreciation of such books as, say, Bulwer's *Last of the Barons*.

All this time vintage was in full swing, and from my observatory behind Mr. Antoni's counter I could see processions of grape-laden donkeys marching past, each carrying a pair of colossal baskets. The new wine had, no doubt, something to do with the hilarity of the people. But this state of Bacchic beatitude was not destined to last long. To everybody's surprise and dismay it was one day announced that the *Taxildars*, or tax-gatherers, who were not due till March, had arrived at Serres, and would soon be at Nigrita. The news spread with the quickness of an electric shock, and the bright buoyancy of a few hours before was succeeded by dark depression.

The head-man of the village summoned the council of elders in all haste that they might draw up the lists of tax-payers and assign to each one his share of the common burden. The Turkish method of taxation is a masterpiece of simplicity: a lump sum based on a rough computation of the population is demanded from every village, and the distribution of it among the different individuals is left to the villagers themselves. This system is not of Ottoman invention. The Turk has originated nothing, not even abuses. The village council of the present day is a survival of the Roman *curia*, or board of landowners, imported into the Eastern Empire by Constantine the Great. Like its ancient prototype, this council is responsible for the taxes due by each freeholder in the district, and is obliged to make up all deficits. A similar system prevails in Russia, and is considered by many as the chief source of the agricultural distress in that country. Collective responsibility of the village communes in regard to the payment of taxes has

been found to encourage laziness and consequent ruin. In Turkey matters are even worse. The incidence of taxes according to districts destroys all stimulus for individual exertion and initiative on one hand, while the establishment of Imperial tax-gatherers over the head of the responsible board on the other, opens the door wide to corruption and extortion, as these gentlemen can claim the tax when they like, and in some cases as often as they like. A respite, if obtained at all, has to be dearly bought. Arrears are not objected to as a rule; but the peasant who does not pay at once has to pay more than once in the long-run. He is often flatly refused a receipt for what he has already paid, or he is given a false receipt. In either case he finds himself shamefully cheated, yet helpless. An appeal to the law would only mean additional fleecing. In a country where every wheel of the judicial machinery has to be liberally greased before it can be made to move, a lawsuit is a luxury beyond the reach of the peasant's purse.

Again, the taxes are so heavy in themselves, and are often swelled to such dimensions by the extortions of the local officials, that the peasant sometimes finds it more profitable to destroy his property. Orchards are thus frequently cut down and crops uprooted, because the dues are out of all proportion to the value of the produce. Even taxes which have been formally abolished by the Government are still collected by the tax-gatherers, "by mistake." On the whole, the Macedonian is perhaps the most heavily taxed of any peasant in the world, always excepting his fellow-subjects. Apart from land-tax and tithe, he pays a tax for exemption from the military service,

which, as a Christian, he is not allowed to enter. He pays a tax for education which he never receives from the State. He pays a tax for roads and bridges which are never built. In short, he pays a tax on everything he buys, on everything he sells, on everything he imports, on everything he exports, on everything he carries, on everything he weighs, on everything he possesses, and on many things which he does not possess.

The manner in which these impositions are collected adds to the severity of the ordeal, and at the same time forms its most repulsive and galling feature. In other countries the tax-payer is spared as much as possible the vexation of official visits, and every care is taken to make the potion as palatable as the nature of the case will permit. In Macedonia quite the opposite principle obtains. The tax-payer is not considered entitled to any superfluous tenderness. On the contrary, it seems as though the Turkish official does not think that he has done his duty properly until he has made the patient drain the bitter cup to the dregs. He gloats over the sufferings which he causes, and derives a fiendish enjoyment from the sight of the pain which he inflicts. The reader will gain a glimpse of the situation shortly. Meanwhile the board of notables has assembled at Nigrita.

The council consisted of twelve elders and two youths who volunteered to assist them as secretaries. Its seat was a rush mat spread under the shadow of the church belfry, and, as the day advanced, shifted round in chase of the shadow. Most of the Twelve were old in years as well as in name; they were all dressed in the garb of the country: baggy breeches, voluminous sashes, and dark shirts. Some wore a feeble imitation

of a Turkish turban in the form of a silk kerchief wound round their fezes; a few blinked over brass-rimmed spectacles poised over massive and suspiciously rubicund noses. Thus equipped they sat cross-legged in a circle, nursing their socked feet with one hand, and, perchance, handling a cigarette or a rosary with the other. The registers were produced and opened upon two empty boxes of Batoum petroleum. The name of each householder was read out, his financial position was briefly discussed, his rightful portion of the tax was allotted to him, recorded in ink and dried with earth, which did duty for pounce—blotting-paper has not yet come into fashion. There was a vast deal of noise, but no disorder, in the deliberations of this rustic assembly. Indeed, these untutored peasants in the discharge of their financial functions seemed to me to display a degree of public spirit, equity, and ability which would have done credit to many a more pretentious board, and, frankly speaking, I should be sorry to see the system swept away. Whatever its shortcomings may be, there is no doubt that it gives scope to the exercise of some fine human qualities. If Nicolas had come down in the world, Demetrius, who was well off, was made to pay for him. George, who had two sons, both able-bodied and industrious, should assist his poor decrepit neighbour John, whose children were too young to be anything but a burden to their parent, and so forth. An occasional sally of rustic wit enlivened the proceedings, veiling by a cloak of comedy the tragic skeleton of fact. The scene, metaphorically as well as literally, was a blend of sunshine and shadow, not unpleasant to the disinterested observer.

On the following day appeared the taxildars, at-

tended by a strong detachment of gendarmerie. An uncleanly troop of Hebrew vultures hovered in the wake of the officials, lured by the smell of prey. As the visitation was unexpected many of the poorer peasants were unable to raise the money at such short notice. Some of them were imprisoned and flogged, while their homes were ransacked and everything worth anything was confiscated; neither the family meal-tub nor the maiden's trousseau was spared. Others, again, lost their cattle or their mules. Among the latter was the carrier, one of whose animals I had engaged for my departure. To crown all, the gendarmes were quartered on the peasants, and in return for this forced hospitality they committed all the outrages of which an armed and irresponsible gang of starving men is capable.

That night was spent by the taxildars and their myrmidons in revel and carousal—by the peasants in fear and trembling. I, for my part, looked forward to the morning which would enable me to get away from a scene of misery which moved my indignation without supplying me with the means of relieving it.

When I found that my muleteer had come to grief, I hastened to look for another, and after a great deal of difficulty discovered one who said that he could accommodate me. I chartered his mule, and a native schoolmaster on his way to his village engaged a donkey belonging to the same man. This schoolmaster was to be my companion part of the way.

Before retiring to rest, my host entreated me to make this state of things known in England. This was not the first nor the last occasion on which similar

entreaties were addressed to me. These simple folk are under the delusion that Great Britain is destined to be their saviour. They do not know that British statesmen have loftier ends in view than a quixotic crusade for the rescue of the oppressed.

CHAPTER XXVII

FROM NIGRITA TO TACHINO

NEXT morning the schoolmaster, mounted sideways on his ass, myself astride on my mule, and the *keradji* on foot, set off from the weaver's house in the centre of the village. It was still pitch-dark. People in the East are anxious to avoid the heat of the sun, and I was, therefore, not surprised at the *keradji's* eagerness to start before daybreak. I was soon, however, to learn that this was not the only reason.

We had scarcely gained the open plain when our progress was arrested by an incident which took my breath away, but which did not seem to excite any great emotion in my companions. A couple of gendarmes suddenly sprang from under a hedge and held up our beasts.

"Show your receipt," demanded one of them, addressing himself to the muleteer.

"I have not one."

"Then back you go, O son of a mangy dog!"

The son of the afflicted dog said that he would go back and speak to his father about it, and he departed, leaving us in the hands of the Ishmaelites.

I endeavoured to reason with them, pointing out how unfair it was that our time should be wasted, because, forsooth, the *keradji* had failed to pay his

taxes. They remained obdurate, answering all my arguments with a stereotyped "*Olmaz!*—It cannot be!" accompanied with an energetic shake of the head upwards, which is the Eastern way of emphasising a negative.

I then applied the lessons of past experience to the present emergency, and offered to our captors that argument to which no Turk has ever refused to listen. The music of silver soothed the savage breasts of the gendarmes, and they consented to let my mule go; but they still insisted on retaining the schoolmaster's donkey. The latter stoically bowed to the inevitable, and we resumed our pilgrimage with one mount between us. I thereupon proposed that we should ride the mule turn and turn about, but my companion declined the offer with a degree of earnestness, which suggested that he dared not trust himself on anything more spirited than a broken-hearted ass.

"Indeed, sir, I would much rather go *apostolika*—in the fashion of the apostles"—he said, and swung his umbrella with the air of one accustomed to apostolic ways.

Thus we jogged on until we reached a *tchiftlik* called Gheorgala. The schoolmaster knew the bailiff who was in charge of the estate, and he obtained from him the loan of a mare, beside which Rosinante would have looked absurdly stout. No instrument except a ruler seemed to have been employed in the creation of this animal. Its framework presented as many acute angles and straight lines as any figure in Euclid. A saddle had just been placed in a receptacle formed naturally by the combination of a concave spine and two outstanding haunch-bones,

and the schoolmaster, mounted on a stool, was in the act of throwing his leg over the saddle, with all the care required by the fragile nature of his beast, when the *keradji* overtook us, panting and puffing.

"Ah, they have let you go after all," he said, mopping his face with a big red handkerchief. "The accursed sons of Hagar have made us waste the dewy time of day. May the devil take them!"

"Have you seen your donkey?" asked I.

"My donkey? Where is it?"

"The sons of Hagar have detained it."

Hereupon the *keradji* uttered a hasty expression unsuitable for print. Then, the bitterness of grief over, he added:—

"I don't care. Let them keep it. Its value is about the amount I owe. So we are quits, the Sultan and I."

"What did your father say?"

"My father? I have not seen my father. He is locked up in a cool place," he said, wiping the perspiration off his forehead, with a sigh of envy of his father's cool abode, and then continued: "I knew he was in prison since last night; I only went to escape from the gendarmes."

He gradually explained that his father had a small quantity of corn, which he must now sell for what it will fetch, and make up the sum by borrowing. So he would weather the storm for a while. All this was said in a tone of callous indifference, born of familiarity, and more eloquent than any outburst of indignation. I thought of the Jews, with their ready money and greedy eyes, and felt sorry for the poor wretch. A more miserable instance of a hand-to-mouth existence could not easily be found.

"It is like burning your bed in order to get rid of the fleas," commented the stoical schoolmaster sententiously, and we moved on.

The influence of this *régime* on the morals of the people, as I have already pointed out, is, if possible, even more pernicious than the material ruin which it works. Robbed right and left, they appear to have lost all sense of the difference between *meum* and *tuum*. Of this the *keradji* by-and-by furnished me with a fresh proof. I had noticed a scar over his brow, and asked him how he had come by it.

"Oh, that's a wound I received some time ago in a fight with the field-keepers," he said. "Some other muleteers and myself were one day passing by a vineyard, and, hungry as we were, we stopped to pick some grapes. The keepers saw us and tried to drive us out. We came to blows, and I got the cut which you see."

"Did you not know that stealing is wrong?" said I, glad of an opportunity to preach.

"It was not stealing, sir. It was only grapes. God has given grapes for man to eat. One oke (3 lbs.) more or less does not signify."

"If each of you had one oke, and did the same thing for a week, methinks there would not be much left. But, of course, you are right. Grapes were given for man to eat."

"Yes, but what about the man who planted and pruned the vines, and watered them with the sweat of his brow?" rejoined the honest sinner, stung by the irony of my remark, or ambitious to score a point.

"You ought to have thought of that before you attempted to reap where another man had sown," said

I severely, and dropped the sermon. "But did not the affair reach the ears of the police?"

"Oh yes, and they wanted me to bring an action against the field-keepers—they thought it would give them a chance of squeezing some money out of the owner of the vineyard. But I am no fool. Not I. The less you have to do with the law the better."

"Especially when you have not much of a case."

The *keradji* laughed.

The schoolmaster, who had been listening to our dialogue in silence, now opened his mouth and ponderously quoted—

"Zeus deprives man of half his manhood, when the day of slavery overtakes him."

My friend had evidently read his Homer to some purpose, and, in spite of his mare, I was beginning to respect him for his attainments; but at that very moment, as the god of laughter would have it, he did something by which he forfeited for ever all claims to serious treatment at my hands. He spread his umbrella—an immense combination of faded cotton and rusty iron—over his head, and in so doing, completed the picture which he already presented on the back of his equine skeleton.

Meanwhile we passed several marshes bristling with reeds and rushes. These marshes supply the material for the mats largely manufactured in the district, and also breed the microbes to which the lowlands of Macedonia owe their well-deserved reputation as hotbeds of malaria. They are formed by the shallows of the Struma, which gradually develop into Lake Tachino. On the erratic movements of rivers I have

already had occasion to comment. I may add here that when a stream alters its course, the Government loses no time in claiming the land left dry as state property. But it neither compensates those whose fields have been swallowed up by the new channel, nor does it take any pains to prevent a similar disaster in the future.

Soon after we reached the village which straggles along the shore of the lake, and derives therefrom both its name and, in a great measure, the means for existence. It is a squalid, woe-begone little hamlet, consisting of some six-score shanties, with the plaster falling off their sides, and exposing to view the plaited reeds of which the upper walls are built. Several droves of swine—not of the sleek and cultured species common in England, but huge, bristly, black savages, first-cousins to the wild boars of the mountains—wallowed complacently in the mud, testifying by their presence to the pure Christianity of the village; for Islam and swine never herd together.

We dismounted at the door of the school, which was my fellow-traveller's destination. He invited me to go in and have some food before crossing the lake, and I gratefully accepted the invitation.

The school was in harmony with the sty aspect of the village. Repeated outpourings of ink had lent to the floor the appearance of a map of the world on a large scale, while the walls bore evidence of the *cacoethes scribendi*, the characteristic malady of youthful scholars the world over. The schoolroom contained a dozen rows of decayed desks covered with initials carved deeply into them. I should not have been at all surprised had I found a class of young pigs ranged behind them. Above the master's desk there hung an icon

of Christ, and in the desk lay a register from which the following are a few flowers culled at random:—

“Demetrios Kephalas: left on the 15th of March afflicted by frequent attacks of fever.
Athanasios Nicolaides: left on the same day through his parents' whim.
Alexandros Hadjiyannis: left owing to his father's death.”

These and similar entries showed that what with illness, unreasonable parents, and death, my learned friend managed to get rid of a good many of his disciples before the end of the year.

Other observations formed epigrammatic studies of the scholars' characters. One was described as “naughty, but clever;” another as “very intelligent, quiet, and industrious;” a third as “somewhat superficial, yet good and industrious;” a fourth seemed to harbour within his tiny bosom all the vices of which a schoolboy's nature is capable. He was stigmatised in superlative terms as “most insubordinate, most cunning, and most lazy.”

The schoolmaster's voice from the other room brought my unofficial inspection to an end. I found him making coffee over a spirit-lamp in a cold, grimy fireplace. His abode left much to be desired in the matter of elegance. A few rush-mats covered part of the floor; the rest was smeared with grey earth. A mattress stood rolled up against one wall, and a low divan occupied the opposite side.

Having poured out the coffee into a cup, which at some earlier stage of its career had parted company with its handle, he took down from a shelf a quarter of a loaf of brown bread, which, to judge by its appear-

ance, must have occupied that position ever since the end of last term, some three months before. I have seen in the British Museum Babylonian and Assyrian clay tablets, inscribed with archaic cuneiform signs. They looked less indigestible than this loaf. But hunger covers a multitude of failings, or, as my host put it in his vigorous vernacular, "The stomach, sir, has no windows." Armed with this powerful consolation and a lead fork, I attacked the small, bony lake-fish, which my kind host had in the meantime fried for me, and, despite the malodorous flavour of the oil and the flinty complexion of the bread, I made an excellent lunch. I should have mentioned that, after having excavated some two inches into the bowels of the loaf, I reached layers that yielded quite easily to the knife.

Then we sipped our coffee and smoked contraband tobacco.

After this eolithic repast I went out in search of the means of crossing the lake. The quest took me more than an hour, but at last I managed to find a *karavokyris*, or boatman, willing to row me across for twenty piastres (about 4s.). The schoolmaster came down to the shore to bid me *katevodion*. I shook hands with him and stepped on board. He waved his red handkerchief at me for a few seconds, and then vanished from my sight for ever. But his image, uncouth, unclean, and kind, will dwell with me as long as sense of the incongruous endures.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A VOYAGE AND AN IDYLL

THE vessel on which I embarked was a long flat-bottomed fabric, built of rough planks smeared over with tar. It was pointed at both ends, stem and stern alike, after the fashion of an Indian canoe, of which it possessed all the primitive simplicity without any of the grace. Two heavy oars, attached to outriggers by a thong, were pulled by the wiry old *karavokyris* who stood at one end.

I spread a rug in the middle of this marvellous parody of a boat, and, with a sunshade overhead, lay on my back listening to the rhythmic plash of the oars, the gurgling of the water at the bow, and the heavy flopping of the flat bottom upon the greenish waves. A gentle breeze blew from the land and mitigated in some measure the intense heat of the sun, which was reflected on the tarred sides of the vessel. Thus I glided slowly on, "wrapt in a pleasing, soft, and death-like rest," deliciously sweet after the weary mule-ride of the morning.

Tachino is a beautiful lake, abounding in water-flowers and water-fowls. In parts it might be described as a floating garden. The surface for miles around is sown with water-lilies, white and yellow, and broad-leaved plants producing a hard prickly nut curiously shaped in the form of a cross, but to which the limited character of my botanical attainments forbids me to

assign a name. The shores bristle with the needles of rush-forests, which advance far into the lake. In the midst of these plants may be seen a long-necked and long-beaked stork proudly stalking along with the air of an oriental autocrat surveying his dominions. Ever now and again he stoops with a majestic curve of his neck to pick up an unfortunate frog or fish, which soon disappears in the depths of his capacious throat. Flocks of black wild ducks disported themselves in the shallows, and white kingfishers skimmed the water or dived after their finny game.

For about two and a half hours we coasted in a south-easterly direction, hugging the shore, which was here and there animated by the presence of meditative cows and grazing horses, or by herds of buffaloes immersed in the cool waters, so that nothing but patches of their black spines and their curved horns showed above the surface. Then we struck across the lake, and glided on for another hour over its still smooth bosom, with nothing to break the silence except the plashing of the big ponderous oars of the boat, the rippling of the wavelets severed by its pointed bow, and the liquid tinkling of cattle-bells from the receding shore.

The lake is intersected by reed-fences which emerge a few feet from the water, forming, as it were, parallel lines of lilliputian fortifications, with an occasional opening for the passage of boats. A higher tower rises at intervals, with perhaps a solitary stork mounting guard over it. These are the permanent nets by which are captured the small bony fish whereof I had partaken at noon.

Meanwhile the breeze, at first so soft and low, gradually waxed stronger. The waves began to beat

more heavily against the sides of the boat, the flat bottom flopped with a louder thud and danced a livelier step over the wrinkled waters, and I was beginning to realise the meaning of the phrase "a storm in a tea-cup." But there was no chance of a shipwreck. The glory of an Odysseus was not to be mine. The opposite shore was already drawing near. The white cottages of a village on the slopes of a low hill gleamed in the sun, while farther back rose the bare and beetling rocks of Mount Pangæum dimly outlined against the brilliant sky. This was Rhodolivos, a Greek village, containing also some fifty Turkish houses. Several other Greek villages lie between the shore and the foot of the mountain, but they were not visible from this part of the lake.

At last, after a five hours' delightful trip, we grounded our craft among a flotilla of similar vessels in a small rush-grown harbour belonging to Doxamvos, a poverty-stricken hamlet of some two-score dilapidated huts scattered over the rising shore. From the midst of these cottages rose a fair-sized but sadly neglected church, with a flock of crows and rooks hovering over it, as if in the expectation of its speedy dissolution. Some peasants were mending their seines on the shore, others were overhauling a boat, while a group of semi-naked gipsies squatted in the sun busy plaiting the reeds out of which the *kalamotais*, or fishing-fences, of the lake are constructed.

Not far from this hamlet I noticed the mouth of a river, but could obtain no information concerning it except, what indeed was patent even to my untutored eyes, that "it came from over there," this

description being illustrated with a sweep of the hand which embraced a quarter of the horizon.

The *karavokyris* undertook to procure a mount for me and landed, leaving me in the boat. As I pride myself on judicial impartiality and a conscientious adherence to facts, I will here chronicle one which does small credit to the otherwise irreproachable boatman. Our covenant was that, in return for a sum of twenty piastres silver, *plus* "what your honour may please," the aforesaid *karavokyris* pledged himself to land me safe and sound at Kiup-Kioi—or some equally cacophonous *kioi*—situated an hour and a half's distance farther. Instead of which he landed me at Doxamvos, thereby proving himself to be what a Turk would have called "the son of a graceless dog."

I did not detect this abominable treachery until too late for useful altercation. When I did find it out, however, I resolved to punish him by withholding the discretionary addition to the stipulated fee. It is pleasant to play the rôle of Justice, especially if you save money thereby.

What rendered the crime doubly odious in my eyes was the premeditated malice underlying it. By his breach of contract the *karavokyris* aimed at a two-fold gain—first to save himself an additional outlay of energy, and secondly to oblige a friendly muleteer with the present of a helpless fare. It is true that the alteration of the route involved no material loss to me, as the distance from both villages to my destination was nearly the same. But this did not extenuate the offence in the least. On the contrary, the fact that I was not a sufferer through the deed lent to my decision the weight of disinterestedness.

While I lay in the boat brooding over these matters and composing my heart to judicial sternness, the crafty old Charon reappeared, followed by an individual who led a grey-haired creature by a rope attached round its neck. The creature could only be called a quadruped by poetic licence or by biassed affection. In point of fact, it possessed no more than three efficient legs. The fourth was presumably meant as an ornament, for it served no practical purpose. This was, however, the sole available beast in the village, and I could not afford to be fastidious.

Acting in direct opposition to all the dictates of reason and my own decision, I yielded to the old man's lamentations in the matter of *bakshish*. After which I dismissed him and all thoughts of Rhadamanthine rigour and turned my attention to the zoological phenomenon before me. Having surveyed it critically for a few minutes I mounted to find that the saddle, owing to the animal's peculiar conformation, persisted in slipping off its back. I dismounted and requested its master to divest himself of his jacket. He stared at me in stupid wonder:—

"My jacket, sir?"

"Yes, thy jacket, my friend."

When he had taken off his jacket, I bade him fill it with stones and hang it bag-wise on the lighter side of the saddle. He obeyed, not cheerfully, muttering the while dark things about insanity, of which, as they could not possibly concern me, I took no notice.

Having thus redressed the balance of things, I settled on that pinnacle of discomfort and set off on a broken chalky path. After one hour's laborious

limping I gained the crest of the ridge, and from that eminence looked into a deep valley gay with tobacco-fields. Down this valley I limped, stoutly resisting all my mule's attempts at genuflexion, until I reached the first of two brooks, which roll noisily across the vale and finally join the anonymous river which "came from over there." Provista was at the farther end. I forded this stream and gained the opposite bank, which hid the village from sight. Then I descended into the gravelly bed of the second brook. Its steep banks were overshadowed by ancient plane-trees, whose rich foliage whispered mysteriously in the breeze. Two fountains rippled beneath their boughs, and close by several peasant-maids were engaged washing clothes and spreading them out on the smooth shiny pebbles.

They looked up, attracted by the intermittent clatter of my three-legged mount, and exchanged hilarious comments thereon. Their laughter mingled so agreeably with the murmur of the fountains and the mystic psithyrisms of the trees, that I willingly forgave them their impertinence, and allowed myself to drift toward them.

I reined in beside one of the fountains, at which a tall willowy damsel was filling her pitcher. And the damsel was very fair to look upon, and I was very thirsty. So I said:—

"Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink."

And she replied:—

"Both drink thou, and I will also withdraw my pitcher that thy mule may drink likewise."

And I, carried away by the Biblical charm of the scene and by the witchery of the damsel's large black eyes, asked her, not for information, but for the sake

of hearing the music of her voice—"so soft, so sweet, so delicately clear"—and said:—

"Whose daughter art thou?"

And she answered:—

"Mind thine own business, O stranger!"

And I went away crest-fallen and corrected, pondering over the difference between Mesopotamia in the days of Abraham and Macedonia in my own.

Thus I halted up the slope on which spreads the village of Provista. A church belfry and a minaret, rising side by side, showed in a striking manner that here also the Koran and the Gospel lived in hostile proximity.

As I entered the village, a second damsel came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder. She was not fair to look upon. So I made bold to ask her to direct me to the house of the man to whom I was recommended. And she made haste and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and showed me the way. And I bowed down my head and offered her a silver coin, which she declined. Thereupon I offered her a water-lily from my belt, which she accepted with a modest, maidenly blush, and forthwith ceased to look plain.

Verily, 'tis not always the fairest vessel that contains the sweetest wine.

CHAPTER XXIX

A NIGHT AT PROVISTA

My host was a prosperous tradesman, who spoke Greek to his child, but Wallachian to his wife and mother, though they also could speak pure and fluent Greek, and called themselves Greeks. They received me in the simple yet cordial fashion which distinguishes the better class of the inhabitants of Macedonia, and ushered me into the best room of the house; an airy, clean, and comfortably-furnished apartment, commanding an extensive prospect of the valley and the lake beyond. My host, his little child, and I sat on a sofa near the window, and were just in time to enjoy a splendid view. The sun was sinking behind the violet mountains across the lake, and for a few minutes the latter was turned into a veritable lake of fire. Soon, however, the red flames died out, and the waters began to shimmer beneath a sky now enveloped in the grey twilight of evening.

Provista, my host informed me, notwithstanding its picturesque situation, is not a health resort by any means. The mountains which surround it make it excessively hot in summer and proportionately cold in winter, while the neighbourhood of the marshy lake is a perennial source of malaria, the common curse of Macedonian valleys. Nor are the political and social conditions of the district more healthy than the physical. Our conversation was occasionally inter-

rupted by my host's son and heir. The father subdued the child's restlessness with the characteristic threat: "If you do not keep still, I will take you to the Konak!" (or Government House). The bugbears of most children die with age. Those of the children of Macedonia become more and more substantial with the advance of years and experience.

I complimented my host on the looks and size of his frolicsome son.

"Oh, don't mention it, sir," he said, hastily.

I could see that, in spite of the string of crosses and phylacteries with which the boy's neck was loaded, his parent was in fear of the Evil Eye.

"He is not big for his age," he continued. "If he were a girl, he would be double this height by now. Females grow much more quickly, thanks to the devil."

"How is that?" I queried in amazement.

"Oh, don't you know? The devil pulls them up by the nose and makes them grow."

The entrance of his wife saved me from the difficult task of making a suitable reply to this ungallant speech. Evidently the eastern mind entertains no doubts on the origin of sin.

Refreshments, accompanied by contraband tobacco and miscellaneous talk, filled the time until dinner was announced. This repast was served out in the hall on a low circular table, round which we sat on cushions, the ladies of the house as well as the men—an arrangement which impressed me as a sign of uncommon refinement. Among the peasants of Macedonia women as a rule wait on the guests, but do not sit down to dinner with them. In this household, however, everything was conducted in a style suggesting

high civilisation : the plates were changed after every course, and the knives and forks were handled with an air of familiarity.

A neighbour dropped in after dinner, and we sat up far into the night, discussing the state of the country and the consequences of the last Greek campaign. What they said confirmed my own observations. That travesty of a war, besides the damage which it inflicted on Greece directly, served indirectly to rivet more firmly than ever the chains which hold the Christian population of Turkey in bondage. Before that event the prevailing spirit among the Turks was one of fatalistic despondency, deepened by every new curtailment of the Sultan's dominions. They were accustomed to talk of their lease of occupation drawing near its end. Indeed, many of them had made up their minds that the day had come when they would have to decamp out of Europe "bag and baggage." Even while the preparations for the struggle were pushed on, the Mohammedans of Macedonia were anxious to obtain from their Christian neighbours the promise that they would protect them from the Greek troops, should the latter prove victorious. But all this was changed by the result of the Thirty Days' War.

The defeat of the Greeks has revived the Turk's belief in his own invincibility, and convinced him that his empire in Europe has obtained an extension of life. This feeling finds a material expression in the improvement of the military organisation of the country. All the money that can, and a great deal that cannot, be spared from the current expenditure of the Government, is devoted to the purchase of arms, and to the erection of barracks and fortifications. The civil service is starved for the sake of the military. "Voluntary"

contributions and forced loans are the order of the day. An addition of six per cent. on all taxes was established in 1900, and its proceeds are said to be intended for the revival of the navy. Ships which for twenty years had served the harmless purpose of supplying mussels and oysters with shelter, were roused to warlike activity. It is true that their engines during that period of perpetual holiday had forgotten how to work, that the boilers refused to boil, and that the limits between deck and sea could not always be clearly defined. Still an effort was made, and the awakening of the Sultan's navy was hailed by the Turks as additional evidence of their own vitality.

This new-born interest in martial affairs is supplemented by many diplomatic manœuvres, all pointing to the conclusion that the Leader of the Faithful is animated by one desire—namely, to tighten his grip on the provinces left to him, and, by gradually shaking off the control of Europe, to recover the position held by his predecessors in the palmy days when the Sultan of Turkey was known to the obsequious princes of Christendom as the Grand Seigneur. It is with that end in view that the Padishah makes periodical attempts to restrict and hamper the activity of international institutions, based on treaties, such as the foreign post-offices, the Board of Health, and the religious missions. But none of these experiments has hitherto brought anything but humiliation upon him. The European Powers have proved that, be their mutual jealousies what they may, they can always present a united front when their common interests are menaced.

Living, as he does, in close proximity to two great rival forces—Panslavism and Pangermanism—which occasionally choose his own territory as a battlefield, it

is not surprising that Abdul Hamid has caught from them the fever of expansion. The only marvel is that the malady—in its Turkish manifestation termed Pan-islamism—has not yet reached a critical stage. But there can be little doubt that sooner or later the world will hear something to its disadvantage from Constantinople. In the meantime, the Sultan humours the European Powers by seemingly yielding to their demands for reform.

How unreal and futile all such reforms are can easily be seen. One of the more recent concessions is the appointment of Christian *Mooavins*, or Vice-Governors, to the provinces; another is the admission of the Christians into the ranks of the gendarmerie. When the representatives of the late famous Concert wrested these reforms from the Porte, they fondly believed, or affected to believe, that they had at last secured the Christian *rayahs* from oppression. What the Sultan seriously thought no one knows. But what he did is another proof of the sense of humour with which he is credited by some. The *Mooavins* were appointed with a loud flourish of trumpets, and, to Europe's unspeakable delight, they were invested with gorgeous uniforms. But the Sultan took very good care that they should not be overwhelmed with duties involving initiative and responsibility. Real authority they possess none. They are mere puppets in the hands of the Turkish Valis and their Councils. The slightest semblance of self-assertion on their part is sure to result in disgrace. Those who appointed them can dismiss them, and then others will wear their gorgeous uniforms. The *Mooavins*, conscious of the delicacy of their position, wisely prefer to do their master's work, and to earn, if possible, their master's

wages, but in any case to wink hard and hold their tongues. Their complaisance has earned them, even among the Turks, the derisive title of *Evetdji*, or "Yes, men."

The gendarmerie reform ended in a similar farce. The few Christians who were permitted to enlist were victimised by their Mohammedan colleagues and officers to such a degree that they hastened to resign at the earliest opportunity, and by so doing they enabled the Sultan to say, "You see, Gentlemen of the Concert, we invited the Christians to join the ranks, but, lazy dogs that they are, they will not avail themselves of the privilege." Whereupon the Members of the Concert change their tune, leaving the Sultan to enjoy their discomfiture after his own fashion.

In such discourse we spent the remainder of the evening, and, when bedtime came, I was shown into a room where a luxurious bed had been spread on the floor for me. It is the custom of the people to lavish on their guests all the finery at their command, and that night I slept between sheets "softer than sleep itself," and under a velvet quilt which a fairy prince would not have despised. I had only one dream, in which a three-legged mule played a leading part. It appears that I was under a moral obligation to traverse Mesopotamia from one end to the other on its back, the prize for this labour being the hand of Bethuel's daughter. Unfortunately dawn overtook me long before the accomplishment of my task, and I then recollected that the young lady in question had been another's for some time.

CHAPTER XXX

ON THE ROAD TO ANGHISTA

NEXT morning, after the slight apology for a meal with which the Eastern world breaks its fast, I was provided with a genuine four-legged mule, and, having taken leave of my hosts, started on my way to Anghista, the nearest railway station, where I intended to take the train back to Serres.

The muleteer who accompanied me was a native of Provista, a kilted, sinewy, nimble-footed and nimble-tongued villain of some seventeen years. Literally, as well as metaphorically, he was not the sort of man to let the grass grow under his feet, and in the course of our short acquaintance he gave me ample evidence of his preternatural precocity. Like most of his *confrères* with whom I had hitherto associated, he appeared anxious to investigate my antecedents.

"Who is your worship?" he asked at an early stage of our journey, but, like an artful teacher bent on hoodwinking the school inspector, he himself supplied me with the answer:

"I suppose you are a mining engineer?"

My experience of Turkish travel had impressed upon me the inadvisability of publishing one's identity, so I permitted the muleteer to enjoy his shrewd surmise. But the wily youth did not for a moment really think that I had aught to do with mines. He merely

mentioned the subject in order to display his own knowledge, and soon waxed abstruse on chromium, manganese, and other things which, I believe, are to be found in the bowels of the earth, though I had never had the curiosity to look for them there, or anywhere else.

Our path wound over the amphitheatre of hills which closes the valley on the north, and its ruggedness was such that even a sure-footed, four-legged mule and a well-saddled muleteer could tread it with the utmost difficulty. The hills on both sides of the track rose to a considerable height, and in the cheerless twilight of early morn presented a bare and desolate look, which was accentuated by the only token of human habitation within sight. This was a ruined and deserted Mohammedan cemetery on a lonely plateau a little way back from the track. The very name of the village in which its dead tenants must have moved and had their being once, was forgotten, and no vestige of its existence now remained save these white tombs, looming weirdly in the bleak dawn, amidst an undergrowth of weeds. A solitary crow alighted on a slanting headstone and sat thereon, a veritable "watcher by the dead."

The mute pathos of the sight was not lost upon my impressionable companion.

"Do you see yon graves, sir?" he said, pointing with his stick to the plateau. "My father used to say that, long years ago when he was a boy, the brigands wiped off the Mohammedan village which stood close by."

This remark led the conversation to the most ordinary topic in Macedonia, and my companion grew loquacious upon it.

"Did you ever come across my friend George in Salonica?" he suddenly queried.

"I have come across several Georges in my time, my good fellow," said I. "But Salonica is a large place, you know. "What sort of a man is your friend George, and in what part of the town does he reside?"

"He resides in the White Tower, sir," answered the youth in a calm, matter-of-fact tone.

The White Tower, *alias* the Bloody Tower, the reader may remember, is an old fortress now used for the accommodation of criminals of the deepest dye.

"Oh," said I, beginning to get uncomfortably interested in the subject. "Pray, what brought him there?"

The muleteer proceeded in the same natural manner to inform me that his friend George had, during the previous summer, left his field in order to join a band of brigands.

"Life is so very slow in the plains, sir. What with the *Kaimakams* and the *Aghas*, and one thing and another, one wants a change now and again. So my friend George joined the party. They meant to have just one shot and retire. A rich merchant fell into their hands. According to the custom of the country they held him to ransom, and, having divided the money in a friendly way, they each went to their homes. But they had made one mistake: they had forgotten to square the authorities, and so they came to grief. The others got wind of the danger and made good their escape. But my friend George, poor lad, one day, as he quietly ploughed his field, was surprised by the *zaptiehs* and taken to Salonica. That's how he got to reside in the White Tower."

When the muleteer finished his story, I commented that now, at all events, his friend George would have ample time to ruminate on the mutability of human affairs.

"Life is like a wheel: what is up to-day, to-morrow is down," moralised the rascal, with a sigh that might have issued from Solomon's own heart.

"It is a pity he did not take the authorities into his confidence," pursued I.

"It was foolish of him," admitted the muleteer. "But then, you see, sir, he was young and new to the business. He will know better next time."

I began to feel that the bosom friend of a dweller in the Bloody Tower was not the most desirable sort of a travelling companion at that time and place. But it would have been unwise to show my distrust. So I remarked, by way of continuing the conversation:—

"I did not know there were any brigands in this neighbourhood."

"Are brigands ever wanting in Macedonia?" replied the muleteer, with a reassuring smile, and a look of astonishment at my simplicity.

I was not sorry to perceive the first signs of day-break, and felt better still when shortly after I found myself on the open plain within sight of the solitary streak of railway and of the red-tiled roof of the neat little station, cheerfully reflecting the rays of the rising sun. The lake scintillated far away on the left. The space between was bare and parched, a single exception being presented by a small *tchiftlik* close to the road. The few buildings on it were surrounded by a tiny plantation of poplars whose silvery leaves rustled and glimmered pleasantly enough. Another proof that

we were back to the realms of civilisation was offered by our track, for here and there it disclosed a patch of a pavement consisting of loose cobbles, which tried my mule's patience sorely, and did not tend to improve its temper or its speed.

CHAPTER XXXI

AT THE STATION

I REACHED my destination much earlier than I had been led to expect; for my host, with the lack of sense of space common to the peasants of most countries, had overestimated the distance. My arrival at the station was greeted with a furious onslaught on the part of three big shaggy brutes, which rushed at my mule with gleaming teeth and bristling hair. I was endeavouring to ward off their demonstrations of affectionate joy with my whip, when a gendarme in a pair of trousers and one shoe darted out and pacified the dogs with a few well-directed kicks. He then proceeded to cover me with abuse, and with many oaths wanted to know who I was, and whence I came.

I now found myself confronted with a type of Turk entirely different from the courteous *Kaimakams*, who contented themselves with seeing through my thin disguise, and, far from hating me for it, treated me to coffee and salaams. They looked upon my incognito as a tacit tribute to their might, and felt flattered thereby. To tell this monoslippered ruffian, however, that I was a *Redacteur du X— de Salonique*, who had consecrated his life to collecting subscriptions for the same, would have been sheer waste of a useful fable.

In this predicament literature came to my rescue.

I happily remembered the recipe for "striking terror and inspiring respect" into a Turk, recommended by Dhemetri, Kinglake's illustrious factotum, and I resolved to try it. So, assuming a mien of supreme ferocity, I thundered out in what I conceived to be a respect-inspiring accent:—

"O thou fool, and the descendant of many fools, hold thy tongue, and assist me to dismount."

The experiment succeeded to perfection. The gendarme, stunned by this thunderclap, came up, and held my stirrup humbly, remarking:—

"Do not be wroth, effendim ; I knew not you were such a great man."

I followed up my advantage by tossing a two-piastre piece to him. Whereupon he professed to be my bondman for life, tethered my mule, and otherwise showed his sense of my greatness.

Thus, having "smitten the proud and spared the prostrate," I effected my entry into the station with something of the feelings of a Roman Consul fresh from a victorious campaign against the barbarians. On this, as on many other occasions, I found that rudeness is the best and, on the whole, cheapest policy in Turkey. Civility is mistaken for weakness, and woe to the weak in a despotic country !

"Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones," quoth the sage ; but Solomon obviously had little experience of Turkey. Besides, it is not quite clear to *whose* bones he refers. Far wiser is the apophthegm in which he says : "The north wind driveth away rain ; so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue."

Meanwhile, the affray had brought the station-master to the door. I presented to him a note of

introduction, which I had obtained in case I should be obliged to wait for any length of time at the station, as indeed it turned out to be the case. There was no train until 5 P.M. This was an unpleasant surprise, for my host at Provista had assured me that there was one at noon. His object had certainly not been to deceive me. But the inhabitants of these regions will never own that they are unable to give you exact information. Actuated by a most laudable desire to please, they instinctively answer in the way which they think will be the most agreeable to you. In like manner, when the traveller asks of his muleteer, "Are we very far from our destination?" the latter invariably replies, "Oh no. It is just over yon hill." "Yon hill," as often as not, turns out to be the first link of a long chain of "yon hills." As a result of this amiable trait of character, here was I condemned to waste the whole day in the wilderness, with the nearest village miles away on the slopes of a distant mountain.

"What refreshments may I have the pleasure of offering you, sir?" said the station-master, pompously, as soon as we were seated in his office.

"What refreshments may you happen to have in this place?" answered I, smiling.

"There is arrack, sir, and there is cognac," he rejoined in the tone of a man divulging the names of deadly poisons. "I presume that you have not had your luncheon yet?"

"No," I answered. "I left Provista before sunrise. A thimbleful of coffee and a slice of bread was my breakfast, and, I do not wish to be emphatic, but I am famishing."

"Indeed?" said he, gravely.

“ Verily. But I will have a glass of cognac with pleasure.”

The cognac was produced from a mysterious cupboard, and I found it excellent, though by no means equivalent to a full meal. So I asked :—

“Is there no place within measurable distance where I could get something to eat? Bread and cheese, or anything will do.”

“There is no place within measurable distance, sir. None but the railroads are measured in Turkey. There is, however, a kind of coffee-shop within what may correctly be described as reasonable distance,” answered the ponderous pedant, pointing through the office-door to a miserable hovel. “But you can get nothing there except bad coffee and stale Turkish delight, commonly called *loukoun*.”

A row of big baskets full of rosy grapes stood ranged outside the door, and to those I cast a longing glance. My host evidently read my meaning, for he hastened to explain in alarm :—

“Those grapes, which you see, have just arrived ; but they are not mine ;” and he changed the subject.

About an hour later he doffed his uniform, donned an ordinary jacket, and then, bowing to me, said :—

“Will you be so very good as to follow me upstairs, sir? I am going to lunch.”

I rose and followed him in the firm belief that I was going to lunch too, and my stomach was already beating tuneful marches to the table.

He ushered me into a drawing-room and motioned me to a satin couch, more luxurious than comfortable. Then in walked a mournful procession, consisting of an aged lady in black, with a low fez, encircled in a wreath of false hair on her head, and of a younger

lady, likewise in black; a pale though not unpretty little woman, with big eyes wearing the look of a hunted deer. These ladies were introduced to me as the station-master's mother and wife respectively. After a few minutes' mutual embarrassment the sorrowful trio got up, and the gentleman said:—

“I trust you will excuse us, sir. We are now going to have our luncheon. Allow me to offer you a book and some cigarettes. I venture to hope you will like them.”

With this the procession marched in single file out of the room, leaving me with a French novel in one hand and a cigarette in the other, while, Heaven knows, a piece of bread and cheese would have been infinitely more to the purpose. My stomach now began to beat funeral marches to the grave; but I tried to silence it.

I opened the book. It was *Le Collier de la Reine*, by Alexandre Dumas, *père*—an excellent work in its way, yet ever since that day associated in my mind with everything that is dull, uninteresting, and painful. I glanced at the first page; but I found it physically impossible to fix my eyes upon it. The clatter of plates, knives, and forks, and the seductive smell of roast meat were borne in through the keyhole, and distracted me with thoughts of the might-have-been.

I tried the cigarette, but found it sadly inadequate as a substitute for a meal. I wondered whether the station-master laboured under the unfortunate delusion that men of letters live literally on books, requiring no other nutriment, or whether he seriously regarded tobacco as “the hungry man's food,” or, lastly, whether I was the victim of a practical joke.

As I sat there on my satin sofa, starving and puzz-

ling, and, I am afraid, inwardly relegating station-masters and pompous fools to the regions of perpetual heat, my host returned, and, with a radiant smile on his face, requested me to follow him down to the office again.

I still cherished a faint hope that he meant to give me something to eat by myself—"perhaps," I thought, "their luncheon accommodation was not enough to meet the wants of an unexpected guest"—and I waited patiently. But when another half-hour dragged wearily on and revealed not the least symptom of hospitality on the station-master's part, I began to think seriously of my future.

I left the inhospitable roof and strolled out, seeking what I might devour. Fortunately, or providentially, I had not gone far when a labourer appeared before me, with a magnificent bunch of black grapes in one hand and a piece of bread in the other.

"Where did you find these things?" I asked eagerly, addressing him in Greek.

"I did not find them. I bought them," he answered indignantly, in Italian.

"Is it possible for me also to buy such things in this locality?" I pursued, in his own language.

"No, not in this locality, signor," he said, mollified and most absurdly amused. "But hold," he added, with a beautiful impulsiveness, which endeared the Italian nation to me at once and for ever. "You are quite welcome to these grapes, and I can get you some white bread, too."

Had heaven opened its gates to me at that moment, I should probably have felt less elated. But I declined his bunch. He assured me, however, that there was plenty more where that came from, and led the way to

his lodgings. He was a platelayer employed on the line. I followed, lured by the magic of his words. I had lived for many weeks past on black, often dry and mouldy bread, such as nothing but famine could make palatable, and the sound of *pane bianco* had an inconceivable charm for my ears.

Arrived at the cottage, the Italian gave an order to his Bulgarian landlady to provide me with cheese and as many grapes as I could eat, while he extracted from a saddle-bag a lovely loaf of milk-white bread. He pressed me to accept the whole loaf, and it was with the utmost difficulty that I prevailed upon him not to give me more than a quarter of it. With that bread and cheese, and some three pounds of grapes, I made a tolerable lunch, which reconciled me to my kind —station-masters, of course, excepted.

Thus it befell that for the second time during my tour I was beholden to an Italian's humanity for a meal.

As I walked back to the station, I met my Italian friend again, and he informed me that, meanwhile, the monoslippered gendarme, and several others, had been inquiring about me, and that he had replied that he knew nothing, except that I was a signor who understood Italian, and who wanted to eat. Nor did he evince any desire to know more.

The Italian labourer's off-hand generosity contrasted so strangely with the Greek gentleman's elaborate meanness, that for a long time I was at a loss how to account for the latter's conduct. The humourist hypothesis had to be abandoned. The only remaining alternative was lunacy. If so, the station-master was a maniac of a peculiarly gruesome type; there was murder, as well as method, in his madness.

It was only some days after, when I narrated my experience to a circle of acquaintances at Serres, that I obtained a possible clue to his extraordinary behaviour. I mentioned no names; but the people to whom I related the anecdote guessed at once who the hero was, and explained that Mr. Athinellis was a character notorious far and wide for his connubial sensitiveness.

"But why did the idiot introduce me to his wife, if he was silly enough to fear the fascination of a casual stranger, who in all probability will never see him or her again?" I asked.

"Oh, don't you see? so long as you were starving you could have no thoughts to devote to the lady. The danger might arise when your mind was less pre-occupied," answered one of them, laughing.

They also informed me that it was a favourite pastime with the gay sparks of the town to take a return ticket to Anghista just for the pleasure of making the station-master savage, by pretending to smile up at the windows—which were always shut by order, while the train was in, and the wretched lady knew that it was as much as her life was worth to be seen looking out. Poor little woman! no wonder her eyes wore the expression of a hunted deer.

CHAPTER XXXII

LETTER-WRITING AND ITS PERILS

ON my return to Serres I was informed that during my absence some letters had arrived and been forwarded by a *keradji* to Nigrita, which they must have reached after my departure. Next morning I repaired to the *khan*, at which the *keradji* in question usually stopped, but he was not there. On the following day I found him and inquired after my letters.

"They are quite safe in my house at Nigrita," he said.

"Why did you not bring them back here?"

"How was I to know that you were here?"

"Well, now that you do know, please bring them with you to-morrow."

He promised "by the Holy Virgin and the Holy Cross" to do so. But when on the morrow I went to hunt him up, he serenely informed me that he had forgotten. I reminded him of his vows; but he did not seem to think that any of the powers invoked could really make things uncomfortable for him. In any case, he changed his vocabulary and now swore "by the bread we eat" that he would no longer forget. This happened again and again. It was not until after six daily interviews, enlivened by original asseverations on his part and by alternate threats and promises on mine, that I succeeded in getting posses-

sion of my correspondence. The incident cost me a week's anxiety, to say nothing of the waste of valuable time and temper. But it served to bring home to me the peculiarities of the Turkish postal system in a way which, though disagreeable, was eminently practical and instructive.

With the exception of the few places connected by rail, all postal communication with the interior is carried on by government couriers under the escort of mounted gendarmes. This service, though leaving much to be desired in regard to speed, is on the whole pretty safe for the transmission of official despatches and other objects of little value. But there its usefulness ends; for the dangers threatening a packet are in direct ratio to the value of its contents.

The Mohammedans themselves very rarely indulge in correspondence. Neither their intellectual nor their commercial activity is such as to call for a frequent interchange of written messages. From their point of view a post-office is a mysterious and mischievous innovation, due to the pernicious influence of the Franks—a western fashion only less sinful than, say, the use of a knife and fork in eating, or the wearing of a European head-dress. Their business relations, being of the most rudimentary character, are generally conducted by word of mouth.

It is far otherwise with the Christians. The whole commerce of the interior is in their hands, and, being much better educated, they feel more keenly the need for regular communication of news. The intellectual superiority of the Christian over the Mohammedan is graphically shown by the large number of *kiatibs* and seal-engravers of the Prophet's persuasion, and by the total absence of any professional letter-writers among

the Christians. Yet they also fight shy of the post-office; but for a widely different reason. They are simply afraid to entrust their letters to the official messengers. Nor is their fear fanciful. Every one knows that the post-office is used by the authorities as a trap for the capture of the disaffected and the spoliation of the wealthy. No letter addressed from one Christian to another can be considered safe in the hands of a Turkish official. In May 1901, during the post-office "incident," many employés of the Ottoman post-office at Salonica were dismissed because, contrary to orders, they had allowed letters to pass unopened.

This was a rare instance of neglect of duty. As a rule the officials are very conscientious in the examination of private communications—especially if the bulk of the missive suggests more than an ordinary note. There is nothing to prevent a zealous government servant from bringing an imaginary charge against the corresponding parties, if there is in their correspondence any word capable of being twisted into an expression of discontent with the existing disorder of things, or even into disapproval, be it ever so mild, of the conduct of some local official robber. The sender or the recipient of a suspicious letter must deem himself well treated, if, after several months' imprisonment, he is allowed to purchase acquittal.

A whole Bulgarian family of Gumendja was some years ago utterly ruined through a rigmarole addressed by a lad of fifteen, who was at school in Bulgaria, to his father at home. The boy at a moment of youthful indiscretion wrote that he was going to invade Macedonia at the head of a great army, in order to deliver

the Christians from thralldom. As the parent happened to be a rich man, the authorities pretended to take the matter seriously, and, after having squeezed every farthing out of him, they ended by banishing him to Asia.

In view of the perils attending correspondence the Christians are forced to employ private couriers of their own creed and nationality, and the muleteers frequently, though secretly, discharge the functions of postmen, with what success has been shown already.

CHAPTER XXXIII

DRAMA

THE Commissary of Police, who played Cerberus at the Serres railway station, had the pleasure of inspecting my passport for the fourth time, and for the fourth time that intelligent and patient functionary entered into his register the details of my personal appearance—fair hair, blue eyes, gigantic stature, and all, without a word of comment. As he was not physically blind, the only explanation of his tolerance must be this. An Englishman, he probably reasoned, is tall, fair-haired, and blue-eyed. This gentleman is an Englishman. *Ergo*, he must be tall, fair-haired, and blue-eyed. That I happened to be the very opposite to all this was an accident which did not affect the Turkish official's syllogism.

The carriage into which I entered was full of a Greek station-master's wife and her husband going away for a holiday. She was a prematurely decayed but abundantly powdered lady of apoplectic tendencies. He was a brittle little gentleman in a rusty black redingote, and in evident awe of his larger half. Any room that might be left was taken up by their luggage. Baskets crammed with miscellaneous odds and ends, wine bottles, arrack bottles, and flower-pots were ranged between, upon, and under the seats. Pomegranates, reticules, salted fish, umbrellas, cakes, children's hats, cheeses, walking-sticks, buns, and

nightcaps rolled in the racks overhead, while the floor underfoot was carpeted with cigarette-ends, spent matches, and pomegranate rinds. In this festive atmosphere I suffocated two and a half hours, which terminated at Drama station.

There are no important towns along the road; Sarmousakli, Zichna, Zeliachova, and Alistrati exhaust the list. They all lie to the north of the line, and can hardly be designated as towns. They are great straggling villages with a mixed population. The inhabitants of Zeliachova, Christians though they be, use the Turkish language, and are only just beginning to learn or re-learn Greek. There are several other instances of Christians having adopted the language of the Mohammedan conquerors, partly as the natural effect of intercourse and partly as a means of self-preservation. An example of the reverse is afforded by Lialiova, a township farther north, near Nevrokop. The inhabitants of that place are Mohammedan by religion, and yet until recently they employed the Greek language even in the formula with which the muezzin calls the faithful to prayer from the minaret and which generally is in sacred Arabic.

The populations of the other villages mentioned, though speaking mostly Bulgarian, as a rule side with the Greeks. Alistrati especially is distinguished for its staunch adherence to the Greek cause and for its excellent Greek primary schools. These four villages, in fact, form the boundary line between the debatable territory to the north and the purely Hellenic district which extends to the shores of the Ægean, and which, though it includes several Mohammedan settlements, does not contain a single Slav community. This fact

of elementary geography comes as a surprise to the traveller. The apostles of the Bulgarian propaganda have been so energetic that they have succeeded in colouring the map in accordance with their wishes, and even some English ethnographical works make the mistake of yielding part of this district to the Slavs. The inhabitants of the villages near the mouth of the Struma told me how a short time ago Russian naval officers, engaged in surveying that part of the coast, expressed their astonishment at hearing Greek spoken in a district which the Pan-slavist pamphleteers had taught them to regard as Bulgarian. But geography is not the only subject that is treated as a political question in this curious corner of Europe. In their proclamations the leaders of the Slavo-Macedonian Committee appeal to Alexander the Great as a national hero. After this, I am inclined to believe the statement that in their school text-books Aristotle also is described as a great Bulgarian philosopher.

Drama is the place where travellers to Cavalla have to spend the night, and the town consequently boasts several hotels. Representatives of two of these establishments were at the station on the look-out for prey, and as soon as I showed myself on the platform, they both pounced upon me. Their eagerness to serve me would have been flattering were it not somewhat disconcerting.

“Come with me, sir!”

“No, come with me!!”

“My hotel is the best in the town, sir!!!”

“Mine is better!!!!”

These phrases, mingled with more or less pertinent allusions to “health, view, table-d’hôte, beds, bugs,

&c.," were shouted across my face, and the discussion was threatening to end in blows, when a third hotel representative appeared on the scene, and, like a Homeric god, gave an unexpected turn to the fray. He calmly walked between the combatants and took summary possession of my person, with this astounding declaration :

"The gentleman is my guest. I have been expecting him."

The wonder was that the others believed him. At any rate, they acted as if they did : he was at least eight inches taller than the tallest of the two, and broad in proportion.

Overcome by his masterful style, and knowing nothing about the comparative merits of the rival aspirants to the honour of swindling me, I tamely submitted to be swindled by him, and followed him to a cab. When a few minutes later I dismounted at his establishment, I found that I might have done worse. The hotel of Kyr Photis, as this master liar called himself, was situated in a quiet street. There was a trim little garden in front, and the path leading up to the main entrance was prettily shaded with wistaria. An appetising dinner reconciled me still further to my fate, and made me condone Kyr Photis's transcendent contempt for matters of fact.

In the evening I met the *élite* of Drama male society, half-a-dozen employés of the Régie, who used Kyr Photis's establishment as a club. They courteously invited me to join them in a game of bridge. This and poker, I found, were the favourite games, whist being considered too old-fashioned for the interior of Macedonia. In an astonishingly short

space of time I found myself one of a harmonious set, including as many nationalities as there were individuals: a perfect Concert of Europe, as a young Frenchman in blue spectacles, who sat next to me, remarked.

All these gentlemen, though officials of the Régie, or perhaps because of that, smoked contraband tobacco, which is cheaper and better than the monopoly stuff, and is affected by all those who know a good smoke and have the means of procuring it. This is not difficult at Drama. For Drama is the centre of one of the great tobacco-growing districts in Turkey, and owes its importance to the tobacco plantations which surround it.

The town is situated at the foot of a lofty mountain ridge (Boz Dag), and is washed by a rapid stream, a tributary of the Anghista (anciently Angitas), which, springing from these mountains, flows westward, and gradually develops into a respectable middle-class river, ending in Lake Tachino. In fact, this is the river so lucidly described to me on a former occasion as coming "from over there."

However, the apparent healthiness of the position of the town is defeated by the many marshes which fringe its outskirts. These conditions were neatly and concisely summed up by the French member, who, to my questions regarding the chief products of the place, readily replied:—

"Frogs and fevers, monsieur."

With the exception of these few Europeans and a colony of some one hundred and thirty Greek families, the rest of the population is intensely Mohammedan, so much so that on Tuesdays, when the lovely *hanoums* go out for a walk, no infidel is allowed to visit the

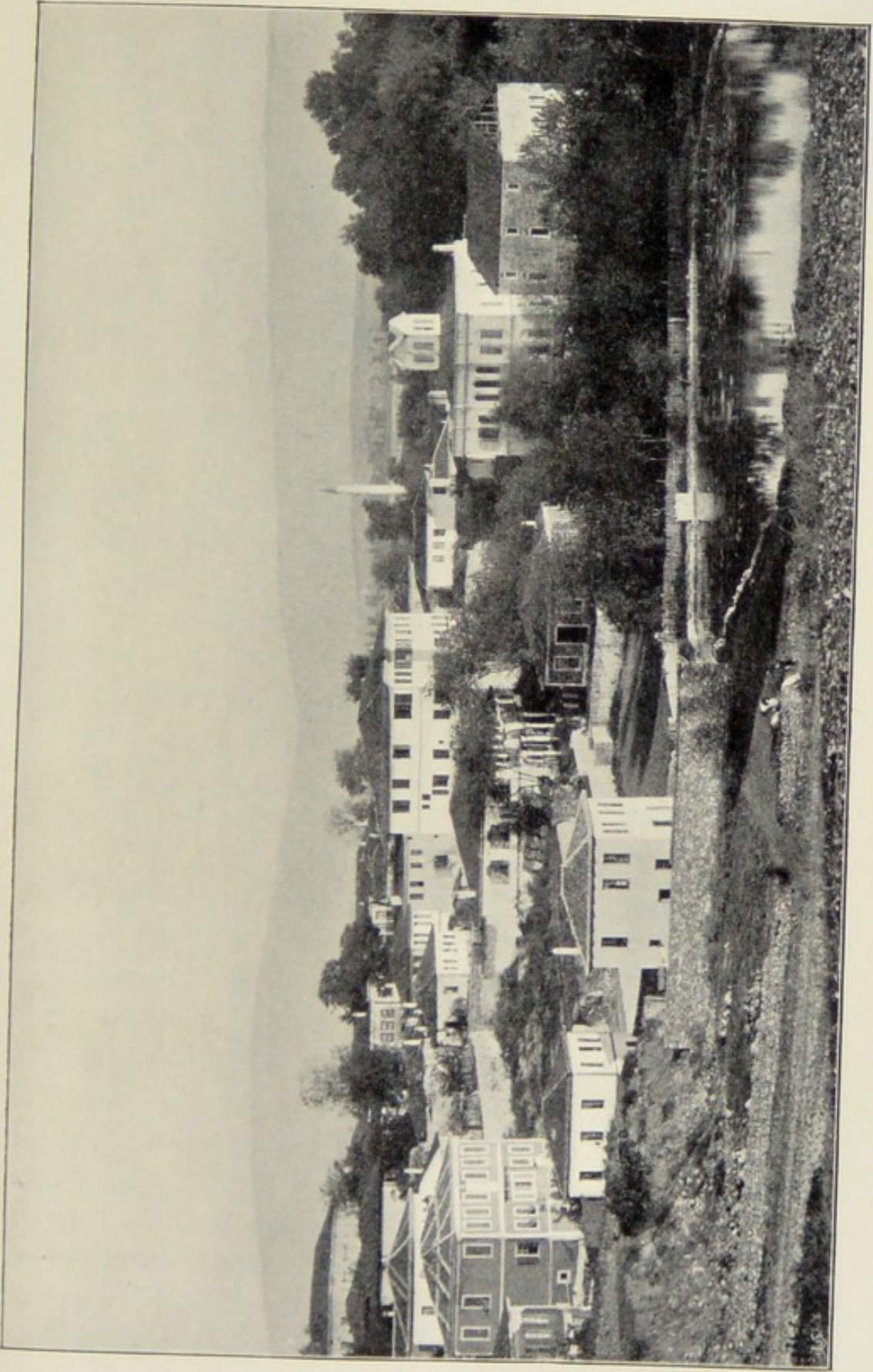
cafés or frequent the public promenades, lest his unclean breath should pollute the air, which on that day is reserved for the exclusive use of the fair followers of the Prophet.

The fanaticism and ferocity of the Turks of Drama and the neighbourhood are proverbial, and contrast with the attitude of the Mohammedans near Nigrita, who, always excepting the *Mooadjirs*, live at peace with the Christians. In other districts again, notably that of Gremia, near Galatista in the Chalcidic Peninsula, the Mohammedans carry their amiability to a still higher pitch. They seem to act on a literal interpretation of the commandment, "Love thy neighbour"—an obligation which, of course, does not apply to outsiders. All strangers in the eyes of these gentry are fair and legitimate game. Yet, though enjoying a hard-earned reputation for cruelty, they never molest their Christian neighbours. On the contrary, if other Mohammedans attack them, they make common cause with them. This alliance is based on the principle of "birds of a feather"; for the Christians also spare none except their next-door neighbours.

The two communities exchange friendly visits on their respective festivals, such as Easter and Baïram, do each other's tasks on holy days, and otherwise live together as behoves the members of an unholy brotherhood. Nothing illustrates this state of equality and mutual loyalty better than the fact that Christian shepherdesses may be seen fearlessly tending their flocks in the close vicinity of young Mohammedan shepherds armed to the teeth. And yet, I have been assured by an old Christian farmer of the district, within the memory of man there has not been a single

case of an insult offered to a Christian woman by a Mohammedan.

These facts should be borne in mind by those who indulge in comprehensive denunciation of Mohammedan fanaticism.



DRAMMEN.



CHAPTER XXXIV

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ST PAUL

THE road from Drama to Cavalla is described by hotel-keepers as carriageable, a somewhat idealistic description; but, after due allowance for racial and professional optimism is made, it is found to be not utterly untrue—in the summer. In winter it is otherwise. As winter had not yet commenced, however, I took Kyr Photis's statement for what it was worth—namely, at a discount of seventy-five per cent., and commissioned him to engage a carriage for me. He brought back the intelligence that no private carriage was to be had, but that he had managed to secure a place in a "beautiful" vehicle which would convey only one other passenger.

Next morning I betook myself to the *khan*, whence the beautiful vehicle was to start, and found that, notwithstanding the coachman's announcement of an early departure, things were still in a preliminary stage. The men were actually shoeing the horses, one of which gave them infinite trouble. It was tethered to a beam, and its lower lip was twisted tightly between two short sticks bound together with whipcord at the ends. One man held up its foot in a noose, while another strove to fix the shoe. But the vicious animal would not accept these attentions, and expressed its disapproval in very vigorous style. Now and again it made a frantic effort to break loose and scattered its enemies.

The man with the noose had to drop the foot and run round the beam for dear life.

While this feud between the shoers and their recalcitrant customer was raging, I improved the occasion by entering into conversation with the *khandji*, a corpulent and responsible-looking Greek who sat upon a stool, with the gaping depths of a dark stable for a background. I accepted a place near him, and offered him a cigarette, which he declined.

"I take snuff, sir," he said, tapping the little black box with his finger. Having helped himself to a pinch he passed the box to me, and forthwith the yard of the inn resounded with our combined sternutations.

"I am an old-fashioned man, sir," he proceeded, as soon as he was able to speak and to hear. "I do not think any good can come of these new fashions—cigarettes, railways, and the rest."

I failed to grasp the connection; but, nevertheless, tried to look responsive, and the *khandji* went on bewailing the altered aspect of the universe bitterly. He compared the present with the days of yore, when there were no railways or cigarettes, but decent people took snuff, and the inns swarmed with travellers.

"Ah, those were heavenly times both for innkeepers and for muleteers, sir"—a sigh and a reminiscent sneeze. "But since this accursed railroad was built we are going to the dogs as fast as we can"—a second reminiscence of the snuff age.

"Those who own these railways are monsters, sir. They are ogres, who feed and fatten on the flesh of poor innkeepers and muleteers. May the devil take them!" concluded the *khandji*, with a third sneeze and a pious look heavenward.

At that moment the Turkish driver announced that he was starting.

"Have another pinch before you start," said the *khandji*, waddling after me up to the coach.

I am afraid I shocked his conservative principles by lighting a cigarette instead, for he muttered mournfully:—

"The old with the old, and the new with the new."

On stepping into the vehicle I was surprised to find two other passengers in it. Ere I had time to comment on this breach of contract, a fourth passenger turned up. The surprise was universal. For a minute or two we glanced at each other in mutual consternation. But, when on comparing notes we discovered that we all and sundry had been deceived by the coachman, we united our forces in one joint growl of wrath against the common enemy. That arch-deceiver, unabashed, said that those who objected to his methods might stay behind, adding, in the quiet tone of one who knows the strength of his position, that there was not another carriage in the *khan*.

This statement was corroborated by the *khandji*, who tried to smooth our ruffled tempers with a friendly remark to the effect that "the more the merrier and the safer," accompanied by a wink, meant to suggest brigands and other possibilities of Turkish travel. So we would fain make a virtue of necessity and bow to the decrees of Fate.

"Allah's will be done!" one of my fellow-victims, a long-bearded Turk, observed resignedly.

As we echoed the sentiment the driver slammed the door to, jumped to his box, and in another second

we were rattling out of the cobble-paved courtyard amidst the crack of whip, the clatter of hoofs, the jingle of harness, and the tinkle of bells.

In a few minutes we were in the open country. Drovers of buffaloes, sheep, and goats were grazing on the stubble in some corn-fields on the right, tended by long-cloaked and kilted Wallachian shepherds, who, according to their wont, had begun to seek the plains at the approach of winter. On our left stretched endless tobacco plantations. The sight of the delicate little plants, with their dark-green foliage and pink trumpet-shaped blossoms, was calculated to fill the heart of the devotee of the weed with pleasant thoughts. The Turk, who had hitherto sat, like the Sphinx,

“ Staring right on with calm, eternal eyes,”

was now stirred to utterance by the view of the herb he loved so dearly.

“ We have much to thank Allah for,” he said, fervently.

“ Indeed we have,” I agreed.

“ There is nothing like tobacco, effendim,” he pursued.

“ Indeed there is not. This is just what one of our writers has said,” and I quoted to him Kingsley’s fine extravaganza on the weed.

“ *Mashallah!*” exclaimed the Turk in ecstasy, “ I did not know you had such clever writers among you. But shall I tell what one of our own wise men says about tobacco ?”

“ I should be everlastingly grateful if you would.”

“ Well, you know that the Arabic name for tobacco

is *doukhan*. But I do not think you know how it has come by it."

"Indeed I do not."

"Listen, then, and you will soon know. Once upon a time there was a king of the East. He had an only daughter, who suddenly fell ill. All the physicians in the kingdom waited on her, but none could cure her. The king was in despair. He issued an edict, saying that he who would cure his daughter might claim any reward, even unto one-half of his kingdom. At last one day there came to the palace a poor old dervish, and asked to see the patient. He closeted himself in the sick-room for three days, and at the end of that period came forth, leading the princess by the hand, radiant with health. When asked how he had effected this miracle, he produced from his bosom several dry yellow leaves. 'I have burnt some of these leaves and made her inhale the smoke thereof,' he answered. The king was so pleased that he ordered the plant which bore those leaves to be henceforth called *dowehkhan*, that is, the *king's medicine*, which is the same thing as *doukhan*."

Whatever may be thought of the philological merits of the story, it seems to prove that not only light but also smoke came to us from the East.

Meanwhile, we were rattling on at a fair pace. The white-washed cottages of several Mohammedan villages and *tchiftliks* peeped over the green undulations of the valley, and several slim minarets tapered upward to the serene azure of the sky. The Mohammedans of these villages, like those of other parts of Macedonia, are not genuine Turks, but native converts to Islam. Vestiges of their origin are preserved in their patronymics, such as Nicologlu Ahmed, Pascha-

lioglu Mustafa, and the like, which correspond to the English-Moslem names Hadji-Abdullah Brown, Mohammed Russell, and other philological hybrids of the same kind. Only three of these villages contain any Greek population at all. One of them, Doxatos, stands on the road, which in fact cuts through the very heart of it.

Here we dismounted and refreshed ourselves with excellent grapes, for which we paid one piastre (2½d.) per oke (3 lbs.), and then resumed our journey to the south. Soon after we reached a stone bridge with a limpid stream flowing over it. We had to dismount again and cross it on foot, over a few rough planks thrown from bank to bank, while the carriage waded through a ford a little way off. This is another tributary of the Anghista, but, before joining it, it is absorbed by the greater branch at Philippi.

Two and a half hours after we left Drama, we stopped at Philippi, a spot fraught with memories dear to the classical and to the Shakespearian student, to Christian and to Gentile alike. The valley at this point becomes very narrow. Two ridges converging from east and west form a pass commanded by a fortress which crowns the hill on the west. Down the steep slope of this hill stretch the ruins of the old town, girt round by a loop-holed wall, which in parts still rises to a height of some ten feet, or more. On the south-western slope there also are plainly visible the tiers of the old theatre, rising one over the other in semicircles. These, in addition to several mutilated sculptures and inscriptions, standing higher up on the walls of what once was the citadel, are all that remains of the city founded by Philip, conquered by the Romans, and Christianised by St. Paul.

From the summit of the hill one enjoys a grand view of the broad valley in which the Roman legions of the East and the West met in deadly conflict. It was on this plain that the successors and the assassins of great Cæsar measured swords, and the empire of the world was lost and won in a day. At the feet of these remnants of a glorious past crouch the paltry cabins of the Mohammedan hamlet of Bunarbashi, surrounded by a wilderness of Turkish tombs, in hardly less ruinous condition than the relics of the old civilisation which their tenants helped to wipe off the face of the earth.

We alighted at a miserable *khan* kept by a swarthy and lanky individual, whom his shrewd face and flattened skull proclaimed a son of South Albania. The peculiar formation of the skull is not due to nature, as a hasty craniologist might surmise, but to the midwife. It is said that, when a South Albanian is born into the world, the midwife slaps him on the back of the head, giving at the same time utterance to the wish that he may live to be "a baker or a brigand," the sale of bread and the spilling of blood being the two most lucrative and honourable professions in that country.

Within the precincts of this inn stands the begrimed monument of the Roman C. Vibius, whose titles and achievements can still be deciphered upon the sides of the block; poor memorials of past greatness. A marble slab, with a half-effaced inscription, serves as a doorstep, and some fragments of columns are built into the enclosure of the *khan*.

Facing this establishment, and a little farther down on the plain, are the massive remnants of an ancient gateway, fringed with weeds, and known to the

natives of the district as the Palace of Alexander the Great. Such is Philippi:—

Parva nunc civitas, sed gloria ingens,
Veterisque famæ lata vestigia manent.

From Philippi onwards the road climbs up a ridge, which grows steeper and steeper, so that the last hour and a half of our journey had to be performed at a slow pace and partly on foot. But, when we gained the crest of the hills, there was a surprise awaiting us, which richly atoned for the toil of the ascent. It was one of those pictures with which Nature occasionally loves to reward and astonish the patient wayfarer.

Far beneath our feet gleamed the Mediterranean. The sight of the bright blue sea, with its limitless horizon, after the dreary months spent among rocks and ravines, and mountain-girt valleys, was like an awakening from an oppressive dream. Its smell and its music were intoxicating. Then, for the first time, I fully understood the melodramatic exhibition of joy of the Ten Thousand on a similar occasion. In less uncongenial society, I myself might have cried out, like them, "*Thalassa! Thalassa!*" But a look at the Turk's rigid and vacuous countenance was enough to congeal a whole caldron of seething sentiment, and I remained silent.

However, the sea was there, twinkling and smiling and inviting admiration. Its violet-coloured waves chased each other and dissolved in spray upon the low sands of the open roadstead, or broke in angry foamy billows against the rocky headland on the left. Far away on the right loomed the snow-capped peak of Mount Athos faintly traced against

the sky, and straight in front of us floated the isle of Thasos, with its olive-clothed Mount Ipsari—the island travestied by the choleric old gentleman of the Anthology as

“An ass’s backbone bristling with wild wood.”

From this point of view it looked more like a colossal green turtle at rest upon the sapphire bosom of the Mediterranean, with the little islet of Thasopoula nestling by its side, after the manner of a youngster seeking the protection of its parent.

A few fishing boats and other light craft rocked in the open roadstead, along the shore of which are sprinkled the white villas of New Cavalla. Old Cavalla rose from behind its battlemented walls on the left. It is built on the promontory which juts out boldly into the sea, with an antiquated fortress beetling in impotent isolation on its summit. A many-arched, sky-sweeping Roman aqueduct spans the depression between the mainland and the crown of this cliff, like an immense bridge reared by the hands and for the use of some “giant race before the flood.”

At the base of the eminence on which we stood the road forks off into two branches, one of which on the right leads round the hills to Pravi, and the other zigzags down the slope to Cavalla, anciently Neapolis, famous as the first European port visited by the Apostle of the Gentiles on his way to Philippi and Thessalonica. It required little effort of the imagination to picture the great Hebrew missionary, with robes girt round his loins and face aglow with spiritual enthusiasm, struggling up this self-same path. Could he tread that road again he would find the crescent

triumphant over the regions in which he was the first to plant the cross; the city, where he preached the new gospel, a heap of crumbling ruins; the church which he founded, a mere name, chiefly remembered by his own epistle to its congregation.

CHAPTER XXXV

CAVALLA

HAVING dismounted at the *khan* where the coach stopped, I engaged the services of a sturdy Turkish *hamal*, who fastened my luggage upon the pad on his back and led the way through the bazaar to one of the hotels of the town. It had been recommended to me by Kyr Photis of Drama, and, to my surprise, I found that his description of the place was not too remote from reality. The hotel was kept by a German spinster of mature years, and was in every respect a decent second-class establishment, differing little from establishments of the same category in Western Europe.

The landlady, in return for my French, gave me English, which, though made in Hanover and much the worse for disuse, sounded sweet to my ears, accustomed as they had been for some time past to a babel of tongues, not always intelligible and seldom euphonious. Here is a welcome respite from the sordid hardships of barbarous travel, I thought. The landlady's voice was an echo of civilisation, and I fancied I detected in its tones a promise of cleanliness and comfort, a promise fully realised by the tidy little bedroom into which I was shown.

I laid aside my fez, my beard, and my incognito, cleansed myself of all impurity, resumed my cloth cap and my normal identity, and strolled out, happy in the

hope of a Christian dinner. In this placid frame of mind I traversed the short space from the hotel to the turreted archway which leads into Eski, or Old, Cavalla.

Having passed between the iron-plated gates which now repose against the walls, like a pair of weary veterans ruminating on the long ago, I found myself in a narrow, crooked street paved with rough cobbles, and overshadowed by the projecting upper storeys and lattice balconies of the houses. This street crawled up the slope of the cliff on which the town is built. Its cleanliness, silence, and somewhat uncanny look of desertion emphasised the fact that I was in a typical old Turkish quarter. By degrees these features grew fainter. The noise began to increase as cleanliness decreased, and the sight of a church belfry apprised me of the fact that I was no more amidst the dwellings of the faithful. The front doors of the houses stood open, and groups of chattering old women of both sexes sat on the doorsteps, exchanging their views on domestic and foreign affairs with their neighbours across the road. As I passed, I saw many fingers furtively pointed at me, and I understood that my personage was the subject of criticism and speculation.

I halted on the top of the cliff, lit a cigarette, and, leaning over the battlements, gazed down upon its steep sides lashed by the waves. The sun had just set, and the mountains of Thasos were putting on their purple night-apparel, preparatory to retiring into the deepening darkness. I was enjoying this slow transformation of sea and landscape, when I became conscious of a number of people earnestly whispering behind my back. Their voices rose occasionally to a

pitch which just enabled me to gather the drift of their discourse. The subject under debate had a peculiar interest for me. It was myself, and more particularly my nationality.

"He can hardly be a Frenchman. He has no moustache," said one voice.

"He is not a German either. He wears no spectacles," added another.

Then more confused whispering ensued. They were, presumably, betting. This in its turn was followed by a deep hush. It was the pregnant silence preceding a storm.

Coming events cast singularly long shadows before them in the East. One of these shadows now fell across the battlement against which I was leaning.

"Your light, if you please," thundered a voice close to my ear.

I turned round and beheld a determined-looking young fellow in a fortnight's collar round his neck and a coeval beard on his chin, standing beside me. He had evidently been singled out to lead the attack. The boldness of his tactics commanded my admiration; but I did not quite relish the idea of being stormed. I therefore handed him my cigarette without uttering a word. But the young general seemed to have staked his reputation as a strategist on this particular campaign, and he felt in honour bound to persevere.

"This is a glorious view, sir, is it not?" he remarked, aggressively, as he handed me back my cigarette.

"Yes," I answered, drily.

Meanwhile the main body remained in speechless expectation of the result of this single combat.

The general changed his tactics.

"Where do you come from?"

The suddenness of the move nearly threw me off my guard, but I rallied in time, and, looking the dashing youth straight in the face, said, blandly:—

"Do you happen to have any business of your own?"

"Yes," he answered, unwarily. "I keep a grocer's shop."

"Attend to your shop, then, and don't worry strangers with impertinent questions"—and I fixed my eyes on the sky-line.

This stern rebuke had the desired effect. When a few minutes later I looked round, both leader and army had vanished into the gathering shadows of night.

Thirst for knowledge is an excellent quality, but it can be carried to excess. The young grocer would have made a first-class journalist of a certain type; another instance of how talent is wasted in Turkey.

Yeni, or New, Cavalla stretches on the slopes along the beach, outside the walls of the old town. As its name indicates, it is of quite recent growth. In fact, it has not done growing yet. New houses, mostly of stone and thoroughly modern in style, are daily built, and the settlement presents an up-to-date appearance in startling contrast to the ancient town and its superannuated fortifications, which I have already described. It owes its birth to the tobacco plantations of the interior, and, notwithstanding the want of safe anchorage, forms the chief medium of the export trade of the district. It is here that the raw material is "manipulated" before it is shipped off to the markets of Egypt, England, and America.

The "manipulation," which consists in drying,

sorting, and packing the tobacco-leaves, is carried on in the long, unpaved and unceiled stores of the tobacco merchants, and affords a lucrative, though not perhaps quite healthy, occupation to thousands of peasants from the environs and from the island of Thasos. Rows and rows of men, women, and children can be seen squatted upon the damp ground of these narrow dungeons, each labourer with a coil of tobacco-leaves or a tobacco-press before him or her. There is the prematurely-aged matron, pale, wrinkled, and careworn, and by her side a bright-eyed, olive-skinned, coy little maiden. These are Greeks, probably Thasiotes. Next to them may be seen the eyes of a Turkish woman peering mysteriously through the folds of her white veil. Men there are too. Men of all ages, both Christians and Mohammedans, toiling side by side, in blessed oblivion of the barriers of caste which elsewhere separate the conqueror from the conquered. Necessity is no respecter of creeds, nor is the lynx-eyed overseer who, whip in hand, walks between the ranks of the workers to see that no minute out of the twelve hours is wasted, and ready to visit any such waste upon the offender's shoulders, with a fine impartiality as to race, religion, sex, or age.

At the time of my visit the manipulation season was nearly over, and many of the labourers had already returned to their village-homes. I had an opportunity of witnessing the departure of several batches of Thasiotes for their emerald isle. They embarked on the light sailing craft (*kaïks*) moored to the beach, and as soon as the vessels weighed anchor the passengers set up songs of rejoicing. Some of these compositions are extremely pathetic in tone and full

of quaint conceits. In them are depicted in the darkest colours the ills of exile—the inhospitality of foreign parts and the unsympathetic attitude of their inhabitants toward the homeless and homesick wanderer. The sentiment is genuine enough, although the occasion to the critical stranger seems somewhat exaggerated. Thasos is hardly ten hours' sail from the mainland. But the Thasiotes share the common Greek horror of expatriation which is so emphatically expressed in the popular distich :—

“ A beggar's lot or durance vile
Is not as bitter as exile.”

To them a trip to Cavalla really means a long voyage to remote and unknown lands.

In one of these folk-songs the hero bewails the misfortune that during his enforced residence from home “his clothes were washed by strange women,” that “a strange woman's hand smoothed his pillow when he was ill,” and that, alas! “the witchery of the strange woman compels him to forsake his old sweetheart.” He beseeches the birds of the air to bear the melancholy message to his betrothed, and bid her wed another, for he will never, never return to the olive groves of his native land.

With such songs these humble labourers celebrate the day of return to their hearths. By such means they strive to lift the prosaic pursuit of the breadwinner to the level of the ideal. Nature gladly seconds their efforts : a smooth blue sea murmuring beneath the keel of the *kaik*, a white sail gently bulging in the breeze, a sky of transcendent brilliance smiling overhead, and the green shores of the island-home drawing nearer and nearer—what more

potent stimulus can the soul of a gifted race want in order to burst into poetic expression?

But these rude peasants and islanders are not the only votaries that the Muses can boast at Cavalla. Ere many days elapsed I made the acquaintance of two bards of another class. One of them was a lad employed by a tobacco merchant. He was poor except in the talent for amusing improvisation, which made him contented with his lot and popular among his fellows. He presented me with a collection of his poetical works published by subscription at Constantinople. One of these pieces is a metrical autobiography, in which the poet gives a grotesque, though hardly over-coloured, portrait of his own person and character. He describes himself therein as—

“Tall, lanky, long-necked, lantern-jawed ;

But, though ugly, not learned.

Almost a drunkard and of a satiric turn ;

But, though a poet, an honest man and a faithful friend.”

Superior in ability and social rank alike to this limping follower of the Tuneful Nine was a gentleman who combined the trade of tobacco with the culture of verse. The first storey of his house was filled with bales of tobacco-leaves, the second with pictures and books. He was an enthusiastic admirer of Byron, and regretted that his imperfect knowledge of English forced him to cultivate the acquaintance of the “Maid of Athens” and the “Corsair” through the medium of a translation. He recited a great many of his own productions to me, and as a parting gift presented me with his photograph. In compliance with my request, he extemporised on the back of the picture a few lines, the easy elegance

of which I dare not attempt to reproduce. Suffice it to say that they began with the apostrophe :

“ O friend, who, like a bee in verdant bower.”

My pleasure, pride, and confusion on reading this address can easily be imagined when I confess that to be called a bee was quite a novel experience for me, unless indeed the epithet be taken to include a drone.

From the Parnassian heights of this upper storey the poet conducted me down to his tobacco stores. Tobacco in a raw condition is quite a different thing from tobacco presented in the form of an æsthetic cigarette. This is a warning to those of my readers who have no patience with prose. All such persons will do well to skip the remainder of this chapter.

As I stated before, tobacco is the life of the place, and a source of wealth both to the people and to the Government. The latter out of the Régie alone derives a yearly income of £(T)700,000. And yet it will neither encourage the culture of a weed which pays it so well nor will it allow the people to develop it by their own efforts. Want of means of transport is the evil of which both the tobacco-growers and the tobacco-traders complain most bitterly. The grievance could easily be removed by the construction of a branch railway line between Cavalla and Drama, a distance of not more than twenty-five miles. The merchants have offered to defray the expenses of the enterprise out of their own pockets, but the Porte has refused to entertain the proposal. The result is that the produce, which contributes so rich a share to the revenues of the Empire, has to be carried to port in those primitive buffalo-carts

which constitute one of the most uncouth and unwieldy, though at the same time one of the most amusing, means of overland transport in the country.

As a reason for this suicidal obstinacy is alleged the same fear of attack from the sea which prompted the Porte to alter the original plan of the Salonica-Dede-agatch railway.

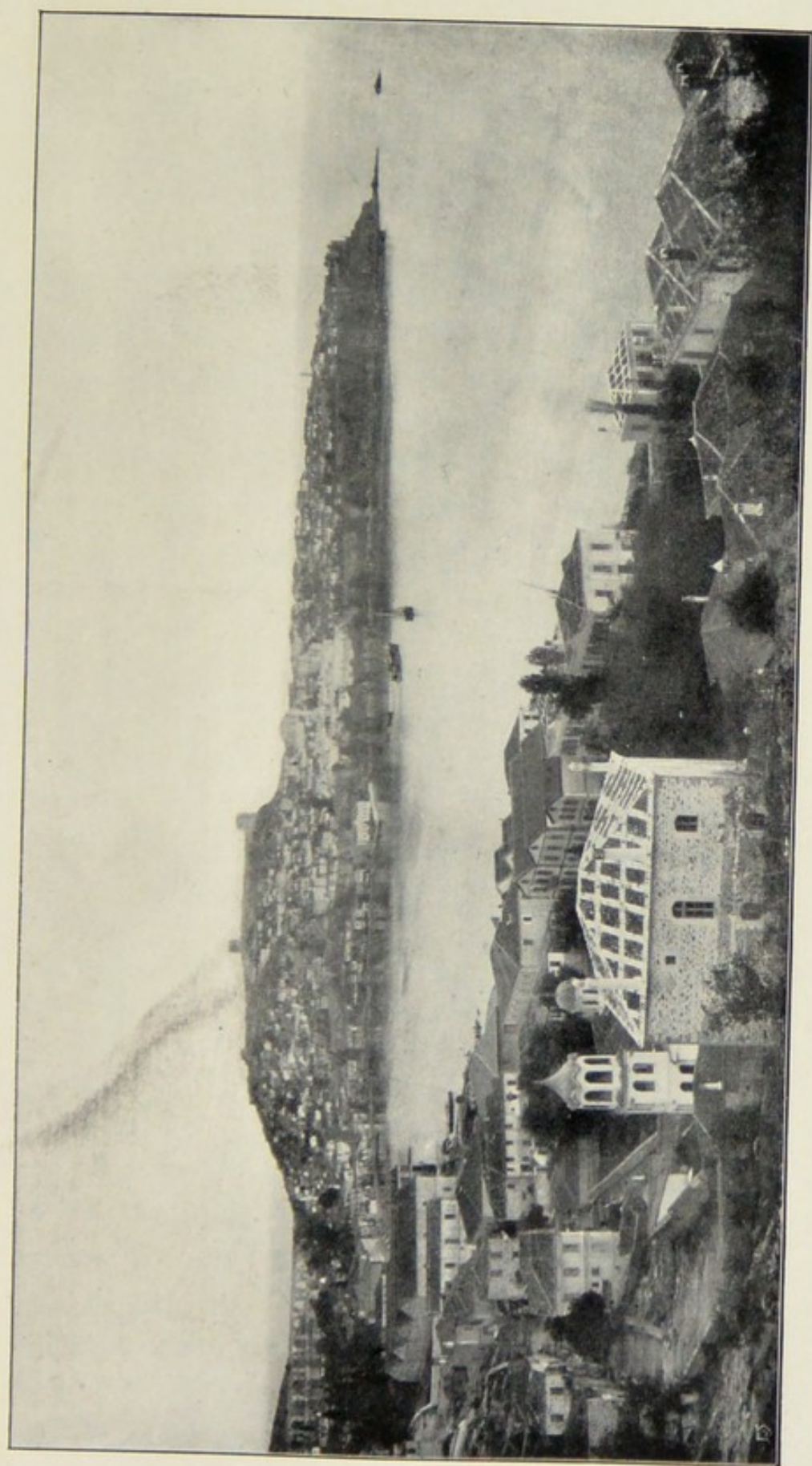
A similar blindness to its own best interests leads the Government to impose many foolish restrictions on trade. Thus, for instance, while goods transported overland are free from imposition, the same goods, if carried from one point on the coast to another by boat—which in certain cases is far more convenient—have to pay an eight per cent. duty. The same duty is also levied on all goods transmitted from one port to another, two-thirds of it being refunded if they are re-embarked for transmission abroad. By such means these far-sighted financiers cripple home production to the benefit of the foreign importer.

The want of a decent harbour has likewise been a crying evil for ages. The demand dates from the early days of the nineteenth century. Mehemet Ali, the famous satrap of Egypt—whose house at Cavalla is still shown to the tourist—when he attained that proud eminence, bethought himself of his birthplace, and offered to the Sultan of the day the option between two donations: a harbour, or a kitchen for the poor. The Sultan, with characteristic sagacity, chose the latter gift, and thus Cavalla was denied a much-needed harbour, but acquired, instead, the congenial institution described in the following chapter.

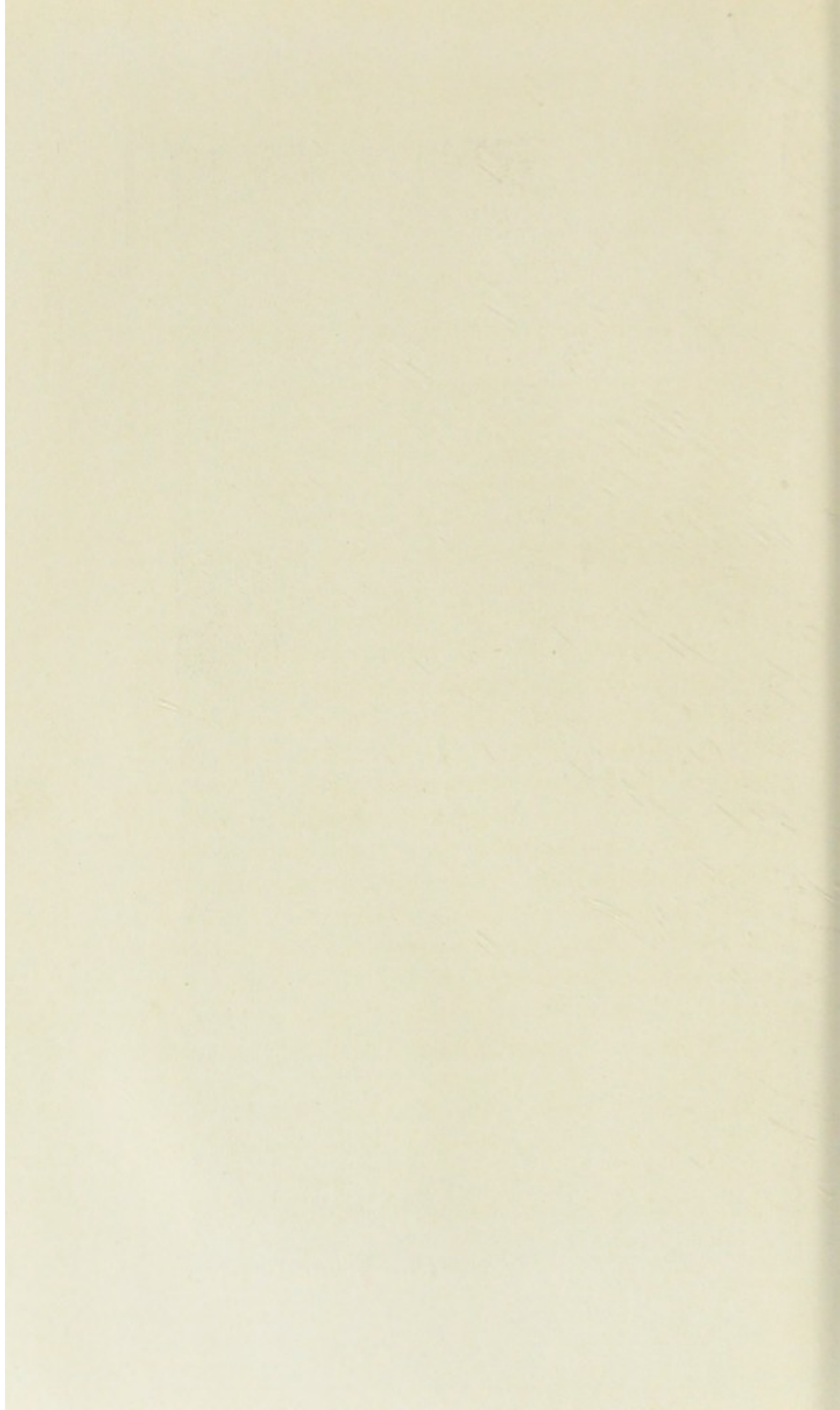
Nor is the choice hard to understand, when we consider the lively feelings of distrust with which the treacherous element has always inspired the Turk.

The present Sultan has devoted the best years of his life to the destruction of his own navy, and that is the one thing in which he has proved thoroughly successful. Few Turks have ever been known to embrace a sea-faring career from inclination, and still fewer to have distinguished themselves therein. All the vessels which sail under the Turkish flag are manned by Greeks, and the only admirals who have ever led a Turkish fleet to battle were English. The Turk may be a very lion on land, but on board ship he is hopelessly at sea.

At Cavalla I heard a pretty story illustrating Turkish seamanship. A steamer once left Constantinople on its way to Salonica. After three days' fortuitous steaming it reached Cavalla. Nor did the captain find out his mistake until he landed. *Se non è vero, è ben trovato.*



CAVALLA.



CHAPTER XXXVI

TEMBEL-HANEH, OR THE LAZY MAN'S HOME

THE above is the sobriquet by which the Imaret of Cavalla is locally known. The Imaret is a curious establishment—a cross between a college and a kitchen. It provides board and lodging for some three hundred needy, greedy, and seedy *softas*, or theological students, and free rations of pillaf to all comers.

The pillaf is the typical dish of the Turk. Like him it is heavy, dull, and stodgy, possessing plenty of body, but hardly any soul worth mentioning. You can soon have enough of it. But so think not the poor of Cavalla, who every morning flock to the portals of the Imaret armed with plates, bowls, trays, or any other vessel capable of holding pillaf, and eagerly wait for the gates to swing back, and for the grateful steam to issue forth and give them a foretaste of their easily-earned dinner. The rice for this dish is conveyed in big cargoes direct from Egypt, while Arabia supplies the green berry of Mokha, from which is made the sober beverage that is dearer to the Turk than whisky is to the Scot or vodka to the Slav. Other Mohammedan countries show their appreciation of the Imaret's mission by periodical donations in coin and kind. But the normal and most considerable portion of the income of the foundation are the revenues of the isle of Thasos, wherewith the founder

endowed it. Thasos still forms part of the Khedive's dominions, and is governed by an Egyptian Bey and a few Egyptian officials, who divide their time between the olive groves of the island and the coffee-shops of the mainland.¹

The popular nickname does not malign these institutions in the least. A more prolific nursery for the propagation of indolence and ignorance could hardly be devised. The Softas, reared in the unwholesome atmosphere of such foundations, have always distinguished themselves by a fierce and intolerant disposition. Whenever the Government considers a massacre of the Christians a political necessity, it finds in these students of theology ready and zealous agents for the awakening of that spirit of bigotry which, if left undisturbed, slumbers peacefully in the Turk's heart. Their education consists in committing to memory choice passages of the Koran, in drawing up statistics of the various letters of the alphabet found in the various Suras of "The Book," and in eating pillaf. The intervals between these exercises are filled up with prayers and coffee.

Apart from the potent allurements of free board and lodging, the Imaret holds out the privilege of exemption from military service. Once you have become a Softa, you cannot be a soldier. No power on earth can force you to exchange the white turban and baggy breeches of the student for the red fez and tight trousers of the fighter. All these attractions

¹ Since the above lines were written a difference has arisen between the Khedive and the Sultan concerning the island. His Imperial Majesty has recently made the interesting discovery that Egypt's rights are limited to the revenue, and entail no jurisdiction over the island, which, accordingly, has been organised as a Turkish Sandjak, and is now governed by a Moutessarif appointed by the Porte (July 1902).

make the College very popular, and the white turban is a distinction as keenly coveted by the ambitious youth of Turkey as the blue cap is by the ambitious youth of England. Many of the students, after having "gone down," return into residence and seek in their Alma Mater's arms a refuge from the clutches of the recruiting sergeant.

On Thursdays and Sundays, in addition to the staple dish of pillaf, there is meted out to visitors another delicacy called *zerdeh*, and concocted of rice flavoured with sugar and coloured with saffron. Also a sweet kind of mashed stuff named *fodla*, and tasting like a line of Omar Khayyám.

During my stay at Cavalla I had an opportunity of partaking of all these good things.

I called at about ten o'clock in the morning and was first ushered into the kitchen—a spacious sand-strewn apartment with a vaulted roof. A row of giant caldrons, standing upon giant iron trivets over roaring fires, indicated without any ambiguity that cooking on an enormous scale was carried on. The head cook received me at the door, and with a magnificent sweep of his wooden ladle, proudly pointed to the boiling caldrons. The "king of men" could not have wielded the sceptre "given unto him by Zeus" with a more majestic air. I felt deeply impressed.

"Is all this pillaf?" I queried, somewhat vacuously.

"By Allah the Merciful and Compassionate it is, Effendim!" answered his Majesty the cook.

A greasy smile revealed a set of amber-like teeth, and his voice drowned for a moment the roaring and hissing of the caldrons.

"And will it be ready by noon?" whispered I.

"If God will, yes, Effendim!" roared the cook, in a tone which belied the conventional diffidence implied by his words.

The cook evidently was a man born to command.

He added that he would consider it an honour if the illustrious infidel *khodja* would later on condescend to look in for a ladleful of pillaf, and so he salaamed me out of his domain.

My next call was at one of the students' rooms. There were over sixty of these, each shared between four or five individuals. At the door the fragrance of the fluid of the mokha berry, referred to already, filled my nostrils. I timidly stepped in, and through a cloud of smoke observed three turbaned and bearded undergraduates sitting cross-legged, upon a raised platform, with their shoes off, studiously imbibing coffee and inhaling nicotine from yard-long *tchibooks*. They gravely, but courteously, motioned me to sit, or crouch, beside them. With a befitting *temenah*—which means that I stooped and swept the air with my right hand and then touched my chin and brow—I accepted the invitation.

A fourth turbaned and bearded youth of some forty summers was meanwhile preparing a cup of coffee in the little red-brick stove with which every room is furnished. A shelf over my head, with two or three volumes of elementary arithmetic and a tattered manuscript of the Koran, showed that the time these gentlemen could spare from sipping coffee, from smoking *tchibooks*, and from sleep was industriously devoted to the investigation of mathematical and theological problems.

While I was musing on these matters, I was startled by a strange noise—a combination of a

groan and a grunt—from above. I lifted my eyes in alarm and behold! high over my head there was a fifth turbaned and bearded undergraduate peering earnestly down upon me out of a pair of dark, dreamy, almond eyes. I must hasten to explain that the happy owner of those orbs did not, as I at first foolishly thought, emerge from heaven, but from a kind of loft or gallery running round three sides of the room and dimly lighted by a small iron-barred window. The comparative darkness of those upper regions and the clouds of smoke which wheeled around them had prevented my noticing the existence of the loft before.

This *deus ex machina*, after having rendered his presence audible in that unconventional way, proceeded to join our circle in an equally eccentric manner. A graceful pair of woollen-socked feet made their appearance first; a pair of many-folded petticoat trousers followed, and in due course the whole bundle of linen was rolled up in a corner opposite me. In the meantime my coffee had been served in a small handleless cup of the size and shape of a half-egg, and I set about sipping it and smacking my lips, as though to the manner born. As I have elsewhere stated, the oral sounds which are considered unpardonable sins against good breeding amongst men, by the Turks are regarded as proofs of gentility and are diligently cultivated. My proficiency in Turkish etiquette delighted, I was sorry to see, my hosts so much, that I had to swallow a third scalding cupful ere I was permitted to retire.

My next visit was to the library, which I found worth a thousand caldrons of pillaf and an ocean of Mokha coffee together. Never before had I seen

an equal number of objects calculated to tempt a scholar to a breach of the eighth commandment amassed in an equally small space. Line upon line rose the carefully labelled, though seldom opened, manuscript volumes of Persian poets and Arab sages — each richer than the other; all written in an exquisite hand upon the finest parchment imaginable. My fingers itched and my very pockets gaped; but my principles, reinforced by the presence of half-a-dozen keen-eyed attendants, who kept peering over my shoulders, overcame the temptation, and I left the place none the wickeder, though a great deal the wiser, for my visit.

On my way out I again stopped at the kitchen, where my friend the cook was much pleased and edified by the sight of a Frank *khodja* tasting his dishes as hungrily and heartily as though he had graduated at the Imaret. His Turkish *sang froid* broke down at last under the strain of his enthusiasm, and I had the gratification of hearing my praises sung in a stage whisper behind my back.

These reminiscences and a few grains of rice which clung to my waistcoat are all that I carried away from this comfortable home of the Moslem Muse.

CHAPTER XXXVII

A PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY MOUNT

ON Sunday, December 2, at noon, we left Salonica on board the Russian steamer *Lazarevitch*, bound for Mount Athos. The sun did not shine on that day, nor, with the exception of a few brief intervals, for a fortnight after. Our twelve-hour passage was accomplished under a leaden sky enlivened by intermittent rain. In harmony with these physical conditions were the feelings of the pilgrims; a single note of discord being struck by the gleeful laughter of my companion's Greek valet, whose pious joy at being able to visit the Holy Mount (at another's expense) was not to be damped even by a cataclysm.

Besides Nicola and his master, there was with us the First Dragoman of H.M. Consulate, a nice gentlemanly giant, presumably included in our party for the purpose of adding to its weight: a function for which he was eminently fitted by nature. What his actual displacement was I will not venture to state; but his speed may be surmised from the fact that he once facetiously referred to himself as "heavy artillery"; a piece of ponderous flippancy which did not fall on stony ground. For a few days after an irreverent father, at a moment of post-prandial expansiveness, addressed him familiarly as *Mahsousseh*, that being the name of a Turkish navigation company.

Mr. B. served his Britannic Majesty by right of

inheritance; for his father had done so before him, and not without distinction. The name of the latter is recorded in the books of Eastern Travellers of the period, and is still mentioned by the monks of Mount Athos with the reverence which is due to the memory of a great man departed. The dragoman's mantle had descended upon the son, who continued to act, in his spare moments, as a mediator between the British and the local authorities, with no fee and little zeal. In addition to his hereditary and personal weight, Mr. B. was remarkable as an interesting embodiment of the contradictions wherein the East is so rich: an English Dragoman, he knew no English; though a faithful servant, he was not a subject of the British Crown; a patriotic Greek, he bore an Albanian name—a misfortune of which he did not like to be reminded.

Such was the greater portion of our company. The rest consisted of Nicola's master and myself. Nicola's master was a member of a much-maligned profession. It is neither my intention nor my business to decide how far the scorn heaped upon the aforesaid profession is deserved. But, even granting the justice of all that has been said and written against it from the beginning of criticism to this day, I can still with a clear conscience sing the praises of my fellow-pilgrim. At the worst he might be described as a luminous exception to an appallingly gloomy rule—as one of the few active organs in what severe critics have called “a system of passivity.” He was a British Consul.

En revanche, he was a Milesian, gifted with all a Milesian's native drollery, comically at war with a depressing sense of professional dignity. He and I were the worst-matched pair that ever the powers pre-

siding over the incongruous brought together in a ship's cabin.

We fell out on the everlasting Eastern Question. He firmly maintained that the Ottoman Empire can be mended, while I, with equal firmness, asserted that it can only be ended.

"Reform a Turkdom—hardly. A wretched old kettle, ruined from top to bottom, and consisting mainly now of foul grime and rust: stop the holes of it, as your antecessors have been doing, with temporary putty; it may hang together yet awhile: begin to hammer at it, solder it, to what you call mend and rectify it; it will fall to sherds, as sure as rust is rust!"

Thus I, astride on a pegasus borrowed from Carlyle's irascible stud, charged at the phantom of a superannuated solecism. My friend, champion of the solecism, met me half-way mounted on a statistical steed, incased in figures and fractions, and richly caparisoned with ancient historic facts and modern diplomatic figments.

The tournament ended as tournaments of the kind usually do: in a frank recognition of each other's error.

I mocked at his love for micrometric detail, telling him that he could not see the forest for the trees. He denounced what he was pleased to call my "chaotic confusion of thought," retorting that I could not see the trees for the forest, and genially counselling me, if it were not too late, "to endeavour and kill superficiality by a dose of thoroughness."

I was silenced, though not pleased.

In the meantime the *Lazarevitch* was ploughing the deep at the rate of nine knots an hour. We sailed

out of the Gulf of Salonica, leaving the clouded mass of Mount Olympus on our right, and the peninsula of Cassandra, the westernmost prong of the Chalcidic Trident, on the left. Darkness, unrelieved by a single star, overtook us apace, and at midnight we cast anchor at Daphne, the sea-port, or rather roadstead of the Holy Mount.

We lay that night at the inn of Daphne, where my fellow-travellers slept, while I listened with awe to the Cyclopean snoring of the Dragoman.

Next morning we rose with the cocks. I use the word advisedly; for there are no hens on the Holy Mount; nor any other animal of the gentler sex. All feminine creatures are strictly excluded from the peninsula in obedience to an ancient rule, the real origin of which is lost in the mists of early Christianity, but which monastic lore explains by a pious legend. It is said that the Blessed Virgin rescued the son of the Emperor Theodosius from shipwreck, and brought him safely on shore. On landing with the prince she said: "Let no other woman's feet tread the sacred soil after me."

The consequence is that the mountain has for centuries been a stronghold of masculine supremacy: a land where all fowls are cocks; all sheep rams; all cats Toms; all housemaids men, and most men monks. Nay, the devout, in spite of strong ocular evidence to the contrary, affirm that even the birds of the air labour under this sexual limitation. A sceptical Russian pilgrim once ventured to doubt the strict observance of the law by the winged tribes of sparrows, crows, and doves, pointing to a number of the latter engaged in amorous dalliance on the very roof of a chapel. A friendly brother hastened to suggest

that he must surely be possessed, and, so the story runs, the Russian was fain to expiate his indiscretion by paying a fine.

It is not difficult to understand how a rule established for very obvious reasons has in time become the nucleus round which a nebulous mass of legend has gradually collected. Be that as it may, the practical result of the law is that neither eggs nor milk are to be had for breakfast, and neutral mules form the only means of transport. A squadron of these ships of the mount were waiting for us outside the gate of the inn, tinkling their bells.

The first rays of the sun were temporarily gilding the bald crown of the Holy Mount, as we sallied forth in imposing cavalcade, led by one of the long-haired, red-capped, white-kilted guards of the holy commonwealth. Panaghiotis was his name, manly was his stride, and vain were all our efforts to keep up with him; vigorously though we strove by stick and spur to emulate his goat-like agility. Alas! our mules' steps, though sure, were slow, and Panaghiotis swang far in advance, flint-lock on shoulder, exulting in his nimbleness. Every part of him appeared to be instinct with vivacity: from the long blue tassel which dangled loosely at the end of his voluminous fez behind, to the twin crimson tufts of thread which fluttered from the turned-up points of his sandals in front. His broad white sleeves bulged out like a pair of balloons, and his plaited fustanella swayed a rhythmic accompaniment to his springy step. Thus armed and arrayed, Panaghiotis skipped lithely from rock to rock, leading us over an imaginary road.

Two brethren of the monastery of Kutlumussi—lean, dark, and pale-faced the one; the other a round-

paunched elder with a flowing white beard—formed part of the procession, perched, like ourselves, on two sleek monastic mules, while the portly interrupter of my night's slumbers brought up the rear, lending an air of stateliness to our caravan.

On our left stretched the sea, whose silver-crested wavelets, sparkling to the sunbeams, rolled smoothly along the surface and expired with a soft murmur on the beach. On the right the mountain rose steep and bare, and to this we now turned our mules' heads, following our guide. After half-an-hour's climbing up the precipitous side of the ridge we seemed to have reached the limits of the Sun's realm, for the rain came down in torrents, turning the hollow mule-track into a water-course and forcing us to hoist our umbrellas—a measure disastrous to the dignity of our procession. Even the stately Dragoman abandoned all thoughts of sublimity and ambled on, an amorphous mass of dripping obesity.

Another hour's toilsome ascent brought us to the crest of the ridge, which runs down the length of the peninsula, starting from the narrow isthmus, where the remains of the Persian king's canal can still be seen, and rising towards the southern end to a height of some four thousand feet. There it sinks slightly, as though in preparation for a last leap, and suddenly shoots up into a colossal, conical peak, so high that the shadow thereof is said to darken the team of the husbandman in distant Lemnos, what time the sun retires to rest. From that giddy eminence it falls precipitously into the sea, to form one of the promontories most sincerely dreaded by the Mediterranean mariner.

On reaching that point we caught our first glimpse

of Karyes, the tiny capital of the monastic republic, with its quaint domes embedded in groves of hazel trees, which lend to the hamlet their name. These trees, together with the olive, the cypress, the lemon and orange, fringe the skirts of the mountain, while the oak, the beech, the chestnut and the fir mantle the higher slopes successively; all vegetation, save the anæmic amaranth, ceasing at some two thousand feet below the summit.

The sight of our destination evidently stirred our Highland guard's martial spirit, for our sensitive mules and their riders were suddenly startled by a loud report from the flintlock, followed by several other explosions, which roused the myriad-mouthed echo of the mountain. On inquiring the reason of this pyrotechnic display, we were informed that it was the customary method of announcing the arrival of distinguished guests.

In a few more minutes we found ourselves at the portals of the monastery of Kutlumussi, where many brethren, clad in their black robes and lofty, brimless hats, were drawn up to greet us. We dismounted, while the surrounding rocks reverberated with the peals of bells, their iron tongues wagging a deafening welcome to "the distinguished guests." The monks filed in, crossing themselves and bowing to the sacred icon which surmounts the porch. We followed.

Our attention was here drawn to an object suspended with grim significance on one side of the porch. It was a heavy mace, ending in a round iron knob: according to some an obsolete instrument of castigation for certain delinquencies; according to others a harmless emblem of power granted to the monastery by the Byzantine Emperors "in the dark

backward and abysm of time." In the opinion of these latter authorities the knob originally was of gold, the transformation into a baser metal being due to the excessive piety of certain pilgrims, who took advantage of its proximity to the gate and carried it away among the pictures, crosses, rosaries, wooden spoons, scratchbacks, and other souvenirs of their pilgrimage.

While these explanations were vouchsafed to us by rival authorities, we passed through two or three double sets of iron-plated gates, traversed the court, and were conducted into the Catholicon. There the monks intoned a short service, in which the prayers for victory, once intended for the arms of the Emperors of Constantinople, were skilfully adapted to those of our late Queen; a slight confusion in genders being obviously due to the emergency of the case. While submitting to these official honours, wherein I was an undeserving and accidental participator, I had ample time to observe and admire the sombre beauty of the old Byzantine church, the venerable pictures of saints, effulgent with gold and gems, the elegant lecterns inlaid with ivory, the silver candelabra, and, above all, the curious bronze coronal, suspended from the middle of the central dome with a number of ostrich eggs hanging between icons and lamps, as symbols of devotional concentration of thought, derived from an ancient myth, according to which the young of the bird in question are hatched by the mother's eye affectionately fixed upon the eggs.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

AMONG THE LOTOS-EATERS

WITH Kutlumussi as our base of operations we explored in a fortnight all the other nineteen monasteries and a few of the *sketes*, or monastic communities, which, together with a vast number of hermitages, cover the slopes or are hidden in the ravines of the Holy Mount. Provided with a circular letter of recommendation by the Holy Synod of the commonwealth, assembled at Karyes, we were everywhere received in a manner befitting our importance. Apart from the pomp and solemnity—pyrotechnic displays, special services, and wagging of iron tongues—due mainly to the official position of my fellow-pilgrim, and, perhaps, in part to the innocent machinations of the Consular giant, who had many friends among the monks, it was easy to see that the brethren in entertaining us were actuated by the purest kindness of heart.

At a whisper from the pious valet, who was anxious to kiss all the relics preserved in the various shrines, thousands of redolent skulls, hands, and joints, as well as pieces of the true Cross, encased in caskets of silver and gold, and profusely decorated with pearls and precious stones, were exhibited for our inspection; the heavy doors of the libraries were thrown open to us, and illuminated manuscripts were taken down from their shelves for our edification;

all the information which we desired concerning the history, ancient and modern, legendary and profane, of the place, was readily afforded us, and even, on hearing that I was interested in folk-lore, some offered to obtain for me Klephtic songs from a certain robber-chief, who was expiating the sins of his youth by acting as defender of the Faith in his old age. In a word, we were honoured with all that unstinted hospitality for which the mountain is justly famous. If there was anything lacking in the matter of diet, that was partly due to the absence of feminine cattle and fowls, partly to the monastic conception of cookery — with which a generously - entertained stranger has no right to quarrel—and partly to the accident of our visit occurring in the midst of Advent. This circumstance was responsible for the fact that fish, under a thousand and one strange manifestations, formed our food day after day; so much so that at the end of the fortnight one felt strongly tempted to paraphrase the Scotch minister's thankless grace: "Fishes hot, fishes cold; fishes young, fishes old; fishes tender, fishes tough; thank the Lord, we've had enough!"

Our hosts seemed cheerfully resigned to this fare. The whole tenor of their lives is an alternation of severe fasting and strenuous feasting, punctuated by frequent prayers and vigils. To these last functions they are summoned by the *semantron*, a quaint gong of wood or iron, struck with a hammer of corresponding material. The deep, dull tones of this antiquated instrument of torture may often be heard in the dead of night floating down the dark and empty corridors. At its mournful sound the caloyer must relinquish his warm couch and, unkempt and unawakened, hurry to

the damp, dimly-lighted church below. Attendance is not always an act of spontaneous piety. Many a monk would prefer to retain his horizontal position in bed, and some endeavour to regain it at the earliest opportunity. A young saint moved me to tears by the confession of the laborious scheming by which he compassed this end. When he could no longer obtain exemption on the plea of ill-health, he would go to chapel, but not stay.

"Our abbot is grievously strict," he said. "Taper in hand, he goes round from stall to stall, peering into each brother's face, in order to satisfy himself that we are all there. Very well. I occupy the first stall close to the column on the right. The old man inspects me and passes on. Then I slip round the column, and so to bed."

I bethought me of our College chapel bell, which seemed to ding into our undergraduate ears:—

Sleep no more!
The Dean does murder sleep,

of our own feelings towards compulsory devotions, and of our stratagems for evading the same, and in the wicked monk I recognised a brother.

There are two classes of monasteries: the *cænobite* and the *idiorrhythmic*. In the former the brethren, forbidden the luxury of a private purse, live on terms of impecunious equality, under the autocratic rule of an abbot. They sleep in small, comfortless cells, and their meals are held in a common refectory. There they sit in orderly groups by fours and by fives round massive marble tables, while one of them reads aloud from a pulpit the story of the martyrdom of the saint to whose memory the day is consecrated, or some other

exhilarating narrative. Appetite is further stimulated by the sight of the frescoes on the walls, wherein are unfolded the refreshing horrors of Hell. There is seen the sinner disporting himself on a bonfire, eagerly fed by a troop of merry demons; or the man who is continually swallowed up by a monster, with a second head where its tail ought to be; or the man slowly broiling over an eternal gridiron; all detailed with exquisite realism and no perspective. Thus the frugal pleasures of the monastic table are enhanced by edifying art, and the mind is improved while the stomach is filled.

The idiorrhythmic monasteries, to which my fellow-pilgrim once with fortuitous infelicity referred as dithyrambic, lack this pleasing feature, or, if they possess it, it is only used on occasions of exceptional festivity. In these monasteries each monk is his own master, living in his own room, or suite of rooms, according to the length of his purse and the bent of his tastes, subject to no restrictions except those imposed by public opinion. In these communities the upper class of brethren form a kind of sacred aristocracy, engaged in administrative work, or enjoying a more or less uncultured leisure. They neither sow nor reap, but their well-invested capital feeds them. This capital often is the outcome of judicious management of the community's estates; for many of the monasteries, thanks to imperial and private munificence of over a thousand years, own broad acres in various parts of Turkey, Greece, Roumania, and Russia. The stewardship of one of the Russian estates especially is a much-coveted and keenly-contested prize. Each of these monks has under his wing a number of novices, towards whom he stands in the relation of a spiritual father or sponsor. In return for a more or less long term of mild

servitude, he initiates them into the mysteries of monasticism, and, departing, bequeathes to them his fortune.

The rank and file of both categories of caloyers have by no means an ideal time of it. It is they who, with the assistance of a few lay servants, cultivate the olive groves and irrigate the vineyards, who fell the timber, who man the monastic fleet of sailing craft, and who fish with their picturesque seines. It is to their industry that Mount Athos owes its privileged position among the Sultan's dominions. Whereas everywhere else in Turkey one is confronted with the saddening sight of dismantled hills and disafforested mountains, in the holy peninsula the greatest care is taken of the woods, no tree being cut down unless there is a young sapling to take its place. A like contrast is perceived in the roads, or rather mule-tracks, which are kept in excellent repair. Many of the monks of this class are skilled in handicrafts, such as the carving of wood, the manufacturing of rosaries of bone, mother-of-pearl, or the diminutive lemons with which the blasts of early spring strew the ground. The painting of sacred pictures is another art assiduously cultivated, and now and again there is to be met a scribe nursing the moribund art of copying and illuminating manuscripts.

All these caloyers, if members of a cœnobite, work as a matter of duty ; if of an idiorrhhythmic, as a matter of necessity. But as neither of these motives affects the upper class of monks, so the standard of industry is comparatively low among the latter. There are a few learned and refined men among them. There are also several whose sincere piety and dignified simplicity of manner entitle them to all respect. But many seem to have donned the monastic garb out of

sheer indolence. The amplitude of their girdles suggests anything but asceticism, and their conversation reveals the curious fact that, though ailments are not uncommon, they seldom are of a spiritual nature. In the majority of cases it is the stomach rather than the soul that stands in most urgent need of help.

Even in the case, by no means rare, of those who embrace this life, prompted by a sincere desire to save their souls, a sceptical observer might be pardoned for entertaining grave doubts as to the wisdom of their choice. With certain exceptions, neither study nor charity enters into their programme; but to live the world forgetting, by the world forgot, chewing the cud of meditation, and eschewing temptation, is their selfish end and aim. In this they faithfully carry out the ideal which was the original basis of Eastern monasticism: each man for himself, and God for all. By taking refuge from the hurly-burly of life's stormy main in the sterile calm of the monastic cell, they narrow their minds and starve their affections. In seeking spiritual salvation they achieve spiritual suicide. This is the view which the sceptical observer would take. I voice it without necessarily holding it.

Nature favours their efforts. Although our visit fell at a time of the year when the vineyards were denuded of their foliage, the beech-forests were bathing in the chilly glow of autumnal gold-tints, the nightingales were silent, the heavens lowering, and the sea raging, yet one could easily picture the place enveloped in the luxuriant beauty of a southern summer: its broad views, its blue seas and serene skies, its limpid rills and warbling birds, its harmonious contrasts of rock and water, glade and thicket, light and shade; a veritable banquet of form and colour, such as an

artist's soul might love to feast upon and never be surfeited. Indeed, the earth offers no more tempting spot to the dreamer whose ideal of felicity is

“To lie amid some sylvan scene,
Where, the long drooping boughs between,
Shadows dark and sunlight sheen
Alternate come and go.”

When to these charms are added the rigorous exclusion of disturbing elements, and the careful weeding out of all worldly interests and cares, can we wonder that the monks' lives are long and monotonous? “Nature and history have combined in making Mount Athos what it is: a milkless, mirthless seat of superstitious meditation, where sanctity is hatched in sable-folded idleness, where the spirit slumbers, rocked in the cradle of mediæval faith. No breath of scepticism wafted from the outer world ever reaches these lotophagian retreats, no aspiration of those that agitate the ‘purblind race of miserable men’ ever quickens the pulse of these melancholy anchorites. A miraculous vision or a day-dream ever and anon visits their slumbers, but wakes them not. In olden times a monk would occasionally soar upon the wings of prophecy; another, by persistent and unwearied contemplation of his navel, could evoke therefrom a source of imaginary light, a feat which once rent the Eastern world by a long and fierce controversy. But even these exercises have grown scarce of late. So have the miracles recorded of olden times. No icon has vouchsafed to speak or bleed in these degenerate days. . . .”¹

As a matter of fact, there is many a monk who

¹ Extract from the diary of the Sceptical Observer already quoted.

has not been "in the world," that is, beyond the boundaries of the peninsula, either in the body or in the spirit, for half a century; while some have not even crossed the threshold of their own monastery for a like period. The attitude of mind engendered by these conditions is profoundly interesting.

Brother Ambrose is an extreme instance. He belongs to a monastery in which we stayed three days close prisoners of the weather, while our overcoats were drying before the kitchen fire. Throughout that period it appears that the brother's ambition was to have a conversation with us; but his efforts had hitherto been frustrated by our politic host, who, intelligent and educated himself, was naturally desirous of keeping his less gifted brother in the background, or what would the "distinguished guests" think of the intellectual standard of the community?

Ambrose's tenacious cunning, however, rose superior to obstacles. Availing himself of a momentary relaxation of vigilance on the part of the Argus who guarded us, he slipped into the room and introduced himself. He was a grey Goliath with a shaggy mane, which struggled to free itself from his towering black cap, beard to match, beetling eyebrows, and a pair of eyes full of vacuous earnestness. Brother Ambrose would, under favourable circumstances, have undertaken the rôle of inquisitor or martyr with equal ease and pleasure.

The first conventional civilities over, our visitor launched forth into an exposition of his one idea. The poor fellow had set his heart on an object which has been the dream of many other earnest and noble minds, and still is dear to some distinguished English Churchmen. The unity of Christendom was his heart's

desire. But Brother Ambrose was more practical than his Western fellow-dreamers. Far from being satisfied with mere prayers for the gathering into one fold of the scattered lambs of Christ's flock, he had elaborated a Machiavellian plan, which he now proceeded to lay before us.

"Why wrangle and quarrel?" asked the schemer, with his hand extended in mild remonstrance. "We all strive for Truth. Now, to ascertain Truth is the easiest thing in the world. Let each Church set forth its tenets in a volume: the Greek Church in one, the Catholic in another, and the Protestant in a third. Let these three volumes be taken to Corfu and laid upon the breast of the blessed relic of St. Spyridion. The volume which the Saint will embrace contains the true dogma: that we must all embrace. The volumes which the Saint will reject contain the false teaching: those let us all reject."

At this point our Argus made his appearance, and, seeing that the mischief had been done, he tactfully accepted the situation. Having listened to Brother Ambrose's panacea for the thousandth time, he laughed out, and thus relieved us from a somewhat strained position.

"It is true," concluded the orator sadly, "that there are difficulties in the way. But it would all be well, were it not for Antichrist."

"For whom?" queried I.

"That's Brother Ambrose's pet name for the Pope," explained our Argus, and then added—

"That's all very fine. But have you told these gentlemen about my proposal?"

His proposal was only that Brother Ambrose and the Pope should both walk into a burning fiery furnace.

Whichever of the two (if either) came forth unscathed, would be acclaimed as the holder of the true doctrine.

At this Brother Ambrose's countenance fell; but, recovering, he answered calmly—

“I am ready to go through with it, if you will send me to Rome.”

The sublime and the absurd had never been presented to me in a more striking and pitiable combination. The poor man's sincerity was beyond doubt, and so was the strength of his faith. It is well that he could find no one to second his touching ineptitude by paying his passage to the Eternal City.

CHAPTER XXXIX

A TALE OF WOE

NEVERTHELESS, with all due deference to the splenetic diarist be it said, life on Mount Athos, though barren, has its own peculiar and potent charm ; a charm which can only be fully appreciated after a careful eradication from the observer's mind of all those ideas of action and altruistic devotion, which form so important a part in the modern man's conception of the perfect life. This preliminary labour more or less successfully accomplished, one cannot but be profoundly impressed by the old-world romance which permeates the place, "so venerable, so lovely, so unravaged by the fierce intellectual life of the century, so serene." How far truer is all this of Athos than of Oxford ! It is here that one really sees the spirit of the Middle Age walking abroad in the garb of a thousand years ago. Art, thought, manner, and speech are genuinely mediæval, and so is everything else, save cleanliness ; for squalor appears no longer to be considered an indispensable attribute of sanctity.

The very stones "whisper the last enchantments of the Middle Age." Look wheresoever you list, your eye will be met by loopholed walls and weather-stained battlements, here entire, there levelled to support a projecting balcony of many ethereal storeys, by rusty, iron-bound gates, and by grey towers rising sternly from the corners of the buildings, or over-

looking the bays from a rocky eminence near the coast. And amid these grim monuments of war there repose the cupolas and belfries of the Byzantine churches, crowned with the emblem of Him who preached "on earth peace, goodwill toward men."

These fortifications, now mere picturesque relics of a long-dead past, played once a serious and salutary part in the history of the peninsula. In the perilous times of old the monks were frequently called from their midnight masses to defend their walls, and ancient engravings depict, with a frank and artless exaggeration, the cassocked warriors hurling huge stones or pouring floods of molten pitch on Saracen pirates, Arab invaders, or Latin freebooters. Yes, life on Mount Athos has not always been an alternation of fasting and feasting.

Nor let me be accused of self-contradiction if I add that the warlike spirit is not dead, but merely dormant. This is only one of those countless contradictions of Eastern life, which a conscientious chronicler feels bound to record, even at the risk of his own reputation for consistency. The truth is that human life everywhere, and nowhere more obstinately than in the East, refuses to be packed into a single sentence, however capacious its dimensions, or to be labelled with one epithet, however comprehensive. I, therefore, venture to affirm with deliberate recklessness, that beneath the cloak of modern apathy there still lurks that active courage which in the past enabled Mount Athos to repel hostile attack, and to preserve unimpaired through the ages its position as "the sanctuary of the Greek race."

In the War of Independence the monks rose in arms, deeming it their duty to contribute more than

empty prayers to the national cause. Their efforts and their sacrifices were vain. The Turkish troops overpowered the holy warriors and pillaged the monasteries of everything that had not been buried or conveyed out of their reach. The Turkish Government imposed heavy burdens upon the monks, dismantled their towers, and carried away their cannon. Mount Athos, however, weathered this storm, as it had weathered many another. At the conclusion of peace between the Sultan and his rebellious Greek subjects the infidel troops evacuated the monasteries, the monks unearthed their treasures, and speedily collected from Eastern Christendom the funds necessary for repairing the losses incurred through their heroic folly.

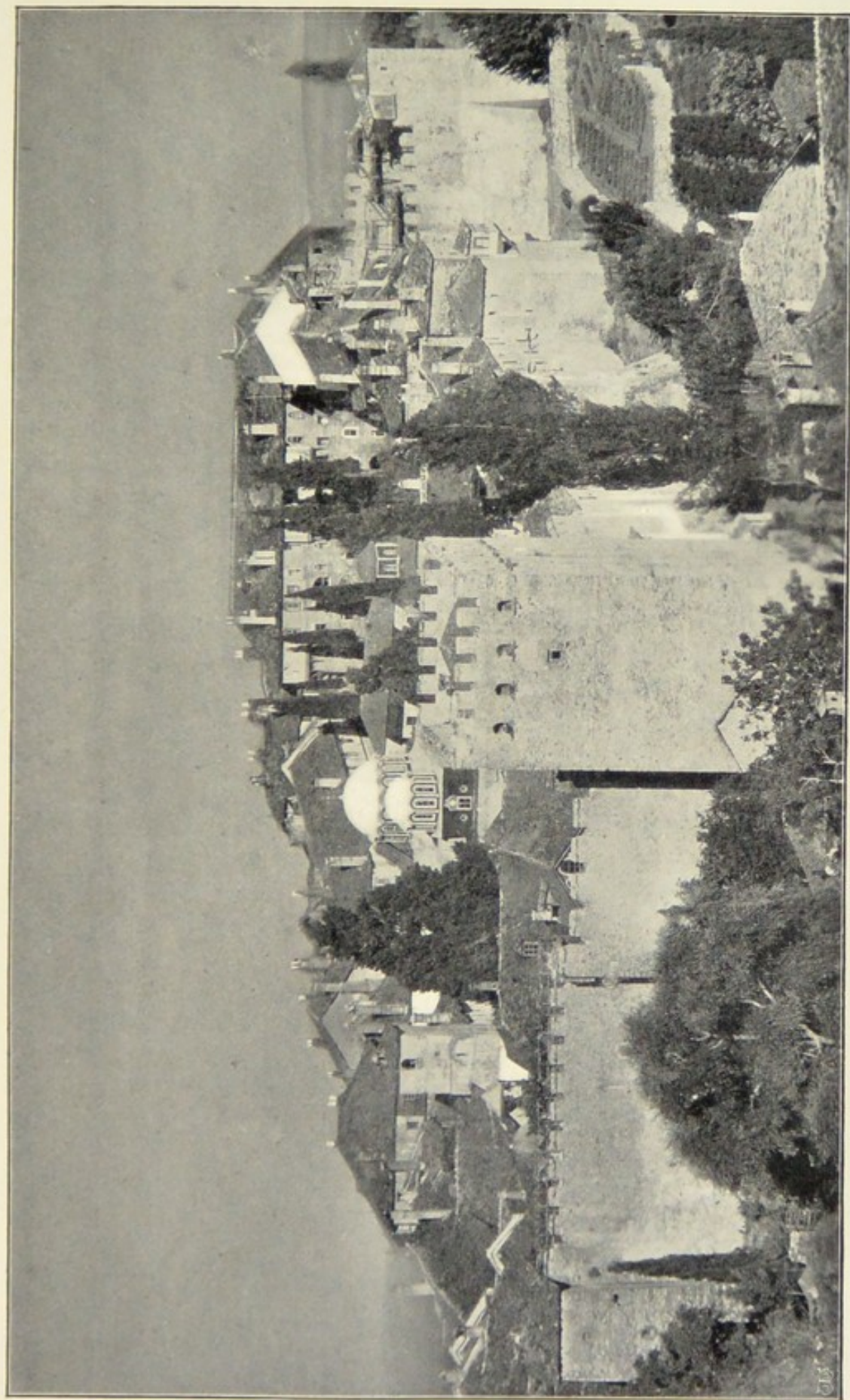
This disastrous attempt had not been dictated by selfish considerations. In bidding for the liberty of the race the monks really jeopardised a liberty which they themselves had never ceased to enjoy. The privileges and immunities bestowed on them by their Byzantine founders and benefactors had, thanks to a timely surrender, been respected by the Ottoman conqueror. Mount Athos, but for the spoliation of its shrines by the Latin Crusaders in the thirteenth century, and their temporary occupation by the Turks in the nineteenth, has always formed a semi-autonomous federation. Even at the present day it is the portion of the Ottoman Empire upon which the Ottoman yoke presses least heavily, if we except the highlands of lordless and lawless Albania.

The religious republic is governed by a Holy Synod, in which are equally represented all the twenty monasteries. The decrees of this deliberative assembly are carried out by an executive body of four presidents, elected by rotation, and the supreme con-

trol is entrusted to one of them, similarly appointed and styled the First (man) of Athos. The republic conducts its relations with the Turkish authorities through the medium of an agent, whose headquarters are at Salonica, and with the Patriarchate through the medium of a similar functionary, who resides at Constantinople. Disputes between the various monasteries are settled by the Holy Synod, with the possibility of an appeal to the Turkish tribunals or to the Patriarchate, and order is maintained by a score of Christian highlanders, of whom Panaghiotis of the flint-lock is a typical example.

The Sultan's rule over the mountain is faintly adumbrated by a phantom *Kaimakam*, who is forced to lead a haremless existence among the ghostly *giaours*, attended by half-a-dozen *zaptiehs*, who are chiefly beholden to the monks for the feat (otherwise impossible) of keeping body and soul together. These Turks, together with a Custom House officer and the payment of an annual tribute to the Porte, are the only bonds of connection between the monastic commonwealth and the suzerain. The *Kaimakam* at the time of our visit was an invisible nonagenarian who slept, smoked, and had his meals in one solitary room.

It is therefore seen that, so far as the Turkish Government is concerned, Mount Athos might continue to be the home of serene and sterile rusticity, unnoticed and unmolested, except by occasional tourists as ourselves, and peacefully unaware of the time of day. But Fate has willed it otherwise. In the absence of oppression from without, there is within the community itself ample cause for strife. It is the familiar and perennial strife between Hellenism and Slavism.



THE LAVRA, ONE OF THE TWENTY MONASTERIES ON MOUNT ATHOS.



Out of the twenty monasteries seventeen are purely Greek, one Servian, one Bulgarian, and one Russian. There is also a small Roumanian *skete* of little or no importance. The Servian convent (Chiliandari), so far as its history is known, was founded or restored in the twelfth century by two Servian princes, since canonised, and in spite of the pretensions of the Bulgarians, has always remained in the possession of the Serbs. The Bulgarians, as their custom is, maintain that the institution was originally theirs, basing their claims on false etymology, and deriving its name from a Bulgarian word which, if it existed, ought to mean a "bee-hive." But no such word happens to exist. Now, whether or not etymology deserves its definition as "a science in which the vowels count for nothing and the consonants for very little," in a question of the kind it is no match for authentic history, backed by actual possession. But it may not be uninteresting to state, as a pure matter of fact, that the only two derivations of the monastery's name, which have any claim to plausibility, are both Greek.

The Bulgarian monastery (Zographou) is said to owe its origin to three princes of that nationality, who built it in the ninth century, and it has always continued under the control of the race of its founders. The Roumanians are compelled to content themselves with a small *skete* founded some fifty years ago, and already hallowed by a miracle, which, however, being modern, adds but little to the prestige of the establishment; for wonders are like wine, inasmuch as their value depends largely on their age.

None of these non-Greek foundations cause trouble to the Greeks. Familiarity in the first two instances

and insignificance in the third breed indifference, if not contempt. It is in the mammoth monastery of St. Panteleëmon that racial antagonism has its origin and its centre. This monastery founded, according to tradition, by a Serb in the dark dateless ages, passed alternately under Greek and Servian rule until the commencement of the nineteenth century, when, having by that time fallen into utter decay, it was restored from the foundations by Greek monks and with Greek money. Since that date, and for some thirty years after, it continued in the undisputed possession of the Greeks. It was in 1839 that the Russians, already beginning to show some symptoms of Panslavism, insinuated themselves into the establishment. The Greeks admitted them on equal terms as members of the same Church; for the Eastern, any more than the Western portion of the Catholic Church, recognises no distinctions of nationality. At first the number of the Russian brethren was by a written agreement limited to one-fourth of the whole population. This was the head of the camel, to be soon followed by the rest of the body. The Russians under various pretences gradually increased their ranks, till they became twice as numerous as the Greeks. The camel was already in full possession of the cottage, to the extreme discomfort of the cottager, who now at last, when too late, realised the folly of admitting the cumbrous guest into his dwelling. The Russians now, feeling sufficiently strong, broke into open rebellion and turned the Greeks out. Impunity was secured by a lavish expenditure of Russian gold on the then Patriarch and Holy Synod of Constantinople. These things happened in the early seventies, a date coinciding

with the heyday of Panslavism and the creation of the Bulgarian Church under the auspices of Count Ignatieff.

The Russians, having succeeded in outwitting the witty Greeks, did not rest content with this first triumph. The thirty years that followed have witnessed a progress of the Slavonic movement on Mount Athos by leaps and bounds. The Russian monks, daily reinforced with recruits from the Empire and supplied abundantly with funds by the Imperial Palestine Society, and even, there is good reason to believe, by the Tsar's own Government, endeavour by might and main to spread over the whole of the peninsula. Already they have acquired by treachery two humble hermitages and enlarged them into palatial *sketes*, equal in size to first-class convents. In the second of these, that of St. Andrew, commonly known as the Seraï, six months before our visit, was inaugurated a magnificent church, which is said to have cost about £T.100,000. The ceremony was graced by the presence of M. Zinovieff, the Russian Ambassador, and of a Russian admiral, attended by his staff, by the Archbishop of Moscow, and a great many other Russian notabilities.

All these strongholds of Russian influence, and especially the monastery now called Russico *par excellence*, are increasing the number of their inmates at a rate which can only be conjectured, as the Turkish Custom House officer dares not ask for passports from the Russian recruits. The supply of accommodation keeps pace with the demand, and already the Holy Mount is dominated by the immense barrack-like buildings, hospitals, houses, and outhouses of the Russian convents, by their gorgeous green domes,

towering belfries, and all that ostentatious glitter in which Muscovite taste delights. It can easily be imagined how unpleasantly do these brand-new and eminently gaudy edifices contrast with the sober magnificence of the Byzantine buildings described above. Their green freshness stands out with self-conscious contempt of the mellowed maturity of their ancient neighbours, and they irresistibly suggest the picture of a forward young woman flaunting her ill-gotten finery before the eyes of a venerable old mother. So much for the pictorial and sentimental side of the movement. Its political aspect is no less noteworthy.

The Russian monastery is regarded by all unbiassed visitors as a political agency masquerading behind a diaphanous veil of religion. The Greek monks look upon it as an exotic monster of ill omen, and watch its rapid growth with the gravest apprehension. Nor can any one, even superficially acquainted with the politics of the Near East and with Russia's attitude towards that part of the world, doubt that these forebodings are as well-founded as they are gloomy. Mount Athos is from every point of view a possession of the first importance to any Power aspiring to the Great Invalid's inheritance. The geographical situation of the peninsula and the monastic dependencies beyond its limits enable its owner to wield an enormous influence over great part of Macedonia, while its physical configuration renders it an impregnable fortress. When to these advantages is added the religious prestige which accrues to the race that rules over this venerable sanctuary of the Eastern Church, it needs no statesman's eye to discern the motive of Russian activity,

and no prophet's tongue to predict its results, if the stream be not stemmed while there is time. But who is there to stem the stream?

The Greeks on Mount Athos, although still in possession of by far the larger portion of the territory, are daily losing ground. Most of the leading monks are quite aware of the danger for the future of their race with which the movement is fraught, and it is to their infinite credit that they manfully struggle against it; devoid of concentration within and of assistance from without, they dispute the soil inch by inch. But the battle is unequal. Their rivals, commanding as they do almost fabulous means, hold a powerful instrument which they full well know how to use. The Greek monks, being but mortal, are not always proof against the blandishments of the Russians nor, it must be said, against Russian gold; and wealth, when wedded to wit, has often prevailed where force has failed. Besides, the Russians are able to bring pressure to bear upon them by withholding the revenues of the monastic estates in the Tsar's dominions, an expedient tried more than once already, but not always with the success which one might have anticipated. Furthermore, the Russian monks enjoy the moral support of the numerous pilgrims who resort to the Holy Mount every year, while there are scarcely any Greek pilgrims, the Greeks having outgrown the devotional stage of their development. Last, and not least, the Russian monks act under the powerful protection of Russian diplomacy, which is at no pains to conceal its zeal; the Russian Consul-General at Salonica pays frequent and long visits to Mount Athos, and his presence there serves the double purpose of encouraging the Russian monks

and of cowing their opponents. Greece might possibly counteract to some limited extent Russian aggressiveness. But for various reasons she has done little as yet. A few days previous to our arrival the Greek Ambassador at Constantinople had paid Mount Athos a flying visit—the first on record. As a general rule, the upholders of the Hellenic cause in that outpost of Hellenism are left to stand or fall according to the fortune of war and their own ability, an exhortation to “watch and pray” being the only succour which they succeed in obtaining from their well-wishers. And yet, though helpless, the Greek monks are not hopeless. The Greek, like the Jew, is deeply imbued with the belief in the immortality of his race and in its divine mission. It is this belief in itself that has saved Hellenism, as it has saved Hebraism in the past, and it is the same belief that sustains both in the present.

This is the melancholy tale which we heard every day of our sojourn among the monks. But for the excitement supplied by this political warfare and the inclemency of the weather, we might very well have succumbed to the somnolent charm of the Holy Mount and, like the wandering hero's comrades, determine to stay with the Lotos-eaters, feeding on the fatal fruit in blissful oblivion of the world and its work.

As it was, we were eagerly looking for the means of departure. At the end of the first week we were disappointed, as neither the Russian nor the *Mah-sousseh* steamer durst approach the Athonic rocks owing to the fierceness of the sea. The overland route was declared by the Consular giant impassable. “Why, we shall get up to the waist in mud and

remain stuck therein till the brigands come and cut off our heads," he whispered to me, anxious to gain a vote. Nor was there the slightest ground for doubting his sincerity. A proposal to attempt the ascent of the peak was wrecked on the adamant rock of monastic rhetoric, powerfully seconded by the Dragoman's impressive despair. There was, therefore, nothing left for us but to make a use of necessity and explore, through fair weather and foul, what remained of the accessible parts of Mount Athos. And this we did.

At last, when seven more wet and weary days had elapsed, the longed-for boat arrived, the sun came out in all his now useless magnificence, and we bade an eternal farewell to the monasteries and their kind, simple, dear old anachronisms.

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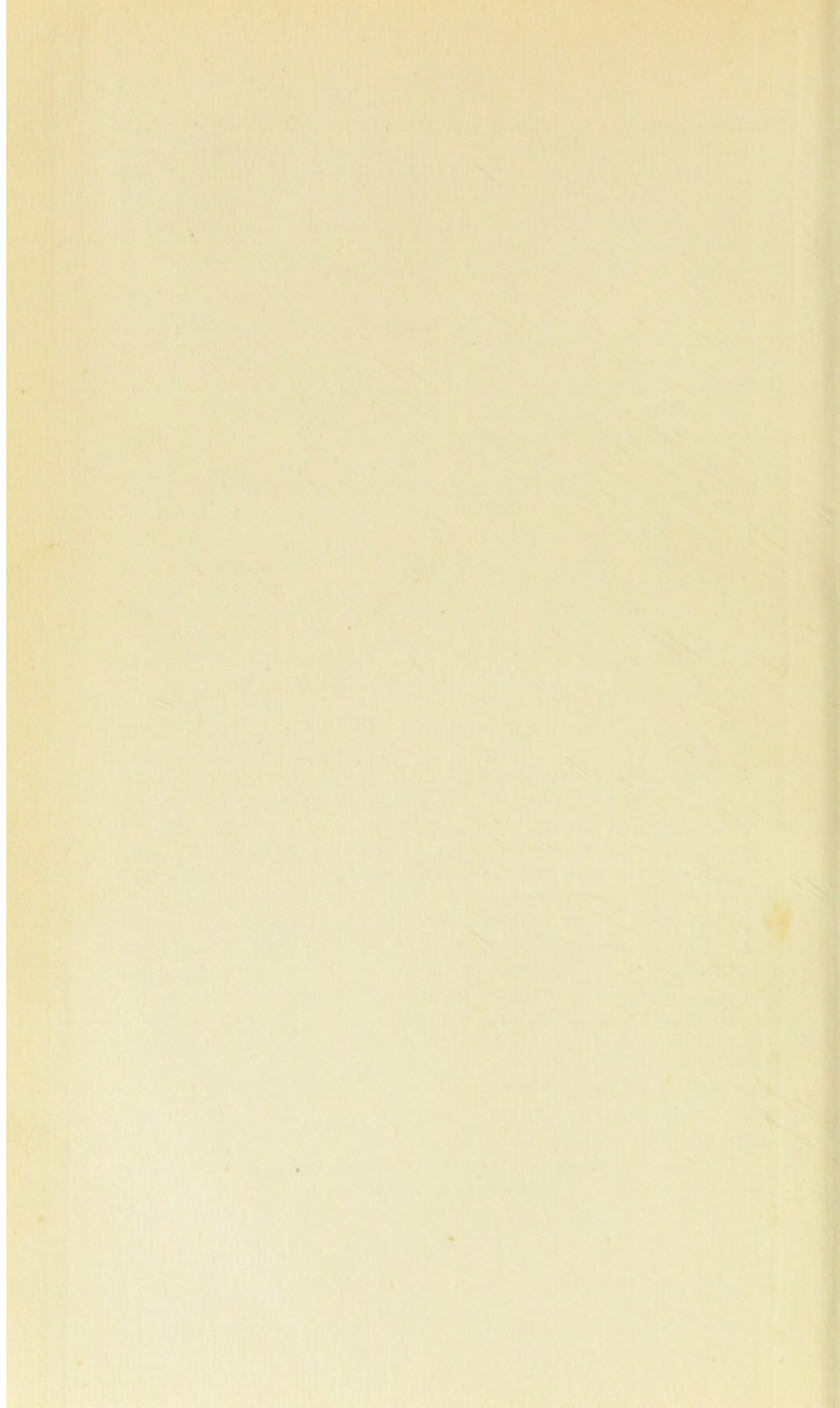
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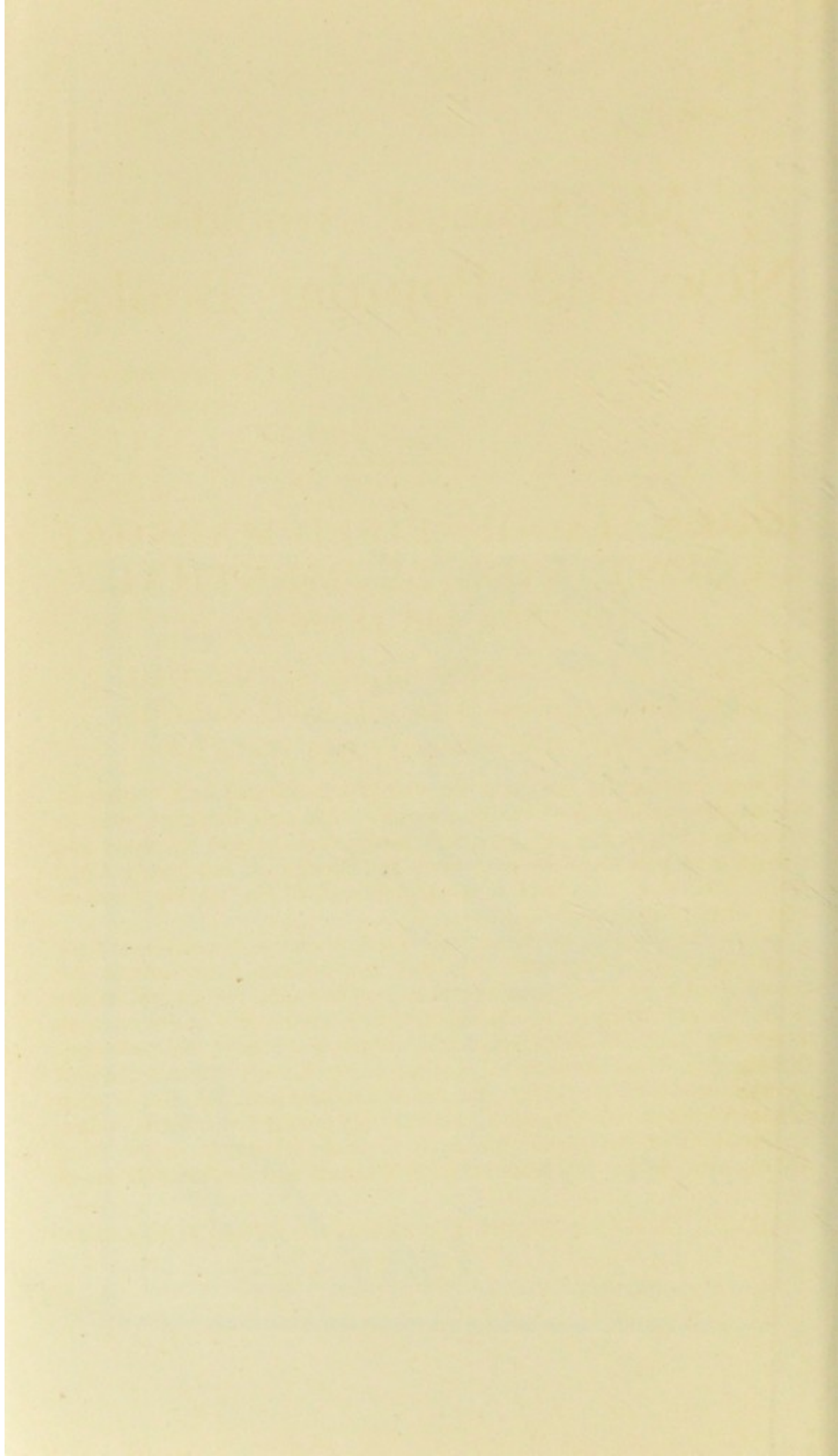
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THE END







January, 1903

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