

BULGARIA BEFORE THE WAR

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BULGARIA BEFORE THE WAR

DURING SEVEN YEARS' EXPERIENCE OF EUROPEAN
TURKEY AND ITS INHABITANTS

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INTRODUCTION.

THE following pages principally tell of my personal experiences and adventures in Bulgaria north of the Balkans, during a residence in that country of seven years, and the construction of the railway from Rustchuck to Varna. As, however, they treat almost entirely of a time antecedent to the present war, it may be allowed here to say a few words, having under present circumstances a more direct bearing on the country and its inhabitants, especially as I find that notwithstanding the many letters that have lately been written from the seat of war, some misapprehension still exists as to what Northern Bulgaria itself is like, and the general condition of its inhabitants.

The great loss of life in the allied armies of England and France, that so shocked the public at the time that those armies were encamped near Varna and at Kustendji, has given rise to a fixed idea that the Dobrudja and Northern Bulgaria are swampy countries cursed with a pestilential climate. This is an error.

With the exception of infrequent marshes at the heads of a few lakes, and periodical swamps caused by the overflow of the Danube into long narrow valleys running up into the hills, the whole of the countries in question are high, dry, and healthy.

The right or Turkish bank of the Danube is formed of cliffs from 100 to 300 feet high, and the country thence to the summit of the Balkans ascends, at first gradually, and in the last eight or ten miles very rapidly. The whole of the country lying between the river and foot of the Balkans is intersected by deep wide valleys and occasional ravines, through which streams, generally small and shallow, flow to the Danube. Wide tracts of this country are covered with forests, with occasional cleared spots where the villagers cultivate their Indian corn; and again, there are equally wide tracts where a tree is a rare and welcome sight, where large crops of wheat and barley are grown under a system of husbandry the object of which is to cultivate as much land as possible.

The Balkans themselves (Balkan is the Turkish for mountain) have little of savage grandeur. For the most part the outline of the hills, as might be expected from their geological formation, is much rounded, whilst cultivated plots are frequently found nearly to their summits. In summer, where not covered with woods, they afford excellent pasturage for numerous herds of cattle, sheep, and goats.

There are very few parts in these mountains that are inaccessible, even in those densely wooded. The wood-cutters and charcoal-burners have made paths in all directions, by many of which the mountains can be crossed with more or less difficulty on foot or on horseback

By the well-known passes alone can artillery or wheeled carriages be conveyed to the south of the Balkans, but it could never be difficult with the aid of guides to pass infantry to the southern side, if unencumbered with artillery and the other 'impedimenta' of war.

Although such extensive forests exist in the Balkans and the country between them and the Danube, particularly in that part of the country comprised in the quadrilateral figure, of which Bourgas, Kavarna, Silistria, and Rustchuck form the four corners, the timber through neglect is of little value. The habit of the peasants is to cut the boughs off the trees for charcoal-burning, fencing, house-building, firing, &c., and consequently there are few timber-trees of value. The greater number are reduced to the condition of 'pollards,' the trunks of which are hollow and rotten, and it is only in the higher and more inaccessible Balkans that good timber can be found.

It is generally supposed that mines of value exist in the southern slopes of the Balkans, but if so they have not yet been discovered, although there is nothing in

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the geological structure of that region to forbid the hope of their being yet found.

Mr. Arthur Lennox, than whom, I believe, no more competent person could be found, failed in bringing to light any mines likely to 'pay,' though he passed months travelling in the mountains diligently searching their recesses. There is something very tempting in the idea of becoming suddenly rich by selling a forest or working a mine, but the real wealth of Bulgaria consists in its climate and its soil, in the corn and wine, tobacco and roses, the necessities and luxuries of life, which, aided by the industrious and frugal population that it possesses, it is so capable of producing in abundance.

Before quitting this subject, I may say that the only mines now successfully worked in Turkey, as far as I am aware (the Ergana Madan copper mines being I believe closed), are the coal mines situated on the shores of the Black Sea, about 120 miles from the mouth of the Bosphorus on the Asiatic coast. They are commonly called the 'Heraclea' Mines, though the mine of Armout Chuk, the nearest to that place, is ten miles from it. From thence the coal field extends along the coast to Amasserah, a distance of fifty-five miles. Inland the coal has been traced to a distance of about ten miles from the sea. This coal field belongs to the true Carboniferous formation, and is underlaid by the mountain limestone pertaining thereto. The

country in which the mines are situated is very mountainous, and the numerous seams of coal crop out on the sides of the hills. Usually the seams lie at an angle of about 45° with the horizon, but there are seams that are nearly and some quite vertical.

The quality of the coal varies very much in the different seams, which also vary in thickness from three to fourteen feet. In some the coal is quite equal to our north country steam coal, whilst in others it contains many impurities which cause it in burning to form masses of 'clinkers,' and render it nearly useless for steam purposes. There is, however, an abundance of coal of good quality. During the Crimean War the English and French fleets were supplied with it in large quantities, no less than 70,000 tons. The mines are principally worked for the government under contract by Christian Albanians, Bosnians, and Montenegrins, assisted by the Mahometan agricultural population of the neighbourhood, who are forced to work in the mines under the contractors; the nominal wages of these villagers, tenpence a day, are reserved by the government as a set-off against their elastic taxes. In times of pressure as at present, they are kept nearly constantly at work, either in the mines or in carrying the coal to the sea shore on the backs of their mules and donkeys.

The seams of coal are constantly interrupted by faults, and from this cause the difficulty of procuring

labour (even under the system of *corvée*), the expense of transport and of shipping in the open roadstead, the coal costs much more than would at first be thought. The quantity shipped in one year has never exceeded 120,000 tons. In ordinary times it amounts to from 70,000 tons to 80,000 tons a year.

In a book on Bulgaria written at this time, it is impossible not to recur again and again to the people of the country. In so doing, I fear that I shall hardly please those (should they do me the honour of reading these pages) who, on the one hand denounce the Bulgar as ugly, stupid, debased, and ungrateful, or, on the other, those who wish to find in him all the virtues of a highly civilised race.

Neither physically nor morally can the Bulgar by any figure of speech be called with truth a degraded being. The men are generally big, strong, and healthy-looking, without the slightest trace of the Tartar origin which some people ascribe to them. This absence of the Tartar appearance does not however prove the absence of Tartar blood, for the Turks who are, I suppose, undoubtedly of Tartar origin, have not now any more of the Tartar features than the Bulgars. The Turks, however, virtually speak the same language as the Tartars of the Crimea, as most of the nomades of Central Asia, and even the inhabitants of Kashgar. The Bulgars on the contrary have no Tartar words in their language beyond a few that they have picked up

from their conquerors, as we see that the Wallachians have done, although Wallachia and Moldavia have never been permanently occupied by the Turks. No doubt the Bulgars are a very mixed race, but that they are mainly Slavonic in their origin is probably true.

Be they what they may, they are an industrious plodding race, whether the work be ploughing a Bulgarian plain, doing navy work in a railway cutting, studying in a village school or in that admirable institution the Robert's College at Constantinople.

The women are equally industrious with the men, and my experience leads me to believe that where this is the case, communities thrive; whereas, where the converse obtains, or where the women only work under compulsion, no community, or indeed family, prospers.

As I have said elsewhere, fear of Turkish Don Juans keeps the women for the most part at home, and as a consequence the houses of the Bulgars are generally clean and comfortable, and the children well clothed and cared for. It has occasioned surprise and apparently indignation to some people since the war began, to find that the material prosperity of the Bulgar was so much greater than they expected. The fact is that there are few Bulgar peasants, properly so called, none of that class that in England works from the 1st of January to the 31st of December for a daily wage, and who when worn out is provided with subsistence by the

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general community. Every Bulgar is a yeoman farmer and maintains himself, his family, and his aged relations, and pays his taxes by the cultivation of what is practically his own land. In order to do this, he must possess capital in the shape of oxen, horses, sheep, cows, &c., and the possession of these gives an appearance of greater wealth than perhaps is justified by the actual balance of his accounts at the year's end.

Again, when on one side the Bulgar is keen to acquire wealth by industry, aided by cunning, and has no scruples about honour, etc., of which he has never heard, and, on the other, his masters and tax-gatherers are needy and equally anxious for money, it is not difficult to understand that a satisfactory arrangement can be made. Thus it is that when a Bulgar arrives at having considerable available wealth, it is nearly invariably by having an influential Turkish partner in the background. It can be readily understood how precarious this prosperity must be; the mere fact of the prosperity itself raises a host of enemies, who are jealous of a Christian getting rich out of the 'Padi-shah's Earth' (the universal theory), and who by reason of his secret connection is probably spared many of the extortions to which they, the Osmanlis, are subjected. Consequently if the great man dies, or is disgraced, accusations pour in against his unfortunate Bulgarian partner, who, if he escapes complete ruin,

can only do so by a judicious distribution of that gold which is only less dear to him than life itself.

I think that it was the late Mr. Nassau Senior who said that until he went to the East he never knew what was meant in the Psalms of David by the constant reference to 'my enemies.' People in England have no enemies in the sense in which it is used in the East, but there every man has enemies who backbite, slander, and intrigue against him though they may never have even seen him.

A Turk looks upon the Osmanlis in the aggregate as the only people in the world possessing real virtues, yet ask any Turk about any other Turk who is not his direct superior, and he will give him the worst of characters. This arises from the great personal influence of individuals, commencing with the Sultan and permeating through all classes down to the village 'Muchtar.' No man loses sight of the fact that if Achmet can be got out of office and Hassan get his place, that he will, or believes he will, derive direct advantage by the change. And thus astute Greeks, Bulgars, and Armenians frequently pave the way to fortune by pecuniarily supporting persons who they foresee will eventually come to power.

The most renowned diplomatist ever known in the East once said : 'After living in Turkey ten months a man thinks that he knows the people thoroughly. After living there for ten years he begins to find out

that he knows nothing about them.' This is very true, and after many years spent in the country, I have much diffidence in giving an opinion on the motives and conduct of the inhabitants. One sometimes gets a glance into depths which reveal feelings and thoughts quite unaccountable. For instance, it has always been a matter of surprise to me that persons so clever as the Christian hangers-on of the Turkish officials should, when in the enjoyment of power, behave so, to our ideas, unwisely. At such times the humblest and most servile man assumes airs of importance and a general air of insolence which one would think must provoke unnecessary enmity. He apes and exaggerates the manners of the dominant race whom he in private discourse affects to despise, and, in short, is insufferably arrogant and vulgar. And yet such conduct seems to be accepted by all classes as quite natural and proper under the circumstances, and such as should inspire respect rather than disgust or aversion.

There is a prevalent idea that the Turk is truthful and the Christian untruthful. My experience leads me to believe that all are not only equally untruthful, but hold in contempt those that are truthful. They look upon what we should call straightforwardness as blundering, if not something akin to bad manners, and taking the view of things that in nearly all transactions with Europeans they succeed, they conclude that their policy, whether in diplomacy or commerce, must be the wisest.

And yet under certain circumstances they believe one another just as implicitly as we believe our most trusted public servants. I have no doubt that the public in Turkey as entirely accept Edib Effendi's account of the Bulgarian massacres as we do the account of them written by Mr. Baring. With them the 'wish is father to the thought' absolutely, and I am convinced that it never crosses the mind of one of them that any of the wretched Bulgarians now being hanged wholesale are innocent of the crimes imputed to them, though they must know that the evidence on which they are being convicted is for the most part quite worthless. They know that the Bulgars sympathise with the Russians, and consequently believe them not only capable of, but certain to have committed, all other crimes. All the stories of Russian cruelties that have been published by the Turks are not only believed, honestly believed, but no amount of evidence to the contrary will ever shake their belief in them.

To save accused Bulgars from the gallows, as I sincerely hope some may be saved by English or any other influence, would outrage the feelings of the Turks as severely as would the liberation under foreign influence of a Rush or a Müller have outraged the people of this country. To hang Chevketh Pasha would be to the Turks as monstrous as the hanging of a Lawrence or a Clyde would have been to the English.

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There are depths of wounded feelings and prejudices concealed under the mild, polite, almost humble demeanour of the Turk, little suspected. He burns to revenge the lecturings and reproofs of ambassadors, and the tolerance he has found it politic to affect, and the liberties to grant to the despised Christians. I do not like to think what the fate of numberless Bulgarians will be, should the Turks succeed in driving back the Russians across the Danube.

Backbite, slander, and intrigue against their fellows as they may individually, the Turks are entirely at one as a nation on all great questions. The show Pasha, who talks of political economy and liberty to the distinguished English tourist, has the same feelings and aspirations as the village zaptieh. With courage flushed by success, and the sensation of victory fresh upon them, they are capable of clearing off old scores and realising old aims, in a way that may astonish the world.

The Turks are brave, docile, cunning, and ambitious. Under favourable circumstances, a Grand Vizier of the old type might call on the 16,000,000 Mussulmen of the Empire for any sacrifice, with a certainty of being cheerfully obeyed, if the object in view were popular. To recover the lost territory of Islam, to humble its enemies and re-establish its direct control over the quasi-independent provinces, would be objects which would meet the enthusiastic approval of all.

Schools now exist in most of the Bulgarian villages.

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They are mostly of recent date, and the education they give is necessarily limited, and it has therefore been the custom of the richer Bulgarians to send their sons to be educated, either in the Robert's College at Constantinople, or to some foreign country. As is only natural, the greater part of the boys or young men find their way to Russia or Roumania, and it is men who have been educated in those countries, as the Turks know only too well, who have spread discontent throughout the Balkan Peninsula.

It is well known that amongst certain classes in Russia, it is the habit to profess radical doctrines—to talk, perhaps rather wildly, of the rights of man in general, and of the Slave races in particular. There is, moreover, throughout the East a tie stronger than blood or country—religion; and the religion of Russia and Bulgaria is the same. They may be unwise for so thinking, but the fact remains that the Bulgars think that the Russians are their friends, whilst they know that the Turks make them pay taxes, and do many things that are unpleasant, and consequently they desire to get rid of the Turks. Much which has been said and written in England on this Eastern question during the last two years goes far to demonstrate how partial is the mass of humanity! If this is so among highly-civilised men, how much more so must it be amongst very ignorant ones. In the Russian the Bulgar sees all the virtues, in the Turk all the vices!

Numbers of men, deeply imbued with Russian sympathies and the more advanced of Russian ideas, have returned to their native country, and in turn inoculated the masses with similar notions. In times of difficulty and trial these men have been in the habit of going to the different Russian consulates for sympathy, advice, and assistance. Under somewhat analogous circumstances, we have seen our Foreign Secretary telegraphing to the English Ambassador at Constantinople to use his influence to save, if possible, two Bulgars educated in England from an ignominious death.

Russian education and Russian sympathy have, in short, been the true—and, I believe, the only real—‘Propaganda’ in Turkey. As to Russian emissaries, I never to my knowledge encountered one, or heard on credible evidence of any one or more being employed. Those who assert that all the troubles in Bulgaria have been caused by Russian emissaries and Russian gold, should bring forward some proof more tangible than assertion.

Let who may succeed in the present struggle, it should be recognised by Europe, when the day of settlement comes, that the population of Bulgaria deserve more than bare sympathy at their hands. With a fine climate, great natural beauty, a rich soil, and either accessible or easily made accessible on all sides, Bulgaria is surely worthy of a better fate than to be given over to periodical devastation, or that between whiles its

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resources should only be used as a means of recruiting forces which are to be again engaged in the same destruction.

Personally I have no belief in the view that Turks and Bulgars cannot live together in peace, even after recent events. Give them a good and a just government and equal rights, and the natural docility of the two races will very soon cause them to submit to law and to settle down quietly. I have seen Turks and Bulgars live in harmony for ten years in the same village ; and, if for ten years, why not for twenty, or for always ?

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BULGARIA

BEFORE THE WAR.

CHAPTER I.

Varna and Rustchuck Railroad—Rustchuck—A Turkish Street—
Buying a Horse.

DURING the five years that I was employed on the Kustendji railway, reports had constantly reached us that the line from Varna to Rustchuck was about to be commenced—first by one company then by another ; but somehow these reports one after the other came to nothing, and the Kustendji line continued the sole representative of railway engineering in Turkey in Europe until the spring of 1864.

The sick man had been getting slowly worse and worse ever since he and his friends had last fought the Russians ; and so, I suppose, feeling himself to be in a bad way, he at last took the advice of his European doctors and consented to pay for a dose of medicine named ‘Progress,’ and, as a first step, entered into a

most solemn agreement to give certain advantages to a lot of unfortunates who, believing in him, proposed to find the requisite money and make the much required line.

There could be no doubt as to the great advantages that would accrue from it to the country, for it was to start from the seaport of Varna and then run inland up the great valley past the maiden fortress of Shumla, to the fortified town of Rustchuck, and would enable the Government at Constantinople to transport troops and material of war from thence to the front in twenty hours. Yes, to the front, for Rustchuck was, and is, one of the eyes of Turkey that is constantly on the strain looking out for the hostile forces of the great Czar. Then it must be remembered that up to the time the Varna and Rustchuck railway was made there was no such thing as a road in all Bulgaria, and that the only way of transporting material, in or out of the country, was to drag it over the muddy tracks in bullock carts, and that even these could not be collected in sufficient numbers when any great emergency arose, such as a threatened attack from over the Danube.

Besides the advantages to be derived from the line in a military point of view, there were those that always should, under a good government, follow from the opening up of a rich country—such as offering to the agriculturalist and the merchant an easy access to the best markets, both foreign and local, for his products and merchandise. Any how, after years wasted over various schemes to get this line made, the Turkish Government

at last offered sufficiently enticing terms to induce an English Company to take the affair in hand, and my elder brother (and former chief) had the management of all the works; and it was owing to a short telegram I received from him that I started at a day's notice from Lago d'Orta in Italy, where I had been residing for some months, and with my stout old portmanteau found myself once more stepping from the Danube post boat on to the domains of the Sultan at Rustchuck on one fine morning in the month of April 1864.

For the unfortunate waif who finds himself in Turkey for the first time in his life, there is no part of Europe more difficult to make a start in, unless some kind friend such as the consul or an old European resident takes him in hand. Not only does he not understand a word that is said, but the manners of the people are so utterly strange to him that though longing for help he fears to trust anyone, and so drifts about paying heavily for every step he goes, until probably some wily Levantine, scenting the plunder to be extracted from him, takes him in hand and helps him to buy his experience. On the other hand, for a man accustomed to the manners and customs of the country there is no place where so much can be done in so short a time.

Before I had been on shore an hour I had rescued my portmanteau from the custom-house, eaten a breakfast with the English consul, hired two clean though rough rooms in an Armenian's house, engaged a man-cook and a cavass and set up house-keeping. Besides

this I had made the acquaintance of a lot of fellow-countrymen who had congregated here for the construction of the line, and among them three or four brother-craftsmen, with whom I started later in the day on a tour of inspection, first visiting the site of the future station, and afterwards round the fortifications on to the rising ground to the south, and then, as evening drew in, home through the heart of the town.

This was my first visit to Rustchuck, and I must say that bearing in mind other provincial towns in Turkey, my first impressions were very pleasing, nor have I had cause to alter them, for though in after years I spent many months in this place, I continue to think it by far the best town I know in Turkey. It is built on high ground on the edge of the great river, which at high floods washes the foot of the earth cliffs on which it is placed, and then extends far away inland on the flat plain. It is open to the river (though protected by several batteries filled with old guns), but on the land side it is surrounded by a fosse and ramp, with batteries at intervals, ready to sweep the plain ; but all are in a state of semi decay, and would require much to be done before they would be fit to protect the town.

On the south side, running towards the west, are low hills covered with vineyards through which runs the main road to Shumla and Varna. From the summit of these hills can be had a very pretty view of the town at their foot, then the Danube with its great flat

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islands, and away some few miles to the right, the Wallachian town of Giurgevo, the front door to that principality.

Like all Turkish towns Rustchuck gains enchantment from distance. Standing as I did that afternoon looking down upon it, it looked beautifully picturesque, clean and prosperous, with its white-washed cottages covered with red tiles, each standing in a large courtyard, and shaded by a cluster of mulberry trees. Every here and there a tall minaret shot its slender shaft towards the heavens, and I could just catch the cry of the Immam calling the faithful to prayer, the distance giving to the sound a sweetness that is wanting when standing near. Strings of arabas were hurrying along, anxious to be clear of the town before the gates were shut, intending to encamp outside to be able to start before daybreak for their distant villages, and another string of men and women on foot, on horseback, or in one-horse telekis were hastening in from field labour. Reminded by these sights that I also had a home, though a very young one, and a dinner waiting for me, I hurried down, and mingling with the stream followed on through the gate into the Turkish quarter of the town, and thoroughly Turkish it was. On the open space left between the houses and the walls of the town were collected groups of arabas with their patient, sleepy-looking buffaloes or bullocks chained up to the pole munching at a bundle of hay, while the drivers were congregated round a fire on the open ground, cooking or eating their supper preparatory to sleeping,

where they sat wrapped in their long capotes. The spot they were on had been used for the same purpose for generations past, and was literally the top of an old dirt heap, reeking with old and new smells, littered about with rubbish, dead cats, wolfish-looking dogs, and half a dozen beggars. Just above the heads of one of the largest, and apparently one of the merriest of the groups, was a stout bar some twelve feet long, supported by two rough posts about ten feet from the ground, from which in the next few years I saw the fruits of the first Bulgarian revolution suspended, but which was now being used as a post of observation by some half-dozen little urchins who were sitting astride it, chatting to each other and chaffing the araba drivers. Then on I went into the street with its wretched one-storied shops open to the front, displaying such commodities as old iron, rope, dried figs, locusts, black or white Bulgar caps, sheeps' milk cheeses, Turkish shoes and slippers, earthen water-bottles, tobacco, and many other such things, useful to the natives, but not pretty nor much calculated to drain the pockets of an European. If the shops were bad the road was worse. Close to the sides were huge narrow irregular stepping stones about two feet above the level of the narrow street, which in wet weather was a river of mud and filth, and in dry, one long dust heap on which sprawled troops of lean, mangey, decrepit and deformed dogs, all looking depressed, all thin, and all either sleepy or sulky.

On I went until in about the centre of the town I

came upon a more open part, on which were pitched higglety-pigglety a group of badly built, worse designed, pretentious-looking buildings, and I at once perceived that I had reached the abode of the great man, the Pasha, and that these were the government offices.

After passing these, my road turned to the right, and each hundred yards I went the houses and shops improved, proving to me that I was in the Giaour quarter. At last I reached the main street of the Christians, which runs parallel to the cliff, and in which there are some really good houses. That is to say good for a Turkish town, for they are spacious, clean, and fairly well arranged. In this street our offices were finally situated, and afterwards, whenever I visited Rustchuck I took up my abode in it.

In Turkey, one's dinner, such as it is, is always ready after the middle of the afternoon, and has the one advantage of being just as well or badly cooked if it is eaten at 5 P.M. or at midnight, and on this evening I found mine ready to be served; so neglecting to put on a dress coat, I just washed my hands, sat down on the edge of the divan, and pegged away with a good appetite at the food which was arranged before me on three rush-bottomed chairs, with Danube water to wash it down, and a cigarette for dessert.

I had soon, though, to be off again to join a council of ways and means, when, after spending half the night poring over plans, taking notes, and discussing arrangements, it was settled that I should accompany the

consulting engineer over the line to Varna, establish myself there, and look after the works at that end of the line.

The next day but one was fixed for our departure, and as there was much to be done on the morrow, and it was already some hour or so past midnight, I ran home and tumbled into my bed, where I dreamt of sections and cross sections, gradients and curves, cuttings and embankments, till I finally fell off some high scaffolding.

I was awakened early in the morning with the glad news that a big lighter with goods for us had arrived from Tchernavoda, the terminus of the old Kustendji line; so I hastened down to see the unloading, and my heart was made glad at the sight of my saddle, camp bed, and various odds and ends of my old camp furniture, whose timely arrival would greatly conduce to my comfort on the approaching journey. When all was unloaded and stowed away, I went up to the town and spread the news that I was in want of a good horse. Soon I had a dozen beasts prancing before my windows with their heads well up in the air looking fit and anxious to run for a man's life; but on telling my cavass to lead them up and down the road with a loose rein, they one after the other lapsed into a lot of spiritless, woebegone wretches, that looked as if they had been at work all and every day for the past month, and besides had had bad nights. It was sharp bits and sharper spurs that had stirred them up, and as I was not going to haul at a poor beast's mouth and probe

him in the ribs for 140 miles of rough road, I sent them back to their stables.

I then heard that a Turkish Bin Bashi had 'a wonder' to sell; so I paid him a visit and spent an hour sitting on his divan, drinking black coffee, whilst he poured forth a string of lies in praise of his horse, the mildest of which would have been enough for most men's conscience to carry. It was a lamb, quite young, very quiet, most enduring, and the price, thirty liras, as nothing compared to its value. He only parted with it because he was ordered round by water to Constantinople, and could not easily take it with him. He let me have it cheap because he loved it so much. 'But come, Tchellaby, and see the beauty;' so off we started to the barrack yard, and I had the animal pointed out to me tied up in a nearly dark stall. In one respect he was like most lambs—he was snow white, but I was assured this was a marvellous horse, for he was born so, and his mother was the same. As he kicked out within an inch of me when I tried to go up to him, I insisted on his being fetched out, and was struck by the fact that the gentle creature required two soldiers to lead him. However, he was a well-shaped horse and in good condition, so I thought I would look him over; but on going up to his head, he gave me a blow on the thigh with his fore foot that would have done credit to Tom Sayer in his palmiest days for its quickness and directness, and which sent me hobbling out of the yard and house quite forgetting to make my salaams.

CHAPTER II.

Pelevan the Murderer—Starting for Varna—Pravady Gorge—Arrival at Varna—Varna Merchants—An English Friend.

JUST before I reached my house I heard a man in a café call out in Turkish, ‘Tchellaby, my Tchellaby, welcome, welcome! again I see you, how glad I am!’ and the next minute a great big red-haired Turk was kissing the end of my shooting jacket with apparent satisfaction. I knew the man’s face at once; it was perfectly familiar to me, but, for the life of me, I could not call to mind where I had seen him; so I patted him on the arm, called him ‘my good child,’ and put on an appearance of pleasure to fit his. In the midst of which my dormant memory revived and I exclaimed, ‘Why, Pelevan, they hanged you years ago for murder!’

‘No, Tchellaby, they did not hang me, they imprisoned me for life—ah, it is a hard fate.’

‘But you are not in prison now!’

‘Yes, Tchellaby, I am, and never shall get out unless I can get some friend, such as you, to help me by interceding with the Pasha.’

‘But you are not locked up!’

‘No, I am confined to this town, and two hours’

distance from it; and oh, my only friend, for the sake of the old days and my former good conduct, take pity on me.'

Considering it was well to keep on good terms with one of the worst murderers I had ever heard of, I spoke him fair—said I was sorry to see him where he was, which was the bare truth, for I would much rather have seen him on the gallows at the town gate, and then, without committing myself to any promises, bade him good-day.

Some years before this man had been employed by us on the Kustendji railway, and was for a year or two rather a favourite with us all. Over and over again he was trusted with money to take to distant towns and buy us requisites, such as pick shafts, charcoal, and other native products. He was often away for a month at a time on these excursions, but always turned up at last and accounted for the money, and might now have been in the same position if he had not drawn his big knife and cleft a small Bulgar boy's head in twain because the said boy refused to hand him over a pitcher of water he had just drawn fresh from the well. Pelevan never attempted to escape, and so was arrested red-handed and put in prison. Two disguised zaptiehs were placed in the same cell with him, who won his confidence by pretending to be fellow-murderers, and so led him on to confess that while travelling about for us he had killed five or six people, some of them Turks and some Christians. He was tried for these murders at Rustchuck and condemned to death; yet here he was,

lounging in a café, well-dressed and apparently prosperous, and I daresay when opportunity offered indulging in his old pastime of cutting throats and breaking little boys' skulls. I am glad to say I never saw or heard of the ruffian again during the remaining time I was in Turkey.

My horse-dealing on this occasion led me at last to purchase, for twenty liras, a big, well-bred, active-looking mare in good condition and with easy paces. I thought at first I had got a bargain, but a few miles of the road next day developed one fatal fault—she struck herself in front when trotting or even jogging, and was perpetually coming down on her head.

As my readers, if they trouble themselves to accompany me through the following pages, will have many a long journey over Turkish roads to make with me, I shall spare them the account of this ride down to Varna, and instead will give them, once for all, a short description of the line and the scenery it passes through, which will help them, I hope, to understand better what is to follow.

The station at Rustchuck is placed a quarter of a mile from the town at the foot of the cliff, on land partly reclaimed from the Danube. For the first quarter of a mile the line runs almost parallel with the course of the river, but works its way up the face of the cliff by an easy incline, till it reaches the undulating plain on the top, and then turns off in the direction of Varna.

Strange to say, the Turkish Government chose the

site for the station, which is so placed that it is outside the forts, and, what is more, out of reach of them, being hidden by the cliffs. On the other hand, it is at the mercy of an enemy holding the island opposite, and could easily be destroyed from thence. This was pointed out to the Turks at the time, but they only said, 'That is our affair.'

For about the first five miles the line mounts up a steep gradient, in some parts as much as 1 in 40, till it passes through the high ground at the south of Rustchuck in a deep cutting. From there it runs chiefly down hill till it reaches the first station at Tchervenavoda (a Russian word which means 'crimson water,' as Tchernovoda, the terminus of the Kustendji line on the Danube, means in the same language 'black water'). After this the line mounts by steep gradients till it reaches flat table land at the station of Vetova, twenty-four miles from Rustchuck, where, for the first time, it leaves the plains and enters a forest of stunted lime and oak scrub which shuts it in as with a wall, and is far the most uninteresting part of the line to the lovers of scenery, though, owing to its flatness, it is the best part to travel over. Forty-four miles from Rustchuck is the station for Rasgrad, though that town itself is some two miles away in the valley at the foot of the steep hill, and is one of the dirtiest and most thoroughly Turkish towns in all the country. It is near this station that the water-shed is reached, after passing which the line descends more or less all the way to Varna.

About seventy miles from Rustchuck is the half-way station of Shitanjick—a most suggestive name, as it means ‘the little devil,’ and further to match its name, it is situated in the ‘deli Orman’ or Mad Forest. Here the line passes over a narrow and deep ravine on a very fine stone viaduct, the best piece of masonry, I believe, in all Turkey. Leaving the forests behind, the line here descends over grassy plains and open downs with a splendid view of the rugged Balkans in front of it, till at Shumla Road Station it passes into a narrow gorge actually at the foot of these mountains, and after winding in and out amongst the hills for another twelve miles, passes through the valley of Pravady (where the entrance of the Changa pass begins, over which the Russian army marched towards Constantinople in 1829), and then on till it skirts the marshes, swamps, and lakes, which it follows till it reaches Varna.

Throughout the entire line the land is of the richest alluvial soil; but though it yields splendid crops of cereals, it is only partially cultivated, and the tillage is of the roughest description. The forests—or what are called forests, for nowhere is the timber good for anything but firewood—afford pasturage for the dun-coloured cattle, little active sheep, and a few goats, and are a fine shelter for such worthless creatures as wolves, boars, and robbers.

For years past I had heard of the gorge of Pravady as one of the worst spots in all Bulgaria for brigands, and half the tales we had been told of men being

stopped, robbed, and murdered were fathered upon it. It was therefore with keen interest that I rode down this gorge for the first time, and I felt thankful that I had English companions with me, and that at all events it was not likely that the trip would be finished by a rencontre with the gentlemen of the hills.

At every village at which we stopped we were asked by the inhabitants with keen interest when the earth-works were to be commenced, and we were soon convinced we should not stand still for want of labour. All had heard of the Kustendji line, and many had worked upon it, and over and over again I was greeted by some sturdy Bulgar or Turk, who claimed me as one of his old masters. Our entrance into Varna was quite an event to the inhabitants of that rather dull town, and as we passed along the muddy, ill-paved streets we were greeted on all sides with cries of welcome; and I was rejoiced to see my old servant Demetry, who had been with me for two or three years on the Kustendji railroad, rush out of a shop and make his salaams. Before I had ridden another hundred yards he was again in my service, and when we reached the door of the English Consulate he was there in readiness to take charge of our goods and chattels, and make himself generally useful. Here we had a great disappointment, for, on the door being opened, a melancholy-looking young Greek told us in perfect English that my old friend Mr. Suter, the Consul, had been buried only the day before. He had been consul at Varna for some years, and from time to time had

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paid us visits at Kustendji. However, I had but little time just now to bewail his loss, for I had to hurry off to the beach, where a huge pile of boxes and goods of every imaginable description had been tumbled from a steamer early that morning ; then there was to hire a magazine to stow them in, look after the transport, appoint a watchman, and, as soon as I could, go house-hunting—and hard work I had, for I was the only Englishman of the party who had ever been at the place before, or knew where to go for help, or who could be trusted.

I feel sure there were not a dozen male humans in all Varna that night that did not entertain hopes of gaining something by the construction of the railway. Some hoped to make fortunes, others were, perhaps, content with the thoughts of competency, but all hoped to gain their end by a short cut and with little labour. In such a hurry were they that they hardly gave me time to swallow my dinner on this first evening before I was beset by at least a dozen of the merchants and leading men of the town with offers of every sort.

They all wanted me to live with them free gratis, for all loved me like a brother, and each one was so disinterested that he split on his oldest friends and neighbours and assured me they were all rogues except himself. Unfortunately for them all, I had lived in Varna for some time previously, and knew a little of them. First, I could not recall their having ever shown me much brotherly love before, and then, from what I could remember of them, there was not a pin to

choose between them ; so my opinion only differed from theirs in that I invariably added one more rogue to the list of those given me—namely, the speaker.

I remember one offer that was made me that night by a man who, I am sorry to say, was a native of one of the great nations of Europe, and an educated man. He asked to be made pay clerk. I thanked him, but said I should not require his services, as an Englishman had been appointed to the post. ‘Ah!’ he exclaimed, ‘what a waste of money! You might have saved his salary.’

‘To give it to you,’ I said.

‘No, sir, I would do it for nothing. See here, sir’ (his left thumb stuck up in the air with a big ring on it, whilst he gave it a severe thrashing with the forefinger of the other hand), ‘you just give me de pay sheets and de money. I go pay all de men, and never ask for one penny.’

‘Ah!’ I said, ‘I begin to see. You would recoup yourself for your trouble by swindling the men.’

‘Sir, you say it coarse. No, sir, by my *commission*. I am a —, not one of dese rogues. All dese others rogues, but I am an honest man.’

I did not quite agree with him, but I daresay he was right and I was wrong—it was, after all, a matter of opinion. However, my opinion on the subject was so strong that I determined from that night to have as little as possible to do with Varna merchants.

I shall always look back to the next morning as one of the days in my life to be marked with a red letter,

for it was then that I first made the acquaintance of a man who for the next three years shared my house with me—shared my troubles, lightened my labours, joined in my sports, and was at all times a perfect gentleman, a genial, merry companion, and one of the pluckiest fellows that ever trod in shoe leather. He was so mixed up with my life for the next five years that I shall often have to mention him, and in future I shall call him by the old familiar name of Mac, well knowing all who knew him will at once recognise of whom I am writing, though I do not give his real name. As we sat at breakfast we heard a cheery voice in the courtyard asking for me, and the next minute Demetry ushered into the room a tall handsome lad of some twenty years, who at once introduced himself, telling me, what I then heard for the first time, that he had been sent out by my brother as my assistant. I suppose in the great press of business my brother had forgotten to mention him, but it only required one look at his face to make me feel very glad to have him with me.

He had ridden in from Kustendji, having arrived there from England a few days before, and he had done the long ride (100 miles) over the Dobrudja in a day and a-half, accompanied by one cavass, to whom he could not speak a word. He gave us an amusing account of his journey, and talked of the difficulties and fatigue of it as a great joke; said he liked that kind of life, and threw out hints that he did not care how soon he was in the saddle again.

Having a spare room, I offered it to him, and it

continued to be his whenever he was at Varna, during the next three years.

On coming down to the courtyard we were greeted by four English sub-contractors, who told us they had just arrived by the steamer from Constantinople, having come there direct from Spain, where they had been on some works, and that now they hoped to be soon at the old trade again. For the next hour or so we were all busy poring over plans, sections, &c., and then leaving the others to ride up the line and have a look at the country, I furbished up my apparel, and hastened off to the Konak to pay my respects to the Pasha—a duty not to be neglected, for though it is not manners for a Turk to appear to take an interest in anything, yet I knew he was in a state of the keenest expectation and longing to see what the Giaour who had come to his town was like, and he would have felt hurt and offended had I not called at once.

CHAPTER III.

A Pasha of the Old School—Turkish Horsemen—Commencing the Railway—The English Camp—Devna Marsh—Varna English.

I HAVE known many Turks and many Pashas, but of all I have known this old fellow was the most honest, the simplest, and the most agreeable I have ever met ; and yet he was a Turk of the Turks, one of the old school, that hated a Giaour in the abstract, but liked him individually, and whose word when given was to be trusted implicitly. Unfortunately for me he was removed long before the line was finished, and I lost a friend, who was replaced by an *à la Franca* Pasha, with whom I had now and then a few words—not friendly.

I found the old fellow sitting cross-legged on his divan, apparently occupied in dictating a letter to his sickly, unwholesome-looking secretary, who was scribbling away on another divan on the opposite side of the room, using the palm of his hand for a desk, and getting through his work at the rate of about a line in five minutes, and it appeared to me that both he and his master were glad to be interrupted, and get a short rest.

I was presented to the Pasha by an old acquaintance, M. Comiano, the Greek interpreter, the only permanent

official I had ever known in Turkey, and therefore far the most efficient. He had been interpreter to some dozens of Pashas of Varna, and his services extended over many years. From what I saw of him, during the years I was at Varna, I came to the conclusion that *he* was the *real* governor, and that the nominal ones were generally only useless, ignorant hindrances to business. After the usual salaams had been gone through, the Pasha entered into a long discussion—or rather, I should say, listened to a long discourse from me—only exclaiming from time to time ‘Inshallah’ (please God), or ‘Mashallah’ (wonderful). When he used the former word, I knew he did it from a feeling of superstition or religion, for no good Turk ever makes an assertion, or listens to one, of what is going to happen, without saying, ‘Please God;’ and when he used the other expression, he meant courteously to insinuate that my talk was a bit too tall, and that without quite putting me down as a liar, he yet was not going to swallow all I said.

Somehow we soon drifted into the subject of horses, when the old fellow brightened up at once, and proposed that we should adjourn to a summer-house in the courtyard and have his stud out to inspect. Wishing to make friends with him I agreed to this, little as I could afford to lose the time; so we marched off, followed by some half-dozen chiboukjis with pipes and coffee. He had some very good Arab horses, of which he was justly proud; but he was almost pathetic, as he patted his well-filled waistcoat and with a sigh said, ‘Ah, this has

spoilt all the pleasure I used to take in riding ; I can now only go at foot's pace on a quiet old pony, and these beauties I only keep to look at and pet. No one ever uses them for work, nor shall they as long as I live.'

Standing by the Pasha's side was a remarkably handsome blue-eyed little lad, about ten years old, who the old fellow told me was his son.

On my asking the boy if he could ride, the Pasha called up one of the grooms, who was leading a horse that seemed to prefer walking about on his hind legs to going on all fours, and told him to put the boy up. In a moment the little brat was on the bare-backed horse, and gathering up the reins and giving a yell started off down the yard, through the gates and out on to an open piece of grass at full gallop, the horse kicking and playing in a manner that would have made me very careful if on him with a good saddle.

There is one thing, if nothing else, that the Turks certainly can do well—they can ride ; not, perhaps, as Englishmen can behind hounds—for it is not their custom to jump horses over hedges, I suppose because there are no hedges to jump—but from babyhood a Turk is at home on a horse, and I have seen small boys perform marvels of horsemanship, and this at the age when young master in England is in a pannier on the Shetland. Not only does he ride when a baby, but will keep it up till he is an old grey-bearded man, and when he is long past walking, he will be seen sitting upright on his beast, going over rough roads and uneven ground

with a light hand and easy motion, looking quite at home and in the right place.

Railway-making must be anxious busy work in any country, but few can realise how anxious and busy a man must be in a country like Turkey, where no one has the faintest knowledge of the work and every small detail must be personally looked to and the entire native staff trained to its duties.

Fortunately for me I was soon joined at Varna by a most efficient staff of Englishmen, and by letting off the earth-works to sub-contractors as far as possible, we soon made a start and put our mark on the country. But even with this help my life was a very busy one, and I had to outrage my feelings by getting up with the lark and working on till far into the night.

Our task was made far more difficult at first by the Turkish Government having determined to cut a canal through the mile of sand and marsh that separates Varna bay from the beautiful deep-water lake which they proposed to turn into a harbour. Therefore our railway was to have commenced at the village of Aladdin, at the head of this lake. We none of us thought for a moment that the Government would ever carry out this scheme, and in fact we knew they were quite incapable of doing so themselves, nor could they even by any possibility get a European company to do it for them, first, because the traffic would not be sufficient to make it pay, and secondly, because the cost would have been so much that the Turks could not have guaranteed even a small percentage on the outlay. The

summer was half over before the Government gave way and consented to our running the line on as far as the outskirts of the town of Varna. At first, therefore, we had to transport all our materials ten miles up the lake, and had a ten miles' ride each time to inspect the earth-works. Then, besides the earth-works, magazines and houses had to be built at Aladdin, and men and horses kept there for the works.

It was just to the north of Aladdin that our troops were encamped previous to their removal to the Crimea, and the first time I rode up to this village an old Turk pointed out to me the ring left in the turf where Lord Raglan's tent had stood.

Doubtless our commanders had good reasons for placing the camp on these hills—at all events it is not for me to criticise their doing so, but I must say I believe it was about the most unwholesome spot within a hundred miles, to say nothing of its being the most unget-at-able. The camp was placed no doubt on high ground, but it was high ground at the end of many thousands of acres of swamp and stinking bog, and the draught down the valley must have carried malaria into the camp every night; besides, the men ran the risk of inhaling the same deadly poison each time they visited the marsh-surrounded lake to get water.

When reading Russell's letters from the camp in which he described the great difficulties the commissariat had in getting provisions up to the camp, I remember being struck with the fact of their not making use of the long lake as a means of transport, and the

advantages of doing so appeared so great when I got on the ground that I immediately sent to Constantinople and bought a dozen big oak lighters, and these I placed on the lake with small rowing boats to tug them. We thus became independent of muddy and oftentimes impassable roads, and had a cheap and easy access to the sea.

To give my readers some little idea what the swamps surrounding the Devna lake are like, it will be sufficient for me to tell them that for one whole week three hundred men were employed barrowing earth into this bog in the attempt to carry the line across it. Every night one chain's length was finished and each morning it had disappeared! I was away on business during this week, and when I returned I had an iron rod sunk, end first, by its own weight to the depth of *forty feet* in the bog! We eventually crossed this and other marshes most successfully by floating the line over it on a thick layer of brushwood and trees, and to this day that has been one of the best parts of the entire line.

The soil of the bog was about the colour and consistency of pitch, and the smell was nearly strong enough to support the rails, far too strong for my poor sense of smell, for it made me actually sick standing over it, and every day the workmen had to be removed and replaced by others owing to the terrible fevers they caught.

The state of the roads will be appreciated when I mention that during the time the troops were at Devna, three or four officers were sent with some dozen troopers

to reconnoitre as far as Bazarjik, a town on the edge of the Dobrudja, only thirty miles distant, and that half of their horses died on the return journey. I was told this only a few weeks ago by an officer who was one of the party.

A few days after my arrival at Varna I received by sea from Galatz two monster rafts of timber—timber that had been grown on the slopes of the Carpathians, and after being floated out of the mountains, had been rafted at Galatz, and sent round to Varna with a tug boat. I had been expecting these rafts for some days, and was beginning to fear some mishap had taken place, when one morning Demetry called me at daybreak to say a sailor had come to tell me that the leading raft was aground on a rock near the shore some five miles up the coast.

I was quickly on my pony galloping to the place, and on turning a headland, there, sure enough, I saw my big friend hard and fast, looking like a small island. I was soon on the beach opposite it, and on hailing the tug a small boat was sent off for me. I first went on board to consult the captain, who told me the raft had been aground half the night and, do what he would, he could not move it. I then went to the raft to give orders for the top timbers to be thrown off so as to lighten it, but I had not been on it five minutes before the people on the tug began to shout, the whistle to go, and the paddles to splash and splutter in a furious way, and I saw to my great joy that we were moving out to sea.

The landing of these two rafts I put into the hands of a big Dalmatian boatman who soon had them high and dry on the beach, and piled up in stacks ready for use. The first day I spoke to him about it, I said, 'Get together a good gang of men—mind, I'll have none of your town hands or coffee-house loungers, they must all be smart and willing to work.' The next morning the Dalmatian came to the office to report progress, and on my enquiring if he had collected a good gang, he said 'Yes, sare, one vera good lot of men—all damn fools!' Now my friend had learnt his English from the English sailors who came into Varna, and from hearing them constantly address the natives employed about the vessels in those two expressive words, he naturally supposed they were the correct term for workmen, and that in using them he was convincing me he had got together a gang of the right sort!

In this he was not unlike nine out of every ten Englishmen who go to Turkey. They always address a Turk as 'Bonny back' and speak of him as 'this old bonny back,' thinking it means some such term as 'old fellow.' They have acquired this idea from hearing the Turks commence their conversation with 'Banna bak'—which literally is 'Attend to me.'

To give another illustration of the fertile imagination of the British workman I may mention that near the mines of Heraclea there is a Turkish village named Zungledék, which was always called by the workmen in the mines 'Uncle Dick,' and they invariably corrected anyone who pronounced the name rightly by saying, 'Oh, I see, you mean Uncle Dick.'

CHAPTER IV.

A Troublesome Visitor—A Volunteer Contractor—Swapping a Horse —
Zaptieh—Turkish Horses—A Country Trip with the Pasha.

ONE of our chief difficulties at the commencement of our life at Varna arose from the excessive affection evinced for us by the Varniot merchants. Despairing after oft-repeated attempts to allure us into the great whirlpool of society as existing there, they settled, as it was settled once before in the East, that if the mountain would not go to Mahomet, Mahomet should go to the mountain. They took to visiting us in the most friendly manner. This perhaps, to some men's tastes, would have been charming, but to one hard at work all day it became oppressive, especially as the visits were paid at all hours between five in the morning and midnight, and as the conversation invariably turned on some advantage the visitor wished to obtain that might put money in his pocket.

The reader will say, 'Why did you not use a little *self-denial*, and order your servant to say, Not at home?' This would not answer in Varna, for this reason: no visitor ever thinks of troubling a servant to announce him, but just walks up and into your room with a self-satisfied smile on his face greatly provocative of a breach of the peace. One gentleman nearly drove poor Mac and me demented. He discovered our meal times,

and whenever either of us by good luck got home in time for dinner there would be our friend smoking his everlasting cigarette, and kindly pressing us to make ourselves at home. Then he would drop in just as the work of the evening was pushed aside, and we had settled down for a chat about home and distant friends; and on waking in the morning, there he would be sitting on the foot of the bed, telling one not to mind dressing before him (washing never entered his head). Driven to desperation, I at last wrote him a note, giving a short description of the manners and customs of the West, in which I particularly drew his attention to the fact, that we preferred our acquaintances being announced by a servant. No good! Our friend appeared again the next morning at breakfast, and proposed afterwards to sit on the corner of the desk in the office while I went through accounts. I drew him aside, and politely pointed out that his visits were untimely, and that when I wished for his company I would let him know. He went away then, only to walk into my bedroom at sunset as I was refreshing myself in a state of nature in a cold bath. He was greatly shocked and horrified at the sight, and, helped by this and the getting my bath sponge full in his face, he retired. I was annoyed before, but now I was in a rage, so I once more wrote him a letter which I flattered myself would terminate our acquaintance; but not a bit of it. He was perched on my bed when I woke next morning, looking more friendly than ever. This was too much; so I told him if he would only wait till I had put on

my thickest boots I would give myself the pleasure of kicking him down stairs ; and further, that I would do the same if ever he came up to my rooms again without first sending up his name.

I did at last thus succeed in getting rid of him, but we always continued the greatest friends, and he might constantly be seen trying to induce Demetry to bring up his card ; but that crafty native was too well trained in the customs of the Britisher ever to allow that we were at home.

The excessive friendship of another Varniot merchant induced him to show the very greatest anxiety about our being constantly supplied with labourers. And to ensure this he proposed to contract with us for this useful article. In vain I assured him we had more men than we wanted. ‘Oh!’ he said, ‘there will be a break-down soon. Harvest time is coming. I must and will engage a lot before then. Let me see. You pay two shillings a day and two loaves of bread. For that I will engage a thousand men. I shall lose by it, but I know how generous you are. When you find out how truly I have befriended you, you will recoup me any little loss.’

I laughed, and said he had better not try me, and thought it was half a joke.

Some ten days after this I went away forty miles up the country, and was astonished by the men in all the gangs coming to remonstrate with me for the way I was behaving, saying that I was paying them sixpence a day less than I was giving on the Varna sections. I assured

them it was not so, and soon convinced them I was speaking the truth, and they then told me that two or three men from Varna had passed by and had spread this report. As soon as I returned to Varna the men there came to complain that the workmen up the line were being paid higher wages than they were, but fortunately they took my word for it, that it was not so. Here, again, I heard that Varna men coming from up the country had spread the report.

Now anyone accustomed to ignorant labourers will see that these reports were just the kind of thing to make the men discontented, and that we ran a risk of having the works greatly disorganised. I felt sure some underhand work was going on, but I held my tongue and bided my time.

A week later the merchant rushed into my office, saying, 'See, I have just received this telegram. Now am not I your friend? What would you do if it were not for me?'

I read the telegram, which was to say that five hundred men had been engaged, and were then on board a steamer in the Bosphorus ready to start in a few hours for Varna.

I assured my friend that I should not employ one of his men, and that I now quite understood who it was that had been spreading reports among my workmen. I then went off to the old Pasha, and soon arranged matters with him. I had only to tell him that I should not give one day's work to any of the expected men, and that I did not suppose he wished for

a cargo of the riff-raff of Stamboul let loose in Varna, to induce him to send word to the merchant that they would not be allowed to land.

I heard afterwards that the merchant telegraphed to his agent just in time to prevent the men starting, but that he lost a considerable sum, as the passage was paid, and they each had received something in advance.

Besides being pestered almost past endurance by the resident 'place and preferment' seekers, hardly a steamer arrived from Constantinople without bringing a batch of people, all wanting—I was going to say *work*, but that would have been the last thing they wished for—no, they all wanted *pay*.

We used soon to get rid of them, however, by asking them, 'What can you do?' 'Anything you like, sir.' 'Then you can keep accounts?' 'No.' 'Well, then you can write English?' 'No.' 'You are, perhaps, a carpenter, a blacksmith, a this, or a that?' till we had mentioned all the employments on the line, finishing up with a labourer, and receiving a 'No' to all. I used then to say, 'Well, there is only one other post to offer, and that is a parson's. Come up on Sunday, and we will see what we can do for you.' They never did come back, and we were well rid of them. Occasionally for some reason we were obliged to give some of these creatures a job, and I can safely say it would have paid us better to have given them a year's salary on the spot and sent them off, rather than have them on the works or in the offices.

Having had some dozen rolls off the 'Kisrak'

(mare), thanks to her trick of 'speedy-cutting,' and having at last become quite nervous when I was on her, I was most anxious to get rid of the beast. In this I succeeded; for one day whilst riding to Bazarjik on an excursion to buy horses, the zaptieh who was riding with me fell in love with her, and proposed a 'swap.' I said I was quite willing, on the condition that we did it 'Bashi Bash' (head for head), and no questions asked. For a time he demurred, and did his best to pump me; but finding this would not do, and fearing I might dispose of the coveted mare at Bazarjik, he agreed, and we then and there changed saddles, and I for the first time mounted one of the very best little animals I ever owned; and I only hope the zaptieh was as well content with his bargain, though if he were not I do not very much care, for, without doubt, he had taken the little horse from some Rayah by force, or by trumping up some threat against him.

I have said 'Zaptieh' (for so I at once named my new acquaintance) was a good one, but this took some time to find out, and I can't say I was so pleased with him at first. He had only two paces—a canter and a jog. The former perfect for short journeys, and the latter the right pace to put a hundred miles behind one in the day. I rode this horse till the last before I left Turkey; and then, feeling that he owed me nothing, and fearing lest in his old age he might get into bad hands, I had him shot. Over and over again I rode him seventy miles in the day, and now and then

as much as a hundred. He never appeared tired, never made a false step, and never showed the least temper. As a general rule the horses (or rather ponies, for one 15 hands high is considered enormous in Turkey) are poor creatures, and those actually bred in the country are good for nothing. All the bettermost horses come from Constantinople or the southern slopes of the Balkans, but it is rarely one gets a good one of any sort. The pashas and Turkish officials all have Arabs, more or less pure bred, and after them the best horses are those owned by zaptiehs; simply for this reason, that by force or threats they get hold of any good horse they may find a Rayah possessed of.

In the days of which I am writing, a Bulgarian pony cost from ten to twelve liras, and the price of the best pony that could be bought (the pashas did not sell theirs) was only about twenty liras (a lira is 18s.). Though they were poor-looking, under-sized beasts, with bad action, they could do a lot of work, and were rarely sick or sorry. During all the time I was in Turkey I never saw a broken-kneed horse or one that was broken-winded or blind, and almost the only instances I remember of a horse dying of any ailment was the result of eating green wet grass.

Early in the Varna days a question arose between us and the peasants of Gebedji, a good-sized village, half Bulgarian, half Turkish, situated about twelve miles from Varna, as to the diversion of a road. The villagers laid the matter before the old Pasha, and I had to go to him with plans, etc., to explain the diff-

culty. I believe the old fellow did his best to get at the rights of the case, but it was beyond my powers to give him the faintest knowledge of the plan, and at last he gave up the attempt, and proposed that we should all meet at the village the next morning, and examine into the matter on the spot. Turning to the head men of the village, who were standing just inside the curtains of the salaamlik with bare feet, and their hands spread over their stomachs as if they were suffering with violent pains, he said, 'You see that we have something to eat; now be off.'

On riding into the village next morning I met the Pasha and three or four other government officials, all in crazy old carriages, and attended by a dozen zaptiehs and chiboukjis. The old Pasha was in a beaming temper, and he told me he meant to enjoy himself; and, as a preliminary, begged me not to raise any difficulties about the road, so that we might quickly settle the affair.

As is usual, we alighted in the courtyard of a *Bulgar's* house, where we found mats and cushions spread for us under a big walnut tree, the shade of which was so inviting that we sat down and let two hours slip by while we drank coffee and smoked. At last the Pasha put up his big white umbrella, and we started for the road in dispute, and there another hour was wasted, although I agreed to all that was said, and promised everything. By this time the Pasha was so fatigued that a zaptieh was sent back to the village, though only a quarter of a mile distant, to fetch his

carriage; but as the horses had been unharnessed and turned out to grass, it was so long in coming, that even the patience of the Turks was exhausted, and it ended in our walking back just in time to see the carriage ready to start. All the zaptiehs and servants abused each other, but the Pasha only sighed, shrugged his shoulders, and said, 'All asses, silence. Is the food ready?'

We were told that it was, so retiring to a short distance from the mats, we all washed our mouths inside and out, and had water poured over our hands by a servant. Directly we had taken our seats, a monster wooden dish was brought, on which crouched a sheep roasted whole, and it was placed before us with also broken bread, a few onions, and a paper of salt.

The Pasha gave us a lead at once, and all being hungry we tugged away with our fingers till most of the outside bones were pretty bare, and then the Pasha having borrowed my penknife, which he first sent to be washed, cut a hole in the sheep's side, and thrusting in his hand, groped about till, with a facetious wink at me, he secured the heart and hauled it forth. It was a disgusting goul-like proceeding, and one almost expected to see the sheep wag its long tail and say ba-a. I felt quite ill, but I had to get the better of my feelings and eat my share of the heart, which the Pasha handed me over with his fingers!

There is quite as much etiquette about a Turkish dinner as there is at a swell London one, and the unfortunate Turk who makes the slightest mistake is looked

upon much as a man in England would be who puts his knife in his mouth. I do not pretend to good Turkish manners, but years before I had learnt never to sit down to table without first washing—never to use my left hand, as that is reserved for all the dirty work a man may have to perform—and never to finish a meal without making one or more violent and disgusting hiccups to show that I was satisfied. Doubtless I made many gross mistakes, but my companions pardoned my Giaour ways more readily, I think, than most hosts in England would those of a Turk if he chanced to be dining with him.

There was one thing in which I know I always failed, but it was from my infirmities and not from want of knowing better and trying my best. The fact is, nature provided me with limited internal accommodation, so that it is impossible for me to stow away a quarter of a sheep, a water melon, two pounds of rice, and some five or six pounds of etceteras, and so my Turkish entertainers always had the feeling that I did not like what they put before me, and were thus made unhappy. Some of the very best dishes I have ever eaten have been in Turkish houses, but what they were or how cooked I must leave to others to describe, and when this is done, I hope my cook may be able to learn how to make *candied chicken*, which is a dish, and a most delicious one, that I once ate when at breakfast with the Pasha of Varna.

After our feed was over we again all washed our hands, and then smoked for half an hour, after which I

proposed to take my leave, but the Pasha would not allow this, as he wished to take me back in his carriage to Varna, and said he had ordered his servants to meet us half way to give us coffee under some big aspen trees in the village of Inji Keui ; but as it was yet early, he proposed we should all take a nap for an hour to assist digestion.

In ten minutes all my companions were in the land of dreams, while I sat, as I often had done before, and envied them the power of going to sleep at a moment's notice. With most Englishmen it generally appears a matter of uncertainty whether sleep will come when required, and when once it has come it has to be guarded as a treasure lest it should be snatched from him again ; but with a Turk it is quite different. With him sleep is a drug always ready at a moment's notice, and may be squandered again and again, and yet never fail to return.

It has often struck me with astonishment to see the little respect anyone in Turkey pays to sleep. When I have been staying in the villages I have often heard a member of the family get up, and after searching about amongst his sleeping companions, arouse them all to ask where his tobacco is, or for some equally slight excuse. A lad of eighteen would thus wake up his father, a man of sixty, perhaps, two or three times in the night, and yet one would never hear an angry word in remonstrance ; and when I have snapped savagely at some one for walking into my room and over my body in the middle of the night, my snappishness has caused

the greatest astonishment. Many times I have turned in with natives, both Christian and Mussulman, in the same room with me ; and though I was generally tired when doing so, and my companions not, yet I think I may say I was invariably the last to close my eyes; and often I have felt so worried and annoyed by the snores around me, that I have laid and tossed for hours ; yet among my own countrymen I am considered a good sleeper.

CHAPTER V.

Robbers, Turk and Bulgar—A Turkish Trial—An Open Boat on the Black Sea—A Night in a Cave—A Narrow Escape.

LATER on in the day, when we were sitting under the shade of the aspens sipping our coffee, the conversation turned on the subject of the robbers of Turkey, and I gathered then, and in many a subsequent chat with my old friends, a lot of information on the subject. One thing I realised now for the first time, and that was that most of the robberies were committed, not by regular professionals, but by the ordinary villager, that is to say, when the robbers were Turks. The fact is that there is no disgrace attached to a young Deli kan (mad blood) who eases a Christian of his purse, not even if, in doing so, he has also to cut his throat. It is a tolerated crime, looked upon as a daring exploit, in the same way as robbing the revenue by smuggling was in England some years ago. It often happens that a lot of young men are together returning from a term of forced labour for the Government, or from cutting wood in the forests, when fate sends an Armenian, or Greek, merchant, or shopkeeper in their way. The temptation is too strong for them, and they save him

the trouble of carrying his purse. If he is fool enough to recognise any of the robbers, he gets his throat cut or a ball through him. The robbers retire to their village. The consuls report that a fresh gang of cut-throats are on such and such a road, the Pasha is stirred up, and the country scoured, the robbers themselves often being of the party.

With a Bulgar it is different. It is considered a disgraceful crime for him to rob, and not only is he a black sheep among his fellows, but the Turks have no toleration for *him*. If he wishes to do a little business on the road, he must cut himself off from all honest men and take to it in real earnest, and thus making a profession of it, he soon outdoes the amateurs. Almost invariably the Bulgar who becomes a robber is driven to it by the tyranny and oppression of the zaptiehs or some other Government official. For instance, when I was at Varna there was a noted Bulgar brigand in the neighbourhood who first took to the woods to avoid being dragged off some thirty miles from home for the second time in the year, to work on the Corvée, and having once overstepped the line there was no return for him, so he continued on the path he had taken, and became the most cunning and dangerous of all the fraternity.

The Pasha told me that a celebrated robber had just been caught somewhere in the forest, and if I would breakfast with him in the morning I should hear the case tried. I gladly accepted his offer as I was curious to see how justice was administered between Turk and

Turk, when there would be no Consul present to interfere with or direct the judge.

My friend the Pasha was one of the old school, so, soon after I had arrived and made my salaam to him, breakfast was brought in and placed on a table, or rather on a big wooden platter with a pedestal that raised it six inches from the ground. Like two birds we hopped off our perch, the divan, and began pegging away with our fingers. When all was finished, the things carried away, and we once more on our perch, cigarettes and pipes were lighted, and word was sent to the members of the council that the Pasha was ready.

First of all in waddled the Kadi or head priest who, having first taken a seat and made himself comfortable on the divan by the side of the Pasha, then turned and made his salaams to him. One by one the rest of the council drifted in attended by Yasiji (clerks), chiboukjis (pipe-bearers), and a few non-descripts. When all had settled down, the Pasha made a sign to the Buluk Bashi (head policeman) and he disappeared, presently to return with the unfortunate prisoner, who was so heavily ironed that he could hardly drag himself along. He was placed before us in the centre of the room, and then the Pasha first, and afterwards the different members of the council, set to work to pump him.

There was no doubt of his guilt if the numerous witnesses, who came in all together from the next room, spoke a word of truth, and it struck me as curious that the man should attempt to deny it; but the Pasha told me afterwards that before he could mete out due

punishment it was necessary to obtain a confession ; so the case soon drifted into the man's stoutly asserting that he was a 'good child,' while his judges exhorted and begged him to confess. Throughout the trial the greatest patience was shown towards the prisoner, and there was no direct threat used to extort a confession. I say direct, for the Pasha addressed the man as 'my child,' 'my lamb,' and begged he would tell the truth, at the same time saying if he did not he would have rough times of it, whereas if he gave no trouble he would consider it in passing judgment.

The prisoner was a short thick-set fellow, with anything but a ruffianly cast of feature, and after the first awkwardness of appearing before us had passed off, he stood in a quiet dignified attitude, and though perfectly respectful to all, yet there was no appearance of fear or attempt to cringe or fawn upon his judges. In this he was a great contrast to an Armenian shopkeeper, the chief witness against him, who stood twisting and writhing in the doorway, livid with fright and racked between his desire of having the man convicted, and so getting back the money he had been robbed of, and his dread that at some future day he might be called to account on a lonely road by the robber or some of his confederates.

Encouraged by the half promises held out by the Pasha, the robber at last gave himself a shake and confessed all. He had been 'on the roads' three years, and till a short time before had been captain of a gang of six. The gang had been broken up through a

quarrel which had also led to the capture of our prisoner. He had committed robberies all over Bulgaria, but, by Allah, he had never robbed a Mus-sulman nor hurt anyone. There had been no necessity for the latter as no one ever attempted to resist; and then he went on to tell us, with a good deal of humour and even a smile on his face, how a short time before he had made a haul from some Rayah merchants on their way to a fair. He said: 'I knew of their coming, indeed one of my men had seen them leave the last guard-house, so I placed my gang in thick scrub on either side of the road and then waited patiently, but to our astonishment they did not appear. It then struck me they must have turned off the direct road and taken one that was longer and less frequented.

'Had they done so they must, I knew, be far on their way to the fair, and it would be impossible to overtake them on foot, but having a good horse tied to a tree near, I determined to make a dash for it alone. Telling the others to go to an old tryste and there await me, I started off, and after half an hour's gallop came upon the other road. I could see at once by the tracks that no arabas had passed for some days, so tying up my horse handy, I concealed myself behind a bush, and kept both ears and eyes open.

'I had not long to wait before a string of covered arabas appeared, and I saw by the anxious frightened faces stuck out of the openings at the sides that I had not a very desperate set to face. I let the leading araba come so close there was no room for it to turn and

bolt, and then with my gun in my hand stepped out and stopped the lot. I called out that if anyone moved I would order my men to fire on them, and would also do so myself, which had the effect of keeping all quiet. I then started to work, first pretending to call to my men to keep their guns pointed, and to shoot anyone who should attempt to move. I carefully searched each araba and its occupants in turn, sending it off along the road directly I had done so, and in this way I robbed the lot, without any trouble, of nearly a hundred liras. I daresay the dogs cheated me and concealed some of their money, but I was alone and in a hurry, and after all did not do so badly. But, Pasha, there was such a talk about this robbery that we had to disband for a time, and go off in different directions, putting a hundred miles behind us. When we quarrelled and finally separated we divided what we had got, and my share came to about seventy liras. Where is it? Oh most of it is hidden in the roots of the old ash tree near the spring, on the other side of the lake. You are welcome to it, but, Pasha, not one para of the money you will find there belongs to that Jenabet (pointing to the Armenian); all *his* money was spent months ago.'

The Pasha looked very pleased at this, and snubbed the Armenian when he said, 'This money would do as well as any other for him.'

Zaptiehs were at once sent to fetch in the money, which was found exactly as the robber had stated, and then the case was adjourned to another day. I after-

wards heard that the robber was condemned to the chain-gang for five years, but he did not serve all his time, for having his chains taken off at the end of three months to allow him to work in the Konak yard, he contrived to pull down the wall of his prison during the night and decamped, and as far as I know was not heard of again.

During the early part of this first summer I was summoned by telegraph to meet my elder brother at Kustendji, and as my horses had all been somewhat overworked, I foolishly listened to a proposal made me by an English merchant captain, who was superintending the discharging of our goods in the harbour. He assured me his gig, as he called his boat, was as safe as a P. and O. steamer, and that with the help of two Greek boatmen he could run me up by sea to Kustendji in fourteen hours, and that I might sleep all the way and so get in fresh and fit for work. It was a sure thing as the wind always came off the sea all day and off the land all night, and there was no fear of a storm.

I don't know what possessed me, but I gave in to his plan, and at daybreak took my place in the boat, and the two men pulled it out of the harbour 'to meet the wind.' I suppose the wind had gone round another way, or that my invariable bad luck on the sea was too much for it, anyhow we did not meet it; and there I sat being fried to a cinder whilst the unfortunate men pulled and pulled, looking quite cheerful and happy under their heavy toil, whilst the wretched captain put

on an injured melancholy expression and sighed as if he had got all the wind we so wanted in his chest.

Few people can realise the intense misery I endured that day, because there are few who hate the sea as I do. and this day it was in one of its most offensive humours. It looked like a great sheet of burnished steel, and reflected back the rays of the sun as the said steel would have done, and yet it was anything but still. It lolled about in every direction, and soon produced a feeling in my head as if my brains were swelling.

The captain was for ever seeing signs of the wind coming, but the Greek boatmen only shook their heads, and at last assured me that when it did come we should have a hurricane. They told me this when we were well out in the Bay of Balchik, heading for Cape Kalagria; and I must say I prayed that we might go on as we were till we reached that point, where I determined to take to land; but on telling the captain this he looked so miserable and sighed so heavily that once more I relented and half promised to keep on if the wind came. Fortunately for me just before nightfall, when we were nearing the point, the captain took it into his head that his watch was over, so handing me the rudder he curled up and was soon asleep at the bottom of the boat.

The entire crew, including the man at the helm, now began to plot a mutiny! My companions told me that if I would bring the boat sharp round behind the point I should find a small piece of sandy beach upon

which I could run her, and that directly above it was a cave in which we could pass the night.

Mistrusting my powers as a pilot, and dreading the reproachful looks of the captain when he should discover what I had done, I hesitated for a few minutes; but a vivid flash of lightning darting athwart the sky, followed by a distant rumble of thunder, settled the matter, and being then just past the sharp headland, round went the boat. After pulling along the face of the steep cliffs for a few hundred yards, I saw a streak of white before us, and telling the men to pull gently so as not to wake the captain, I ran the boat on to it and the men hauled her up high and dry, the captain remaining peacefully unconscious.

As it was getting dark there was no time to lose, so I gathered up my overcoat and following the men who carried our scanty provisions, scrambled up the cliff and soon found myself in a large dry cave high up out of reach of the sea. Whilst one of the boatmen was lighting a fire the other clambered about amongst the rocks and succeeded in getting a large bundle of twigs and leaves which he piled up in one corner of the cave, thereby making me a most luxurious bed. He then helped his mate to boil some coffee, toast some bread, and serve supper. I had just finished my share of this when down came the rain, and in a moment we heard the captain bellowing and shouting, and from his tones I gathered that he was in a miserable fright, yet in a furious temper; so, first answering him with a holloa, I sent one of the men to fetch him up. I shall not easily

forget his face of disgust as he peered over the big fire and saw me comfortably seated on a large stone smoking my cigarette.

His feelings were too deep for words, so he turned away, and the last I saw of him that night from my leafy couch was, sitting in a dejected posture at the mouth of the cave, plugging his mouth with about half an ounce of tobacco. Just before daybreak the captain roused me up and induced me once more to make a venture on the deep, by assuring me there was a 'soldier's wind,' and therefore we should be at Kustendji in no time. I did not know what a soldier's wind was, and should have been better pleased to hear it was a sailor's, and from what I learnt of it in a few hours, I cannot congratulate the military profession on its possession! However, it served the purpose of the melancholy-minded captain, and finding that our goods and chattels were in the boat and it was once more afloat, I followed him down the cliff, our path lighted up by frequent flashes of distant lightning.

The storm had passed off to sea and there was nothing to fear. True, the sea was a bit rough, but it was nothing, and by hugging the land we should get on famously. The captain and I soon came to words over this same 'hugging the land.' His ideas and mine about how to do it differed greatly, and as the boatmen sided with me, I threatened him with another mutiny if he did not keep nearer in. The fact is the wind was blowing strong from off land, and I wished to take advantage of the shelter the steep cliff afforded to go

on an even keel, but the captain, on the other hand, wished to run further out to get more wind. It ended in our taking a middle course, and we went through the water at a famous pace.

Just as the sun appeared, blood-red, emerging from the sea on the horizon, I looked landwards, and to my horror saw a bank of inky black clouds coming up at a desperate pace. I pointed it out and insisted on running in at once under the cliff. It was well I did so, for before we had gone half the distance the wind struck us a blow that made us stagger again, and the beastly boat, turning her nose from the brunt of it, as nearly as possible went over sideways. As it was, I scrambled on to the outer side of her, and the water came rushing in on the other, and I am sure we all thought she would not right again. The captain shouted orders in English, which, owing to the men only understanding Turkish, were not obeyed. However, I think he behaved well and did his part, for the boat did somehow come up again, and he was cool and collected, and looked happier than I ever saw him before or afterwards. He pooh-poohed the whole affair, called the water in the boat 'only a drop,' and wanted to return to his course; but I had had more than enough of the sea, and so had the boatmen, who assured me that if we had been a little further out from the shelter of the cliffs nothing could have saved us, and that the sea was getting up and would soon be too high for so small a boat.

Being at this time opposite an old lighthouse and seeing two men standing near it, we turned the boat for

it, and in a few minutes were once again safe on shore, and very thankful and happy I felt. It was only comparative happiness, however ; for here I was, on the great plain of the Dobrudja without a house in sight and not half my journey over, though I had been on it twenty-four hours already. Had I kept to the road and the saddle I should now have been comfortably in bed at Kustendji with the prospect of a good breakfast on waking. Whereas I had now a journey of fifty miles before me, no means of transport ready, precious little food, and the rain coming down in such torrents that my light summer coat was soon soaked through.

The two men I had seen on the beach turned out to be civil helpful Turks ; so I despatched one of them at once to a village two miles inland to see if he could hire a horse or an araba to take me on ; and after arranging with the other to shelter my companions in the old lighthouse till the storm should be over, and telling them they must then return to Varna as best they could, I marched off over the greasy slippery road towards the village. Just before reaching it I met my messenger in a two-horse araba (if the poor lean depressed-looking beasts that drew it could be called horses), driven by a sturdy Bulgar, who said he would guarantee to get me to Kustendji in fifteen hours ; so at once, thanking and bakshishing the Turk, I took my seat and off we set.

I have called the vehicle an araba for want of a better name, but it was only an araba in the sense that a springless market cart is a carriage. There were just

four wooden wheels, all far from being circular, with a plank placed between them, stretching from one axle to the other. The driver perched on the front end of this plank, just under his horses' tails, and I rode astride it in the middle, with the sharp edges cutting into my legs. There was not a bit of iron about the rickety machine, neither was there a piece of leather in the harness, frail, rotten-looking ropes being used instead. However, such as it was, I was thankful for it; and so, hunching up my back and hardening my heart, I started on one of the most detestable journeys I ever had. Yes, started, and, what is more, got to the end of it, after much misery and many small mishaps, such as a wheel coming off, and the harness giving way, reviling myself all the time for having been such a fool as to go near that treacherous, restless, never-to-be-trusted element, the mighty ocean.

If any of my readers want to know what perfect sleep is, let them go without it for forty-eight hours and then take a doze. The pleasure of eating can be intensified in the same way; and I can assure them there is nothing like going through the miseries I had, to make one enjoy the comforts of a good English house, and when to this is added a kind English host and hostess, good food, good beds, and time and liberty to enjoy all, one's happiness is complete. I had all these in perfection on my arrival at Kustenldji and revelled in the luxury.

CHAPTER VI.

Varna and Varniots—English Graveyard.

It was at Kustendji I had passed my apprenticeship to the ways of the East, and though many old friends had drifted away to distant lands and distant homes, yet many still remained, and all the next day was passed in revisiting old scenes, paying visits, recalling and laughing over past events and old jokes ; and it was with regret that at daybreak on the second day I found myself on a friend's horse, topping the first rise out of the town with the hundred miles of road to Varna before, and Kustendji, my old home, behind me.

Directly I had arrived at Kustendji I had telegraphed to Mac to send a horse on for me to the half-way village of Delemby Keui, and on arriving there I found it rested and fresh ; so only stopping to shift my saddle and take a long pull at a bowl of milk, I started on at once, and just as the sun dipped behind the range of the Balkans, I pulled up at my own door, somewhat tired, but none the worse for my trip.

There are two facts connected with the town of Varna, and I may say with all the large Turkish towns

I know, that have always been a mystery to me :—First, how ever the inhabitants earn a living? and secondly, why they do not all die of plague, cholera, or fevers? In Varna there is a population of 12,000 people crowded close together within the walls, and out of these there are, I believe, not more than 2,000 who ever do any manual labour. A few are engaged about the harbour and shipping, a few more are porters or drive one-horse telekis for hire, a few own vineyards and scratch at them occasionally, but the great majority just loaf about all day, every day, and all their lives; yet there is no such thing as *poverty*, as we understand it in rich industrious England. In the immediate neighbourhood of big towns there is no attempt at agriculture except in the vineyards, and I am sure if all the townspeople who leave the gates of Varna in the morning were counted they would not amount to 500. Even when our railway was under construction, few of the townspeople ever asked for a job, and yet the shops, khans, and coffee-houses are all full of apparently poor people, and their homes generally swarm with unkempt, unwashed youngsters, the picture of health and looking well fed and contented.

Then why are they not plague-stricken? As I have before said, Varna is a densely crowded town, the houses all closely clustered together, and the streets are so narrow, that in most of them, when a man on horseback meets a cart, he has to squeeze past it on the pavement. Yet in all this town there is no such thing as a proper drain. A large cesspool, more or less open, is the re-

ceptacle for all sewerage, and this in a town where the thermometer all the summer stands between 70° and 90°. Well, I don't understand it. I only know that if we had one-half the filth and one-third of the horrible smells in an English village; the parson, doctor, and grave-digger would have a brisk time of it.

There is one thing in Varna that is excellent—the water—and not only is it good, but it is abundant, being brought down from the hills on the north-east in earthen pipes and discharged in all parts of the town from marble fountains, which are also supplied with big stone troughs whereat the cattle may drink.

The town is divided into quarters—such as the Turkish, the Tartar, Armenian, Greek, Bulgar, and even the Gipsy quarter; all kept distinct except the Greek, where the foreign merchants, consuls, and other Europeans have either houses of their own or hired ones. I may here mention that when a house is hired, the rent is always paid for the year in advance, experience teaching the owner that a ‘bird in the hand’ is the proper and safe thing.

The town is surrounded by well-constructed ramparts and a deep stone-faced fosse designed and laid out, I believe, by European engineers; but in my day the batteries only held a lot of old smooth-bore guns, so honeycombed that they were more dangerous to their own gunners than they would have been to an enemy.

In the very heart of the town is a huge powder magazine, far from bomb-proof, and yet piled up to the roof with powder. From the great carelessness I have

seen displayed by the Topjis (artillerymen) on guard there, as to walking in and out, smoking their cigarettes, I can only suppose it has not blown up long ago from the fact that the powder is all damp and spoilt.

My house and offices were situated in one of the main streets on the boundary between the Greek and Bulgar quarter, and I must say I envied the Turks the quiet of their part of the town. I did not in the least object to the business bustle of the day, in fact there was very little of it, but I did object to the senseless noises of the evenings—the idiotic high-pitched laugh, the songs droned out through the nose, and the hyena-like screeches. Screeches given for no earthly cause that I could ever discover, but simply made in the same way that a jay or woodpecker will make day hideous in an English wood, and this not by children but by full-grown men. For two hours after sunset, and on feast days far into the middle of the night, bands of four or five swaggering Greeks will come lolling up the street holding each other's hands and walking out of step, with their preposterously baggy knicker-bocker-like breeches swaying from side to side. One will be talking of money—the one subject of conversation with all—two more singing different airs, and a fourth yelling madly. They drift in and out of the low, smelling billiard-rooms and drinking-shops, and there quarrel and gesticulate, but seldom come to blows. No, if a Greek has worked himself up in a fit of rage to the personally aggressive

point, he will slip behind a door or round a street corner, and give his adversary a stab in the ribs with his knife and then make a bolt.

The Greek women are very little seen in the streets of Varna. When they do take an airing on a Sunday or a feast day, they get their husbands or fathers to drive them out to the vineyards, and on such days strings of springless one-horse arabas may be seen on the road, thickly packed with women and children, being bumped and jolted over the rough ground in a manner awful to behold. On other days when the household work is over, the women sit for hours at the door of their courtyard, peeping through a narrow slit, which they leave open, and one may often see a pile of faces one above the other thus engaged. So fond are the Greek women of this harmless, if somewhat triste occupation, that they indulge in it when the cold is so great that their noses are blue, and they are shivering all over.

What I have said of the Greek women applies also to the Bulgar, for they are so mixed up in the towns that their habits, so far as I could judge, are identical. There is this difference though—in the Bulgar quarter many a sweetly pretty and *attractive* girl's face may be seen, whereas amongst the Greeks, though there are many handsome faces, they lack attractiveness. They are beautiful as a statue is beautiful, but that is all.

I cannot leave the subject of the Rayah women without saying that I believe them to be the most chaste and virtuous class of women in all Europe, and this is

the more curious as their near neighbours, under a Christian Government, are anything but paragons of virtue. When one has become acquainted with the girls and women both in the town and villages, they will exchange a joke with you as you pass, but it is always a most harmless one, and any familiarity or coarse word from the gentleman would cause the door to be banged to and bolted.

Every house, let it belong to Turk or Rayah, must have a courtyard—for this reason, that none is ever built with the windows looking into the street, except in two-storied houses, where they are far above the reach of the swaggering ruffians, Christian and Turk, who would be for ever peeping in and annoying the inmates. The house door, which stands open all day, even in cold weather, leads into the courtyard, and in the better houses the kitchens and offices are generally on the opposite side of it. Nearly every house has a deep raised verandah, protected by the overhanging eaves, and for eight months of the year the entire family live in it, and the rooms are deserted. Not only do they use it by day, but at night mattresses and pillows are brought out, and all sleep there.

The first Sunday we were at Varna, Mac and I went for a walk along the coast, and were shocked to see the dilapidated state of the English graveyard. When I was at Varna previously it was surrounded by some rough boarding, but every vestige of this had disappeared, and the tombstones lay tumbled about in every direction, and even the graves themselves were

being fast trodden out of sight by the droves of cattle that wandered across it night and morning on their way to pasture.

This state of things was rendered the more conspicuous by the fact of there being a large French graveyard close by, enclosed by massive stone walls twelve feet high, with strong oak doors, all looking clean, neat, and in good repair. We drew the attention of our chef to this, and he at once wrote to the Foreign Office on the subject, suggesting that a good wall, like the French one, should be built, and enclosing drawings and an estimate of the cost. The letter had the immediate attention of those in power, and we were asked to undertake the work, and put it in hand at once.

It therefore happened that one of our first undertakings at Varná was the graveyard, and before many weeks were past it was as complete and perfect as its neighbour, with, I think, the advantage of having big open-work iron gates instead of doors, so that anyone passing on the road could look in and see that all was in order. Not only was the wall built, but gravel paths were made, trees planted, the tombstones replaced, and the graves, as far as they could be traced, were restored; but it was only when we had to dig new graves that we discovered how many had disappeared from sight, and what a number of people had found a resting place for their bones in this out-of-the-way spot. It was with difficulty we ever dug a fresh grave without disturbing others; but from the state of the coffins it was evident they must have been there some

years, most of them, I suppose, from the time when the troops were there on their way to the Crimea.

Amongst the few gravestones that continued in position were two or three placed over the graves of the children of Mr. Prettyman, an American, who for many years worked among the Bulgars as a missionary. His children's graves were restored, and the head-stones placed upright, and they were, I recollect, the nearest graves to the north-west corner, just inside the wall.

I am sorry to say that though the Government went to the expense of making an excellent graveyard, no money was provided for keeping it in order, and long before I left Varna (in the summer of 1870), the interior was a perfect wilderness, the weeds being high above the gravestones. The walls were repaired from time to time by the servants of our railway company; but since then the railway has been turned over to a German company, and, unless something has been done since, I fear they must, ere this, be in a dilapidated condition.

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CHAPTER VII.

Cavasses, Hassein and Sali—Honesty and Dishonesty—Village Lodgings.

IN Varna and all over Turkey, it is considered the correct thing for anyone who wishes to be thought a swell to keep one or more private guards, whose sole business is to follow their master about, or, in crowded streets, to precede him, and, if they dare, push the passengers out of the way. So much is the cavassa necessity, that all consuls keep one or two, and rarely leave their houses without them, never when officially engaged.

The favourite men for this work are Mussulman Albanians, who are dressed up, at their masters' expense, in the most gorgeous costume, which often consists of a fez, a crimson or green hussar jacket with slashed sleeves hanging loose from the shoulder, a waistcoat to match fastened with about forty little gold lace buttons, and both the jacket and waistcoat a mass of gold embroidery. Then comes the 'fustan,' a closely plaited white linen petticoat reaching to the knees, which swings from side to side at every step, and gives the wearer a swaggering raffish appearance; beneath this are embroidered trowsers, closely hooked over the lower

part of the leg, and then spreading out well over the clumsy square-toed shoe. Round the waist is a huge belt, which holds a brace of silver-mounted pistols, a knife two feet long, an oxidized silver box or two, with lots of silver chains, and a white handkerchief stuck well in the middle, showing its embroidered ends hanging down.

As a rule, these men are by nature swaggering ruffians, and are, to my mind, perfectly odious after they have been petted and spoiled by their European masters. I doubt their courage, their honesty, and their veracity. They are cringing, flattering beasts to their superiors and bullies to their inferiors, and yet I believe they are necessary to our consuls, for they do engender respect among the ignorant inhabitants, and it is, after all, their masters' fault if they are allowed to take advantage of their position.

I had myself to keep two of these cavasses, but I made them dress quietly at their own expense, and as neither of them were Albanians they wore the ordinary Turk's dress, without the (to me) offensive fustan. Their duty was to ride behind me when on a journey, cook my food, and act as general servant when I was staying in the villages, and when at home to guard the office, open the doors of the courtyard to callers, and go on messages all over the country. I never took them with me when walking about the town, nor did I allow them to swagger and bully.

My head cavass, Hassein, was by birth a Kurd. He was a quiet, peaceable fellow, with great strength, plenty

of pluck, and a good servant in all ways. He was very ugly and morose-looking, but his moroseness was confined to his looks, for he was always civil and obliging, and no one ever heard a grumbling or discontented word from him.

Sali, however, was my favourite, and the one I liked best to have with me on my long, solitary rides ; for not only was he a handsome fellow, but there was a pleasant, kindly look in his eyes that gained one's confidence at once. I cannot say that I ever engaged him as a cavass. He just drifted into my service in this way. I was returning alone from a long journey up the country, and was on a horse so tired that it was cruelty to put it beyond a slow jog, when just as I had reached the scrub bush above Aladdin, ten miles from home, I heard a footstep, and found Sali close behind me.

After the usual traveller's salutation of 'A prosperous journey to you,' he said, 'Tchellaby, you require a cavass ; you should not ride alone ; engage me and I will serve you well.' I thanked him, but declined his services, but he trotted along by my side and chatted as he went. When two miles from Varna I wished him goodbye, and pushed ahead, but next morning when I came down stairs I found Sali installed in the cavasses' room, and there he stayed in spite of my saying I would not have him or pay him. He soon made friends with my servants, and by the end of the month I found he had done so much for me that I had to pay him. This money he laid out in pistols and a knife, and coming to me said, 'See, Tchellaby, I am now ready for the road,

and where you go I shall go.' From that day he took it in turns with Hassein to accompany me on my journeys or go messages up the country, and we soon put such trust in him that over and over again he was the bearer of large sums of money, perhaps 100*l.* or more, to the different parts far away in the forests where the works were going on, and never once had we reason to regret the confidence we placed in him.

And yet this blue-eyed, fair-haired, gentle, though daring, young hero, was a veritable Bashi Bazouk, and, like all that gallant band, was a brutal murderer! I had no suspicion of this all the time he was with me, and it was only after he had served me three years and then had died of rapid consumption that Hassein and others told me his history.

He was born and had lived till a few years previously at a village on the southern slopes of the Balkan, not far from the town of Kizanlik, on the pass between Rustchuck and Constantinople. For many years, as he himself told me, he had been engaged making gun-powder 'on the quiet,' which he sold to his neighbours at no small profit, and at last he had distinguished himself by a midnight raid on a solitary house, cutting the throats or shooting all the inmates, men, women, and children, and walking off with all the plunder he could lay hands on.

Two or three other enterprising young 'deli kans' (wild bloods) assisted him in this last exploit, but they at once separated, and Sali, thinking it might be as well to be from home for fear he should be 'wanted,'

slipped over the mountains, and when I met him on the road he had only committed the murders a few days.

Twice over he was called before the Pasha, who told me he resembled the description of the Sali who had committed a murder; but his passport described him as coming from a village three hundred miles from where he was really born and brought up, and Sali is such a common name in Turkey that a hundred Salis could be found more or less like the description; so his examination led to nothing except that he got a line or two added to his passport to say that the Pasha had proved him to be a 'good, quiet, young man.'

It is next to impossible for a European to understand these extraordinary people, or to realise the fact that one of them will prove himself within a few months to be capable of the foulest crime for the sake of a few liras, and yet be able to be trusted to carry hundreds of pounds for long journeys on lonely roads where he could easily make a bolt of it, or hide it up and say he had been robbed by overwhelming numbers.

On one occasion we had to send 100 liras twenty-five miles up the country, and as Mac had to go to the same place, I gave the money into his charge, and sent him off in a covered two-horse araba with his gun and pistols by his side, and Sali, armed to the teeth, on the front seat, by the driver.

Unfortunately he was not able to start till the best of the day was over, but as the roads were fairly dry and the horses good, he trusted he should get in before dark.

Just half way on his journey there was a piece of boggy ground and a stream to pass; the track across the former was difficult to keep, being narrow, and also under water, and on this afternoon, or rather evening, it proved too much for the skill of the driver; so first his horses plunged off the road up to their necks in bog, and then over went the araba with Mac inside.

He stuck to his money and his firearms like a man, and creeping out of the uppermost window, plunged into and through the bog, and so to terra firma. It was soon evident that neither horses nor araba could be extricated for hours; so leaving the driver and some *mén* who had run down from the village of Gebedji to see to this, he called Sali, and giving him the money-bag to tie up in his sash, started off on his ten mile trudge through dense forest on the margin of the lake.

Now here was a chance for the man who but a few months before had risked hanging, and had exiled himself from his home for the sake of a few liras which he could only obtain through a brutal murder! Yet I will engage for it, the idea of shooting the boy before him and making off with the money never for a moment entered his head, and he was as much to be trusted on that lonely walk as Policeman X. is at this moment as he stands guard over the jeweller's shop in Regent Street.

Anyhow, Mac got in quite safely, but not without an amusing adventure. About half a mile from the village of Sultanla, whither he was going, his path came out into the open country, and as he emerged from the

thick scrub he saw, about 200 yards before him, a man on horseback, who at once shouted out, 'Halt, who goes there?'

Now in these early days Mac was feeble in Turkish, so he wisely left Sali to answer, which he did by saying, 'Keep still till I get my gun straight on you, and then you'll see.' In a moment off bolted horse and man direct for the village, and when a few minutes later Mac tramped in he found a gallant zaptieh haranguing some dozen young Turks preparatory to leading them against a large gang of desperate robbers, with whom he said he had been fighting for half an hour! Sali explained the joke, which all greatly enjoyed except the discomfited zaptieh.

For many reasons a Christian is never employed in Turkey as a cavass—the chief one being that the Turkish villagers would look with contempt upon a man so escorted, and so the traveller would fare badly when he arrived at a village and required food and shelter. Again, a Christian is so accustomed to being bullied by the dominant race that, let his master be ever so much insulted by a Turk, he would not dare to interfere, and in case of a rencontre with Turkish robbers I may safely assert that the Rayah cavass would skidaddle. No, it is just as well when travelling in Turkey to have a Mussulman cavass, and he should be a carefully selected man, who will be civil and courteous to the villagers and all he may pass on the road, but a very demon when his master does not get proper attention, or is slighted in any way.

I think myself that the best cavasses of all are zap-tiehs, engaged for an entire journey or by the month, paid by the traveller and liable to be dismissed by him at a moment's notice if they misbehave in any way. The ignorant Turkish villagers are awed by the zap-tiehs' uniform, and the Bulgars soon lose all fear of them when they see they are under the control of a master who will keep them in order.

Hospitality is part of the Mussulman religion, and a traveller in Turkey should always be well cared for. In most villages there is a strangers' room looked after by the Tchorbadjî (Soupman), a name no doubt originally given him from his having to provide soup for strangers, but now merely denoting head man of the village.

These rooms are used by the very poorest of travellers, and custom has made it usual to offer a private house or room to anyone that looks as if he could pay for it. Yes, pay, and pay *well*. The poorest wretch in the Mussafir Odase (strangers' room) gives something, and the European will find the cost of a night's lodging in Bulgaria almost as much as it is at a first-class hotel in London or Paris. Doubtless a Greek or other native would get it for half this, but an European, and especially an Englishman, is expected to pay up and be cheerful, and if remaining long in the country it is as well he should do so, otherwise he will get the name of being close, and will find nothing but black sour bread and sourer looks at supper.

As one man will be more generous than another, so

one village in Bulgaria will be more hospitable than its neighbour, and it does not follow that the richest or biggest will give the heartiest welcome. I have ridden into a strange village, rich and prosperous-looking, on a cold dark evening, and on calling the Tchorbadjî have been told to go on another hour's ride to the next village, as in his village they did not take in strangers, and it has only been after some sharp words from my cavass that I have obtained shelter; and sometimes I have had to share the Mussafir Odase with a lot of Arnout children, merchants, and other dirty, insolent fellows, and for this meagre accommodation I have been asked as much as a lira, though I did not give it.

On the other hand, I have arrived in the same way at a poor-looking little village, and have been received kindly, taken to a clean house (Bulgar or Turkish), had the very best food the village could produce, and in the morning my host has expressed himself as pleased with five shillings. It is very bad form for a host ever to ask for payment, but it is always expected that the traveller should give a bakshish besides paying for such extras as chickens, honey, cream, etc., and his horse's provender.

Journeys in Turkey rarely come to an end before dark, so the first thing on arriving at a village is to get supper. This is usually prepared by the host; but if the cavass can cook a bit, and will see to it, so much the better. There never is any sort of table or chair in a Bulgarian house, so the meat must be eaten *à la Turk*, squatting on the ground, and when this is over,

hands washed and all made straight, the traveller may draw up to the open wood fire (I am supposing he is in the forest district), and lolling on his mat, with cushions to support him, may abandon himself to the delights of a cigarette. But he will not be allowed to enjoy his quiet long, for soon the head man and half a dozen of the young swells of the village will drop in to pay their respects to him and have a chat.

With his consent they will seat themselves in a row on the opposite side of the hearth, and after the usual salutation, 'Welcome, Tchorbadji,' 'Welcome to you, Tchellaby,' the conversation will commence with, 'Where do you come from?' 'Where are you going to?' and 'What news have you?'

It would rather astonish one here in the West if on meeting a man in the road he were to address one thus, and he would probably be told to mind his own business; but in the East it is the first thing that is said either on the road or on arriving at a house, and is so far from being a breach of good manners that to neglect to do it would show a want of interest in the stranger. There is no penny paper or daily post in Bulgaria, so this is the only direct way of gaining information.

At the commencement of a visit the traveller is expected to offer his tobacco to all his visitors, and coffee should be served, at least if he wishes to be very polite, but as he is a (yolji) traveller, this will not be necessarily expected. When conversation flags, or he begins to feel bored, he has only to throw out a hint

that he is sleepy, and at once the visitors will rise, make their salaams and depart ; and this form of dismissal may be used even when it is broad daylight, as it is understood to mean the stranger wishes to be alone.

I never but once received *pure* hospitality in Turkey. I was on a journey over the Dobrudja, and night setting in I lost my way, and accompanied by my cavass wandered about till near midnight. At last we stumbled on a village, and on calling 'Kayia' a few times, were answered from a door where a light was shown. The next minute a middle-aged Turk hurried up, and taking hold of my bridle led me to his house, where a clean, warm room was given us, leading out of a stable. No questions were asked, but the Turk went off to rouse up his women to cook us some supper, which quickly appeared, and after that was despatched clean bedding was brought in, and the Turk, asking at what hour I wished to be called, bade me goodnight.

Not only were we thus well cared for, but our horses were put in the stable, covered up with rugs, their mangers filled with barley, and long after I was in bed I could hear them munching away.

Soon after daybreak our friend came with a pitcher of hot water, which he poured over my hands at the door for me to wash, and then he brought us a capital breakfast.

When we were about to start I offered my usual backshish ; but the Turk quietly declined it, saying it had been a pleasure for him to receive a stranger, and

he hoped I would come again. In vain I tried to persuade him to let me pay, and Hassein's efforts in the same direction were equally unavailing; so shaking hands with my kind entertainer, and asking him to come and see me at my own house, I bade him goodbye, and Hassein and I jogged away over the plains. From that day to this I have never seen the hospitable fellow, but I shall always remember his kindness to me, a total stranger.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Circassian Emigration—Circassians.

It was during this summer of 1866 that an event occurred which will for ages leave its mark in the history of the Turk; and from what I know of it personally I am inclined to think it will not be for their advantage. I refer to the great Circassian emigration to Turkey. An emigration that gave satisfaction to those left behind, and was welcomed by the governing powers of those who received them.

Some years before I had seen the Tartars arrive in shoals at Kustendji, settle down quietly, and form a peaceable and industrious portion of the Mussulman community; and in my ignorance I thought the Circassians would be much the same sort of people, and was further prepossessed in their favour by the plucky way they had defended their mountain homes against the trained soldiers of the Czar.

For some time notices had appeared in the European papers that the Circassians were to emigrate, but I believe the first intimation anyone in Varna received of their coming was given by the arrival of a Turkish barque crammed with miserable emaciated

wretches in a state of utter destitution and actually dying of starvation; for the ship having been detained a few days by contrary winds, the meagre supplies they had brought with them, both of water and food, had been consumed. Not only were they starving, but, like the Tartars before them, they landed dying by scores from small-pox, dysentery and fevers, and before the anchor had been down an hour the bay and beach were dotted with dead bodies. No preparations of any sort had been made, but now that the trouble had actually come the Governor bestirred himself, as a Turk can when the case is desperate; and soon bread was distributed to all, and the first great evil, hunger, stopped.

In all Varna there was but one medical man, a Greek. As he could not have attended to one case in five hundred, and as there was besides next to no medicines to be got in all the town, he did nothing, and the poor miserable wretches just died on the beach where they landed, like beasts, or rather like *wild* beasts, for if they had been considered of as much value as our domestic animals, they would have received more care.

This first ship-load was soon followed by many more, and I am sure I may safely say that the miseries the poor creatures went through in the passage of the Black Sea would make the sufferings and hardships endured by slaves in the Middle Passage appear as nothing. Eighty thousand arrived at Varna alone, and soon the town was filled with them, all begging for food, and offering for sale their few trinkets and any-

thing they possessed. Again and again Circassian mothers stopped me in the street and begged me to buy their children, pointing at the same time to their own shrivelled breasts, and giving me to understand that this last source of nourishment for the babies had failed.

The Tartars had endured fearful hardships in their emigration, but they were small compared to what the Circassians went through; for most of the Tartars had money and all had goods of some kind, and also they could speak Turkish, whereas these unfortunates had literally nothing and not one in 200 knew any Turkish.

They were driven from the town by the police each day before the sun set, but returned in the morning clamouring for food, and when one was fortunate enough to have a piece of bread given him, the others rushed at it like a pack of starving dogs, and the possessor had to run away, dodging his pursuers and at the same time swallowing his food. After the first few days bread was procured in sufficient quantities to put a stop to this terrible state of things, and little by little the new arrivals were sent off to the different villages, the inhabitants of which had to support them, build houses for them, and finally provide each family with a pair of oxen, an araba, and seed corn.

Hundreds died on landing, especially among the very young and very old, and constantly a half-starved wild-looking man or woman might be seen dragging the body of his or her dead partner through the streets to leave it on the sand-hills just outside the town. At

first the Turkish officials were too busy with the living to care for the dead, but at last a gang of convicts were sent out to pile up the bodies and cover them with a few inches of sand, while many were carried out to sea by the land breezes, and sank to trouble man no more.

Great numbers of those that did live, finally built themselves villages in the forests on the slopes of the Balkans within a day's walk of Varna, which became their town for marketing, and in after years I had thus many opportunities of seeing these curious people, though, owing to their not speaking Turkish, their utter contempt of law and their savage carelessness about taking life, it was impossible to know much of them or to visit them, except at rare intervals, in their villages.

There is a widespread belief in Europe that the Circassian women and girls are very beautiful. This is an utter mistake, for though I have seen hundreds of them, I never saw one with the least pretensions to beauty. The mistake has, I believe, arisen from confounding the Georgian women (who are very beautiful) with these mountaineers. Possibly I was unfortunate enough to come across only the ugly ones, but I do not think this could be so; and even the very young girls and children seemed to me exceedingly plain. The fault of their faces is that they are too long and too narrow, and give one the impression that their heads had been squeezed between two boards and flattened. Then their noses are too long and their mouths far too

near the middle of their faces. Their complexions are of a dull leaden hue, quite destitute of any ruddiness. In figure they are slight and wiry with very small hands and feet.

As it is the case I believe with all pure bred people, where one sex is distinguished by plainness, the other makes up for it with good looks. Certainly it is so with the Circassians. What the Arab is among horses, the Circassian is among men. He looks just the finest purest breed of the human—rather small in stature but most perfectly built in every way ; and it is as rare to see a plain Circassian *man* as it is to see a pretty Circassian *woman*. They have perfectly shaped heads well put on, dark chiselled features, with a sharp, intelligent, bold expression. They are quick and active in every movement, and as restless as a weasel (an animal they greatly resemble in character) ; but the most noticeable part about them is their hands and feet. I observed hundreds of them, and never saw one that an English girl of sixteen might not envy for shape and size ; and if any of my readers should have one of the many thousand Circassian knives that have been sent home to England, he will realise the truth of what I say if he will look at the smallness of the handles.

I cannot imagine any two races of people so utterly different in manners as the Circassians and their co-religionists the Turks. The latter dignified, quiet, and above all, *slow*. Slow in everything he does, from making a treaty to save his country, to taking his watch out of his belt to see the time. The former is

one mass of energy, never quiet for a moment, and always in a hurry. I never saw a Circassian, except the dying, lolling about or even walking slowly, and every movement of their bodies or motion of their hands is made with a swiftness that would do credit to a conjuror. A Circassian can be identified a mile off by his quick short step, upright carriage, and rapid movement; and if two or more are together they will be talking as fast and as eagerly as if life and death depended on the getting out the words. And yet, with all this marvellous energy, they hate labour of any sort as a cat hates water.

When they first arrived, a few of the young men, doubtless urged to it by hunger, would now and then ask for work on the railway, but one, or at the most two days at it, would prove more than they could stand, and they would disappear minus their pay, never to venture near again. The sub-contractors would gladly have employed hundreds of them all over the line, but though they were starving they would not work, and I do not think that, by lawful means, the whole of the emigrants received from us to the amount of 5*l*.

They allowed the peasants to build their houses for them without putting out a hand to help, but the old inhabitants gladly gave their labour if the new village was some way off, as by this means they got rid of their unwelcome hungry guests.

The corn that was given them for seed was eaten at once, the draught bullocks shared the same fate, and to this day they have not cultivated as much land,

man for man, as the Tartars did in the first year of their settling.

They are a race of marauders and cattle-lifters, and the whole of them may be said to live by theft. They had not been in the country a month before they were at their favourite occupation, and before six months were over nearly all the men were mounted, though when they landed they had not had money to buy food to stave off starvation. The old residents, both Christian and Mussulman, had at once to take precautions for the protection of their beasts, and for the first time in Turkey each village had to keep a strong patrol on the alert all night; but in spite of this, the Circassians would lift a horse or cow from under their very noses, and yet it was rare indeed they were taken in the act. If they were caught very little mercy was shown them, they were shot down like vermin and buried like dogs.

Not only did they steal cattle, but there was nothing in the way of plunder beneath their notice. The graves of our workmen at Shitanjik were opened by these animals for the sake of the few rags the bodies were wrapped in; so at last the very graves of the dead had to be watched and guarded.

Every creature in the country hated them, and either Turk or Christian when passing one would turn his head aside, give a spit of disgust, and mutter, 'Ah, Tcherkis kurt!' ('ah, Circassian wolf!') This they would do openly before the face of the despised one, and yet I never saw a Circassian retaliate or even look angry or astonished.

CHAPTER IX.

An Englishman attacked by Circassians—In Fresh Trouble—Wife-kicking—The Lawyer Navy.

EARLY in the spring after the Circassian emigration, one of our sub-contractors, Martin by name, who had been spending part of the winter in England, arrived at Rustchuck, and hiring an araba and pair of horses started for the village near the middle of the line, where he had left his wife under the care of his partner. Some hours after dark he reached a steep hill within a mile of his house, and being impatient of the slow pace of the horses, he jumped out and went ahead on foot. He had little fear of robbers as the country was quite free from scrub and timber, and the night was fairly light. But just as he had reached the top of the hill up sprang around him some dozen Circassians who had been lying hidden in the deep cart ruts, and in a moment they commenced cutting and hacking at the poor fellow, who had not even a stick with which to defend himself. He was soon brought to the ground with his head cleft open, one ear cut off, the cap of one elbow swept clean away with one slash, and many other smaller wounds. Fortunately for him he quickly became insensible, and the Circassians thinking they

had killed him, plundered his pockets, taking among other things his note-book and some letters. They then made a dash down the hill, but the Arabaji, seeing so many coming, turned his horses round and succeeded in effecting his escape.

Some time during the night Martin regained consciousness, but he was so wounded he was unable to stand. Little by little he dragged himself forward on his knees till at last he hit off the partially-made railway only a few hundred yards from his house, but then feeling utterly done, he crept under a pile of sleepers and again lapsed into unconsciousness.

His wife, not expecting him home so soon, was not anxious about him and even hesitated to leave her house when told by some workmen soon after daylight that an Englishman was lying wounded under the sleepers. She did go, however, and her horror may be imagined when she discovered who it was. Martin was still alive, but quite insensible and apparently at his last gasp. She had him carried home, and then sending for her husband's partner and other English navvies, soon despatched a messenger to Rustchuck for the doctor, who luckily was at home and at once started back on his sixty mile ride.

For some days Martin's life was despaired of, and for weeks he remained between life and death, but at last he so far recovered that he was able to finish his contract and go home to England with his savings, though his arm, from losing the entire elbow-cap, must ever remain a stiff one.

This outrage stirred us all up, and our chef called on the governor-general, Midhat Pasha, and spoke to him in forcible language, and not content with this, an account of the occurrence was telegraphed to the Ambassador at Constantinople. Thus a little energy was at last awakened, and a strong detachment of zaptiehs was sent to the Mudir of Rasgrad with orders that the whole of the assassins *must* be caught at once. The old Mudir enjoyed the reputation of being an out-and-out bad lot, but also that of being good at thief-catching, and he maintained his character.

He went at once to a Circassian village about a mile away from the scene of the robbery, and on telling the villagers he was come for the robbers, was naturally informed that all in that village were angels.

He wasted little time in talking, but placing some of his zaptiehs so as to prevent the chance of any escaping, he ordered the others to fetch out every woman in the village. This they soon did, and then the Mudir had a rope passed from each woman's neck to that of her neighbour, the ends being fastened to the girths of two of the zaptiehs' horses.

The Circassians stood for some time looking on in stupid astonishment, but on seeing the Mudir moving off with his captives, and aroused by their shrieks and cries, they at last rushed forward and said if the women were spared, the *plunder* should be given up. A halt was ordered and some of the men ran off to the houses, from whence they quickly returned with Martin's pocket-book, knife, letters and a few other things.

Then the Mudir, still sitting on his horse, ordered all who were engaged in the robbery to stand apart, and one by one, eight men came forward and confessed to the crime. The women being then untied, these eight took their places and were marched off.

After some time they were tried at Rustchuck and were all sentenced to the chain-gang for some years, where I hope they served their time, though I have little faith in their having done so; for after all they were Mussulmen and had only half killed a Giaour, and the troublesome Englishmen would never know if they were liberated or not.

If the Turkish officials in the provinces would or could (their nature is opposed to it) always display as much energy and determination when a robbery or outrage is committed, these little exciting incidents would soon be put a stop to and the country be safe to live in; but as it is, the brigands know that if they confine their operations to Giaours, nine times out of ten only half-measures will be taken for their apprehension, and even if they are taken it is next to impossible to get them convicted, for, whatever firmans may say, no judge in Turkey, if he can help it, will really listen to the evidence of a Christian when it is against a Turk.

There is a sequel to the story of Martin which I think I must mention, though it illustrates somewhat unfavourably the character of my fellow-countrywomen. When the poor fellow was in a convalescent state, he accepted an invitation from a brother-navvy

to take a walk to look for game. Martin, while doing so, discovered some nets hanging on a bush, so pushed his way in to get at them, leaving the gunner beating a field hard by. Presently, bang went the gun, and at the same moment Martin was shot in the face, chest and arms, and, though not seriously hurt, he was properly peppered and the blood trickling down his face made him look ghastly. In this condition he hurried home to his wife, who at first was horrified, but on discovering that little real damage was done, she lost her temper, fell foul of the unfortunate husband with her fingers, and gave him a severe handling (or fingering) for being such a fool, she said, as to go out shooting. From that day she nagged and nagged with the object of getting him to go home to England, for, she said, 'there was nought but ill-luck in this beastly country.'

I believe that all of us English at that time in Bulgaria were under an obligation to Martin, for the news of the outrage perpetrated on him spread far and wide, as well as the marvellous promptness of the authorities, and so it was thought too dangerous to interfere with any of us to be really pleasant or profitable. Anyhow, we never again had any trouble of the sort, and this is the more astonishing when one thinks of the numbers of English employed on the line, of their various tempers and dispositions, their ignorance of the manners and customs of the people they mixed with, and the sort of 'bull in a china shop' way they got through life.

My old friend the navvy, or rather the roving navvy, got on better with the various natives than any of the other English workmen—for this reason : they had all of them worked for years in different parts of Europe, so had learnt a little tact, and also not to think themselves so very, very superior to all others that they could do exactly as they liked. Besides which, they chiefly lived up country, away from towns, and they worked so hard that when they got home they were glad to eat their suppers, drink their grog, and be off to bed. At pay-time they would come to the towns, but did not wander far from the grogshop, where they met other Englishmen ; and, if they got excited or quarrelsome, pitched into a fellow-countryman, and gave him a thrashing, or took one themselves.

Many of the other workmen lived in the towns, and, though not so rough as the navvy, were more quarrelsome ; and being new to foreign countries, thought themselves lords of creation, and that if they got into a row their master, or the consul, had to get them out of it. When, as sometimes happened, the master or the consul deemed them to be so utterly in the wrong that they declined to interfere, and the noble Briton found himself in a Turkish gaol, their indignation was more than words could express.

This treatment quite cured one otherwise worthy blacksmith of that truly British pastime ‘ wife-kicking.’ It chanced that the consul went away for a few weeks on leave, and during his absence I acted for him. Within half-an-hour of my receiving the seals, the

blacksmith's wife appeared with two black eyes and a swollen nose, to inform me her husband had been ill-treating her, he being at the time 'in liquor.' I at once availed myself of my newly-acquired power, and without telling the wife I despatched two zaptiehs to take the husband to the Turkish prison, sending at the same time a note to the Pasha, asking him to keep the man locked up for twenty-four hours. I got a powerful mobbing from the wife when she found out what I had done ; but she lived to thank me for it, for so horrified was the husband, when the fumes of drink cleared off, to find himself locked up in a filthy prison, with filthier companions who had eased him of his money, knife, and such etceteras, that he made up his mind the game was not worth the candle, and in future never drank more than was good for him, therefore remained sensible enough not to knock his wife about.

No sooner had the railway works got fairly under way, than we were joined by many of our old English workmen from the Kustendji line, who being well known to us were of the greatest service.

Besides these, fresh men were engaged in England, and a host of sub-contractors and navvies flocked in from Spain, Italy, and Austria, indeed from any country where English companies had been constructing railways and public works. The majority of these proved first-class men, but now and then we got hold of the 'lawyer navvy'—a gentleman who never finishes a job, but tries to make his money easily, by a plausible tongue and a false tape, or, failing these, by going to law.

We fell victims to one of these latter very soon after the works began ; and, though it is not pleasant having to confess to being swindled, I will tell how it happened.

When we were letting the different sections by contract, a man who said he had just arrived from Spain applied to us for work, and as he showed most satisfactory testimonials and was very reasonable in his terms, we soon let him one of ten miles in length. I must own that I felt great confidence in my new sub from his very prepossessing appearance. Apparently he was about sixty years of age, had snow-white hair, blue eyes, and an open frank expression. Moreover, he looked a sober man, was well built and active-looking.

Few of the sub-contractors have money at starting to purchase their plant, so an order on the stores is given them from time to time, as the work goes on, for what they may require, and at each month's end part of their money is retained in hand to pay for it.

Well, old Grey applied at once for a large quantity of stores and got all he could, and soon he had large gangs of men at work all over his portion of the line. All went on well until a few days after the first payment was made to him, when he appeared at the office with his eyes bandaged up and in a terrible state of inflammation, and in a heartbroken voice he informed us that he was totally blind. Furthermore he said he had been in the same condition once before, and then the doctors had told him that it was only by having his eyes attended to at once that his sight had been saved. It

was a pitiable sight to see such a fine fellow thus afflicted, and very sorry we felt for him.

He told us he had paid all his men the previous night, and now he begged we would give him the money we had retained for the payment of his plant, as he had nothing, and take the plant back again in its place. He then begged to be allowed to leave for Constantinople by the boat just starting, as it was the only chance of saving his sight.

We never doubted him for a moment, so gave him the money and sent him off. But on going up to his section the next day (it was thirty miles distant from Varna), I had *my* eyes opened, for I found all his men in a state of fury, not having received a penny of their pay. The old fox had bolted with about 200*l.*, and before doing so had burnt his time books, so that it was most difficult to find out what he owed his men.

Fortunately I was able to induce the native foreman to give me at once, before they had a chance of altering them, the notched sticks they kept for their own satisfaction, and by these I paid everyone, and I do not think we were very far wrong. It would never have done to repudiate the debt, for the men looked upon us all as belonging to the same company, and so would never have trusted any of us again.

Shortly after this, another navvy arrived from Spain, and on my enquiring whether he had ever heard of a man named Grey, he exclaimed, ‘What Grey the blind dodger?’ and then went on to tell me that the swindler had played the said game over and over again. Doubt-

less he put something into his eyes that greatly inflamed them for a time, but he thought the pain worth suffering for the haul he made.

Having the plant on the ground, and a lot of handy-looking young Turks and Bulgars ready, we thought it a pity to stop the work even for a day; so Mac, who volunteered for the job, went to live in a neighbouring village, and with the help of a couple of English navvies as foremen, soon pushed on the work, and in an incredibly short time finished it, and when the accounts were made up he had the satisfaction of seeing that, by his judicious management and energy, he had recovered the 200*l.* of which we had been swindled, besides paying for all the plant, and he had finished his section in a thoroughly workmanlike manner. He was very proud of it, and we were very proud of him, as only half a year before he had been a schoolboy. He had only been in the country a few months, and could understand but a few words of Turkish.

CHAPTER X.

Two Strange Characters—Frozen to Death—Long Rides—Distances—
Midhat Pasha's Roads—Midhat Pasha's Post.

THE two navvies who worked under Mac were both peculiar in their way. One was actually a murderer, and the other was only saved from being so by his revolver missing fire when he snapped off all five barrels within an inch of the head of a fellow-navvy, with whom he had had a quarrel. This had not been done in drunken madness, for Tom Moore never drank anything but water. Like most of our other navvies, he came to us from Spain, and all we could learn of him was from his fellow-workmen, who all hated him but allowed that he was a first-rate man on works.

They disliked him because nothing would induce him to be sociable, or spend a penny in drink, and he seemed to them a great morose-looking giant, and a—mystery. To such a pitch did he carry his reclusiveness, that during all the summer he lived entirely in a big sort of coffin, which he had made out of an old packing-case. This the native workmen carried on as the line proceeded, so that he never left the works day or night, except to visit the villages to buy food, which he cooked for himself in the open. His box was about

seven feet long, three wide, and four feet high, fitted up as a bed with a thin mattress, and at the head and sides were shelves for the few things he required. Though he lived in this rough way, Tom was always one of the cleanest and best dressed men on the line.

In spite of his trick of shooting at his fellow-workmen, I always liked him, and often of an evening, when staying at Mac's lodgings close by, I would stroll out and smoke a cigarette sitting on the top of his box with him. After a time he became very friendly and open with me, and I learnt from him that his great object in life was to save enough money to return to England and buy a small house with sufficient land to support him in his native county, Wilts, and that he had nearly obtained enough to gratify his wish. As he suddenly left us before the line was half finished, I hope he may have gone home and be at this time a householder and landed proprietor.

Sam Skipper, Mac's other foreman, was the very opposite to Tom Moore. He was a little merry jabbering fellow, as restless as a magpie, and not quite so harmless. Every penny he earned he spent in drink before he received it, and yet he worked like a horse.

I did not hear his history till after his death, as his fellow-workmen would not split on him, but I was then told (mind I do not vouch for the truth of the statement), that years before he and another ruffian had broken into an old woman's house, in England, in the middle of the night, and because the poor old thing had sat up in her bed and screamed, Skipper had killed her

with a blow on the head from a pinch bar. He managed to escape across to France, and had spent the remainder of his life working on railways. His end was a very terrible one and came about in this way.

At the beginning of winter the works had been stopped for more than a week by the severity of the weather, and this leisure Sam devoted to drinking raki in the village grog-shop. As long as he could get it all went well, but the Greek proprietor, getting frightened at the long score he was running up, refused to let him have more till he paid his old debts. This sudden suspension of his drink brought on delirium tremens, and in a fit of frenzy he rushed out into the dark night in the face of a blinding snow-storm, clad only in a shirt and drawers.

It happened that I was sleeping that night at a village but a few miles away, and early next morning I was told what had occurred, so mounting my horse I hastened to the place, turned out all the workmen and scoured the country for miles round. From the first I had but faint hope of finding him, as the snow was very deep and much drifted, and the country was covered with thick acacia scrub. The search was continued for days unsuccessfully, but in the spring a few rags of his shirt and drawers were found in the bush, together with his skull and some bones. Doubtless, either before or after his death, the wolves had torn him to pieces and eaten him.

I do not know *why* it should be so, but certainly distances in Turkey appear very much shorter than

they do in England, and one soon gets to pay as little regard to a journey of twenty miles on horseback there as here we do to one of five. And yet it must be remembered that there are no macadamized roads, and it would be a strange thing if a man capable of sitting a few hours in a saddle should willingly venture twice in any wheeled conveyance. He may do so once, but his bones will be so rattled that he will remember it all his life.

Soon after I had settled at Varna, my younger brother, R. A. B., my companion of the Kustendji days, took up his quarters at Sheitanjik, where he superintended the middle sections and the construction of the great viaduct, and as this part of the line was far away from places resorted to by Europeans, he there came across the Turks and Bulgars ‘au naturel,’ and I learnt through him a great deal of information about them.

Seventy miles is a long way to go to spend a day with a companion, but during this and subsequent summers I constantly rode over my part of the line on the Saturday and at night pushed on to the little cottage at Sheitanjik, and at other times R. A. B. would ride down to enjoy the delights and excitement of the town of Varna.

I may here mention that all over Turkey distances are measured by the time it takes a man to ride them, the pace being that of a man on a long journey. Where the ground is good, and no hills intervene, as on the Dobrudja, ‘an hour’ would represent a little over four

miles, but in the mountainous districts not more than three, and it will sometimes happen that when there are two roads both going to the same place, the longest by mileage will be much the shortest by hours. From Varna to Rustchuck throughout, the 'hour' was as nearly as possible four miles, which we ascertained from the measurements of the railway.

I have said there were no macadamized roads in Turkey, but perhaps I ought to have said in the parts of Turkey I have visited, for lately I have seen it mentioned in a letter from a special correspondent, that there is an excellent macadamized road leading out of Widdin, made by Midhat Pasha when he was governor of the Vilayet.

Midhat Pasha arrived at Rustchuck soon after we commenced the railway, and at once set about making a chaussée from that town to Varna. It was all done by Corvée, and great numbers of men were engaged on the works, the result being that for the first five miles out of Rustchuck there was a fairly good broad road. From Varna, also, there was something like a road finished for four miles, but the intermediate piece (some 160 miles) was in a far worse state when the road was announced to be opened than before anything had been done to it.

In most parts the brushwood was cleared away—in some a ditch was cut on either side of the supposed line, while in others, rough stones, from the size of a cocoa-nut to that of a man's fist, were thinly scattered about, and these sinking into the mud formed a foundation

that prohibited the possibility of driving on it for even a few yards. Whenever the road passed near a town, such as Shumla and Rasgrad, a little more was done to it, but even here it was never passable, and the carts and arabas had to make fresh tracks by the side. At first zaptiehs were stationed all along the line to force the carts to keep upon it, but as the rough unbroken stones soon destroyed the tireless wheels and lamed the bullocks, the drivers would diverge miles from the direct road rather than risk a break-down, and I am quite sure the great Pasha himself never kept on the chaussée after he had once passed over the good piece from the gates of Rustchuck.

This piece may have been repaired now and then, but over all the rest not one man's labour was expended during the next six years, and before I quitted Turkey the brushwood had again hidden all traces of it in the wooded districts, and nowhere was it ever used.

Every European on visiting the Pasha was asked if he had seen the new road, and if he had not he was either sent out a mile or two in one of the Pasha's carriages, or asked to hire one for himself. In this way the Pasha soon won a grand reputation; but if, on the one hand, one takes into consideration the great numbers of men forced from home and their usual occupations, the misery they suffered, and the heart-burnings this forced labour engenders, and, on the other hand, the *results*, any fair-minded man would, I think, agree with me, that the Pasha deserved a reputation—but a very different one from what he got!

Directly the road was supposed to be finished, a post was established on it in imitation of those in Wallachia. Post-houses were hired or built all along the road, light four-wheeled carts, some with and some without springs, were bought in Hungary, and a score or so of wretched native ponies were purchased. This was advertised in the Constantinople journals, as also the tariff and the number of hours it took, or was supposed to take, the post to get over the road.

I once availed myself of this means of transport, when it was in its young and palmy days, but I never attempted it again. I ordered the cart over night, and, what is more, got the head director of the post to put a 'special recommendation' upon the order he gave me for fresh horses. An hour after the time fixed, up drove the little waggon drawn by three ponies abreast, and as soon as Hassein and I had taken our places, the post-boy, a great heavy young Turk, flourished his whip, and away we went over the rough pavement at a pace that fairly frightened me, the boy shouting as he went 'Wada posta!' to make the people get out of the way. On leaving the gates and getting on the half-made roads, whack went the whip, first on one beast then on another, then round the driver's neck as if he wished to commit suicide, and then into our faces—for the whip, like all the rest, was *à la Franca*, and copied from the Wallachian. It was therefore a stick some 18 inches long with a lash of about 10 feet, and this to hit horses the tails of which were swishing into the driver's face!

Never mind—we did spin along famously—so

famously that the Turk could not help turning round to boast about his cattle and assure me that they could do the whole distance twice as quickly if required, and that when they had eaten corn a little longer they would go 'Kush gebe' (like birds). On leaving the *show* piece of the road they perhaps went 'Kush gebe,' but not like birds on the wing—no, about as fast as an old hen could run, and all the whipping and swearing poured on them produced no effect.

The first post, twelve miles, was got through at last, and on showing my order, three fresh horses were provided; but these only *started* at a slow jog, and soon fell into a walk; so seeing it was hopeless to get through my journey in this way, I stopped at a village, where I found a saddle-horse, and wished the post good-bye for ever. For a few months one saw from time to time a post-cart slowly dragged along, and a friend would come by them to dinner from up-country, and arrive in the middle of the night; but they soon disappeared, and I doubt if they have ever been revived.

Besides the five miles of good road out of Rust-chuck, Midhat Pasha also made a fairly good macadamized street through the Bulgar quarter, which he continued for one mile out of the town in the direction of Silistria, and I believe scratched a little at a road towards Widdin. He also built an orphan asylum, which as soon as it was finished he turned into an hotel, saying the orphans should have the profits, and as his father and mother were dead, I daresay an orphan did get them. He further built a very handsome quay wall

along the river face, with a broad promenade on the top ; but as his engineers forgot the foundations, it all subsided within a year into the Danube, where it stove in the bottom of the boats till it sank deeper and deeper and was forgotten. Of course all I have said refers to the state of things while I was in Turkey, that is up to the year 1870. Since then the road *may* have been repaired and other public works *may* have been put in perfect order, but if they have, I, for one, shall be vastly astonished.

CHAPTER XI.

Hard at Work—Turkish Execution—Locked out of Varna—Landing
Locomotives—Greek Gang.

OWING to the intensity of the frosts, the depth of the snow, and the general severity of the winter in Bulgaria east of the Balkans, little or no work can be done out of doors ; so availing myself of this, I started off to England *viâ* Constantinople and Marseilles, leaving Mac and R.A.B., who had come down from Sheitanjik, in possession of my house, and I did not return to Varna till the winter was over. Then began the busiest part of all our life in the East, for every description of work was now in full swing, and workmen of all sorts, all nations, and all trades swarmed all over the line. I was very sorry to find that during my absence my old friend the governor had been removed, and that his place had been filled by a Pasha of the new school. A man of the most unprepossessing appearance—big, fat, and unhealthy-looking, dressed in what he considered perfect Parisian clothes that sat on him like those on a dummy at the door of a second-hand clothes shop.

I determined to make the best of him, therefore called on him at once ; but soon found from his insolent behaviour that it was best to have as little to do with

him as possible. My belief is that he hated me because I had got on so well with his predecessor ; anyhow there was no mistake about his dislike for me, especially when he hung a murderer on a tree just outside my gate, and left him hanging there three days, and only allowed him to be cut down at the remonstrances of half the consuls in the town. As this execution illustrates the customs prevalent in provincial towns in Turkey, I will briefly describe it here.

There was no doubt about the guilt of the man, who was by birth a Turk, and who for years had indulged in Bashi-Bazoukish pastimes. He was seen by several people in the act of murdering his last victim, so was taken and put in prison. Months passed before he was tried for the crime, and after he was sentenced to death he was again shut up in prison for two years, though liable at any moment to be taken out and hanged. One would have supposed that this two years of awful suspense would have somewhat cowed his spirits, but apparently it had no effect on them. One day, soon after my return to Varna, two zaptiehs led him out of prison heavily chained, telling him his time was come, and he was to be hanged at once. On their way to the tree near my door (they did the distance on foot), the clever zaptiehs remembered that to hang a man a rope was necessary, a fact they had quite forgotten ! They halted and discussed the matter, when the prisoner helped them out of the difficulty by suggesting they should take the rope reins off a passing teliki—a suggestion

they gladly acted upon, thus committing a highway robbery to execute justice !

On reaching the tree a further discussion, in which the prisoner joined, took place as to how they were to hang him. And again he helped them. He said if they would allow him to smoke a last cigarette he would hang himself—an offer they accepted by handing him one ready lighted. The man, then pointing to an empty barrel standing at a shop door, told them to place it under a bough that hung immediately over the middle of the street, and when they had done so and fastened one end of the line round his neck and the other over the bough, he stepped upon the barrel, the slack of the rope was pulled in and all was ready.

It may have been thoughtless of the man, but under the circumstances I think it was *natural*, he was very slow over his cigarette, and even when urged by the zaptiehs to carry out his bargain, he said, *he* was in no hurry. But there is an end to all things, and the cigarette was at last finished, when the man stepping to one side of the barrel, gave it a shove with his foot, which sent it rolling down the street and left him swinging just two feet from the ground, a caution to all beholders.

Strange as it may appear, this execution caused my friend Mac, for the first and last time, to lose his temper with me very seriously ! He was away up-country when it took place, but the evening before the body was cut down he returned to Varna. On reaching the tree he turned his head round to see what all the loafers

were staring at, and as his horse was going at a sharp tripple, before he had time to look before him he was carried so close to the body that it brushed against him. The next minute he was in my room pouring forth torrents of abuse upon astonished me, for not having had the forethought to send a cavass to the gates of the town to caution him to avoid coming down the street.

I pacified him at last, but there was always an angry flash from his eyes whenever the subject was reverted to, and he often told me he shuddered every time he thought of it, and ever after hated passing the tree.

Besides hanging the murderer at my door, the Pasha soon adopted other ingenious methods of annoying me. Every evening at sunset the gates of the town are shut and locked, and the keys taken to the Konak, where they remain till an hour after sunrise, while at every gate there is a group of people and carts, both outside and in, waiting for the doors to be opened.

Now, as I was almost every day out somewhere on the line, it was impossible always to get to the gates before sunset; but during my old friend's reign I had only to ride to the gate nearest the Konak, give a shout, and the zaptieh on guard would run to the Konak to fetch the key and let me in himself, well pleased to do so for the sake of bakshish.

One day, not long after the arrival of the new Pasha, I rode up to the gates some two hours after dark, and shouted and shouted, but all in vain. So I

turned my horse's head to the spot at the end of the lake, but outside the walls, where the future station was to be built, and where we already had stables, intending to sleep there and do as well as I could. But on arriving there and telling the night watchman what had happened, he said, 'Leave your horse with the grooms, Tchellaby, and come with me, I will soon have you into the town.' I followed him up the steep hill till we reached a lonely corner of the fortifications, where he gave a low whistle, which was quickly answered from the inside; and then, approaching the head of the fosse, he told the sentinel what had occurred. He at once said that if I would drop very quietly into the fosse, he would haul me up with his sash. I was quickly inside the town, and giving the man a good bakshish I arranged with him that whenever I wished I was to come in the same way, and furthermore, he furnished me with a lantern to light me through the town, for it is against the police regulations of all towns in Turkey to be out in the streets after sunset without one.

A year or so after, when this Pasha in his turn had been intrigued out of his place, he could not resist calling on me to cast in my teeth the fact that he had over and over again locked me out of the town; but the tables were turned when I told him I had a silver key that fitted all doors in Turkey, and that I had never once slept out on account of the gates being shut.

Every now and then when the oily brute wanted

me to do him some favour, he would invite me to drink a coffee at the Konak; but finding from experience that I had to pay heavily for such honours, I persistently declined them, and so at last in despair the Pasha sent me word one evening about sunset that he was coming to see me. Rumour said that alcohol in any shape and in almost any quantity was grateful to the Pasha's palate; so having none in the house (Mac and I being both tea or water drinkers), we sent to the best café for some champagne, and when the Pasha and his secretary arrived I placed a bottle before them, and before the visit was over we were the best of friends and two bottles had been emptied.

Out of politeness I sipped a few drops myself, and it tasted for all the world the same as I imagine effervescing ink would, but the Pasha said it was capital, and smacked his lips and hiccupped loudly after every glass. This was the last flicker of friendship between us, for calling by appointment at the Konak next day to see the Pasha, I heard he was very ill, and oddly enough his secretary was suffering in exactly the same manner! The doctor did not know what was the matter, but thought it looked as if the Pasha had been poisoned, and remembering the beastly beverage I had tasted the previous night, I thought he had for once hit the right nail on the head.

By the middle of June we had finished a substantial wooden jetty reaching far out into the bay, and had also run a line from the lake across the marsh on to it. This was not done without opposition from the autho-

rities, as they feared it might be used at some future day to shelter an enemy besieging the town. The difficulty was at last got over by our giving a note to the Governor in which we said the Government were at liberty to remove the bank in case of war. Should war ever break out, I advise them to set about this in time, for, judging from the time it took us to put it up, it would require some weeks to pull it down.

The jetty was erected chiefly to facilitate the discharging of the locomotives and other heavy goods, and for this purpose a gantry was built at the end of it on which worked a big travelling crane.

All had been ready for some days, when at last two big steamers arrived together, each with two locomotives, and as they drew 16 feet of water and we had only 17 feet under the gantry, it made us feel very anxious. For four days in succession we had all the men ready on the jetty before daylight, only to find that the captain dare not come in for the swell; but on the fifth day it was a dead calm, and so stern first and with steam up, we warped the steamers alongside and began our discharging.

The work was all done by a lot of Greek boatmen and carpenters; and they managed it so well, worked so steadily, and showed so much intelligence that they were kept together as one gang, not only on the construction but for years after the line was opened. They got to be extraordinarily skilful at all sorts of railway work, such as repairing and making wooden bridges, station roofs, putting in points and crossings, pile-

driving, and, in fact, any sort of work done on a railway. But where they specially distinguished themselves was at a break-down on the line, clearing away the wreck and putting all straight. During the five or six years they worked under my orders, I never had to dismiss one for bad conduct, nor did I ever see any of them the worse for drink; and yet scores of times I have had them out in such intense cold that Sir Wilfrid Lawson himself would, I think, have taken a nip.

When discharging the locomotives they had a first-rate English foreman over them in Tom Bilby, a man who had commenced life as a sailor, and previously to this had been driving a locomotive on the Kustendji line. (He is, I believe, at this present time a driver of the express train on the Varna railway.) With hardly a minute's rest they all worked on till dark, by which time we had the satisfaction of seeing all four engines with their tenders on the rails, only requiring fitting and cleaning to be ready for use.

My readers will understand what an anxious day we had of it, when I tell them that four times during those hours we had hanging on a single chain the fate not only of the locomotive, but the steamer under it, which was besides heavily laden with goods for Odessa. Had the chain broken or anything gone wrong on the gantry, down would have gone the locomotive through the bottom of the steamer, and the company would have had to pay for all. Besides which there were necessarily a lot of men in the hold bousing out the engines from under the hatches, and directing them up.

At the very first attempt and, fortunately, before the chain began to lift, 'ping' went a link and bang came the chain in two, knocking over Tom Bilby, but fortunately not hurting him. Yet this was a new chain just out from England, where it had been tested up to four times the weight it was required to lift. Not having another, we had to use the other end of the same chain again; and well it stood its work; for once, owing to the position of the ship, which could not be placed immediately under the drum of the crane, the chain on the drum was pulled aside and mounted coil upon coil one over the other, and just as we were going to bring the 'traveller' back, and so land the locomotive, which was hanging some twenty feet above the bottom of the ship, one coil of chain slipped off the other, letting the weight drop about an inch, and so increasing it that the gantry creaked and trembled throughout. I know my blood stood still, and I felt cold all over, but the five Greeks who were at the crane on the top of the gantry behaved splendidly. They never flinched, but kept a tight hold on the handles of the crane, for which plucky conduct each received a good bakshish.

CHAPTER XII.

The First Engine—A Turkish Picnic—Strictly Guarded Beauties—In Trouble with a Pasha—A Trip in the Wrong Direction—A Conscientious Turk.

SOME time before the arrival of these big engines, we had got a little four-wheeled affair puffing and spluttering about, a machine so small that it looked overloaded when the driver stood on the foot-plate, and yet it continued to run away at a brisk pace over the rough newly-laid line with four heavily-laden waggons of rails, and as the rail-laying got further and further off, it was hardly ever off the road day or night, and became one of the dirtiest and most raffish-looking fellows in Europe. We got up and down the line faster on it than on horseback, but otherwise the quadruped was by far the pleasanter means of locomotion. It was long before we could get accustomed to its spitting black water (priming) incessantly from its low chimney all over us, or could learn to tolerate its hopping dancing mode of progression, and many was the aching back, aching head, and blackened clothes, face, and hands that it gave me.

When the rails were laid for about twenty miles, some members of the mejliss (council), whose acquaintance we had made when visiting the old Pasha, asked

us to give them a trip up the line. We readily consented, and the scheme was enlarged into a Turkish picnic, at which the ladies of the different harems were to appear, and at which I was to be the only Christian.

We all met at the station, and the ladies clambering into one ballast waggon, I got with all the men into another, and away we went dragged by the spitting little engine.

As is correct in Turkey, none of the men made any remark on this, to them, strange mode of locomotion, nor did they deign to ask any questions; but it was quite otherwise with the ladies. They criticised all they saw, openly expressed their intense wonder, and if laughing and jabbering like a waggon-full of children showed pleasure, they must have been greatly delighted.

In about half-an-hour we pulled up opposite a pretty marble fountain, built on the hill-side near the line, and surrounded by fine walnut-trees. The Turks, approving my choice of ground, all tumbled out of their waggons, and leaving the women to follow as best they could, without giving even a look towards them, they waddled up to one of the trees and squatted themselves down on their carpets. The ladies in like manner collected under a neighbouring tree, and the servants soon kindled a fire at a little distance and served all with coffee and sweetmeats. These were no sooner finished than the great feed itself was placed before us, and we set to work in earnest. All the dishes were first handed to us lords of creation, and when we had done with them they were taken on first to the ladies and then to

the servants and slaves, but even here the sexes kept apart and the weaker was last served.

Now and then one of the men would fish out with his fingers a tit-bit from a favourite dish, which, being placed on a big dock-leaf, was sent by a slave to some young beauty or favoured one in the rear, and in return he would get a merry laugh and a wave of the hand; but this was the only notice taken of these sweet creatures, who I was convinced from the way they were constantly casting sly glances our way, would greatly have enjoyed a small flirtation.

One tall, pretty girl in particular, who was the wife (I don't know if she was the only one) of a man old enough to be her grandfather, and whose yashmak was very transparent and very loosely put on, behaved in what in Turkish eyes must have been a most audacious way. She lolled about (not to say rolled!) on her carpet, laughed and talked loudly, and played practical jokes with the others, and at last when the repast was over and we had all washed, she burst forth into a song, that is to say, if a long string of words without rhyme or melody, delivered in a voice like the high notes of a violin being tuned, could be called such. I suppose my taste was not sufficiently cultivated to enjoy it, for it appears that all the others did, and as it went on first one and then another old Turk shook his hand before his face with the tips of his fingers and thumb in a cluster, and gave a suppressed whistle, expressing thereby that he thought her a wonder.

It was quite refreshing to see the intense pleasure

all this gave the old husband. He stroked his beard, grinned, sighed a sigh of content, and actually blushed with modesty, and yet all the time he sat with his back to his charmer and never cast a glance her way. This performance was no sooner over than the lady picked up a sort of diminutive fiddle with, I think, only two strings, on which she tweaked away with her thumbs and accompanied with dismal howls, casting her really pretty eyes about in quite a reckless fashion.

The time was passed in this somewhat deadly-lively manner, till just as the sun was setting, up came the engine and waggons and we all took our seats. Hardly had we moved off before the young beauty beckoned to me with a downward wave of her hand, and called out in a peremptory voice ‘Ghel-burda’ (Come here). I was fairly perplexed what to do, for I had always understood that it was considered by Turks as something awful for a Giaour to look at a Turkish woman, much more to speak to one. However, my hesitation was overcome by another sharp angry ‘Ghel burda, Ishitmior sen?’ (Come here; don’t you hear me?) from the fair one, and a nod from the old husband.

I dared not venture inside the waggon, so perched myself on the end with my feet resting on the buffer, and thus, with my face within a few inches of my interrogator, I answered her quickly following questions.

‘Are you married? No! Ah, you are poor then and can’t afford a wife. You would like one, would not you?’

‘Yes, very much if I might have the one I want; but I can’t have her, she is married to another.’

‘Ah, ah!’ with an arch look. ‘Have you a father and mother? write to them and make them buy you a wife; but Giaours’ wives are no good, they run away from their husbands. Have you good water in your country, and water-melons? No water-melons! Bah, what a bad place! When you want a wife how do you get one, do you buy her? You find out a girl who loves you and then ask her to marry you, but how do you know she loves you? By her eyes! Oh!’ looking down. ‘You hate a yaskmak; so do I, and so I wear as thin a one as I dare. There go away, I have done;’ and somewhat crest-fallen, I slipt back among the men, who, I may remark, did not hear the above conversation, our voices being drowned by the noise of the waggons.

The jealous way in which a Turk guards his wife not only from intercourse with, but also from the gaze of, an European, is not a traveller’s invention but a real fact, and though I spent twelve years altogether in Turkey, and was intimate with the people, this was one of the very few chances I ever had of speaking to a woman who looked less than eighty years old! In after years I did once or twice speak to some younger ones, but it was not till I had a wife of my own to look after me and act as chaperone.

On my first arrival at Constantinople some years previous to this, I saw a Levantine Englishman limping about, and was told by him that he had had some ounces of flesh carved out of his leg by the sword of a negro guard, for looking into a carriage in which were seated some ladies of the Sultan’s harem. He did not

seem to mind it much, for the wound in his leg was almost healed, and the wound in his feelings was doing well under the treatment of the great ambassador who had taken the case in hand, and extracted a lot of golden ointment for it from the Government.

After this picnic party we were incessantly pestered by all sorts of people for a lift up the line on the wag-gons, and as the rails reached further and further inland so much the more were we beset by travellers. If we granted leave we got no thanks, were grumbled at for delays, and screamed at for mishaps. Did we refuse, never mind what our reasons were for doing so, we made an enemy for life !

An amusing incident occurred to me through this love of getting a lift gratis. I had gone up the line in the morning, taking my little horse Zaptich with me in a break van, and on reaching the end of the rails some twenty miles from home, I started off on him to inspect some earthworks further on. I arranged with Tom Bilby, the engine-driver, that the train should come up again towards evening and take me home to Varna ; so when my day's work was over, I rode back to the end of the line, and dismounting, waited patiently for the waggons.

I had not waited long before up drove a carriage attended by some half-dozen zaptiehs, in which was seated a fat, pompous-looking Turk, whose coat being a mass of gold braid I rightly supposed to be some great military swell.

By order of this big man one of the zaptiehs asked

me if the train were expected, and on my answering in the affirmative the Pasha struggled out of his carriage, and coming up to me salaaming over and over again to the ground, asked if I would be so kind as to give him a lift to Varna, together with a servant or two, and a little baggage that would be up in a few minutes. I returned the salaams, and said I should feel honoured by his company; and the locomotive and waggons arriving at that moment, I set to work to get their load discharged as quickly as possible. When this was done, the Pasha told me he was very sorry but his baggage had not yet come; did I mind waiting a few more minutes? I would wait half an hour, or an hour even, if it would convenience the Pasha; and wait we did just an hour, at the end of which time I espied, about a mile from us, a string of fifty bullock arabas approaching. For some time it never struck me that these contained 'the little baggage,' but when it did I was somewhat astonished, not to say amused. I at once explained to the Pasha that having only two platform waggons and a break-van it was quite impossible to take all, for the waggons would not hold half of it.

The Pasha said, 'Oh, you don't know; my men will fill it up, tay! ever so high! We can easily take all.' I explained to him that even if we could get half the goods into the waggons our little engine could not drag them in, and we should stick fast. But not a bit of it! I reasoned, I explained, and did my best to persuade the Pasha to leave his 'little baggage' and come on alone with me; but this he refused to do, and

finding that reasoning was thrown away on this dense-brained idiot, I told him I gave him one last chance, and if he did not get up at once I should go without him. Then he in his turn began to threaten. 'See,' he said, 'if you venture to do so I will report you to the manager of the railway when I arrive at Varna to-morrow, and will insist on your instant dismissal!'

This was enough, so telling Tom Bulby to move on, I made my salaams, the engine puffed and spitted, and away we went, leaving the Pasha shaking his fist and gesticulating—a display of energy that he kept up till we were out of sight.

Mac and I laughed over the affair that evening, and then it passed from my mind. But two days later, as we sat at breakfast, Demetry popped his head in at the door, and said in a hurried whisper, 'One great big pasha, he come see you, sare,' and withdrawing his head, threw the door open again the next instant, and in an awe-struck voice announced, 'The Pasha Effendi.'

In a moment I recognised my friend, and at the same time scented some fun. Not so the Pasha; he did not deign to cast one look in my direction till after he had slowly unbuckled his cumbrous sword, seated himself on the divan, and stroked his beard. Then, however, he bowed low, commenced a salaam, and also a friendly smile, but on recognising me his salaam was arrested on the middle of his stomach, and the friendly smile turned first into a look of astonishment and then of anger. In a rage he turned to his Tchiboukji, who

stood just inside the door, and said, 'Eshek (ass), you have made a mistake!'

'Yes, Effendi, I have—but they said this was the head man of the iron road.'

'Pah, pig, hold your tongue.' And then coldly turning to me, he said he wished to speak in private to the manager of the railway.

I at once asked Mac to leave the room, but the Pasha stopped him and asked, 'Who is the manager here?' I said, 'I am, and I shall be most happy if I can be of service to you.'

The Pasha gave a low whistle, and then beginning to grin, said, 'True? Then I have made a mistake. I called to complain to *you* of your own conduct the day before yesterday, and was going to ask for your dismissal. What shall I do now?

'Have a coffee and a cigarette, and believe me it was only the utter impossibility of doing as you wished that forced me to leave you on the road; but, Pasha, why did you not come on alone?'

'I could not, Tchellaby, for this reason. I was taking down government stores from Shumla, and amongst them was a lot of *powder*, and it would not have done.'

After this explanation we sat and chatted in the most friendly manner, and on leaving the Pasha pressed me to call on him the first time I went to Shumla.

Another amusing scene took place when the rails were laid to Sheitanjik. A long train of materials was standing at Shumla Road Station, on its way up the line, and whilst there a swell young Turk, a govern-

ment official, arrived from Shumla in a carriage and four, and jumping out told his servant to place his baggage on the end waggon and arrange him a comfortable seat.

I was standing by the side of the waggon all the time this was being done, and when the Turk was seated I asked him what he intended doing.

‘I am going down by this train,’ he said ; to which I rejoined that it was against rules for anyone to get on to a waggon without a written order. At this he chucked his nose in the air and said ‘Pish,’ and in doing so contrived to throw such concentrated essence of insolence into his manner that I refrained from asking him where he wished to go to, guessing that he thought from the position of the engine that we were bound for Varna, whereas we were *shoving* the train before us up to Sheitanjik, just twenty miles in the opposite direction, and what was more, when we got there the engine and waggons would be detained ballasting for a week before they returned.

I therefore made him a salaam, and when all was ready I jumped on the tender and away we went. Our friend took no notice till we were clear of the station, but then finding we were going faster and faster in the wrong direction, he jumped up and began shouting and waving to me in a frantic manner, but I kept my back to him and let him shout till he was tired. On arriving at Sheitanjik, up he rushed, and in a very different manner to that he had used before, told me he wished to go to Varna.

I replied that if he would wait where he was till the end of the week I would give him a written order for the waggons, but they would not be going there sooner. He begged, he intreated, he threatened and blustered, but on my shrugging up my shoulders as high as I could get them, spreading out my hands before me with the palms upwards, and saying ‘Neyapajak?’ (What’s to be done?) in as *à la Turk* a way as I could, and at the same time offering him no suggestions, he retired to the native huts. An hour later, when I was mounting my horse to ride on to Rustchuck, I had the pleasure of seeing the young swaggerer jogging off in the opposite direction, in a one-horse teliki, with a journey of seventy miles before him; and I trust before he had accomplished it, he had come to the conclusion that it was better not to be insolent to Giaours unless they were Rayahs.

As the foregoing occurrences illustrate the Turkish character in a somewhat unfavourable manner, I will, before quitting the subject, tell an anecdote that shows how patient a Turk can be, and also how conscientiously he attends to his religious duties, that is to say, if he is one of the old school and of a good sort, as was the man of whom I am going to write.

Some time after the rails were all laid, but before the line was opened, an old village Turk came to R. A. B.’s house, at Sheitanjik, and asked him to give him an order to go to Rustchuck on the waggons, to see his son, who had been drawn for a soldier, and the poor old fellow had heard that his regiment, which was then at

Rustchuck, was under orders for Constantinople, and no one knew where afterwards. He added, taking hold of his long white beard, 'I am an old man, and cannot expect to live long, and it is pretty sure I shall never see my boy in this world, for I am too feeble to make the journey by road, but I am told you could take me to Rustchuck in a few hours, without my suffering from fatigue.'

R. A. B. at once gave him the order, and calling up his cavass, told him to take great care of the old men, provide him with food and bed, and see him off safely next day, as he himself had to leave home that evening.

A train passed through Sheitanjik each day, at a fixed time, on its way to Rustchuck, but only just pulled up to deliver letters, and did not stop a minute. Now it so happened that the time the train arrived was just at the moment the old Turk's turnip-like watch told him to say his prayers, and it pulled up at the temporary station just as the old man had spread his carpet and gone down on his knees. An English navvy, the only European at the station, told him the train could not wait, and that if he wished to go he must look sharp, but the old fellow went on with his prayers as if he had not heard.

The engine-driver whistled, moved on his train, and shouted to him, but it had no effect; so fearing to delay longer, he started off, and by the time the prayers were over the train was far away in the distance.

The old man rose, rolled up his carpet, cried feebly, said 'Allah yapmish' (God did it), and settled down to wait another twenty-four hours; but again the train was punctual, and the watch despotic, and again the poor fellow was left behind as on the previous day. Again he said, 'Allah yapmish,' and quietly wept, adding, 'Please Allah my child will not have left Rustchuck when I get there.'

The same thing was about to occur on the third day. The Turk went to his prayers, the engine arrived, everybody shouted to him and urged him to get up, but again he apparently heard not. This proved too much for the patience of the big English navy, who had witnessed the two previous failures; so making a rush at the old 'Bony-back,' as he called him, he lifted him up like a child, and tumbled him over the side into a waggon, and pitched his carpet in after him. Nothing in the world would have induced the good old fellow to swerve one iota from what he considered his duty, but words cannot tell, and my pen cannot describe, the intense delight his face betrayed when fate thus stood his friend in the shape of an impatient good-tempered burly navy, and as long as the train was in sight he could be seen waving his thanks with a beaming countenance.

I am glad to be able to add that a week later the old man returned, and thanking my brother for his kindness, told him he had spent all his time in Rustchuck with his son.

Some years later, R. A. B. again saw him at Sheitanjik station, and with him was his son, who, he said, had been sent home with his discharge, as his eyes were failing; 'But, Tchellaby, our wise man soon cured them, and there he is safe and well.'

CHAPTER XIII.

Quarantine—Cholera—Giving Chloroform to a Horse.

TOWARDS the end of this summer, when we were enduring the very greatest heat, the cholera, which had been carrying off hundreds of victims at Constantinople, fell upon us, or rather I should say upon our companions, for, strange as it may appear, there was not a single case of it in Varna. It was all round us, at Bourgas, Baltchik, Kustendji, Shumla, and Rustchuck, but for some unaccountable reason it did not appear in Varna.

Doubtless it will be said that quarantine saved us, but for my part, I do not believe it did the least good, for this reason, that though it was supposed to be most strictly observed, yet I know of dozens of cases where it was broken, and broken with the connivance of the quarantine officers. Then, again, though there was quarantine for all who came to Varna by sea, yet anyone was at liberty to come in by land from Constantinople, Bourgas, and Kustendji, and I myself, as well as many other Englishmen, constantly passed into Varna from infected places, and no questions were asked.

When it was at its height at Rustchuck, a cordon

of soldiers was stationed along the road from Shumla to Silistria, to stop people from Rustchuck coming further inland; but I know of numbers of people who passed through simply by paying bakshish to one of the soldiers on guard to let them do so, and the captain in command made quite a pretty little purse out of travellers by this way of collecting tolls. In fact quarantine in Turkey, like all other laws there, seemed expressly made to hinder trade, annoy the inhabitants, and enrich the officials. Quarantine was the only weapon used either to keep the fell enemy out of the town or to fight against him should he make his appearance. No sanitary measures were taken, such as removing the hills of filth that lay reeking in the sun all round and in the heart of the town. Not a single cesspool was cleaned out, and not an ounce of extra medicine or disinfectant of any sort was imported; and the Greek doctor told me that if it did break out, he had not sufficient of the commonest medicines to last a week. Then the quarantine arrangements themselves were as bad as bad could be. All ships arriving were visited by an officer and their papers looked at, and those unfortunates who were forced to land were marched off to the far side of the bay, where a rough shed of planks, far from either air-tight or water-tight, was all the accommodation made to receive them. Here, men and women, Asiatics and Europeans, rich and poor, were huddled together, and catered for by a dirty Greek cook, who kept a canteen.

If any of the unfortunates had friends in the town,

they were allowed to take them food, which had to be placed outside the quarantine ground, and then the guards, if paid, would fetch it in. Some few rich men, or men who knew Turkey well, brought servants with them as well as tents, and these fared like princes compared to the others; still I should strongly recommend all Europeans who could do so to quit Turkey directly cholera broke out, not on account of the disease but on account of the risk they must run of suffering from the stupidity, idleness, and dishonesty of the quarantine officers.

The cholera apparently started for the Bulgarian province from Constantinople, visiting Bourgas, then fortunately jumping over Varna, it touched at the little seaside town of Baltchik and so on to Kustendji, where it proved most fatal to the English workmen, killing a far greater proportion of them than of the other inhabitants. Then it broke out at different places all down the Danube simultaneously, and after a little while appeared in the interior. At Rustchuck it was most destructive, but here, unlike Kustendji, the English did not suffer much. The chief victims were the poor Albanian masons, hundreds of whom were employed by the railway company on the various buildings. These Albanians were living in all parts of the railway works in small huts they had themselves constructed, the sanitary arrangements of which were bad, but directly the cholera broke out this was at once remedied. On the other hand they were men who lived on vegetable diet and drank very little in the shape of alcohol.

The English at Kustendji were better lodged than any of the other inhabitants, and ate quite six times as much meat, man for man, as any other people there.

The poor Albanians, when they saw their friends and relatives dying by scores, became perfectly panic-struck, and I have no doubt their terror held the door open for the cholera to enter. Strange to say, it constantly happened when one of these poor creatures felt himself attacked by cholera he would go away from all his friends and from all help, and wandering into the vineyards or into the brushwood two or three miles from the town, die there like a beast, and long afterwards, whilst shooting, we constantly found their unburied bodies.

Fortunately, we had an extremely clever English medical man to attend to the servants of the railway company, and to great ability he added indomitable pluck and perseverance; and I can safely say that of all the men that ever did a day's work for the railway, he at this time worked the hardest and went through enough danger to make him worthy of a Victoria Cross. Hundreds of those who came under his treatment died, but here and there he succeeded in snatching a victory, generally before the enemy had made much way with its victim, but not unfrequently when the man was actually in a state of collapse. A life saved by the doctor was not only *one* life saved, for I am sure the moral support it gave to others went far to prevent their falling ill, and even gave those already stricken courage to battle for life. I repeat what the doctor

told me when I say there is nothing in the whole pharmacopœia that staves off cholera so well as quiet courage and the not giving way to a morbid dread of the malady. And yet this will not save all. Hundreds of men of all nations with undoubted pluck, and many among the Turks apparently quite indifferent to death, were swept off by this outbreak.

I remember well one of our English carpenters who had so often been face to face with death in various forms, that he had learnt to look on it without the least dread. He had served from a boy in the English navy, had visited all quarters of the globe and seen cholera over and over again, and had been frequently in action, and yet, poor fellow, he was one of the first taken at Rustchuck. He had worked some time for us as manager of the saw mills, and it had always been his custom on going home to dinner to leave his tools in the mill. His fellow-workmen, therefore, were somewhat astonished one day to see him carefully putting away his tools in his basket before going home. On their asking why he did so, he said, quite calmly, 'Well, mates, you see I shan't require them where I am bound for. I have got the cholera, and what is more, shall not be here long. Good-bye, all.' And off he walked home. At the time no one thought he was in earnest, but before night they heard he was really down with it, and by dinner-time the next day they were making his coffin.

At Rustchuck, Midhat Pasha, stirred up by our

doctor, who was incessantly at him, did turn out the prisoners and made a feeble attempt at cleaning the streets; but if the entire gang had been kept at the work a year they would not have removed the abominations that had accumulated, and by scratching at it as he did I suspect more harm than good was done. He only stirred up fresh smells, and brought to light that which had been hidden. Like Varna, there is not in all Rustchuck a single covered drain. In every courtyard there is an open cesspool, besides lots of others that have become full and been covered over with a little earth. Before leaving this subject I must mention that under the doctor's orders all the Turks who were employed in attending on the sick, burying the dead, and doing sanitary work, behaved famously. They never once resisted an order, and evidently felt no fear. Doubtless their being fatalists helped them, but yet allowing for this, there was shown, as there always is when a Turk is well commanded, great courage and devotion to duty.

Even for those who were fortunate enough to be beyond the fatal district, as we were at Varna, it was a most anxious time, and hearing, as we did daily, of scores of natives being struck down all round us, we dared hardly hope that all our own friends would escape, and we began to dread the sight of a telegram lest it should tell of some one dead or dying. Thank God, we all escaped, and few will wish to be in Turkey again when cholera is on the move. I say 'few' ad-

visedly, for I had one man living in the house with me who had come from England at the first outbreak sincerely hoping he would see a lot of it!

He was a medical man in the service of the English Government, who, hearing we required an extra doctor to take charge of the Varna end of the line, applied for his leave and devoted it to looking after us, thinking he should be able to study the horrid malady, and perhaps throw some light upon its causes, treatment, &c., that would be of service to the world in general and to his profession in particular. His was a most praiseworthy ambition, but as I might have been the case for him to study, I am thankful he was disappointed, and that during the three months he lived with me he did not see a single case.

Not only did he fail in this, but he failed in another professional attempt he made. He said this was because his assistant was such a muff, and as I was that assistant and yet suffer from the hard things he said of me at the time, I will tell my readers all about it, and let them judge between us.

One morning after going his rounds, the doctor rode his horse up to my courtyard, and left it fastened up to a post while he came to eat his lunch with me. Now in the post was a firmly fixed nail, and after the manner of horses, the beast devoted his leisure to rubbing his head up and down the tree, and in so doing managed to tear its eyelid nearly off with the nail.

When the doctor went to remount he saw what had happened, and calling me, said that unless the lid were

at once sewn on, it would come quite off, and leaving the eye exposed, dust and grit would go into it, and the horse would go blind. 'Now I have it,' he added; 'we will give him chloroform, and then we can sew it on.'

It was settled we should take the horse into a shed thickly strewn with hay, and that I should administer the chloroform. This was quickly done, or rather commenced. The chloroform was poured on a thick cloth, and, going into the shed, I held it to the horse's nose. At first he objected and tossed his head, but presently a happy, contented, sleepy look came over his face, and he stood stock still. At this I said, 'It's all right, doctor; get ready, he will soon be off;' to which he replied, 'I am rather astonished he has not gone through the excited stage.' Just as he said this, the horse gave a sudden and violent plunge, knocking me over on my back in the hay, and then he commenced the most eccentric unhorse-like proceedings. He sat up on his tail and tried to reach the roof with his feet; failing this, he jumped up and rushing into the corner essayed his best over and over again to run up the wall, and failing, fell each time over on his back. Then he tried to put his head through between both his front and hind legs, and so went head over heels forwards.

Need I say I bolted! but will it be believed that the hard-hearted, unfeeling doctor held the door against me, and only answered to my entreaties to be let out. 'Hold it to his nose! hold it to his nose! look sharp, and hold it to his nose!' and when at last I succeeded

in bursting the door open and making my escape, I was greeted with both contemptuous looks and words! As I said before, I will let my readers judge between us. A Rary might have liked the situation: I am not a Rary, and at all events I did not like it, and was very cautious how I went up to the beast, even after he had got over his flurry and stood stock still, looking very astonished, as well he might.

It ended in our having to cast the horse, and then the doctor in half a minute sewed up the lid, which healed perfectly in a very short time.

CHAPTER XIV.

Casting Horses—Turkish Saddles—A Vicious Horse.

THE method invariably adopted in Turkey for casting a horse appears to me a particularly good and safe one, far better than the brutal way in which it is often done in England by tying a poor beast's feet all together and then throwing it over on its side, and perhaps, as I have known happen, breaking its ribs.

A soft rope or strap is passed round the horse's neck close to the shoulders; then two light ropes are fastened to the hind fetlocks, the ends of which are passed between the front legs through the rope round the neck and then returned through the front legs, and each held behind the shoulders by a man. The horse is then led on, and as one hind leg after the other advances, the ropes are tightened, and so at last the hind feet stand between the front ones. The bridle is then taken hold of, and the horse being pushed backwards, it quietly sits down, it is then turned over on its side and the legs made fast all together. I constantly saw this done, as two of my horses would not allow themselves to be shod standing; but I never saw a horse hurt in the least, and yet they were always cast on the hard ground.

The same plan might be advantageously adopted for the poor bullocks and buffaloes in Turkey, as they are always cast for shoeing; but with these they fasten all four legs as they stand to a long stout pole, and then after shoving the poor beast over on its side with a great thump, two men seize the pole, one at each end, and hoist the legs up in the air, the beast being on its back. The thin cleft shoes are then tacked on, the ropes cast off, and with a scramble the animal gets up and walks about for half an hour, with marvellous knee action, produced by the strange feeling of the new shoes.

No horses in Turkey are shod in our fashion, or as the Turks call it *à la Russe*. Instead of our shoes, flat iron plates an eighth of an inch thick are fastened on cold, and then the hoof is rasped down to fit them. Under the frog there is a small round hole in the plate, which immediately fills up tight with mud and remains so as long as the shoe lasts, for a Turk never thinks of cleaning this out.

Though roughly shod, few horses go lame; and I cannot say that I think this a bad method, in a country where the roads are all soft, except that on sloping or slippery ground the flat soles give the horse very little hold, and one of the commonest accidents to an equestrian is having his animal slip up sideways.

A horse's shoes last a very long time on the soft roads; and well it is they do so, for otherwise shoeing would be a serious item for a poor man, not over burdened with much ready cash; for as all the shoeing

smiths, or nearly all, are gipsies who wander about from town to town and village to village, cash payments are the rule, except when a kick or slash of a knife is given instead by a swaggering Turk.

In the villages where the horses are not required for long journeys and are only used to jog about near home, shoes are dispensed with; first, to save the cost and trouble, and secondly, because the having no shoes on often stops a Turk from borrowing one for a journey whilst his own horse lives at free quarters in the stable of that taken. They get on very well without them, and I have myself ridden a village pony 200 miles in a week without shoes, and at the end of his journey his hoofs were as sound as when he started.

To such an extent do certain people carry their admiration of everything that is Eastern, and especially Turkish, that I have heard such declare there is nothing so comfortable to ride on as a Turkish saddle. If anyone desires to know what it is like, let him fix two posts crossways, forming the shape of the letter V. Let the V be two feet wide at the top and a foot deep; stick two cushions on the sloping sides, and then wedge himself in between these. Let him put his feet in *very, very* short stirrups hung quite at the back part of the saddle, and then sit quiet for five minutes. He will by that time know all about it, and will be willing that any friend, who may wish, should take his place.

When on a Turkish saddle the rider's legs from the hips stick out backwards, his nose is poked forwards, and, if he is not up to the use of the cruel Turkish bit,

directly he picks up the reins the horse hits that prominent and tender feature a rap with the top of his head that is far from agreeable. It is painful to sit still; it is agony to move, and to ride a mile is acute torture. No. Whatever I may admire in the Turk, I shall not praise his *saddle*; and yet in many things--such as feeding, watering, and grooming a horse, and especially in his quiet treatment—a Turk, in my opinion, is far more judicious than we are in England, and I hope the day may come when people will graft much of Turkish stable management upon that which is English.

I never owned but one vicious horse all the time I was on the Varna railway, and I did not own him long, for, after having fought him day after day when riding about near home, I thought a journey up to Kustendji would be a fine opportunity for tiring the devil out of him.

I intended doing the entire hundred miles in the day, and therefore sent on a horse by Sali some days previously to the half-way village. No horse in the world could have behaved better than this vicious one for the first twenty-five miles, and I chuckled at the thought of how famously he was getting me over the ground, and determined that in future I would always keep him for long distances. Just as I had come to this conclusion the horse came to another. He was convinced we had gone far enough, so twisted round like a top. I got him by the head and tried to pull him back to the road, and so far succeeded that he let

his head go slack, and I pulled it round till he stared me in the face, but not one inch would he move his body. I then gave him a few severe digs in his ribs with my spurs and applied the whip, but to no purpose. He stood it like a broken-down rocking-horse, and apparently with about as much feeling. I got off and whacked him, and then he was lively enough, for he rushed at me like a savage dog; so feeling safer in the saddle, I once more clambered up. For some minutes after this he kicked, he plunged, he bit, and did his worst, but, as I still stuck to him, he once more lapsed into passive resistance, and I now found he would not even go towards his own stable.

Two precious hours I sat there in the scorching sun, the perspiration running off me, and my temper getting worse and worse. I verily believe I should either have been sitting there to this day, or been forced to abandon him, had not a friendly Tartar come along with a load of wood on his bullock-cart. On first coming up, and hearing from me what a fix I was in, the Tartar's face expanded into a broad grin, and he kept walking round and round me, muttering, 'Mashallah!' but, on my remonstrating with him for not helping me, he said, 'Oh, I will make him go; but can you stick to him if he behaves badly? Well, all right;' and going to his araba he fetched his goad—a long light pole with an iron point about a quarter of an inch long and as sharp as a needle. He gave the beast one stab on his nose with this, which sent him round in an instant, and then telling me to hold him in, he administered a dozen more

behind, the first of which started the horse off as hard as he could go. I was determined he should have his lesson, so again and again I pulled him up, and the Tartar ran up and gave him a prick, till at last, when mad with fear, I gave him his head and kept him going as fast as I thought safe till I pulled up at the half-way village, never having before or since ridden twenty-five miles so fast.

I never set eyes on that brute again, for when mounting my fresh horse I told Sali he was to sell him within the next two days as best he could; and well he did it, for on my return journey he handed me the exact sum I had given for the horse, telling me he had sold it to a young Turk in the little town of Baltchick.

CHAPTER XV.

Strange Birds—A Colony of Waders—Rose-tinted Pastors—An Unpleasant Discovery—Vultures and Eagles—A Poor Day's Sport—An Unfortunate Mistake—A Monster Wild Boar.

I BELIEVE there is no part of Europe that affords the ornithologist and collector so rich a field to work upon as the triangle between the Balkans, the Black Sea, and the Danube, and even a busy man, such as I was, may constantly come across rare birds, and if he has the will and the taste for it, may in a short time make a valuable collection. Owing to the near proximity of the Balkans with their vast forests, precipitous crags, and unfrequented ravines, the birds of prey have every facility for enjoying a quiet life, and as, to them, comparatively short flight carries them to the open fields at the foot of the mountains or to the great open Dobrudja, and marshes of the big river where the abundance of animal life affords them a rich hunting-ground. Then the great islands and marshes of the Danube provide a secure retreat for the numerous waterfowl; and so between the two nearly every European bird may be found, except some few who make their homes in regions of perpetual snow and ice, and even of these stray birds occasionally drift away to these parts, and

may be seen and shot by anyone who will brave twelve degrees below zero, and has strength enough to plod about through snow above his knees.

Though living too busy a life to become a scientific ornithologist, yet, thanks to having spent all my boyhood in the country, and to an innate love of all birds and beasts, I rarely left my house without observing some sort of bird more or less rare, and, as I often carried a gun with me, I constantly secured some good specimens, which I skinned and sent home to my ornithological friends. Every now and then some stray collector would arrive from England and take up his abode with me for a time; and so, stimulated by him and urged on by my own love of the fun, I, as often as I could, stole a few hours from work, and indulged in an excursion, either collecting skins or birds' nesting; and I now look back to the hours I thus spent as some of the happiest I ever had in the land of the Turk, and when passing some quiet cliff side or marshy ground in England, a feeling akin to home-sickness comes over me, and I long to be once more away in Bulgaria with its wild life, sunny days, and sporting adventures, and I plan out all sorts of excursions to those parts, till a twinge of rheumatism, or the thoughts of bygone fevers, reconcile me to my home life, and I content myself with going over the old ground in imagination.

The Danube, on the Wallachian side, is split up into innumerable islands, large and small, mostly covered by low willow scrub and rank vegetation, the shores of

which, when the river begins to fall after the spring floods, are wide beds of soft mud, affording a rich feeding ground for numberless water-birds of all kinds. By threading the numerous small channels, and coasting quietly round the islands in a native 'dugout,' one can approach, and observe the habits of such birds as the spoon-bill, heron, night heron, the purple heron, the bittern, the little bittern, the egret, besides almost all the different species of tern, duck, waders and divers, and many other birds too numerous to be mentioned in these pages.

For a long time it had been a puzzle to me where the various waders, &c. built their nests; for though the birds were to be seen at every few yards along the muddy banks of the river, or slowly flying over the marshy islands, I had as yet never discovered their nesting ground. At last, one fine afternoon in the early summer, I accompanied a friend in a small boat on an excursion a few miles down the river below Rustchuck. On approaching a small island which was covered with water about a foot deep, we heard, amidst the dense willow thicket which overspread it, a noise as if the inhabitants of Purgatory had made their home there and were having an unusually bad time of it. Pushing our small boat into a narrow creek, we took off our boots and stockings, and, turning up our trowsers, picked our way through the tangled boughs in the direction of the sound, which evidently proceeded from the centre of the island, and I shall not easily forget the sight we beheld when we reached it.

There, on the pressed down boughs of the willows, only a few feet above the water, were hundreds of great flat nests of the various kinds of herons, spoon-bills, egrets, bitterns, &c., all huddled together in one confused mass, and the entire colony reeking with the most indescribably filthy smell.

It was rather late for eggs, as most of them were hatched off, but it was just the time to observe the doings of the children of these sedate, quiet, peaceful-looking birds, and I must say that I never yet beheld such a collection of little fiends, nor a more hideous set. Their bodies were of the smallest proportions, while every other part of them—their wings, legs, necks, and beaks—were of the longest; most of them had no feathers, and all seemed possessed with one idea, and that was either to limb a small brother or swallow him whole, and all kept up either a shriek of fear or pain, or a yell of rage. Floating on the top of the putrid water were masses of dead birds, some with legs torn off, others without heads or wings. Most of them were dead, but others were dragging their maimed carcasses about in a ghastly manner. So intent were they on their fiendish pastime that they took little notice of us, and dragged and clawed themselves about after their weaker brethren at our very feet, whilst the old parent birds sat looking on from the topmost twigs, as if fratricide were the proper moral pastime of the young. A big spoon-bill would chase a small egret from bough to bough, till at last he tired it out, and then seizing it with one claw, would take hold

of its leg or wing and tear it from the poor victim, or else getting its head in its mouth, would try to swallow it whole, and gulp and gulp till so much of the little one was down its throat that it was itself choked, and would turn over on its back kicking and struggling, to be in turn seized by a brother, and torn limb from limb.

All kept up some hideous scream, and all kept clambering and dragging themselves about from bough to bough, all either hunting or being hunted; and from what we saw I am sure nine-tenths of all hatched in that colony came to an untimely end before they could fly. We did not stay long to watch them, but quickly securing some eggs from the few nests that were not hatched off, we beat a retreat, with our opinions of the beautiful, gentle-looking birds greatly changed.

Twice over the lovely rose-tinted Pastor visited our railway in thousands, and took possession of a mound of broken stone and rock thrown out of a cutting, to make their nests in. Like the birds on the island, they were anything but pleasant to the smell, but, unlike them, they appeared a peaceable friendly lot, and the young ones kept quietly in their nests till they were able to fly; and as soon as all were well on the wing they deserted the home of their birth never again to return to it. Each time they built in heaps of broken stone from a railway cutting, but not in the same place.

The love of nesting is not one of the weaknesses of the Turkish or Bulgar boy; therefore, having learnt from experience that no human being will trouble

himself to plunder their nests, such birds as the eagle, falcon, and hawk build often on trees a very three-year-old might climb, and I can now remember looking into a splendid sea-eagle's nest as I sat on my horse under the boughs of a low thorn bush. Out on the grassy plains of the Dobrudja, where there are literally no trees, the various sorts of eagles actually build on the ground; but the most favourable place for nesting is in the big trees on the islands of the Danube, for there all is perfectly quiet, and a rich feeding ground within easy reach on both sides of the river.

Two of my brother-engineers made a most unpleasant discovery whilst eagle-nesting on one of these islands. They had climbed many trees with varying success, when at last they arrived at the foot of one the top branches of which were so thick and full of leaf that they with difficulty discovered what they thought was a nest well up on the top. One of them stripped off his coat and climbed up the tree; but what was his astonishment on reaching the supposed nest to find it only a bundle of decaying rags, with a shepherd's crook sticking out of them! Perching himself on a secure bough, he pulled aside the rags and revealed the skeleton of a man, the bleached bones of which went falling to the ground as soon as disturbed, quickly followed by the horrified nester, who, calling to his companion, never stopped till the Danube separated him from his ghastly discovery.

The highest of the Danube islands are visited by the Wallachian shepherds with their flocks, and I have

no doubt this poor fellow had been surprised by the spring flood, and to escape the water had been driven up the tree, where he had remained a prisoner till he was starved to death. His flock would have been drowned, and no doubt his friends supposed he had been washed away down the river with them.

Those collectors who are unaccustomed to the habits of the vulture and eagle are apt to let the spring get too far advanced before they go nesting, and so give themselves the trouble and danger of a climb up a big tree or over the face of a precipitous cliff, only to find the nest tenanted with the great downy young birds, with their big beaks and fierce angry-looking eyes. Most of the eagles lay their eggs in the month of February, and I have taken them when the ground has been inches deep in snow, and when one would have supposed the frost was severe enough to kill the poor old bird as she sat her dreary time on her eggs.

Much has been written at various times about the danger of being attacked by the old eagles whilst plundering their nests. From my own experience I should say the eagle of all sorts is a most cowardly bird, and again and again I have failed to identify one of them, when taking the nest, by the bird keeping such a respectful distance. No: there is quite danger enough in the climb without the imaginary one of being buffeted and pecked at by the old birds. I believe a mistletoe thrush in its small body has more real pluck when its nest is being disturbed than all the eagles in Europe put together.

When kept in confinement there is no doubt but that the eagle and vulture are often savage and even dangerous. I found a splendid Cinereous vulture, which one of my cavasses had brought up from the nest, become such a nuisance from the way it attacked me and every other creature that came within its reach, that at last I let its wings grow and turned it out to shift for itself, much to the disgust of the cavass.

It was supposed to be always kept chained up by the leg, but somehow it was for ever getting loose, and then would immediately march up into my room, and attack me with wings, claws, and beak, and in the fight both I and my furniture came off badly: then it took two powerful men to secure it, and this was seldom done without torn clothes and hands.

I kept this vulture in a small courtyard in Varna, and though I also had cats, dogs, and a tame hare, to say nothing of rats and mice that swarmed at times, I never knew the bird attempt to kill anything, and therefore I suppose it lives entirely on carrion.

The commonest of all the Raptores in Turkey is the hen harrier; and wherever one goes one or more of these birds are to be seen regularly hunting a grassy bank or beating a field, and their nests are easily found in some thick jungle of grass or thicket of short brush.

When out shooting, two or three of these birds will often hover near all day, and one must look sharp to pick up a wounded quail or partridge, or the harriers will have it.

Then the marsh harrier is very common by the

sides of the lakes and in swampy places, where also numerous buzzards and kites are always to be seen. These often help the sportsman by keeping the duck and snipe down; and though I have had a wounded bird carried off by them, yet I have through them got many shots I should not otherwise have had, and so I learnt to welcome them when out with my gun, and never took a shot at them.

In my opinion the most beautiful of all the birds of prey, both in plumage and in shape, and certainly the most graceful in its movements, is the osprey. Many a time have I watched this bird hovering over the big Varna lake until it has descended like a stone into the water to emerge with a good-sized fish in its claws, to be eaten as it sits on some withered tree branch hard by the shore.

All the birds of prey are much tamer in Turkey than they are in any other part of Europe; and not only do they build their nests within easy reach, but they will often sit close to the side of the road, and let the passer-by examine their beautiful plumage from a few yards distant.

The Turks hardly ever keep useless birds as pets; but now and then, in the courtyard of a rich man, one may see a graceful demoiselle crane walking demurely about, or still more frequently a few ruddy sheldrake that have been hatched under a hen, and are impudently tame, are to be seen among the domestic poultry.

I remember, at a small village on the Danube, a

Greek coffee-house-keeper had a splendid griffin vulture that never left his house, and would show fight to anyone who offended it, flapping with its wings, and darting its strong claws into the feet and legs, apparently greatly enjoying the fun if it could make its enemy call out with pain. This poor bird at last fell a victim to a party of twelve gentlemen from Galatz, who had arranged a shooting excursion up the river on board a gunboat. Each of the twelve had powder and shot with him sufficient to supply the whole party, even if they had had good sport. All were dressed in correct sporting costume, and each had a perfect *chien d'arrêt*—that is to say, perfect in the eyes of their owners; but to those accustomed to our pure-bred active English pointers they appeared the ugliest, clumsiest beasts that ever waddled after man. Even when it is cool an ordinary walker can keep well in *front* of these brutes; and when hot—as it was when these gentlemen made their ‘chasse’—the noble Fido finds panting and gasping as much as he can do, and no amount of flattery or abuse can get him to do more than creep from bush to bush, not to look for game, but to recline in the refreshing shade.

Anyhow on this occasion, after walking some hours up hill and down dale, the twelve chasseurs only succeeded in killing one small quail before they reached the village. But there, sitting on the top of the very first house, they espied a noble object, a lordly vulture, and ah, such an impudent one! A line was formed, and at the word of command half the guns went off

pop, and over fell the bird! The next minute out rushed the owner with some score of customers all in a furious passion, and before the twelve chasseurs were allowed to pass they had to subscribe two Turkish liras; but they did not mind this, as they were allowed to take the bird on board ship, which they did, held out by the tip of its wings, forming a most imposing head to the returning procession.

I remember on another occasion a sporting party from Bucharest making a more serious error of judgment; for while beating through some jungly ground on the Wallachian banks of the Danube, they disturbed a drove of pigs which they most naturally mistook for wild ones, the two animals being exactly alike in appearance. After a splendid and spirited chase they succeeded in bagging the entire drove—some twenty beasts; but great was their disgust, after bragging at Bucharest of their exploits, at being summoned before the authorities on the charge of having killed the herd of pigs belonging to an entire village, and having to pay about double the real value for the dead pigs!

My readers must not, however, imagine from the above anecdotes that I laugh at and ridicule all foreign sportsmen; for I can assure them, on the contrary, that I have known foreigners who, in their knowledge of the habits of game, their powers of enduring fatigue when following it, and their skill in bringing it to bay, could not have been beaten by anyone of my own countrymen.

During the time I was on the Varna Railway, a

Wallachian gentleman, with whom I was acquainted, succeeded in getting two or three of his little hounds on to the line, of what he judged from the footprints in the snow, to be a monster wild boar, and though he was quite alone he determined to have it if possible. All day he followed the cry of the hounds through the scrubby oak bush between Bucharest and Giurgevo, and though he every now and then caught a glimpse of the huge beast he never had a shot at it, but these momentary peeps so encouraged him that he stuck to the line all day long, and when too dark to see more he marked the spot where he left off, and marching with his tired dogs to a village some miles distant turned in for the night, only to be on the ground again by break of day. Slowly and laboriously he pricked the beast through the snow, never for a minute leaving the trail, till about noon his hounds once more opened on the recovered line, and after driving it through miles of forest, the boar at last took to the open, where the hounds, catching a view, so harassed it in rear and front that at last it was driven to bay in a small thicket, and Mr. — was able to roll it over with a well-aimed ball between the eyes just as it charged at him.

The carcase was taken to Bucharest, and there stuffed and presented to the Museum, where it may now be seen. When its skin was taken off, numerous slugs and even balls were found embedded in it, showing that it had often been in trouble before, and owed its long life to the thickness of its hide.

I myself saw the boar after it was set up, and measured it, but my memory will only allow me to state that its height at the shoulder was exactly a metre.

CHAPTER XVI.

Turkish Watchmen—Visiting Watchmen at Night—Passports—How Robbers are made.

THANKS to the new arrivals, the Circassians, I found it absolutely necessary, for the protection of the railway plant, to double the number of guards or watchmen at Varna, and not only to do this but to double my own watchfulness in looking after them; and I found the only effectual way of doing this was to visit them all from time to time in the middle of the night, and summarily to dismiss all those I found off guard.

There is no post a poor Turk likes more than that of watchman; first, because he can sleep all day, and, secondly, because he expects to do the same all night; and therefore my visits were anything but pleasing, and it rarely happened that I went the round without finding some of them snugly sleeping in their watch-houses. The plan I generally adopted was to ride with my cavass from some up-country village in the middle of the night, and, leaving the horses under his charge, walk all round the works. The first time I did so I found every watchman snug in bed, and consequently there was a general discharging in the morning.

There was always to me a certain charm about these midnight strolls—the feeling that of the thousands all around me, I was one of the very few that were about and stirring, and that I had the world all to myself, as far as my fellow-creatures were concerned. And then how weird and uncanny everything appeared on those still quiet summer nights, as, after having visited all the guards, I would sit on the side of the steep cliff over the big lake, and listen to the various cries of the night birds, the far from unpleasant chorus kept up by the myriads of frogs in the marshes, and the chirp, chirp of the grasshoppers all round me! How delicious also was the cool breeze to one's fevered blood, and how we longed to escape the fearful heats that would be upon us directly the sun arose! These midnight outings were often shared by Mac, and many is the pleasant chat he and I have had as we sat waiting for the sun to rise and the gates to open, till first the creaking of the wheels of a string of bullock-carts, and then the passing of a few country people on their way into the town, has warned us that we might also be going in the same direction, home to a cup of hot coffee and a few hours' rest, before the great heat of the day made one's bed a furnace and sleep impossible.

Few of the native workmen belonged to the town, most of them came from distant villages in all parts of Bulgaria, and therefore they lived on the works. A bench cut in the side of a steep bank, with a few boards covered with rushes or long grass for a roof, a few

rough boards and a coat for a bed, made what they thought a comfortable home in which to sleep in wet weather ; but on fine nights everyone stretched himself out, wrapped in his big capote, with a bundle of straw for a pillow, in front of his hut, and there slept as few who do not labour in the open air can, even on spring mattresses in snug English rooms. Many a time have I stood over the sleeping forms of some twenty or thirty men, and admired the perfect repose of both limbs and features, and longed that I had the power of some great painter, that these living pictures might be retained, as I saw them, for ever ; but then the picture could never be quite the same, no not even if I had the pencil of the greatest artist that ever lived, for it would lack that delicious fragrance of the marsh herbs, the smell of the dew-refreshed earth, and the thousand half-hushed sounds that all came into the picture of my mind. But there is the sun just peeping over the eastern horizon of the glassy sea like a red-hot ball, and then first one and then another of the numerous shepers rouses up, yawns and stretches, and in a few minutes scores of camp-fires are ablaze ; a little later and the fragrant smell of the flowers gives place to that of highly-roasted black coffee, and then the lately sleeping human swarm is all at work. The bustle and the anxiety, the bother and the worry, the jokes and the laughs, that make up a working life have begun again, and the quiet night is a thing of the past.

I have often heard it asserted in England that passports are not asked for in Turkey, and that it is the

freest country on the continent for anyone to travel in, and that the Turk thoroughly respects the liberty of everyone so long as the reasonable laws of the country are respected. Now these assertions are based on ignorance. There is no country I have ever been in where the law requires stricter passport regulations than in Turkey. Not only is it necessary for foreigners to carry and show their passports, but everyone, foreigner or native—Turk, Christian, or Jew—has to be provided with a passport for the very shortest journey *in* the country—even from one village to another, and any wretched understrapper of the Government may demand to examine it, and through it give the traveller an infinite amount of trouble.

It really appears to one, when living in Turkey, that all the laws are made for the express purpose of annoying honest people; for rogues ride roughshod through them, and are often greatly assisted by them, whilst those who would be honest and straightforward have to suffer both in purse and temper.

True, the administration of the law is so feeble, and those whose business it is to put it in force are so venal and idle, that, by anyone who knows how to set about it, law can be either bought or avoided. But the freshly arrived European, who expects the law to protect and help him as long as he remains honest, finds it is only used to extract money from his pocket, and as a capital exercise for his bad temper.

Bakshish ninety-nine times out of a hundred saves the delinquent. Bakshish buys the judge, buys false

witnesses, opens the customs to contraband goods, staves off the tax-collector, and is the finest passport in Turkey. Bakshish cleverly administered will release the murderer from prison, shoe the patient soldier with paper boots, load his musket with sawdust cartridges, and allow rogues and swindlers of all sorts to enjoy a good time of it.

I have seen bakshish pass some traveller through the passport office, whilst a poor foreigner who did not understand its use has stood for hours amidst dirt, smells, and all the discomforts invariably attending an official's office, waiting for his passport, which is as perfectly *en règle* as the law can make it.

I once discovered an unfortunate English lady jammed in a filthy crowd in a passport office, dreading she should miss the train which was about to start, in vain assuring the official that she had been told in London that passports were not needed. I felt sure bakshish was the only thing necessary, but before trying that I thought of another dodge. I ran up to my office, rummaged an old shooting license out of my gun case, and giving it to the lady, told her to present it. The trick answered, and in a few minutes the license was returned properly viséed as the veritable passports are, and the lady was free to continue her journey.

Not only are passports required, but everyone carrying firearms in Turkey has to buy a permission to do so, which has to be renewed each year and paid for afresh.

When the rail-laying was going on near Pravady,

we had a gang of strapping young Turks at work there under a Turkish chaoush or foreman, and this man had in his possession two very handsomely-mounted pistols, which unfortunately attracted the attention of the head of the zaptiehs at Pravady, who at once plotted to do the man out of them. He waited till the 'permis' to carry arms was a few days out of date, and then riding down the lines to the gang he began examining their papers. When he came to the chaoush and found that his was out of date he abused him violently, and finished by confiscating the pistols, riding away with them sticking in his belt.

When the men were paid at the end of the month the chaoush bid the English foreman goodbye, saying, 'I shall not return to work again. I shall now live as a big man, and I have no doubt you will hear of me. I am going first to look after my pistols.'

About a month later the chaoush and all his gang entered the little town of Pravady at the dead of night, surprised and overpowered the watchmen, and then proceeding to the house of the zaptieh, forced open the door, and, with a pistol in his hand, rushed into the room. Fortunately for him the zaptieh was away at Varna, and only the wife at home; so discovering this to be the case, the chaoush first gave her a scolding for appearing with her face uncovered (she having in her hurry and fright forgotten to arrange her *yashmak*), and then sent her for the two pistols, which she soon brought him. He at once turned to leave, but when he got to the door he told her to tell her husband he

had better be on the look-out, for sooner or later, perhaps not for years, but nevertheless he would most certainly, be killed, and he swore by Allah that he or one of his men should carry out the threat.

For some years after this, in fact till I left Turkey, this gang was the terror of the eastern slopes of the Balkans, and though from time to time they disappeared for months, yet they were sure to crop up again and be recognised by some unusually daring robbery; and not only were they themselves a scourge, but they afforded a shield from behind which many a murder and robbery was committed, for when a traveller was found dead and robbed the deed was sure to be laid to the door of the chaoush and his gang, and the local authorities felt excused from taking the trouble of hunting up the real perpetrators.

The next thing we heard of this gang was that they had paid a visit in the middle of the night to the governor of Yenibazar, a little town ten miles beyond Pravady. Having overpowered his zaptiehs, they cleared out the Government chest, and also made the governor send out and collect from the townspeople a further sum of 200*l.* T. They also informed him that if 200*l.* T. more were not deposited at a certain spot within a month, his head would have to make a journey into the hills without the usual encumbrance of his body. The money was never deposited in my day, but I often saw the governor at Shumla Road Station looking anything but comfortable, and always surrounded by a strong guard.

I never heard that either the threat to the zaptieh's wife nor this to the governor was ever carried out; but from what I know of the Turks I feel sure that sooner or later the chaoush will have kept his word—that is to say, if his intended victims do not die some other death in the meantime.

We did not much fear being molested by these men, first, because we knew they had no grudge against us, and secondly, because we (that is, Mac and I) took care that it was well known all over the country that we never carried money, and so attempting to rob us would have been not only dangerous but unprofitable. Anyhow we rode all over the line alone, even through the dreaded Pravady Gorge with its evil reputation, and yet we never had an uncivil word said to us. Not that Pravady Gorge was maligned, for twice during the construction of the line foul deeds were perpetrated in it.

CHAPTER XVII.

Two Murders—Zaptiehs protecting Roads—Insulting an Englishman—
Merchants going to Fairs—Commercial Morality—Consuls.

I HAD occasion one day to call on the Governor of Pravady, and found him enquiring into a case of brutal outrage. It appeared that at the next village to Pravady there lived an old Turk and his one wife, who, from the number of his sheep and cattle and the quantity of land he had under cultivation, was considered rich. Anyhow a band of five ruffians, with their faces disguised, had, on the previous night, broken into his room, dragged him out of bed and then cut his throat. His wife was told that if she kept her head covered up in the bed-clothes so as not to see the murderers no harm should come to her, but the cries and struggles of her old man proved too much for her and she sprang up to try to help him. After the man had been murdered the brutal fiends deliberately gagged the poor woman, and then cut her tongue out so that she was unable to give evidence against them.

I myself saw the poor creature lying huddled up and groaning in a corner of the governor's room, and I heard that she had died a few minutes after I had

left, but not before she had by signs made her story intelligible, and also pretty clearly pointed to a Turk in a neighbouring village as the leader of the ruffians. Doubtless they were neighbours, as otherwise they would not have been so afraid of being recognised.

Again, just above Pravady, in the quietest part of the gorge, Tom Bilby observed, as he passed with his engine on three successive days, that two horses remained tied up to a tree without food. He pointed them out to one of our engineers as he passed the place, and on stopping the engine and going up to the horses they discovered, just beyond them, two Jews, their arms tied behind them and their heads thrust into the brook, both quite dead. The poor horses were let loose and at once rushed into the river to quench their thirst. Then putting the two dead Jews into a waggon, they carried them on to Pravady, and told the governor what they had found.

The only remark he made was, ‘Ah, what matters it? two Jews—I’ll see to it.’ Again the same Turk was suspected who was supposed to have committed the previous murder; but no enquiry was ever made and no one ever troubled about it.

Every now and then, when some great fair was going on, as, for instance, the annual one at Eski Djuma (a town some twenty miles to the west of the road between Rustchuck and Shumla), a feeble attempt was made to protect the merchants going thither with their goods, by placing, about ten miles apart on the chief roads leading there, three or four special *zaptiehs*,

and these nearly always were a parcel of rowdy Arnouts, who built themselves huts on the side of the road, sponged on the nearest village for food, and systematically insulted every passer-by they dare, under the pretence of examining their teskeris or passports. Nine times out of ten, when we passed these stations, the guard was to be seen fast asleep, and I have often, through this, been able to avoid their insolence and a useless and annoying delay. It is rare that any of these zaptiehs can read, so that any bit of paper with a big seal on it passes muster; but in spite of their not knowing a word of the writing, one after the other of the zaptiehs intently examine it and try to look knowing.

Then, as guards they are quite useless. What chance would they have, placed ten miles from the nearest picket, without horses, and only three or four together, to stop such a gang of robbers as that of our old friend the chaoush? besides, I believe them to be a set of arrant cowards, and that they would cave in to robbers were they equal man to man.

On one occasion a young English engineer had to pass by one of these stations on his way from Rustchuck to Pravady. He spoke but little Turkish, and knew little of the manners of the country, and most naturally supposed he had fallen among thieves, for his passport, which was from the Governor-general, was overhauled, and then confiscated. He was charged twenty piastres for the trouble he had given. He was sworn at, abused, and detained two hours on the road, and was then only

allowed to proceed after giving fifty piastres more to gain permission to do so.

As it happened, he found R. A. B. sleeping a night at Pravady, on his way up country, accompanied by his cavass, and to him he told his tale. R. A. B. knew it would be labour lost to apply to the authorities for redress, so took the law into his own hands, and when he and his cavass reached the guard-house next morning, they pounced on the two Arnouts, slipped one end of a cord round each of their necks, and, fastening the other end to their girths, took the two gentlemen on to Sheitanjik, a distance of thirty miles, and then turned them loose, to find their way back as best they could. We expected a grand kick-up about this, but never heard a word about it. From that day, however, there was a marked improvement in the behaviour of all the special guards to us English.

Occasionally, when these guards were genuine Turks, on arriving at their hut one was treated with civility, and then it was pleasant to dismount and stretch one's legs, and, as soon as the men could prepare it, drink a cup of black coffee; but these were rare treats, and we learnt to avoid the guard-houses as one would the professional robber.

The love of commerce and money-making must be marvellously strong in the Jew, the Armenian, and the Greek, to induce them to travel over the country, from fair to fair, with their merchandise, for they suffer tortures from fear all the time they are on the road; and well they may, for there are few of them that have not

been at some time stopped, robbed, and ill-treated on these journeys. If you ride with a native of the country he will, as you go along, point out at every few miles some spot where a robbery or a murder has been committed. 'Here Demetri Jancho was robbed of a hundred liras; there Juan Popa was strangled, because he had not money enough to satisfy his murderers; there three Jews were found with their throats cut. Yes, over that point would be our nearest way, but we don't like the road since a whole caravan of merchants were stopped and robbed upon it, so go round in the open plain,' and so on.

Naturally, the merchant puts an extra price on all his goods to cover the risk he runs, and the country is almost as unsettled as if a foreign enemy were over-running it, and trade and commerce are as effectually stopped by the home enemy, the robber and the police, the tax-collector and the Government official, as if the dreaded and detested Russ had an army of Cossacks skirmishing about.

The only comfort is that in Bulgaria one seldom feels much pity for the victim, unless it is some poor peaceful villager who gets into trouble. The merchant and trader, great or small, is always a rogue, and one gets to feel rather glad when one hears that the rogue has been robbed, and the cheater of piastres plundered of liras. It may appear a hard thing to say of a class of men that they are all rogues; but few Englishmen will live as long as I did in Bulgaria without coming to the same conclusion, and fewer still will get away without

being cheated. There is no such thing in Turkey as commercial morality, and anyone who indulged in such a Quixotic notion would be thought a fool, and when one hears of a good merchant or trader, one at once understands he is a cunning, successful cheat. They are so proficient in the art of cheating, that they can seldom over-reach one another, so they all prey on the villager, both Turk and Christian, and consider they have done badly if they do not do him out of ten to fifteen per cent. on every bargain they make.

When the corn is coming up from the villages, the merchants' touts may be seen far away on the road trying to make a bargain. 'The price of corn has suddenly gone down. No ships are in the harbour. The governor is buying up the corn in the town, at a nominal price, for the Government.' In this way the peasant is induced to make a bad bargain before he reaches the town. Then his corn is measured out of his bullock-carts with false measures, and when the number of measures is mounting up, and there is a biggish row of notches on the tully-stick, one may constantly hear a dispute going on. The teller has dropped suddenly from calling out 510 to 410. The peasant corrects him, and is at once shown the stick with its notches; a dispute is carried on for an hour or more, but as perhaps a dozen different peasants are all discharging into one magazine, and it was perhaps half full of corn previously stored, nothing can be done. Then the bland, oily merchant arrives upon the scene. He hates disputes; would rather lose his money than

quarrel with friends, &c., and so 'we will split the difference, and go on counting from 460. Ah! you won't have it so? Then come before the governor, and we will ask him if a consul is likely to swindle. Come along.'

To be made a consul for some country is the great ambition of all merchants, for the gold-laced cap and medal (nearly all foreign consuls have medals) awe the peasant; and, besides, the governor finds it better to be on good terms with a consul, and so when there is a dispute between a consul and a peasant, the minnow has to give way to the shark.

I am glad to say our English consuls are not allowed to trade, and, therefore, they are the most respected of all except the Russian, who also confines himself to his consular business.

I must own, though, that I have known many of our English consuls who were utterly unfit for their post; and in my opinion there is nothing wants looking into more than the efficiency of our Consular Service in the Levant. I can speak with some authority; for not only did I know many consuls, but I once acted in that capacity myself at Varna for nine months, and so got some insight into the business—an insight that gave me the poorest opinion of the way it is conducted.

Often the consul is a Levantine, with numerous relatives around him, all pestering him to use his authority to gain them some advantage from the local government. Then the man himself is not chosen be-

cause he has any special aptitude for his duties, nor has he had any previous training. Many are regular 'jacks in office,' ignorant, prejudiced, and consumed with the idea of their own great importance. They have hardly one day's work in a month, and the truth of the old saying of the devil finding work for idle hands to do, can often be seen close under the English flag in some dull little Turkish town.

Silly childish quarrels are always going on between the British consul and his colleagues about some supposed breach of etiquette; and he who is sent to protect British interests spends his life in watching the behaviour towards himself of those he fancies are either cutting a grander figure than himself, or are wishing to put some slight upon him.

Frequently their knowledge of law is nil, and their knowledge of the country and people is prejudiced and incorrect. They only mix with the rich merchants and Turkish officials, while the peasant—his life, his troubles, his pursuits and his aspirations, are quite unknown to them. The information for the reports they send home is collected chiefly from the Turkish officials, and is quite unreliable; and yet these men receive a salary that would induce many educated and intelligent Englishmen to jump at the appointments.

I have seen some brilliant exceptions to all this; I have seen men who were respected and honoured by all, high and low, Turk and Christian, and whose knowledge of the country and people they live amongst was the result of years of careful study. But again, I

must repeat, these were the *exceptions*, as far as my experience goes.

I know that the truth of these assertions will be doubted, and that every single consul in the Levant could find some one to speak to his fitness for his position—some one who has visited his consulate, received his hospitality, and profited by his official position; but I do not think these would be competent to judge. It is only those who have lived long in the country, and known it well, who have watched the conduct of the consuls, and read their official reports on the manners and doings of the people they live among, that can understand how unfit they often are for their work.

As a specimen of the way consular business was transacted at Varna some few years ago, I may mention how it was I became an acting consul; and first let me say that I had not the slightest idea of consular work, and had to learn how to carry it on from a wily Greek, a man who I knew was a cheat and a rogue.

The consul at Varna was taken ill, and as he did not recover as quickly as he wished, he suddenly determined to take six weeks' leave, and so begged me to receive the seal, flag, and archives for that time. I pointed out that I was utterly unfit for the work, but he begged so hard that I would undertake it, and assured me so forcibly that there would in all probability be nothing to do, that at last I gave way. The archives, such as they were, were brought to my office and I had an inventory taken of them. There were

no copies of old reports, no instructions, no forms or official papers. There was just the seal and its box, the flag, and about a pound's worth of old nicknacks, the effects of British subjects who had died at Varna.

The six weeks became six months, during all which time I never heard a word from the consul or any other official person ; so not knowing whither the consul had taken himself, I at last wrote to the Foreign Office and stated my case. In answer to my letter I was assured that no one knew that the consul had left his post, and I was politely asked to continue to act until some one was sent out. The old consul never appeared again, but after three months a fresh one was appointed, and I, after nine months' work, if work it could be called, handed up the seal, &c. As my services never received any public thanks, perhaps I may be allowed to say for myself that I had nothing to do, and did not do it very badly, which is more than can be said of many Levantine consuls in the same position.

From experience, I have come to the conclusion that under no circumstances should a Levantine ever be made a consul, as, even if he is an honest clever man, he is yet sure to be in awe of the Turkish officials and will be got at and influenced by them. I would go further. I would never have a man appointed consul who had lived long enough in Turkey to learn to twist up a cigarette !

Every consul should be appointed direct from England, after a proper education and after passing a competitive examination. He will not perhaps have the

same knowledge of the people at first, but his judgment will not be warped by deep-rooted prejudices, and he will not have friends to deter him from doing his duty.

If the consular salaries are not good enough to induce educated gentlemen to bury themselves in dull Turkish towns, let them be increased. The Foreign Office would then get its money's worth, it would not be led so much astray, and in time we should have a really valuable collection of consular reports, on which we might act whenever the Eastern question has one of its periodical eruptions.

I have said that of all the consuls in Turkey the English are the most honoured and respected, *except the Russian*. I have said this after due thought and consideration, for I believe the Russian consular service is as superior to ours as ours is to all others. I have known many Russian consuls in the East, and I have invariably found them intelligent, well-informed men, keeping to themselves, doing their business quietly and without ostentation, never mixed up in trifling quarrels with their colleagues, and never getting into troubles with the authorities; and from conversations I have often had with them, I believe they understand more of the people of the East than all the other consuls put together. It is said, I know, that they intrigued with the Bulgars against the Turks, and that in a way may be so I cannot deny, for they are men who do what they have to do without taking the world into their confidence.

In Turkey proper I never saw or suspected that any underhand work was going on, though I know that in Bucharest there was, previous to the first Bulgarian evolution, advice and moral support given to it by the Russian consul.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Funerals—A Volunteer Clerk—Proposing to a Widow—Death of a Contractor—Husbandry—Vineyards—A Generous Turk—Osmanlis—Asking a Turk the time.

DURING the time I was acting consul at Varna we had several deaths among the English employed on the railway, and it was then my duty to read the funeral service. Somehow, little as I liked this amateur clerical work, I was looked upon by all the Englishmen ever after as the proper person to officiate, and so it became part of my work; and during the time I was at Varna I buried in all thirteen people: that is to say, nearly all who died during that time. As it became my duty to be the parson, so somehow it fell to the lot of a great Scotch navyy to act as clerk; and not only so, but during the last hours of the poor fellows who died from any illness he would sit with them for hours reading the Bible in a sing-song voice, and in a hard matter-of-fact way. He was not picked out for duty from all the other Englishmen because he was religious or good character, nor do I think anyone paid much attention to what he read. He simply drifted into his work, and he and his Bible became as necessary a part of a man's dying decently as an elm tree, and black clothes were considered correct for his burial.

Then he acted as clerk, and arranged the funeral down to the minutest details, from putting pennies on the dead man's eyes (piastres would have been rejected with horror!) to seeing the grave was carefully finished off when all was over.

If a woman was left a widow and in poor circumstances, another duty by universal consent devolved on 'Scotty,' namely, dunning all the other men for a subscription for her, and from the large sums he often collected he was evidently a famous supplicant.

'Now, you chap, I want something from you for Mrs. S——. Come, look alive, and shell out. Well, there now, two pound only, and you a-getting ten shillings a-day. Well, you are a mean beggar. So help me, if you get nipped, I'll see how as you arn't buried in elm nor put very deep in the ground. No, I aint a-going to take less than five pounds, so look sharp about it; I haint no time to be a-jawing here. There, I'll put that to the widdy's fund. Now for the kids. There be three on 'em, so you give a pound a-piece. What! the five pound do for the lot! No; I just aint a-going to stand that, so out with your money; and then when your turn comes I'll see you've all done rect.'

English women were so scarce in Turkey that few remained widows long; and I remember on one occasion was leaving the graveyard after a funeral I was over-taken by a sub-contractor, who said he wished to speak to me 'verry partic'lar.' 'You see, sir, I hear as how the poor widow yonder is going to pack up her traps,

and leave by the steamer for Constantinople to-morrow morning. Now I don't think as how it would do for me to speak just now, but if, sir, you would kindly see her this evening, and tell her as how I be willing, if so be as she be willing, for to marry her; say in three weeks: that is as soon as the top grief has got trod down a-bit. It do seem a pity as such a useful crittur should go away, and women so scarce. I have spoke to my mates, and none of them want her, and so I thought as how I would speak to you.'

As the man was getting on well in the world, and was able to provide for a wife, I called on the widow that same afternoon, and in five minutes had made her the offer, and the sub-contractor was accepted, and what is more, was married before three weeks were over. He was the third husband the woman had had, and I am sorry to say she did not enjoy her married life with him long; for some months after their marriage he was one day riding quietly up the line on a stodgy old pony, when as he was passing between some thick acacia bushes a wolf trotted across the line under the pony's nose, and so scared it, that it twisted round like a top, depositing its rider on a heap of sleepers, with two of his ribs broken. I have no doubt he would soon have recovered from this accident, but being confined to his house with nothing to do, he passed his time with a brandy bottle at his lips, and three or four days after his first mishap, fell, whilst drunk, off the verandah, and so injured himself, that he died the same night, and I had to bury him. I did not on the

occasion propose again to the widow, as no one asked me, so I suppose she having survived her third husband, was looked upon as an unlucky venture.

Strangely enough, the very morning the man died I had been scolding him for the disgraceful manner he was carrying out his contract for rail-laying; and on my saying that I knew it was a good paying contract, and he should not scamp it, he replied, 'Look here, sir, I have not made a penny by it. If I have, may the Lord strike me dead.'

After the funeral the consul seized his effects (as he had a daughter living by a previous marriage), and it was then discovered that he had 800*l.* buried under his hearthstone, all of which I know he had made out of his contract, as he borrowed a few pounds of me to buy food, etc., when he first began it.

When I first arrived in Turkey I made the mistake that Englishmen are apt to make when visiting the country—that of despising the people for their very rude style of husbandry, but I have since learnt to modify my opinion on the subject. I say *modify*, for doubtless much might be done by better implements, such as good iron ploughs, &c., to save time and labour; though in a country where the weather is settled for months, as it is in Bulgaria, even this is not of any great importance. For farming the land in a rough manner, no doubt it is better in most parts to do so, for it pays better to bring fresh land under cultivation, rest the old land a year, and then crop a larger area, than to expend labour on keeping the old land in a fertile condition by deep plough-

ing and manuring. In few parts is there any dearth of land, so the farmer can always break up virgin soil, and give that which has been cropped a long rest.

Just before I left Turkey the inhabitants in some of the large villages and in places where, owing to the near proximity of the hills and forests, land for cultivation was somewhat scarce, did begin to use manure; and this they could do to any extent, for in all villages there are perfect mountains of accumulated manure that could not be exhausted for years, and would be a perfect fortune to a man were it in England.

The old Roman wooden plough continues to be the only one in use, and this is dragged through the ground by a perfect herd of oxen. No attempt is ever made to harrow or roll the land, or to free it from weeds, but the seed corn is scattered broad-cast over it, and left to take its chance, and I must say that generally it does remarkably well. The chief crops are wheat and barley; the former being of a small, hard, fine-skinned description, that seems created especially for the lazy Turk, for it does not shell out from the ear, so that there is no hurry necessary in getting it under cover. Owing to the iniquitous system of tything it on the ground, and to the Turkish rule of never doing to-day what possibly may be done to-morrow, it often remains months on the ground. As far as I am able to judge, the barley is very good, being large in grain and rich in colour; but I am not a farmer, and therefore may be mistaken in this.

Most of the wheat is exported, chiefly to the Medi-

terranean, and also some of the barley, but large quantities of the latter are consumed in the country, as it is the only corn ever given to horses. Besides wheat and barley Indian corn is grown, especially on the Dobrudja and on the wide plains between the hills. Then millet is also grown in small quantities, and is used occasionally to fatten up horses for sale.

Unlike most semi-civilised countries, and also unlike most that think themselves civilised, in Turkey women, or rather Christian women, do not work in the fields, and for this reason: were they to do so they would be subjected to fearful insults from their lords and masters the Turks; and so they never venture far away from their houses and the protection of their neighbours. Now and then a few Turkish women may be seen in the fields at harvest time, but even with them it is not a general practice. No woman of any description ever asked for work on the railway, nor are they ever employed on works for the Government.

Potatoes were just becoming known in Bulgaria in the year 1857, having been first introduced by the German colonists in the Baba Dagħ mountains in the far eastern corner formed by the Danube and Black Sea. They never became a favourite food with any of the natives, and though it was always easy to procure them, large quantities were not cultivated. In their place melons and water melons are used in summer in immense numbers, and in winter dried pumpkins are cooked. The best soil in Bulgaria for melons is some high and dry piece of virgin pasture, roughly ploughed,

and the seeds sown broadcast amongst the rough uneven turf. Near every village may be seen many acres of these two kinds of melons, and when they are ripe the entire population may be said to live on them, and to us Europeans it appears marvellous to see the way a Turk or Bulgarian can swallow them by the cart-load.

Melons of both sorts, as big as a man's head and of splendid flavour, may be bought in any of the towns for about the tenth part of a penny, and in the villages they are given away to whoever likes to eat one; the consequence is that wherever you go, either in the villages or far away on the roads, melon peels are to be seen lying in all directions covered by millions of flies and insects. As far as I myself am concerned, a good tuck-out on Swede turnips would be preferable to the best melon, and far more digestible; but in this the old saying that 'one man's meat is another man's poison,' proves true; for not only have I seen natives, old and young, eat them till they swelled visibly before my eyes with no ill result, but I have seen a fastidious English lady in Turkey demolish a big one just before going to bed, and yet, strange to say, not only has she been alive next morning, but apparently quite well and refreshed with sleep.

With the water melon it is different. They are so thin soft and watery, that when the outside rind is taken off one as big as my head, it cannot weigh more than a few ounces, and 90 per cent. of its contents is liquid. On a cool day a water melon is distasteful to most people, unless they have by long habit acquired a relish

for them; but in a broiling sun when one is hot and feverish, their coolness and lusciousness is most refreshing, and I plead guilty to having often eaten three or four at a sitting.

In the immediate neighbourhood of both Varna and Rustchuck there are many thousands of acres of vineyards producing great quantities of excellent grapes, from which is made a poor sort of 'vin ordinaire,' which I have no doubt might be greatly improved by a little care in the manufacture. As it is now, the grapes are thrown just as they come from the vineyards into large tubs, and then a good big youngster in a state of nature is pitched in on the top of them, and there he kicks and tramples about till the juice is extracted and the boy himself has become redder all over than the reddest Indian. Doubtless all impurities are carried off by the fermentation, and it is only imagination that makes me believe that Turkish wine is flavoured with Bulgar.

These vineyards are the only crops in Turkey that are fenced in, and not only are they protected in this way, but, to make all safe, watchmen are stationed all over the vineyards during summer.

The vines themselves are all low stubby bushes about three feet high, planted in rows, and carefully pruned in the autumn, when also the earth is hoed up round the roots to protect them from the cold of winter. No sort of manure is ever used, and so in time a vineyard wears itself out and is left covered with weeds for years until it recovers. Generally the owners of the

vineyards are most generous with their grapes, and will allow one to pick and eat as many as one likes on the ground, besides giving away great quantities. The price of grapes is, however, so trifling, that it really is of no consideration to the very poorest.

A friend of mine was one day shooting in the vineyards at Rustchuck, when he was stopped by an old Turk and told that trespassers were not allowed, and that he must clear off at once. My friend turned to comply, but before leaving said in Turkish, ‘What manner of man are you? I have shot in these vineyards for years without a word being said to me, and to-day I have passed over many miles and spoken to many owners of vineyards, and you are the only one who has raised the slightest objection. The vineyard is yours, and you have the right to object to my being here, so I shall leave your ground, but I never received such treatment from an Osmanli before.’

The Turk, who up to this time had been squatting on the ground, jumped up, and with a marvellous display of energy, began protesting: ‘Tchellaby, you shall not say so—others have shown you hospitality, and I will not be behind them. Go where you like, eat what you like, carry away all you like, and all the vineyard is yours to do as you like with.’ The Englishman thanked him, and it ended in the two squatting down and having a feast on grapes and smoking a cigarette together.

I am always glad to tell anything I can in these pages which shows the Turk in a good light (as I

think the above does), for I fear if I keep to the strict truth I may tell many a tale that does not redound to his honour : the fact is, he is a strange mixture—quite unintelligible to us Europeans—full of the vices of the Eastern savage, which are yet often qualified by great virtues.

It may be observed that the term *Osmanli* is used in the foregoing anecdote. No Mussulman ever calls himself a Turk ; and further, to call him so is to insult him. The term Turk, when addressed to anyone, is synonymous to our word ‘lout,’ and is never used except in that sense, unless it is by some foreigner who does not know how it is understood. I have often heard people freshly arrived in the country splutter out the question, ‘Are you a Turk?’ to some dignified old fellow ; thereby doubly insulting him, first by insinuating that he might be a *Giaour*, and secondly by asking him if he is a lout ! The Turk, however, is very quick at catching the meaning of foreign words and broken Turkish, and will at once see that no insult is intended, and will answer, ‘Yes, I am an *Osmanli*.’ If the feelings of the Turk are apt to be hurt, those of the European who does not understand the ways of the country may often also suffer from being called a liar. If in conversation a doubtful statement is made, it is not considered bad manners to tell a friend that he is telling a lie ; it only means in our language that he is making a mistake. I suppose lying is so common in Turkey that it has become an accomplishment, and

therefore it is not an insult to say you tell a lie, but rather the reverse.

Again, Europeans are sometimes hurt at not receiving thanks from a Turk for any little attention they may show him. Thus, for instance, a man will stop you on the road and ask you for a light for his pipe. You give him one, and he rides on without any acknowledgment, remarking, 'May your journey be prosperous.' There is no equivalent in the Turkish language for our word 'Thank you,' and the nearest approach to it, 'May God reward you,' is too much for so slight a favour as the giving a pipe-light, or telling what o'clock it is. By the way, let me warn the traveller in Turkey if he is in a hurry never to ask a Turk for the time. The chances are if he does, the man begins in the slowest possible manner, so slow indeed that it is impossible for the most sleepy Englishman to mimic him, to search in the folds of his sash. After some minutes he fishes out a canvas or silk bag in which is his watch. One of the old-fashioned ones, such as our great-great-grandfathers carried about, as big and round as an orange, and enclosed in a pinchbeck case. The bag will be tied up by a loose piece of twine in a hard knot, the untying of which will take many minutes, then the case will take a while to open, and when it is the man will apply his ear to the watch for half a minute to make sure it is going, and about nine times out of ten it is not. Even if it is going, it will only be 'somewhere about the time,' and one cannot feel sure of it by an hour or so.

Then the time will be given in Turkish fashion, which begins to count at sundown, and goes on for the whole twenty-four hours, so in the middle of the afternoon one may be told it is exactly 17 o'clock. Then as the sun does not have the politeness to set every day at the same time, it is necessary to carry an almanack in one's head to reduce the Turkish time to English. After the Turk has taken all this trouble, it is not polite to ride away and leave him before he has returned his watch to its case, the case to the bag—the bag, after being carefully knotted up, to his sash and all shaken into place; so to learn the time of day within an hour or so a quarter of an hour will be wasted, a quarter of an hour that would have put the English traveller two miles further on his road. The fact is watches and clocks are very little used by the Turks, as time is of no value, and if they are in a town the cry of the immaun from the mosque calling to prayer is sufficient, or if in the country, a look at the sun is enough for their needs.

CHAPTER XIX.

Droughts—Progress of Railroad—A Railway Accident—Attempts
to wreck Trains

EVERY few years, say about once in ten years, there is more or less of a drought in Turkey, and the crops out on the great open plains perish for want of moisture, and the cattle die by hundreds, or have to be sold off at nominal prices to those living in more fortunate situations. During the second summer we were engaged on the railway we had a drought, and the crops and cattle suffered greatly. At last even the Turks were aroused out of their indifference, and it was then that I witnessed a curious ceremony. All the small Turkish children from the schools were formed into a procession headed by the mollahs, and marched out of the town into the open plain, where they were ranged in lines, and spreading the little carpet each one carried, they all at a word from the head mollah fell down and prayed with their faces to the east. After continuing this for an hour, they again formed in procession and marched back into the town, droning out as they trailed along a most dismal and hideous chant. But Allah did not seem to hear their prayer, or at any rate did not grant their request; for instead of rain coming, it got hotter

and hotter, and for weeks the sun played down on the parched ground without a cloud in the sky to moderate its force, till every living creature was prostrated by it, and even the birds sat about gasping in the shade with their beaks wide open. The only things that did not seem to mind it, or had a spark of energy left in them, were the pretty lizards that wherever you go in Turkey during the summer may be seen darting about in every direction, and the fiercer the heat is, the more happy they appear to be.

During this excessive heat the work progressed somewhat slowly, the men not having the power to work or the masters and foremen sufficient energy left in them properly to press matters forward; and it was only owing to the long hours we all worked that we got on as well as we did. First embankments and cuttings were finished in section after section, and then day by day the rails crept forward, in gorges, over morasses, out on the down-like plains, till at last the joyful day arrived when a pair of rails had to be cut for a junction, and each end of the works exchanged an engine. The line even then was far from being completed, for ballasting had to be finished, sidings, crossings, turn-tables, and signals put in, and the stations finished off and put in order for the traffic.

As I was not the engineer who designed the plans, or decided where the line should go, but simply had to see the works properly executed, I may be allowed to say that I think, taking all things into consideration, it was most skilfully laid out, and during the years I was

on it I never had reason to wish that any part of it had been differently planned. I say, taking all things into consideration, for no doubt had money been unlimited it would have been better to have made a far more expensive line, avoiding sharp curves and heavy gradients, and to have kept the line at the foot of the hill on the Rustchuck section rather than on the high table land, so that the produce of the country might have been brought down-hill to it, rather than dragged wearily up.

But then money is the one thing always scarce in Turkey, and if the line had been planned to cost more it would not have been made to this day. The only fault I have to find with the line is that it is far too good for the country, and especially that so much money was spent on the stations, which are all substantial stone buildings, far beyond the requirements of the people of the country. If these stations had, instead, been mere sheds, and the money expended on them had been used for reducing some of the gradients, it would have been better; but the Turks could see and understand somewhat the imposing appearance of the station as shown in the plans submitted to them, but could not understand why a locomotive should not work up and down an incline of one in forty-five.

In all countries and at all times the life of the engineer of a railway must be full of anxiety, but it is doubly so on a railroad under construction, and trebly so in Turkey, where, owing to the inexperience of all the workmen, their indifference and incapacity to see

danger, and to the wretched state of the police and the feebleness of the law, accident may be dreaded at any time from any one of the above causes.

Our experience on the Kustendji Railway taught us that it was quite useless to fence in the line, for the villagers there stole the whole of the fencing in one winter without a single culprit being caught by the zaptiehs ; so we determined on the Varna line to trust entirely to our cow-catchers, and a strict rule was established that no engine should ever get up steam without having one on ; but even with this protection we were not safe, and from time to time accidents did occur from the train being kicked off the line by a horse, ox, or buffalo.

I am sorry to say that the first serious accident we had on the line was through the fault of the English driver. He was taking out a train of fifteen waggons heavily loaded with rails, and from what we could afterwards make out about it, it seems he was not quite sober. A few miles out of Varna the line descends through a cutting, on rather a steep gradient, and then runs over a short high bank. On reaching the top of the gradient, the Bulgar stoker very properly put on the break, but no sooner had he done so than the driver, swearing at him, pulled it off again, and then put on all steam.

Away rushed the engine with its heavy load, and fortunately got just over the high bank, when it gave a hop in the air, and turning across the line went over on its side, the fifteen waggons behind it jumping one

atop of the other in one confused mass of rails, waggons, broken wood, and twisted iron.

Just before the train started Mac had been at the station and had ejected from the waggons some score of would-be travellers, but, unfortunately, as the train was moving off, a Turk, with his wife and a little girl of seven years of age, had scrambled on to the last waggon and squatted down between the end of the rails and the thick board that formed the end of the waggon.

When the smash came the rails shot forward, and one of them pierced through the chest of the man, carrying him on over the wreck till it struck the engine, when it turned up in the air, lifting the man, still impaled, high above the wreck. The poor woman had both her legs broken, and died in a few hours without, I am glad to say, apparently suffering any pain.

The unfortunate child at the same time had her arm broken above the elbow, and was with difficulty extracted from the mass of wreckage, maimed for life and an orphan.

The darkest cloud has a silver lining, and so had this one, for the Bulgar stoker behaved splendidly. I have said that when the engine went over all steam was on, and as both the driver and stoker were at once pitched clear out into the field, they had no time to shut it off, so as the great beast lay on its side its wheels continued to revolve at a fearful rate. Neither of the men were hurt, and as the driver picked himself up he said, 'Hook it, mate, she'll bust in a minute,' and suited the action to the word by placing the pile

of broken waggons between himself and the dreaded machine. Not so the Bulgar. He at once jumped up, made a dash at the prostrate engine, shut off the steam, and then opened the safety valves, which he found firmly closed by the mass of *débris*; and thus doubtless saved a much more fearful accident and a greater destruction of property.

For this heroic deed he was liberally rewarded at the time, and before I left Turkey I am glad to say he was one of the regular drivers on the line, a capable and deservedly trusted man.

Mac and I, with a gang of men, were quickly on the scene of the accident, and having first sent off the poor little girl on a trolly to Varna, we busied ourselves in getting the line cleared of the wreck; but though we worked hard with hardly a moment's rest, it was twenty-four hours before all was clear, and then we were left with a crippled engine, and of the fifteen waggons not one was fit for the rails.

The Greek doctor at Varna, in the absence of our own medical man, amputated the child's arm, and, thanks to her great pluck and patience, she got well over the operation and soon recovered. The railway company gave her a sum of money that would make her a great catch in a few years' time for a poor man, and every now and then during the years I was at Varna she paid us a visit, and invariably on such occasions extracted a handful of small coin from our pockets.

There was a great row with the authorities about

this accident, but as they had neglected to place a policeman at the station to prevent people getting on the waggons, and objected to our using the only effectual means of keeping them off, namely, a stick, they could do nothing. They contented themselves, therefore, with writing to the big-wigs at Constantinople, and stating that many people had been killed, but that it was impossible to say how many, as the engineer on arriving at the scene of the accident had buried all that had been killed outright, and that the graves could not be found !

How it was that more accidents did not happen is now a marvel to me, for hardly a day passed without an attempt being made somewhere on the line to upset the train. One day it would be a big stone on the line, another a rail bodily taken up, and on one occasion we escaped a dire catastrophe by the merest chance. Just beyond Kara Agatch, a village some seventeen miles up the line, there was a wooden bridge over an old water-course, which in summer was dry. Early one morning a Turk from the neighbouring village passed under the bridge on his way to the marshes to cut reeds, and observing some fresh sawdust he examined the structure, and found that one of the big wooden beams that carried the rails had been sawn through within two inches. At once he saw that a terrible accident must occur if nothing were done, so he walked a few hundred yards down the line, and there squatting waited patiently for the train, which he stopped just in time within a few yards of the fatal pitfall. We, on our part, rewarded

the man, but it is needless to say the Government never moved at all in the matter.

During the time I was at Varna, many, not altogether unsuccessful, attempts were made to upset trains, but the only person ever punished on this score was one of our young engineers. He chanced to be on the engine one day, when rounding a curve he saw a big young Turk deliberately carry an old sleeper and place it on the rails. As soon as the engine slackened he jumped off, gave chase, and overtaking the man hit him with his fist and knocked him over. For this he was summoned by the man himself before Midhat Pasha, who was then the Governor of Rustchuck, and fined two pounds, the man being allowed to get off free.

CHAPTER XX.

Government Inspectors—Turks at a Breakdown—Sport—
Deer-shooting.

BEFORE the line was opened the Turkish Government appointed two inspectors to see that the works were properly executed and maintained—one a Pole and the other a Turk, and I must say, two more ignorant inefficient men never were employed. They were as ignorant of anything connected with the construction of a railway as a ploughboy in England would be, and not half so capable of learning. They made up for their deficiency, though, by their fussiness, or rather the Pole did, for the Turk took things more easily and was content so long as he got his salary, which we had to pay him.

The Pole from the first day looked upon me as his natural enemy, and left no stone unturned to catch me tripping. On one occasion he reported me to the authorities because he found that ‘on one of the very sharpest curves on the line the outside rail was much higher than the inside one!’ I believe, however, that he was an honest man and most anxious to do his duty, if he only knew how; certainly he was most energetic in running up and down the line, and might be said to live in the first-class carriages.

The Turk, on the other hand, was of the Young Turkey school, and not very 'straight.' I remember once when the Minister of Public Works (I think it was Edhem Pasha) was to pass over the line, the inspector asked our general manager to complain of him. 'Just say that on the whole you are content with me, but that you beg the Pasha will speak to me and tell me not to show such an excessive amount of zeal, and that above all things he will ask me to be more friendly with you!'

When an accident occurred on the line we always advised the inspectors of it, and gave them the chance of proceeding to the scene on the picking-up trains; and I confess it was a real treat to me to see the Pole sitting in the broiling sun or biting cold hour after hour, whilst we worked on, and every now and then to ask his opinion on some matter connected with the accident. He was in such dread of committing himself that he would twist and writhe about as if in extreme tortures, but never uttered a word. Once when an engine had jumped off the rails and had partially broken a ballast waggon, the Polish inspector, who had gone with me to the place, asked me how much damage I thought was done. I answered jokingly, 'Oh, something under 5,000*l*.' It was no joke to him, for on his return to Varna he wrote a report to the Minister at Constantinople, in which he said a grave accident had occurred, and he estimated the damage done at 5,000*l*. When the accounts were made up at the end

of the month, and he found all had been repaired for 15*l.*, his rage with me was sublime.

It was at these accidents that the Turkish labourer showed to the best advantage. I have known a gang of young Turks had out to repair a bank, remove a slip, or pick up a broken train, remain exposed to excessive heat, rain, or intense cold for twenty-four hours at a stretch. They have had no shelter—only black bread and water, and little or no rest, and yet one would never hear a murmur. It was sufficient for them that they were ordered to do it, and that their masters stuck to the job; and not only did they work, but they worked with a will, and when all was done, seemed as pleased as we were, and if we could procure them a sheep for a feast looked upon it as a great favour and were thoroughly happy.

A Turk does not like steady work. He will do it for a few months and do it fairly well, but it is against the grain. But any exciting job he thoroughly enjoys, and will then put forth all his latent energy. He wants most careful supervision, being just like a child, rash and impetuous and quite incapable of foreseeing danger, but when he does get hurt he excels all other races in bearing pain bravely, and I have seen a man with two fingers broken actually want to go on working.

Not only is the Turk a good workman at a push, but when he likes and respects his master, he is one of the pleasantest men to work with, as he is willing and obliging, and shows courtesy and good manners in a hundred little ways.

I cannot imagine a more dreary life than one in Bulgaria would be for a man who was not a sportsman, a botanist, or a collector of some sort ; for though he may have work to do, the old saying, that ‘ All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,’ holds as good under the Balkans as in any other part of the world, and the only ‘ play ’ to be had is in the open field. For an Englishman there is no society of any sort in a Bulgarian town, and the frequenters of the billiard-rooms and cafés are such a rowdy set that no good can be derived from frequenting them ; sooner or later, the most peaceful of mortals will get mixed up in a row if he goes there, and probably get a few inches of knife between his ribs.

Then, unless arrangements are made for books to be sent out from England or Vienna, there is no reading ; for in all the towns of Bulgaria—that is in Varna, Rustchuck, Widdin, Silistria, &c., there is no such thing as a bookseller’s shop, not even on the very smallest scale. Newspapers and letters arrive once or twice a week, and the longing for home news causes an Englishman to gallop through them in the first twenty-four hours, and then till the next postal delivery life is a blank. No : there is only *work* and *sport* ; and my advice to anyone going to live in a Turkish town is to work hard at both.

For men engaged as we were, there is always plenty of time in winter for shooting ; for as the ground may be frozen three feet deep and the cold so intense it is impossible to handle a tool, the works have to be stopped, or only those carried on that can be done under

cover. It was very strange that though we had always about a hundred Englishmen employed on the line, there were not more than half a dozen sportsmen among them all; which was the more fortunate for those who were, as the game never got scarce or wild, and some sort of a bag might be made any day within an easy walk of the town.

When first I arrived at Varna I had sent up to Kustendji for my two old setters, Bell and Bounce, now grown somewhat old, but still able to do good steady work in the field, especially after younger and faster dogs had found the game and driven it into covert; besides these I had out from England a brace of good active pointers, and was therefore well prepared for the first season, and the envy of my less fortunate companions.

Partridge-shooting may be said to commence in August, but it is so fearfully hot then that there is more pain than pleasure in it, and the really enjoyable shooting does not commence till the end of September. Having devoted an entire winter to shooting at Varna while waiting for the commencement of the Kustendji railroad, I knew pretty well where to find the game and what to expect; but great was my astonishment and delight to find that since those days, partridges in great numbers had come down from the Dobrudja, and were to be found out in the open cornfields close up to the gates of the town. During all the winter I had previously lived at Varna I only saw two coveys of birds, and everyone told us they were unknown except out on

the Dobrudja ; *now* they were to be found everywhere, and an ordinary shot, with a brace of good dogs, could, towards the end of September, kill from fifteen to twenty brace of birds in the day, besides filling up his bag with quail, snipe, duck, a hare or two, and (oh tell it not in the shires) a fox !

Then, besides partridge-shooting, a pretty day's sport might always be had on the Varna marsh among the snipe ; and if one was a glutton at it, as I confess I was till fever and rheumatism made me more cautious, a trip up the line to the great marshes some twenty miles away brought one into the very *crème de la crème* of snipe-shooting---they literally swarmed there from morning till night ; one might fire and load as fast as one could and yet snipe get up at every step, and this not on exceptional days, but always from the end of July till just before Christmas, when the marshes became frozen and the snipe migrated.

The Turks looked upon snipe-shooting with wonder and contempt. How could anyone with brains forego the chance of getting a hare, a beast that might be killed without danger and without fatigue, and, when secured, was equal in weight to a whole bagfull of snipe ? to plod about all day over one's knees in water in a smelling bog ! ' Ah, these English are curious people, eccentric to the verge of madness, and the less a good Osmanli has to do with them the better.' No : a Turk's idea of real sport is to perch himself up on the top of a stunted tree in the low brush wood, and allow his small Coppoi (hound) to run a hare about, perhaps for hours,

until he brings it within range, when, if it will only sit still for a few minutes whilst the Turk takes aim, he knocks it over, and then scrambling down from his perch proceeds to cut its throat and bag it. No game or other animal is eaten by a Turk unless its throat has been cut, and therefore it is supposed to be bad shooting to kill anything outright, and I have often laughed to see some great swaggering fire-eating young Bashi-Bazouk pursuing a wounded partridge with a knife some two feet long in his hand ready to cut its throat!

On all the higher Balkans there are, I believe, numbers of red deer, but I was always too busy to be able to spare time to make an excursion after them, so I can only speak from hearsay; moreover, much of the information I gleaned on the subject was from natives, and they are always inclined to magnify the wonders of a distant place, and when one hears of 'hundreds of deer' from them, it is as well to divide the sum by ten, and not be disappointed if on going to the happy hunting ground you find no game at all! Few Englishmen have ever been on the high Balkans, so the only reliable information I ever had was from Poles, and as they are generally good sportsmen, I believe their accounts were to be trusted.

Were I about to make a shooting expedition to the Balkans, I should go out to Constantinople and there organise a trip from Bourgas through the high Balkans away to Kazanlik, stopping at the few Bulgarian villages and working the country well on both slopes of the mountains. As there are no roads to speak of

in the mountains, one could take very little luggage, and it would have to be carried on pack horses. The entire journey had better be done on foot, leaving the baggage in the charge of a good cavass to transport from village to village. Then it would be as well, if one did not wish to run the risk of being murdered or robbed, to have a cavass or two with you besides a few Bulgars, well-armed, who could act as extra guards, look after the dogs, and attend as servants at the villages. A foreigner, unattended, or with only a few servants, is looked upon as a very poor low sort of creature, and the respect shown is in proportion to the number of men that follow you.

Besides red deer, there are great numbers of roe deer and wild boar on the mountains, and now and then a pheasant, capercaillie, or black cock may be picked up; so that a shooting party need never want for meat, and all other necessities might be had in the villages if one were not too dainty to eat what the natives thrive upon.

, From all I have heard, I think it would be most difficult to stalk the red deer, as the part where they are found is all forest, and I think the biggest bags would be got by driving the hills with the peasants, which could always be done with little expense as there is nothing the villagers, both Turk and Bulgar, like so much as a drive, especially if they are allowed to share in the game killed. I have turned out a hundred men for a long day's drive, and the entire cost has not amounted to a pound.

CHAPTER XXI.

Turkish Hounds—Wild Boar—An unpleasant Rencontre—A Pole killed by a Roe—An English Officer murdered.

IN all Bulgaria there are only two sorts of dogs that are domesticated—the Persian greyhound, which is used on the Dobrudja, and the little Hungarian hound called ‘Coppoi.’ These latter are a small sort of harrier, invariably black and tan when pure bred, straight on their legs and with small unhound-like ears, but possessing the most extraordinary power of endurance and of sticking to a line. I believe a cross with them would greatly improve many of our English packs of harriers by restoring to them the keen power of scent and their music—gifts that have been lost through crossing them with the foxhound for the sake of getting greater speed.

These little hounds are by no means common in Bulgaria, and I have often been asked as much as 10*l.* for a really good one, and have had others of my own that no money would have bought.

Of all the sport I have ever had in Turkey, nothing, to my mind, comes up to roe-deer shooting on the slopes of the Balkan with these hounds, nor do I know sport that requires so much judgment and power of en-

duration. As soon as the severe cold and snow had shut up the works and driven the labourers home to their villages, Mac and I would start off to some Bulgar village in the forest, taking with us old Hassein as a cavass, Popa, a Bulgar, as master of the kennel and general body-servant, and provided with a good supply of tinned meats and other luxuries. Tchakal, Dudush, and Barak, three small hounds, rode up in an araba with our goods, while Mac and I plodded away over ice and snow on our ponies. On reaching the village we hired a room in a Bulgarian house, and after arranging our camp beds and the few other comforts we had brought with us, receiving the Tchorbadji (head man) and others, we would squat down in front of the fire and with ravenous appetites peg into the good things that Popa, assisted by the housewife and her daughters, had prepared for us: good things by no means to be despised after a fast of ten hours and a ride of between fifty or sixty miles through intense cold. First of all, while our appetites were at the keenest, we would have a pair of chickens or a grand tough old turkey that an hour before had been lording it over the poultry-yard, then a big wooden bowl of youatt (milk curds) or a dish of cream, and as a finish some delicious virgin honey with black bread. There was always goats' cheese, but this I could never stand, for it leaves a flavour of the beast it is made from in your mouth for a month.

After supper we would sit and chat over the wood fire that went roaring up a chimney wide enough to

drive a coach and four up, or else listen to the stories of our host—stories of the doings of the Russians in 1828, stories of sport, of brigands, and the never-ending theme Turkish oppression, till at last the evening wore away and we slipped between the sheets to dream of whole herds of roe deer which we were hunting in the land of nod.

Before it was light Popa would rouse us up, and, dispensing with shaving and such extras, we would have a good sousing over head and face in the yard with icy cold water, and hurrying into our clothes, sit down to another big feed, the last we should get for the next ten hours. Then, as the grey of the morning began to appear, we started off to the hills, among the deep rugged ravines, and soon reaching our ground, Mac and I would ascend one of the hills, and placing ourselves at a likely spot on the brow, listen breathlessly for the first notes of the hounds that Popa had kept with him below until he thought we were ready.

These hounds, to be quite perfect, should, as soon as they find, give tongue and never for a moment cease; besides this, they should hunt slowly, the slower the better. If a hound only speaks at intervals, the deer suspects that it is stealing upon it and will take a scare and go off straight away over the hills for miles with the hounds after it, and the entire day will be spent in a stern chase vainly trying to call back the hounds or to push on past them for a shot. The same thing takes place if the deer is hard pushed; but if the hounds will only hunt slowly and keep up continuous

music, the deer will play with them and may be seen hopping along quite happily only a few yards in advance of them, and a snap shot can be got as it darts across some open glade or stands to listen for a moment to the hounds as they toil with difficulty up the face of some steep ravine which the nimble little deer has bounded up apparently without the slightest exertion.

Many is the long run Mac and I have had up and down the steep ravines, over the flat tops, through thick brush and stunted evergreen oak, often with no result; for on some days the deer are wild and come ungainly, whilst on others the hounds settle down on a wild boar which directly it finds man following it, makes off in a straight line at a sharp trot, crushing through the thickest part of the brush-wood and making for the high hills far away. I lost the very best hound I ever possessed through one of these beasts.

We had got it on foot early in the day, and Tchakal had stuck to it up hill and down dale, till as evening approached we could only just hear him giving tongue far away on the other side of a deep ravine. We were all far too tired to push across, so turned for home, giving a good blast on the horn from time to time to call back the good old hound. All the evening we were expecting to hear his whine at the door, and when in the morning we found he had not returned we started off to track up the boar in the deep snow. On reaching the spot where we had last heard Tchakal, we found him, poor fellow, stretched out on the snow, stone dead with a ghastly tear in his side. He had

driven the boar to bay under a steep crag, and there, I suppose, making a dash at the beast, he got a rip from its powerful tusks that settled him.

I must confess that I never once got a shot at a boar all the time I was in Turkey. I don't know how it was, for I worked like a slave to get one, and never went out in the forest after deer without having one or more of these great beasts on foot. But, somehow, I had no luck, and someone else always got the shot. It was a great disappointment, for I would have slept out in the snow for a week to have made sure of a fair shot at a real old tusker.

No animal has more courage in a *pig-headed* way than the wild boar; not only will he turn to bay on both hound and man, but when making a point he will dash straight through a line of beaters all halloaing and making a row; and if by chance he meets a man in a narrow path he will just gallop between his legs, and the man may think himself fortunate if he does not get a severe wound from his tusks. Then few people have any idea how active one of these great unwieldy creatures can be at a push. I have seen one jump off a cliff fifteen feet high, and without even '*pecking*' gallop away at the bottom at a surprising pace.

Everyone's hand is against the wild pig—the Bulgar, because he thinks it the best of all game; and the Turk, because it fetches a good price, and also because it plays havoc in the corn fields, pumpkin grounds, and Indian corn patches.

To my mind there is nothing in the way of game

so good for the table as the roe deer, and many is the rich feast Mac and I had after a successful day, and the civility of our European friends when we returned to Varna with two or three deer was quite touching.

In these shooting expeditions there is just sufficient spice of danger to keep one alive. First, there is the fear of getting lost in the maze of wooded ravines, and then one offers rather a tempting shot to a loafing Turk or 'Hayduck' (robber). On one occasion, when R. A. B. and I arrived at a village in the forest between Varna and Baltchik, we were told there was a band of robbers out on the hills, and if we did not keep well together we should certainly be potted; indeed, our Bulgar friends recommended us to give up the excursion, but having walked some fifteen miles out we were unwilling to do this, so at daybreak we started from the village for the hills.

During the early part of the day we succeeded in killing two deer, which we despatched to the village; then, not having seen or heard of the robbers, we became more venturesome, and on a fresh deer getting up we separated. After a long time R. A. B. found himself in an old Roman fort on a thickly wooded point on the high hills over the sea. Not hearing the hounds, and not feeling sure of his way home, he halloed to attract my attention, and soon heard a shout in response from the valley below. Hurrying down the hill, he hit off an old cart-track and hastened forwards, but just before he reached the bottom he heard voices, and the next minute saw through the stems of the

trees some half-dozen ruffians stealing along all with guns in their hands. Fortunately for R. A. B., the road where he was divided into several branches, all cut deep into the boggy ground; so trusting the men might pass by a parallel road, he crouched down where he was, luckily unperceived, and had the pleasure of hearing the men pass within a few feet of him, and gathered from their conversation they were hoping to get a pot shot at him. He was very nearly discovered, for just after they passed a Coppoi that was following them actually came up and sniffed at him, and gave one low growl, but fortunately refrained from barking.

R. A. B. was not long in putting a mile or so between him and them. Meeting me we started for home, and the next morning reported the gang to the Pasha, who informed us that he knew them well and that the leader was an escaped convict, who had, since his escape, committed three or four murders.

In this Baltchik forest a Pole once lost his life in a very curious manner whilst out shooting. He had wounded a deer in two or three places, besides breaking its fore leg three or four inches below the knee. He rushed up and seized it in front by the neck. In a moment the deer raised itself on its hind legs and struck at him with its front ones, and in doing so plunged the sharp splintered bone of the broken leg deep into the man's body just below the chest, killing him instantaneously, and then falling dead itself by his side.

It was just below the Roman fort I have mentioned,

and between it and the sea, that an English commissariat officer was murdered, whilst the British troops were waiting at Baltchik for transports to take them to the Crimea. He had ridden into Varna on business, and was returning accompanied by a cavass, when, passing a fountain in the forest, he stopped to give his horse a drink. Whilst doing so he was shot by some ruffians who were concealed at the back of the fountain.

The cavass galloped on to the camp to tell what had occurred, and a party was despatched at once to the spot, but only to find him quite dead. It seemed probable this foul deed was perpetrated for revenge, for the poor fellow was robbed of nothing, and the body was found exactly as it had fallen.

Of all roads I have ever passed over, this was without exception the most convenient for a robbery, running for miles on cliffs above the sea, with steep cliffs rising again on the other hand at the foot of the hills, all full of deep caves, and the entire ground covered by dense thicket.

I myself once experienced anything but pleasant emotions when riding on this road. Just as I came into it from the Baltchik side, I espied a Turk perched on a rock well above me, who, on seeing me hesitate before entering it, shouted out, ‘This way, this way ; the other one is out of order.’

Thinking this might be a dodge to make me take the higher road, I kept a sharp look-out as I trotted along the road to which he pointed. I had not gone far before I saw a newly-felled tree right across the

road, in so thick a part of the forest that there was no possibility of rounding it. Knowing that the horse I was on was a good jumper, I took him short by the head, and with a touch of the spur sent him at the tree, which he cleared splendidly, and then, increasing his speed, I kept him going briskly till I was through the gorge. But from the moment I saw the tree, so evidently put to bar the path, till I had left it well behind, I had a nasty creepy feeling up my back, and don't mind confessing I was in a horrid fright.

CHAPTER XXII.

A 'Shooting Excursion—Lost in the Snow—Taking a 'Nip'—
Friends in Need—Forests.

THE last Christmas-day we were in Turkey, we were all sitting round the fire with a few friends who had shared our dinner, when the conversation, as often happened, turned on shooting; and on my describing a very good day's sport I had had after deer, at a village called Chaoush Keui, some twelve miles to the east of Varna, and among the forest-covered hills in its neighbourhood, three of my friends were fired with a desire to try their luck, and I at once offered to accompany them with my hounds and men, and to make all necessary arrangements for a two nights' stay in the village.

As we were all of us young, all apparently strong, and all accustomed to outdoor exposure and hard work, I proposed that we should start about noon the following day, and walk up to the village with our guns in our hands, and see what small game we could pick up for the pot. Early next morning I packed a light waggon drawn by two ponies, with the remains of our Christmas dinner, camp beds, &c., and despatched it with the three little hounds, under the care of Popa and Hassein, with orders to go to the village and take the same rooms, if they could get them, that I had

occupied some three years before, when on a similar excursion.

I must now give some description of my three companions.

First in the list, as the biggest (he was six feet high) comes C——, a straight, well-made man of about thirty, who had been staying with us during the autumn for the sake of shooting.

Then came Salwey, a young civil engineer, sturdy and strong, looking like a rope of twisted wire, always good at a pinch, and always in a good temper.

Thirdly, and lastly (for I shall not attempt to describe myself), came W——, a strong-looking though slight-made young fellow, but who had had his constitution a good deal shaken by fever and rheumatism.

The rendezvous was at my house, but the last arrival did not put in his appearance till long after one o'clock, just as we were finishing a heavy lunch. Then he would explain how it came about that he was late; then, to be even with us, he had to take in his provisions; and then when all was ready he remembered that he had left his shot-belt at home, and had to go and fetch it. It was, therefore, just 2 P.M. when we did get off, and as in place of roads we had nothing but snow-covered tracks before us, I saw at once that we must give up all idea of shooting by the way, and push on as fast as we could, so as to get near the village before dark.

I spoke with authority, as I was the only one of the party who had ever been that way before; but I felt pretty sure of the road, and, failing that, knew the lay

of the land well, so was little troubled with fears. We stepped out bravely from the Varna gate over the mile of plain to the foot of the steep vine-clad hills, climbed ploddingly up their face, through the deep snow with which the ground was covered, and when we got to the top were all glad to halt for a minute under a projecting cliff on the roadside, to wipe the moisture from our faces and light our pipes. Then on again, over the brow, on to the great flat plain that extended some miles before us, over which the north-east wind swept full in our teeth, so cold that it became dangerous to touch the gun barrels with a *wet* naked hand.

‘Come on, W——, old fellow, face it out; it won’t be so cold in the forest. Don’t lag; we must push on.’

‘All right; I’m coming.’

Yes, he kept ‘coming,’ but he got slower at every yard, and I saw with some fear that he began to take long, weak, loping steps, and did not lift his feet out of the snow. When we had crossed the plain and had struck off the opening made by the track in the edge of the forest, it began to get dusk, soon to be followed, in these Eastern parts, by darkness, and, ‘Yes, by Jove, it is beginning to snow again.’

Never mind! the longest part of the journey was over. We were on the right road, and if we could but keep it all would be well. So, once more lighting our pipes, we pushed on; but not before W—— had taken a pull at his pocket flask of brandy, ‘just to keep the cold out.’

Before we had gone another mile, I was startled by an

exclamation from Salwey, and turning round saw W—— slowly twist round and round three or four times, and then take a dive into the snow head foremost. He was up again in a minute, but seemed half-unconscious and almost unable to move. No time was to be lost, so handing over our guns to C——, Salwey and I placed, each of us, an arm of the poor fellow round our necks, and with our hands clasped behind his back, hurried him forward. The progress we made was small, and the further we went the worse we fared. Soon it became dark, or nearly so, for thanks to a small moon behind the driving clouds, we were able to see our way a little.

The wind grew stronger and colder, and the snow drove full in our faces with pitiless fury.

C—— went on in front and, more by the feeling of the ground under his feet than by sight, kept the road for us for a time. But only for a time; for, after asking us to wait, while he cast forward and around, he returned telling us the road was lost! We dared not wait longer; so taking the direction in which I knew the village to be, we pushed forward, up to our knees in snow, midst stunted bush and fallen timber, and every few yards one or all of us came down heels over head in the snow.

After struggling on thus for two hours we at last came to a small brook running between steep hills on either side, and I knew that by following it down we should pass within half a mile of the village, which was placed on the side of the hill with open grass land sloping down to the brook. If we could but reach this open land, we should feel quite safe.

For the last hour poor W—— had been begging in a half-conscious, but wholly piteous way, to be allowed to lie down if only for a minute, and we had at last to resort to blows and other rough usage to keep him on his feet. At times he almost recovered himself, but at others his legs dragged behind him, and we had to carry him on between us.

The brook wound across and across the narrow valley, and at every two or three hundred yards we had to plunge in above our knees and carry W—— over. The entire valley was covered with tangled stunted timber, and the ground strewn with big boulders and logs, which being concealed beneath the snow, made it most difficult walking. It seemed as if we were never to get out of this wood, and at last my two conscious friends lost all confidence in me, and kept protesting that I was leading them astray, and that we had better alter our route. I might be wrong, but I thought not, and at all events it was just as well to follow on by the brook as to wander about on the hills.

C—— kept on in front, and when at last I even was beginning to despair, we heard him shout out the glad news that he was out of the wood. We were soon beside him, and from what I could see, I felt sure the village was far away up the steep hill to our left.

We halted for a minute, and C——, in spite of my entreaties, would take a pull at the brandy-flask, and then, as Salwey was so done up he could scarcely drag himself along, C—— took his place and helped me to half-carry, half-drag W—— up the hill. For a few minutes he

gave great help while the fumes of the brandy were stirring up his brain, but it was soon over, and I then found I had to drag him as well as W——; so using forcible language, I fear, I made him drop his hold, and continued to drag W—— on alone.

When half way up the hill, Salwey gave a shout and drew our attention to the light of a fire directly *behind* us on the opposite hill. All then set on me and declared I was taking them from the village, insisting that we should retrace our steps. In vain I assured them the light must come from some shepherd's hut, and that if we all descended the hill again into the forest, we should lose sight of it, and be too exhausted to climb the other hill to look for it. It was only when I announced my intention of going on alone, and actually dropped W—— in the snow, and took my gun from Salwey, that they consented to 'make one more attempt.

C—— was by this time in much such a state as W——, beginning to wander both in his speech and with his legs, and I dreaded every moment his falling and going to sleep.

Salwey pushed on ahead, and soon called to say he had reached a wattled hedge. I knew then that we were on the outskirts of the village, so with a rush I shoved W—— up the remainder of the hill, and we soon all four stood under the shelter of the fence to take breath.

Salwey now took a 'nip of brandy,' and though we all started at once round by the fence, it did its work

too soon, for on coming to a sort of deep ditch cut in the face of the hill by water, he pitched head first into it, and had not strength to do more than just drag himself out and collapse on the bank. I managed somehow to get the others through, and then telling them to huddle together and wait for me, I snatched up a gun and hastening on soon came to the houses.

In a few seconds I was surrounded by some dozen howling, snapping curs, who were only to be kept at a respectful distance by a continual discharge of snow-balls. Passing one or two detached houses, I made my way to the door of one from which a few rays of fire light shot out from a partially covered window. I knocked a dozen times before I got an answer, and at last I was requested to go away as there were no men at home.

I insisted on the door being opened, said I was alone, an Englishman, and nearly frozen, but it was only by threatening to fire my gun into the lock that at last I got it opened. On slipping inside I found three or four Bulgar women and an old man, and on telling the condition of my friends and requesting the man to come and help me to bring them in, all the women set up a howl, and clung to him as if they thought his last hour had arrived. I first tried entreaties and promises, then threats, that is, I swore I would shoot the man where he stood if he did not take me to some house where I might procure help. He soon shuffled out, followed by all the women, and after leading me half way through the village showed me into the 'Mussafir Odase'

(strangers' room), and then made a surprisingly hurried bolt of it.

I found two likely-looking young Turkish giants sitting in front of the fire, and at once told them of my friends, and asked for their help, but the only answer I could get for some time was a surly 'yok' (no). Again I tried persuasion, and then bribery, and after I had offered them a lira (18s.), they consented to go, on condition that I left my gun in the room, and that they might take their pistols, for they said, 'We don't know who you are, and you may want to decoy us out and murder us.' After depositing my gun in the corner and paying the money in advance, the two heroes started off with me, and in a few minutes we found C——, Salwey, and W—— more dead than alive. Salwey was the strongest of the party, and with a helping hand from me he managed to cripple along, but the other two had to ride in pig-a-back on the young Turks. Doubtless the old Bulgar and his wives had spread the news of our arrival, for on getting to the 'Mussafir Odase' we found quite a crowd assembled, and they looked at us as village yokals in England would look at four Esquimaux if they suddenly appeared at night in their village.

. We sent for the Tchorbadji or head of the village, whose business it is to provide for strangers, as his name 'Soup man' denotes, and asked for news of our men; but to our great annoyance nothing had been heard of them. Then we asked for a private room, and for the owner of the house where I had previously put up. We

were told we might have all the accommodation we could find in the strangers' room, which was literally nothing but a mud floor, four walls, a broken door, a leaking roof, and a smoking fire! Food would be given us in the morning, if we behaved well; if not, we should be turned out fasting.

This was all said in a contemptuous way by the head man, who was a Turk. There was nothing for it but to submit, so I started to strip the wet boots and stockings from the feet of poor W——, who was quite unconscious, and C——, who was nearly so. Salwey had brightened up a little and was able to valet himself, and even fired off a feeble joke or two on the hospitality of the noble Turk.

Whilst we were thus engaged, a small bright-eyed little Bulgar urchin, who had been peeping in at the door all the time, suddenly addressed me with, 'Have you a companion who shoots with you named Popa?' And on my saying yes, he jumped up and disappeared into the darkness, soon to return with his father, who proved to be the owner of the house where I had formerly stayed. He was delighted to see me, and in half a minute had W—— on his back and carried him off home, returning for C——, whom he transported in the same manner. Salwey and I followed with the cast-off boots, wet socks, guns, &c., and soon found ourselves sitting on cushions round a roaring wood fire on our host's hearth, whilst he, his wife, and daughters married and unmarried, his sons and grandchildren, all busied themselves to give us a hearty welcome.

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The reaction after our long miserable struggle in the cold was worth a king's ransom, and Salwey and I could only sit and chuckle for the very fullness of our hearts. Yet all was not as we could wish, for both C — and W—— remained in a comatose state, and the latter never said a word all that night, but rolled on the floor and sighed as if his heart were breaking, which I think it very nearly did !

In a few minutes the housewife made us a big flat cake which she quickly baked in the hot embers, and then with the help of about a score of eggs poached in oil, we sat down to a good supper, and I know I fared like a prince as far as quantity and appetite went. Then what pleasure and contentment there was in sitting over the fire after supper roasting the last lingering shudder out of our bones and chatting over our misfortunes !

All agreed with me that the *brandy* had brought the trouble upon us, for did not my being able to get through with hardly more than pleasant fatigue prove that it had almost driven the life out of those that had tasted it ? Yes, *tasted* it, for on examining the flasks we found that not more than a wineglassful had been taken by the three.

Had W—— not taken any he would doubtless have got through with more or less fatigue, assisted a little by us—Salwey would not have been knocked up had he not had to drag and carry him, and C—— would have done very well if he had not had all our guns to

carry. As we sat round the fire that night we made up our minds never again to take nips to keep out the cold.

Soon after supper the Tchorbadji appeared to pay us a visit; his manners had greatly changed since he learnt that we were not a set of poor destitute devils as he had supposed, and he came sidling into the room salaaming and cringing like the very cur he was. I could not stand the beast, so jumped up and seizing a stick sent him flying from the door, much to the delight, though somewhat to the alarm, of our Bulgar friends. They were delighted to see the bully discomfited, but were fearful lest he should visit on them his wrath when our backs were turned.

The house we were in consisted of only two rooms, one through the other, but it was clean and dry. The inner room was given up to us, and the good women made us up a monster bed on the floor opposite the fire, where we soon found ourselves curled up, only having divested ourselves of our outer garments. We were quickly asleep, but about 2 A.M. were aroused by a noise at the door, and the next minute Popa and Hassein appeared with the three dogs, food, &c.

Popa told us that soon after they had got on the top of the hills in the morning, the snow proved so deep that the ponies could hardly drag the waggon, and after struggling on for two or three hours the waggon was fairly pulled to pieces; so after tying it together with ropes, they returned to Varna, hoping to get there

in time to stop our starting, but found we had been gone two hours.

My wife, knowing we should be in want of food, &c., and unable to do anything without the hounds, made Popa and Hassein hire some pack horses, on which baggage and dogs were tied, and started them off, in pursuit of us. Like us, they had lost the road, but as they had not indulged in 'nips,' they were able to get on and at last hit off the village.

On waking up next morning, we found to our joy that our two friends had greatly recovered, and were able to get up and about. W—— seemed to have forgotten all about the weary struggle of the night before, or nearly so, for one thing remained clearly imprinted on his mind, namely, my brutality in not letting him lie down in the snow, and the punches, &c. I had administered.

Our assuring him that I did not do it for my amusement was quite useless, all he would say was, 'Oh, I was quite right, only you hurried me so.' He declared he was quite strong enough to go out shooting with us, but we resolutely declined his company.

We had a famous breakfast off the remains of our Christmas dinner, and then Salwey, C——, and I, accompanied by Popa and the three hounds, started for the forest about two miles distant, and in half an hour after reaching it, had the satisfaction of hearing the little hounds open on a roe.

Accustomed as Englishmen are to the sight of our

well-preserved and well-cared for woods at home, the condition of all the accessible forests in Turkey appears to them most wretched and dreary, and so it really is.

Thanks to the universal mismanagement of the Government, and the feeling of the village Turk that with him the world ends, no sort of care is taken of them, and the traveller may journey for miles over the hills, always in forest, and yet never see a tree that would sell in England for more than firewood. Here and there some gnarled, half-rotten monster oak may be seen denuded of all its big limbs, most likely half destroyed by fire and yet living, as if to point out to the Turk what really splendid timber the land will grow, and what a mine of wealth these hills might be if properly cared for.

Year after year the destroyer visits the woods, but I do not believe there is in all Turkey such a thing as a young growing forest that is really preserved. In its place is a ragged thicket of stunted oak scrub, intermixed with a few lime and hornbeam, just occupying the rich virgin soil to the prevention of husbandry, and utterly unprofitable except as pasturage to a few mangy-looking sheep and goats.

The roe deer gave us a very pretty two hours' run just in the best part of the day, but when at last we brought it to bag we all felt so tired that, fearing we might some of us be knocked up as we were over night, we turned back to the village, and after spending

another night with the hospitable Bulgars, we returned home to Varna. This time we accomplished the journey easily and without mishaps, for not only had we the entire day before us, but there were the pack horses to give a help to those who felt tired.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

Private Family Affairs—Down the Danube—A Turkish Beau—A Trip to Kustendji—Inside a Harem.

DURING the construction of the railway we had little time for shooting excursions, and most of these I have written about took place later on when there was not so much work to be done, and when the fun of the chase was not spoilt by the dread lest all should be at a standstill for want of our supervision on the works.

The railway was finished and opened for traffic in 1866, and I had the post of resident engineer offered me, with Mac as my assistant; this I most gladly accepted, as it enabled me to take a private assistant who had been waiting, engaged to me for some years, and who was willing to face the hardships, dangers, and privations of a life in the East, whenever I might be in a position or had time to run home and fetch her out. I thought this private business so much more important than seeing the line opened, that a few days before that great event I got leave from my brother and joyfully hurried off, over the now finished line, up the Danube and home; but there was so much work still left undone that I was obliged to hasten over my important private family affairs, and just ten days after

my arrival in England I once more had my face turned eastwards, but this time with a wife to cheer me on the way.

As far as Pesth our journey was quick and pleasant—a sort of honeymoon affair; but from this point there was anything but honey or any other sort of sweetness in it. The post-boat had just started, so there was nothing for it, if we did not wish to stop a whole week, but to face the horrors of a slow boat. The Danube was very low, and we should have to change at The Iron Gates; but we made the best we could of the state of affairs by taking a private cabin, and so having a spot, though a small one, where we could escape from the dirty, garlic-smelling, unwashed crowd of Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics, to say nothing of Greeks, Wallachs, Serbs, Croats, Montenegrins, and Bulgars, all jabbering, eating, drinking, smoking, spitting, swearing, and generally objectionable.

All went pretty well with us until we reached a small village just below Baziash, at the mouth of the gorge leading to the Iron Gates; but from this point till we reached Rustchuck all was misery, discomfort, and actual hardship. I shall here insert a letter from my wife to her home friends, describing our journey, as I think the account of it whilst the scenes were passing will be more interesting than anything I can write from memory.

‘Orsova, 7 A.M., November 10th, 1866.

‘MY DEAR F.,—I have no doubt you saw my letter to M., so I will only tell you of what has happened to us

since I finished her letter yesterday morning. The *Carl Josep* was then just stopping before Baziash, and H. ran ashore and posted the letter. We thought we were to remain on the *Carl Josep* till this morning, and had settled ourselves down for the day, when it was found the water was so low that we must turn out into a smaller boat, so we had to scuffle our things together, and go on board a wretched crowded little steamer. The luggage was piled up in the centre of the boat, and H. and I perched ourselves on the top of it. We were quite comfortable, and I longed that you could have been with us, for the scenery was most glorious—ininitely superior to anything I had ever seen—grand hills on either side, covered with forests that are gorgeous with every shade of brown, red, and yellow; and lovely valleys in between, dotted about with the quaintest little white cottages only one story high. Part of the way, the Danube runs through a narrow defile, as if the hills had been parted asunder to make a pathway for it, and at the entrance there are ruins of an extraordinary old fortress built up the side of the rocks in a most un-get-at-able place. It is most provoking that the Danube is so low, for otherwise we should have gone on all the way in one boat, but as it was the water was boiling and fizzling over the rocks on all sides of us, and when we reached a place called Drinkova we were all put ashore. Such a scene it was! *Crowds* of passengers, not such as one pushes one's way amongst in the civilised world, but hideous-looking dirty animals, dressed in the strangest costumes, all

with long greasy moustaches and huge pipes, gesticulating and shouting in the most unearthly tongues. We were all bundled ashore into a filthy kind of yard, worse than any pig-sty I ever saw in England; great long-legged hairy pigs added to our troubles by trying their best to upset us; and then we had to look sharp not to get driven over, for the place was crowded with arabas, which are little wooden waggons with a kind of awning over them, and curtains that draw all round. They carry four passengers inside, and there is a seat in front for the driver. Each is drawn by two miserable half-starved ponies, with bells jingling round their necks. The arabas are light and *very* rickety; but H. says they will stand a great deal of rough work, and indeed they will, for I can give you no idea of the jolting we went through. We left the boat about 5 P.M., and drove (packed tight with all our luggage) for nearly five hours. It was a starlight night, but too dark to see much beyond the fact that sometimes we were unpleasantly near the bank of the river. At last we saw the red light of a steamboat, and we and all our travelling companions were turned out in the middle of a ploughed field (in such mud!) to find our way on board. H. had arranged that we should have a cabin all the way here, so we were better off than our neighbours; but the rest of the boat was so crowded that we had to take Harriet (my maid) in with us. There were but two berths, but we made her comfortable on the floor. None of us undressed, which was lucky, for at 5 A.M. a man came to the door and said, in broken

English, "Sir; it is time." "Time? what for?" shouted H.; "the boat is going on, isn't it?" "Yes, sir; the boat goes on, but you are to be left on shore." So out we all turned again in the dark, and here (Orsova) we are to remain till midday, when we are to go on again by arabas to Turna Severin, where we hope to find another steamboat. The worst part of our troubles yesterday was that we were *starving*. We had breakfast about 9:30, were hurried out of the boat, and had no chance of getting anything more till past 10 P.M. It was real suffering; and when, at last, while waiting for some food to be cooked, they brought us some sour bread and black coffee, I thought it more delicious than anything I had ever tasted. I have now taken a supply of rolls with us, so that we may not again be in such a fix. H. has lost his portmanteau, and it is such fun to hear him haranguing all the hotel people. He seems to understand all they say, whether they speak French, German, Italian, Turkish, or anything else, and he talks fearlessly to everybody in *any* language. As far as I can judge by his French, he appears to be quite innocent of grammar; but he always manages to make himself understood, and never hesitates for a word, for if he cannot remember it in one language he puts it in, in another. Portmanteau just found! the news brought us by a Frenchman, who, in the exuberance of his delight at having discovered it, has nearly shaken my arms off, and is now proceeding to do the same by Harriet! Harriet makes friends, and amuses herself by giving lessons in English to her fellow-

passengers; she is bright and happy and very civil. Arabas now arrived. Good-bye.

‘Rustchuck, Monday, 12th.—Here we are safe and well, and now we have but one stage more and then we shall be home; nine hours by train to-morrow and we shall be at Varna. Yesterday was a very dull day, scenery uninteresting, and I could not leave the cabin at all, for the boat was crowded with *such* a set of creatures, they were lying in masses all over the deck, they actually eat, drink, and sleep there. On Saturday night we had a tremendous storm, the river was like a rough sea, the waves washing over the deck and running down into the saloon, yet these creatures slept out in it all. We stuck fast in the Danube last night for an hour, we did so hope we might not get afloat again till morning, but unfortunately we did, so at 2.30 A.M. we were opposite Rustchuck. We could not land here because of quarantine, but we had to get up and dress, and at 3 A.M. we were put ashore on the other side of the river, about two miles from Giurgevo. At first we were put into an awfully dirty hovel, where some old Wallachs were snoring in bed, but H. afterwards got us taken into the agent’s office, and there we sat waiting for five hours. H. remained with us till it got light, and then he walked on to Giurgevo, to get some carriages. It was about 8.30 A.M. when he got back to us, and we drove for half an hour across a desolate-looking plain, no road, but all just like a ploughed field, deep in thick mud; and we were so shaken and jolted. Then we were put

into a little boat, and sailed up the river and landed here just by the railway station, which, by the by, is a very nice one, quite English-looking, and very clean and neat. We walked from the station to the town, above a mile, through a sea of mud, to Mr. S.'s house, where we remain till to-morrow.' * * *

In the above letter my wife says, we could not land at Rustchuck; no, this was the case. There was supposed to be cholera somewhere up the river, at Orsova, Vienna, London, or perhaps San Francisco. No one knew where, but, to make all safe, passengers arriving by the boats were subjected to quarantine, but travellers from Europe *viâ* Wallachia were allowed to pass free. It was therefore the easiest thing possible to avoid the quarantine by passing Rustchuck, landing at Giurgevo, and then coming across in a boat; and this we did, though, in having to do so, we went through several extra hours of extra discomfort, which, though passed over so lightly by S. in writing home, will yet never be forgotten by either of us. The fact was, the river being so low our boat was not able to pass up the narrow, shallow channel to Giurgevo, and, therefore, ran on to a temporary landing-place, two miles below that town, where the enlightened Wallachs and enterprising Danube Steam Navigation Company had provided for the comfort of the passengers, when waiting for or arriving by the boats, a wooden hut, some ten feet square, fitted up with two wooden beds, on which slept two porters. This was the only place to shelter some half-dozen unfortunate ladies, who had to sit on

the edge of the beds still occupied by the snoring porters.

There landed with us on that memorable occasion a real Wallach Prince (not a sham one), with his lately espoused French wife, and it was quite refreshing to hear him revile his country, its institutions, and government, as he and I stood on the river bank in summer clothes, refreshed by several degrees of frost, waiting for the first glimmer of daybreak to show us our way over a partially dried swamp to Giurgevo in search of carriages.

On our arrival at Varna I found that R. A. B., who during my absence had been living with Mac in our house, had got things into a pretty comfortable state, first, by removing the offices out of the house to the station; and secondly, by papering, white-washing, and cleaning up generally.

As may be supposed, I had much to hear of all that had taken place at the opening of the line, and I remember one incident that greatly amused us. Two English ladies had accompanied their friends out to Varna to be present at the opening of the line, and had stayed in R. A. B.'s house. Thinking that none of the natives could possibly understand English, they talked away freely before them all, criticising their costumes, manners, &c. Now it so happened that we had a remarkably gook-looking young Turkish zaptieh, who having been constantly with us for some years understood and spoke English perfectly. The younger of the ladies was greatly taken with the lad, and I think

the admiration became mutual, when, as she was standing at the door ready to mount her horse, she looked him hard in the face and said, ‘ Yes, there is no denying it, you *are* a pretty boy.’ Mehemet’s delight was so great that as soon as the riding party had started, he fresh waxed his long moustache, hurried off to the town, and had his photograph taken, which he presented a few days later to his fair admirer, with looks of deep devotion. Poor Mehemet, not long after this he accompanied me on a shooting excursion, caught cold whilst sleeping out in the open, and in a few weeks died of consumption.

Thanks to my having in my bachelor days foregone the delights of Varna society, and also to its being the custom there for the new comers to call first on the old residents, S. and I were spared the necessity of paying calls and receiving visits, and instead, we occupied all our spare time in riding about the pretty neighbourhood, making excursions up the line, or paying visits to friends at Kustendji, Rustchuck, Bucharest, &c.

The first of these distant trips was to Kustendji, to introduce my wife to my old friends there, and show her the place where my apprenticeship to the ways of Turkey had been passed. We persuaded Mr. H., our medical man, to make the trip with us, and as we were all fond of riding, had good horses, and wished to make the journey quickly, we sent our luggage on in an araba, and all three started from Varna early one fine winter’s morning, escorted and guarded by Hassein and Mehemet, our two cavasses. After a long but pleasant

day we reached the half-way village of Delembý-Keui, and asked a night's lodging of my old friend Halil Aga. The old fellow was delighted to see us, but no words can describe the excitement our arrival occasioned to his harem.

S. was the first English woman that they had seen, and not only was she herself a curiosity, but every article of her dress was a novelty to them.

As the doctor and I were not allowed to enter the yard in which the harem rooms were situated, S. felt at first disinclined to visit them alone, but this so increased the anxiety of the women to see her, that they came to the door and entreated her in such beseeching tones to pay them a visit that she consented. Great, however, was their disappointment to find that S. could not speak Turkish; this difficulty was at last got over by old Halil Aga inviting me in to act as interpreter, saying, 'I know you of old; are not we brothers? besides, you never were a deli kan (wild blood), and now you are evlendi' (married, or literally, housed).

For the first time in my life I found myself inside a Turkish harem, and I must say, I did not feel very much elated. There were three wives, ranging from the age of twenty to sixty, the youngest looking quite old, and the others two fearful hags. At first they kept on their yashmaks, but after a while they allowed them to fall down and show their faces, whilst they all three at once poured down upon me innumerable questions.

What seemed to strike them most was, that S. had not got her finger nails coloured with henna, and they kept taking her hand and chuckling over it, evidently thinking it looked most unfurnished and strange. Then her English boots were examined over and over again, till at last getting somewhat tired of sitting with both feet prisoners in their hands, she took a boot off and allowed them to look it over at their leisure.

A proposition that S. should sleep with the women in the harem was declined; so after we three travellers had had our supper squatting on the floor in the men's apartments, attended upon by old Halil Aga (the women dare not come into the room because of the doctor), S. and I once more returned to the harem and gratified the inquisitiveness of its occupants for another hour or so, whilst S. ate sweetmeats, and the Turkish ladies and I smoked cigarettes. At last bedtime arrived, and the doctor having retired to a stable to pass the night as best he could on a bundle of hay, the women came in and made us up beds on the floor. All was beautifully clean and comfortable, but, in spite of this, S. could not sleep a wink all night, because all felt so strange and new to her, and because, for the first time in her life, she got *down* into bed.

At the door of our room stood one of the oak poles of the telegraph running from Varna to Kustendji, and the wire vibrating in the wind kept up a continuous hum.

Halil Aga drew my attention to this, and asked me

if I could tell him why it was people talked so much more by telegraph in winter than in summer, adding, 'In summer they often do not speak for days, and then often in a whisper, whereas in winter they hardly ever stop—just hear them now, they are almost shouting.'

I tried to explain matters to him, but soon got so out of his depth, and my own too, that Halil Aga saw it was no go, and cut me short by saying, 'Ah, never mind; it is a "Sheitan Shey" (devilish thing). It is no good for us Osmanlis;' a remark with which I agreed, for I believe the telegraph and other inventions of civilised Europe will eventually drive the half-civilised Turk out of the land. I for one shall be sorry when it does, for among the *village* Turks there are many good old fellows such as Halil Aga, hospitable to strangers, kind to their families, contented, happy, fairly industrious, and altogether much freer from vice than any other inhabitants of Eastern Europe.

Leaving Delemby-Keui early next morning, we pushed on for Kustendji, where we arrived in the afternoon after a very pleasant and fortunate ride—fortunate because we had accomplished the journey without once losing our way, no easy task on a great open plain, without landmarks and without roads. Yes, without roads; for though my readers, if they turn to a map of the Dobrudja, may see them marked there, it is the only place where they *can* be found. From village to village there are tracks worn by bullock-carts, winding about in any direction, and often dividing into three or four branches, only to meet again some miles further on,

and often near villages, all ploughed over. Nowhere, since the day the land first appeared from out of the waters, has there ever been the feeblest attempt to construct a road of any sort, and the natural earth remains the only ballast.

CHAPTER XXIV.

On the Dobrudja—An Ontrage—A Turkish Husband—Prospects of the Railroad—Snow-clearing.

SINCE the days of the Crimean War I have many times seen, in the papers and in books, remarks about the 'swampy maish of the Dobrudja.' These are totally incorrect, and lead people into most erroneous ideas of this part of Turkey. It would be about as correct to call Salisbury Downs a morass as to call the Dobrudja a swamp. From the hills above Varna to the Baba Dag Mountains on the one hand, and from the sea to the Danube on the other, I should say the average depth of the driest possible alluvial soil is 300 feet. The one difficulty in nearly every village is the want of water, and many of the wells are 150 feet deep.

Between Varna and Kustendji the traveller only crosses one stream, and this is in the hills near Varna; except this stream no open water is to be found till he reaches Tusla, some twenty miles from Kustendji. Here there is a big lake of fresh water divided from the sea by low sand hills, and lakes like this will be found all along the sea coast at intervals of from ten to twenty miles. Again, on the Danube side, there are a few lakes such as the chain running from Tchernavoda

towards Kustendji, by the side of which the railroad is constructed. Looking at it one would say no healthier country could be found in Europe, and it is healthy except for the ague, which, though very trying to Europeans, seldom proves fatal.

But to return to the tracks. Owing to the ground being all of a rich dark soil with hardly a stone on it, the mud in winter is very tenacious, rendering draught work most severe; but in summer, when the ground is dry and hard, it is far from bad to travel over, and there is no extensive tract of land in all Europe more fitted for military purposes than the Dobrudja Proper. Not only are the tracks firm and good, but artillery, cavalry, and baggage waggons can pass straight through over the undulating plains for hundred of miles without the least difficulty, except that of the great want of water, which, on the Mid Dobrudja, can only be procured at the villages, and then in limited quantities from deep wells.

It is pitiable to see the droves of cattle standing for hours, on a hot summer afternoon, round the well of the village, nearly parched with thirst, waiting till some lazy young Turk, towards sundown, thinks fit to arouse himself, and with the help of a pony, and a huge wheel, draw up a few buckets of water, which he empties into a dug-out tree placed near the well, the contents of which are half spilt by the frantic haste of the poor beasts to get at it.

We spent a very pleasant week with our friends at Kustendji, devoting nearly every day to coursing, and

the evenings to paying visits. We sent our horses home with the cavasses, and then ourselves returned *viâ* Tchernavoda and the Danube to Rustchuck.

On our way down the line from Rustchuck, R. A. B., who had joined us, told us of a brutal outrage that had taken place near the station of Sheitanjik. He was called up one morning by the news that a Bulgar boy was dying in his yard. On going out, true enough there he found a lad about fourteen years old, looking very much as if he were not long for this world. His face was black and swollen, his eyes seemed about to drop from his head, and he was quite speechless. R. A. B.'s cavass said that when riding in early that morning from some neighbouring village, he had discovered the boy lying in the grass with his arms tied behind him, and his head pulled backwards towards his elbows by a rope from them round his neck. He was nearly strangled, and quite insensible. Cold water was poured on the boy's face, brandy poured down his throat, and his feet and legs well rubbed; and, after a bit, he revived and recovered his speech. He then told R. A. B. that a Turk, the son of the head man of Kajelidere, the next village, had tied him up the previous night, and then left him, because he had allowed some sheep he was watching to stray on to what the Turk was pleased to consider his pasturage. R. A. B. at once despatched his two cavasses to Kajelidere, and they soon returned with the man.

When told what the boy had said, he answered, without the least appearance of shame, 'Yes, I did it,

and why should not I? He is a Giaour, and let his sheep eat my grass.' R. A. B. told him he ought to be ashamed of himself, for it was a most disgraceful thing he had done. Whereat the man turned on him in a fury, and said, 'How disgraceful? I am the Sultan's soldier (he had been one), and the Sultan's soldiers cannot do a disgraceful thing.'

It was useless to argue with him; so R. A. B. ordered his cavasses to take him to Shumla, and hand him over to the governor, sending a message at the same time that he hoped the man would be severely punished. When the cavasses returned they said the Pasha sent Tchelaby many salaams, and he would certainly punish the man severely. His ideas of severe punishment and R. A. B.'s, however, somewhat differed; for the very next morning the man rode up to the station, swaggering and blustering, assuring everyone that the Pasha had told him that he was a very good child, and that he had done no harm. So much for a Turk's ideas of right and wrong, and so much for a Pasha's ideas of justice between Mussulman and Rayah!

We were accompanied on our journey down from Rustchuck by a Pasha, who was on his way to Constantinople, with his two wives, three or four children, and some half-dozen slaves of either sex, some white and others black; and his treatment of his 'better halves' raised my wife's indignation greatly. First of all, while waiting for the train to start, he allowed the poor wretches to stand out in a piercing wind on the

platform, while he squatted under the verandah in an arm-chair. Then, when we started, the Pasha came into a first-class carriage with us, while his wives, children, and female slaves were all huddled like a lot of sheep in a second-class compartment. Throughout the entire journey the old fellow never so much as looked at them; and, on arriving at Varna, they were all put into a springless araba, whilst he drove up into the town alone in an open carriage. Yet the old fellow did not seem to dislike ladies; for all the way down he had been most polite and courteous to S., and through me, as interpreter, kept up a lively conversation, and paid her such extravagant compliments, that I dared not translate them all, for fear of her head being turned.

It was about this time that the unfortunate shareholders in the Varna Railway began to have their faith in ever getting a dividend somewhat shaken. They had been induced to put their money into the concern by the promise of the Government guarantee, and the guarantee was to come into effect as soon as the line was *ready for traffic*.

Now the line not only was ready for traffic, but was running three or four through trains each day, besides carrying the mails for Constantinople twice a week. But yet the Government refused to pay the guarantee on the ground that the line was not finished. Over and over again we asked to have the line inspected; and over and over again, after some weeks of delay, some well-instructed man came up to examine it, or to

pretend to do so, and then left, finding some childish excuse for the Government's not paying up—such as the station doors wanting repainting, or the reeds in the marshes near the line requiring to be cut. Again and again we complied with their requirements, and put all finishing touches to the line; but it was only by stopping the traffic and shutting up the line that we at last got it acknowledged to be in proper working order; and then, when we hoped to get some money, there was another rather awkward hitch. The Government had not got any; and from that day to this the company has experienced like treatment. Now and then some trifling dribblet has been obtained; but the sum owed by the Government is enormous, and will, I fear, remain so, and all hopes of getting it are quite vain.

During this winter I had my first experience of what I look back upon as the most disagreeable and severe of all the tasks I ever had to perform, namely clearing the line of snow, and as Mac was spending the winter in England the entire work fell upon me.

Wherever the neighbourhood of the line is open country, which it is throughout the greater part of it, the fine hard frozen snow drifts and drifts until it finally piles up behind every obstacle and falls over every declivity, and then settles to about the consistency of a block of salt, and this, not only when the snow is falling, but after it is down it drifts at every rise or change of the wind. Constantly a telegram would arrive after dark to say that a train with all its

passengers was stuck fast at such and such a kilometre, and then I had to turn out of my snug warm room, huddle on mountains of furs, and hasten away up the line with the 'picking up' train, pushing in front of us a monster snow plough that would clear a cutting of many feet of snow if it had not been lying long enough to get compressed.

Often we in our turn got jammed, and then in the piercing cold, engine and plough had to be dug out, and the cutting cleared by hand, and when at last we did recover the lost train we had to precede it into Varna or Rustchuck, and then start off again to run over the entire line, for we felt pretty sure that the same storm that had caught the train would have filled all the cuttings.

On these excursions we often took with us, in break vans, three or four hundred Bulgars, packed like herrings in a barrel, for the sake of warmth. Often we were out for two or three days, and then after having cleared the entire line would learn that a shift of wind had undone all our work.

I remember the first time we used the snow plough we were in some fear of the weighty machine, and did not go half fast enough at our blocked cuttings, but we soon got over this and before our arrival at Rustchuck had become quite desperate. When we found a cutting quite full of snow we ran up and down the line a few times for half a mile in front of it to clear the rails, and then, whilst we were getting up all the steam power we could, some men went forward and sanded

the rails. When all was ready we drove ahead with all our might, crouching well down behind the fire-box to shield us from the avalanche, and went crash into it. If the cutting were not too long or too deep, and we had a good run at it, we would dash through ; but often when this was not the condition of things, we just burrowed into the snow till not a vestige of the engine or waggons could be seen, and then we had first to dig ourselves out, and afterwards the entire train.

It was always a marvel to me how the men could be induced to start on these excursions ; for if I suffered, wrapped up as I was in warm furs from the soles of my feet to the top of my head, what must they have gone through with only a sheep-skin jacket ! Yet they never grumbled, and never refused to turn out, and day or night worked with a will, and not only with a will, but with many a laugh and joke. When all the work was over I gave each of them a good glass of spirits, but never while the work was going on, for I am convinced, from experience, that there is nothing prostrates a man, or destroys his bodily vigour and heat, so much as spirits. For a short time after drinking it he may fancy he feels warmer and stronger, but it will not last ; the master will see at once that he is not working as well as he did before, and if the cold be very great, and the man tired, he will 'shut up' altogether in a few minutes.

The best thing I believe to give lasting heat and vigour in intense cold is a cup of hot Turkish coffee, the stronger the better, to be followed up by a

good meal on the warmest and greasiest dish ever dreamt of by the worst of cooks ; and I plead guilty to having eaten, with the greatest relish, some dozen eggs, all poached and floating in a lake of oil—a dish that would be about as tempting to me, during temperate weather, as a tuck-out on physic.

We all of us suffered most on these occasions from the fine needle-like particles of snow being driven into our eyes, causing intense inflammation and pain, and sometimes blinding us for days. Then every now and again we got a nip of frost-bite, which is, to my mind, the most terrible pain, and I still have a numbness in my toes, the result of a frost-bite on the Varna Railway. No : snow-clearing, with the thermometer at 20 deg. below zero, is not pleasant, and this is one of the few things in my life in Turkey that I do not look back to with pleasure.

CHAPTER XXV.

Wolves—A Lion on the Line—Killing a Cossack—Wallachia and Wallachians—Giurgero.

DURING our snow-clearing excursions we often saw packs of from three to ten wolves—long-legged, gaunt, ragged beasts, always on the gallop, but shy and cautious, never coming within shot, and certainly not looking very fierce or dangerous ; nor are they. I do not know the beast in any other part of the world, so can only speak of him as he was in Turkey, and I am bound to say I never could verify one of the numerous stories that we constantly heard of his attacking and eating men ; nor do I believe them. When a man is found eaten by wolves I take it he has either died of cold or some other ailment, or else been dead drunk ; and I do not blame the wolves for clearing him up. It is much more moral of them to do so than to attack live cattle or sheep, as they will do if they are not well looked after ; but even here they are very cautious, and I never heard of wolves killing any in the daytime, yet they look, and I dare say often are, very hard set with hunger.

Nowhere in Turkey have I ever heard of wolves being trapped, and I believe the only plan adopted for

their destruction is to drive a strip of forest and shoot them, or try to do so, as they bolt. A Turkish sportsman may be said to kill his game about once in every three shots fired, and his gun, which he loads as deeply as he can, goes off once in every two attempts. With all these chances in the wolves' favour, it is a puzzle to me why they do not swarm. As it is they are decidedly rare, and are seldom seen by anyone.

Besides wolves I believe there are a few jackals in the Balkans, and that they come within a few miles of Varna, but I cannot be certain about this as I speak only from hearsay, that is, from what I have gathered from the shepherds, but I am inclined to believe them; as not only did they assure me that their flocks were often visited by them, but they imitated the cry of the jackal, which they could not have done if they had not heard it.

I am always sceptical as to the reports of natives about game that I have not seen myself, and it is sometimes as well to take the tales told by even Englishmen with a grain of salt. For instance, one night, just as I was turning into bed at Rustchuck, Tom Bilby came to my house, wanting to speak to me 'very particular.' Having asked him into my room, and set a glass of grog before him, he said, 'Well, sir; you know I have killed with my old locomotive almost every animal, from a man to a hedgehog, but I never had such a stroke of luck as I have to-night. If you will believe me, not an hour ago, I went smash over the biggest lion you ever saw. You may laugh; but I did.

I was running sharp down the Vetova incline when the beast sprang at the fore-part of the engine, and I just saw it writhing under the wheels as we dashed over it with a great heave up that made me think for a moment that we were off the rails. There aren't no lions in Turkey? well, you must excuse me, sir, but I know better—there is one, a dead one; and if you will come back with me to-morrow I will show it you.'

Tom stuck to his story, assuring me he saw quite plainly by his engine lights its ragged red mane, and so accurately and vividly described it that I was almost convinced, and began to think he must have run foul of a lion that had escaped out of confinement; but the next morning, on going up the line with him, the mystery was solved, for there, on the side of the line, with some fifty vultures tugging at it, was a dead camel! If Tom had not returned that way he would all his life have sworn he had killed a lion, and as he was one of the most truthful men I ever knew, it would have been difficult to disbelieve him.

At Vetova station we left word about the kill of the previous evening, as we knew the carcase, or such part as the vultures left, would prove a rich feast for the Circassian villagers. Nothing ever seemed to come amiss to them, and they apparently liked their food gamey, for R. A. B. once saw them unearth a horse that must have been dead and buried for weeks, and carry it off to cook, when the worst rascal that ever sent bad meat to Smithfield Market would have turned sick at the smell of it.

When we killed a beast on the line, which I should say was about three times a week, first its owner, if a Turk or Bulgar, would strip off its skin, then the Circassians would clear off the meat, and the wild dogs and vultures finished up the offal ; so by the next day the utmost to be seen was a few scattered bones and a trampled dark spot on the turf. I plead guilty myself to having carried home, on more than one occasion, a leg of beef, but then good beef was very rare, and it did seem a pity to let the beasts of the field (I include Circassians among these !) eat good food.

It may perhaps be said here what a shame it was to kill the poor villagers' cattle. It was certainly a pity, but not a shame, for every beast killed owed its death to the carelessness of its owner or guardian. Either the herdsman drove his beasts on to the line or across it in front of a train, or more frequently he went to sleep and let them stray on the path of danger. I once saw one of our own gate-keepers fast asleep at the door of his hut, whilst his horse was tethered to the rails, and was, poor beast, cut to pieces by the engine I was on.

I only wish we had been able to escape running over human beings ; but even this we sometimes did through the utter recklessness of the people, who *would* cross the rails just in front of a train going at full speed. I can never forget the feeling of horror I once experienced when just as we had got up full speed, after leaving Gebedji station, and were rounding a sharp curve, the driver saw a man, lying across one rail with his head resting on the other for a pillow, fast asleep.

It was impossible to stop, and the next minute we were over him, cutting him clean in two. On enquiry I found that the man was a Cossack, and that shortly before our arrival at the station he had been seen staggering about very tipsy. I ordered a gang of Bulgars to bury him where he died, and reported his death to the authorities, but no notice was taken of it; and why should there, for he was only one of the many thousands of hated Russians that had found an unknown resting-place in that distant land.

As the snow had ceased falling for a bit just before Christmas, and I had but little to do just then, my wife and I took the opportunity to spend a few days with my brother, G. A. B., who was at this time living at Bucharest. It was a visit I looked forward to with much pleasure, as I had once lived a year at Bucharest, and, therefore, had, besides my brother's family, many sincere friends there, though I must confess chiefly among the English and other foreigners. I fear I cannot say much in favour of the Wallach. I don't like him. I even prefer the Turk to him, and yet I know, when I reason with myself, that, on the whole, he is the Turk's superior in most ways. Since the partial independence of Wallachia, the country has greatly improved, and is going on improving. Good roads have been made where previously only muddy tracks existed. Iron bridges have been thrown over most of the large rivers where these roads cross them, and hundreds of miles of railroad have been opened; above all the Wallach is ambitious and hopes for a

future on earth amongst European nations, and can be got at through public opinion. In these two latter points he is *somewhere*, whereas his neighbour over the river is *nowhere*.

The Turk hopes for no improvement; but, on the contrary, wishes to stop where he is and as he was 400 years ago; and as for public opinion, it is the opinion of Giaours, worse and more to be despised than the opinion of the beasts he uses.

When first I went to Bucharest, some eighteen years ago, there was nothing but a rough track from Giurgevo to that town; since then a very good high road has been constructed all the way, and this in its turn has given way to one of the very best constructed railroads in all Europe. The progress exhibited on this road is a fair specimen of what has been done throughout the entire country; and yet Wallachia has much to do, and many, many years must elapse before she can be admitted into the family of nations as an equal. She must get over her swaggering, boastful, yet effeminate ways; she must introduce education and literature amidst all her people, beginning at the very highest. Her women must learn to prize virtue more than fine clothes, and the men must learn to look on women as something better than creatures sent on earth for their pleasure. In fact, the saying one often hears a Wallachian quote of his own country, that it is a land where 'The fruit has no flavour, the flower no scent, the men no honour, and the women no virtue,' must become

untrue, and it must be the boast of its people, instead, that at all events the latter part of the proverb is altered.

These are but a few of the many lessons Wallachia has to learn : it is a long task and will take a long time ; but learn it they will, I have no doubt, if *they only have time given them*.

I have said my say, as far as the dark side of the Wallachian character is concerned, and now I am glad to give the other side of the picture. There is no part of Europe where the stranger is received with greater kindness and hospitality, and he will find his hosts amusing, clever, and anxious to please. The men always ready and willing to do him a service, and the ladies more than kind—that is to say, the married ones, for with them alone will he be able to converse freely, the girls being guarded strictly by mothers and duennas, as if they thought all hopes for them would be lost if they escaped from under their eyes ; but as the boy is father to the man, so I suppose the girl is mother to the woman, and judging from the ladies I have known in Wallachia, I should say the girls must be very amusing, if one could only talk to them without restraint.

I have crossed the Danube from Rustchuck to Giurgevo some hundreds of times, and am well used to the troubles and trials that beset a traveller, wherever he may go ; but I can safely say that I lost more good temper each time I entered Giurgevo than a trip to

every capital in Europe would cost me, through the imbecile management of the Wallachian passport and custom-house officials.

On reaching Giurgevo, you are landed on a muddy, shelving shore, between the river and the town, amidst piles of goods, arabas, bullocks, horses, and indescribable smells. There is no place to shelter you or your luggage, and if you attempt to enter the town, you are at once stopped by a creature dressed like a scarecrow, calling himself a sentinel. He speaks nothing but Wallachian, and even if you understand him, he will only condescend to tell you to stop where you are ; and stop you will, probably for hours, if you are not fortunate enough to induce some one to take pity on you and go to call a custom-house officer. Supposing this has been done, and your luggage carried to the custom-house, nine times out of ten you will then be told that the custom-house officials have not yet arrived, that they have left for the day, or that they have gone home for dinner, and if you remonstrate at this state of affairs, you are looked upon as most inconsiderate. The only chance is to get hold of some Wallachian gentleman who may be passing by, and persuade him to help you ; if you succeed in this, he may in time fish up an official for you, and then, with time and patience, helped with bakshish, you will at last get through your troubles and be allowed to go into the town. This kind of thing takes place again and again, day after day, as often as you go there, and yet Giurgevo is the front door of Wallachia, or, stating the case in

arithmetical terms, one may say, 'As Liverpool is to England, so is Giurgevo to Wallachia.'

When once the frontier troubles are over, a foreigner is as free in Wallachia as in England, and will have no more 'official' annoyances of any sort, as long as he behaves himself properly and quietly.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Wallachian Cruelty — Judicial Torture — Bucharest — An Affair of Honour—A Swindle.

WHEN my wife and I arrived at Giurgevo on this occasion, the railroad was only just commenced, so we had to hire an open carriage with four horses (harnessed all abreast), and with our luggage packed in with us, started off at a capital pace, which was kept up throughout the entire journey of forty miles, the unfortunate beasts pushed along at their best speed by the unsparing application of a whip that cut like a knife.

When the present Prince of Wallachia first arrived at Bucharest he was accompanied by several Prussian officers, one of whom was heard to remark a few days later, that ‘The Prince had better give up his undertaking and return home again, for no good could be done in a country where the people are such consummate fools as to illtreat the animals they make their living by, until they kill them.’ And from what I have seen, I know the officer had but too good reason for saying this.

In all the civilised world, there is no people so innately cruel to their beasts as the Wallachians are, and so foolishly cruel too. I have seen the driver of a

carriage sitting by the side of the road crying bitterly over one of his horses that lay stretched out dead, having been driven to death, and then seen him in a fury of rage attack the poor surviving beast, and fell it by repeated blows on the head, and yet the poor things had been driven on and on, till they were totally exhausted. As long as a horse can move, its owner will continue to work it, if he can earn a penny by it, though it may be plain to the greatest fool that by doing so the horse must die in an hour or two. All the peasants' beasts are half starved and covered with sores and crippled by ill-usage. On the old road from Giurgevo to Bucharest dead horses might constantly be seen lying by the side of the road, and at the half-way house the yard and premises were strewn with the bones of the poor beasts that had died there.

As may be supposed, these people, who are so cruel to their domestic animals, are not much better to those of their fellow-creatures who are at their mercy. Men, and even women, were beaten in a brutal manner to extort confessions from them, and other revolting tortures were resorted to for the same purpose; and yet the Wallachs say of themselves that they are the most refined, enlightened, and civilised of all the European family!

In the year 1868 or 1869 (I forget which), a sum of money was despatched by post-cart to Foktchany. The driver of the post was changed at each stage; so some half-dozen people had charge of the money during the journey. When the cart arrived, the money was not

forthcoming, and nothing could be made out about it. The loss was reported by telegram to the authorities at Bucharest, and orders were sent back to beat the post-man till he told where the money was. This order was at once carried out in the severest manner, but without eliciting anything; and it ended in the Minister of Justice running down to look into the affair himself. The post-boy was brought before him, again flogged, with no further result, and then the Minister, sitting in judgment, ordered sharp pegs of wood to be driven under the finger-nails of the unfortunate wretch. Driven wild by the excruciating pain, the poor victim called out, 'I did take it, I confess!' But then followed the question, 'What did you do with it?' and, not being able to tell, he was again subjected to the same torture, and, in addition, had a rope tied to his feet, by which he was over and over again lowered down a well and soused in the water. At last the man became insensible; and then the Minister sent for the man's wife, and the mildest torture to which he subjected her, and the only one I can sully my pen by mentioning, was placing hot roasted eggs under her arms, next the skin, and binding her arms down upon them. The woman, in her turn, became insensible, and was carried off to the hospital; and the Minister, feeling, no doubt, that he had done a good day's work, returned to his house at Bucharest.

Unfortunately for the Minister, there were some English engineers at Foktchany, who reported the affair to the consul, and through him the matter was

taken up, and the Minister, after much delay, was brought to trial and condemned to, I believe, a year's imprisonment for 'un peu trop de zèle.' I have said '*condemned*' to imprisonment; for there the matter ended, the authorities thinking it quite sufficient punishment to *condemn* him, without ever carrying out the sentence; and during the year of his supposed imprisonment, the man might be seen driving or walking about in Bucharest, looking quite contented and happy.

I afterwards heard that he died raving mad; so I will be charitable, and suppose his diabolical acts were done in a fit of insanity. Though if such deeds only occurred in Wallachia when those in authority were deranged, I fear a lunatic asylum on a large scale was greatly needed!

Mind, these events occurred some years ago, and I hope things have improved since then; indeed, I know they have under the influence of Prince Charles and the good Princess, who would not tolerate such brutalities, nor many other doings of the Wallachs of some years ago.

Neither in situation, nor in any other respect, is Bucharest a pleasant, pretty, or healthy town. Being placed out in the midst of the great flat plains, it is fearfully hot in summer and bitterly cold in winter. A dirty little river runs through the lower part of it, and furnishes a plentiful crop of ague and other fevers, and, at the same time, is an outlet for such drains as there are, while it supplies drinking water for half the people

in the town. All the buildings are made with half-burnt bricks, so rotten and soft that to keep them from crumbling away they have to be covered with plaster and cement, which, owing to a trick it has of coming off in big patches, gives even the very best of the houses a shabby, untidy appearance. There is not, in all the town, a building with any pretensions to architectural beauty, but many of the houses are well arranged internally, and are warm and dry.

I do not think there is to be found in all the town a street that is straight for a hundred yards, and nowhere in any street are there two houses alike, or facing in the same direction. Here one sees a large pretentious house placed sideways to the street, there a wooden drinking-shop jutting out over the footpath, and next to it, perhaps, a church, wretchedly built, standing in an open yard—open, because the wooden railings that once surrounded it have rotted away or been stolen, and the only things that now show it was once an enclosed space are the crumbling brick pillars that had supported the gates. After this may come a shop or peasant's hovel, and then another palace. In the days I write of the streets were paved with water-washed pebbles from the river, as round as cannon-balls, set in the accumulated mud of ages, without any drainage, and most of them loose. I once saw, not fifteen years ago, a horse foundered in a bog-hole at the very door of the house of the then Minister of Public Works!

In summer, not only do you drive and walk through piles of dust, but you breathe it, eat it, and drink it,

and in winter directly you are out of your house, you are plunging, slipping, and staggering in a quagmire composed of liquid filth and the above-mentioned boulders. The consequence is, that no one who has the means of hiring a carriage ever thinks of walking in the streets for a yard, but goes bumping and jolting at a rattling pace over the rough pavement, bespattering not only the foot-passengers, but the houses and shops, even to the top of the ground-floor windows.

The public carriages are little light four-wheeled affairs, with a hood that can be raised or lowered at pleasure, drawn by two horses. Nearly all these conveyances are owned and driven by Cossacks, generally so huge in size that they alone make a good load for the horses. Just outside the town, to the north, there is a feeble attempt at a park and gardens, through which runs a good broad macadamised road, and it is here that on hot summer evenings the fashion and beauty of Bucharest take their airing, do their flirting, and show their fine feathers and artistically prepared faces.

Some of the carriages are most gorgeous, and have been built in Vienna, Paris, or even London, and the entire turn-out, including the really fine horses, must cost a small fortune, and yet a properly turned-out carriage is never seen. The carriage may be all correct, so may the horses, and laying aside English prejudices, the coachman in a livery that is a sort of cross between the dress of the old English parish-beadle and the robes of the Lord Mayor of London, may pass muster, so may

the pretended Montenegrin in his preposterous white petticoats and a belt full of pistols and knives ; but how about the rusty bit ? the coachman's pig whip ? the traces a foot too long, and the collars six inches too small ? But, after all, these are but minor matters, and I suppose the real pleasure is in knowing that the cost of the whole is very large, and that altogether the turn-out is better and more imposing than that of your neighbour.

Besides being the proper place for rank and fashion to take their airing, the *Chaussé*, as the drive and surrounding gardens are called, is the correct place for *affaires d'honneur*, and every now and then a duel takes place there, but it is seldom that any real mischief is done. A hero is manufactured for the fair ones to admire. A little powder is burnt, and now and then, when two very desperate characters have met, one or both may be seen for a few days with a hand in a sling or a crutch under his arm, but I have never yet heard of one returning on a shutter, in the old approved manner.

One of these *affaires d'honneur* took place while we were staying at Bucharest, and the history of it was, I believe, that an officer had fallen head over heels in love with a married lady. He did not know her, had never spoken to her, and despaired of making her acquaintance, as she was a great swell, and he a nobody. In despair the poor fellow went to the opera night after night, and when his charmer was in her box, he would fix his glasses upon her, and throughout the

evening never take them down. After this had gone on for some time the husband got angry, and on meeting the officer as he left the opera he slapped his face. There was the usual hubbub, and at last kind friends arranged that the two fools should have the pleasure of shooting at each other in the gardens next morning—the result being that the officer had the end of his thumb shot off, and became, on the spot, the hero of Bucharest, for at least three days, and was on show walking up and down the gardens each afternoon for an hour with his hand in a sling. I was told that the husband, having had his honour satisfied by about three-quarters of an inch of thumb, then discovered the officer was a good fellow, so invited him to his house, played with him at cards, night after night, and lost to him a sum of money, which might well repay him for his morsel of flesh.

An old Wallachian once told me a good story of a duel that was fought in Moldavia, in years gone by. It appears that one of the old Boyards who lived in those parts got very short of cash, and having put all the screw he could upon his serfs, borrowed of his friends, gambled at cards, &c., to no purpose, he at last summoned to his help a Russian Jew from over the border. Wishing to ingratiate himself with the Jew, he invited him to join him and his retainers at dinner. Now among these retainers were six young swells, the very pink of fashion, whose honour felt injured at having to break bread with a Jew money-lender. They therefore consulted together and ended by sending the

Jew a challenge to fight them all with pistols one after the other. The Jew protested against this, but on being told the gentlemen could never hold up their heads again if they did not vindicate their honour, he gave way, but at the same time said he would much rather lend them a heavy sum on good security than shoot the lot.

The meeting was arranged for the following morning, and then the Jew and No. 1 of the retainers took their stand, the signal to fire was given, and over fell the young swell, shot fair through the middle of the chest. No. 2 rather hesitated to come forward, but being cheered on by his friends, took his stand, and the signal being again given, he fell by the side of his dead companion, shot in exactly the same place.

There was then a great discussion as to whose turn came next, and on the Jew saying, 'Pray come on one of you; it cannot matter which, as I shall kill you all in the same way,' the quarrel waxed so fierce that the rest of the duel was postponed, and has not come off to this day. The best of it was the Jew thought it advisable to get over the frontier as fast as he could, and in his hurry had not the courtesy to say good bye to his entertainer. The result being that the Boyard did not get his loan, so lost his temper and dismissed from his service the four survivors of the duel.

Probably it was fortunate for the Jew that his financial speculation was thus interrupted or he might have been served as was an Englishman I knew while I was living at Bucharest. He one day received a visit from

a high-born and well-known Wallachian, who, in an off-hand manner, stated that he was in want for the moment of 100*l.*, his rents had not come in yet, and two splendid horses were on sale, and he must have them, &c. My friend knowing the great man well, and having the money in his safe, gave it to him, but before doing so took a bill at thirty days for it. Punctual to the day the big man reappeared, and after chatting for a few minutes, said, ‘By-the-bye let us settle that little money affair—you have a bit of paper of mine, I believe, give it me, and I will settle it at once.’ The Englishman unlocked a drawer, took out the bill and handed it over, and then turned to relock the drawer. When he looked round again the Wallachian was craning his neck up and down and swallowing violently, but his labours were soon over, and then picking up his hat he said, ‘Ten thousand thanks; now that little affair is satisfactorily settled,’ and walked off, no doubt to digest at leisure his bill for the 100*l.*

From that day to this my friend has never seen his money, and what is more he had not even the satisfaction of annoying the great man by exposing him, as in less than an hour the Wallach himself had spread the news all over the town as a good joke.

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CHAPTER XXVII.

Bucharest Houses—A Night at Giurgevo—Crossing the Danube—
A Murder.

NEARLY all the best houses in Bucharest stand in large courtyards shut off from the street, with the stables and domestic servants' rooms at one end, and they are generally prettily shaded by monster ball acacias.

Externally the houses are not handsome, but internally they are the nicest I ever lived in, combining all the best points of both Turkish and European houses. Like the Turkish, there is always a large entrance-hall running straight through the house, in which the family live in hot weather; and opening from this are dining-rooms, drawing-rooms, and bed-rooms (most of the houses have all the rooms on one flat), and every room is fitted with a porcelain stove, a thing looking like a small church organ, only in china. I know that few of my readers, except those who have lived abroad and learnt it by experience, will be inclined to believe me when I say that nothing man has yet invented for heating a house comes up to these stoves, when they are as good as they are at Bucharest; but I feel sure that if once they had lived a winter in a house warmed with them they would never, if they

could help it, go back to our open fires. I shall be told an open fire is so cheerful, and so it is, but only because you are shivering with cold; you will not require cheering if you feel warm all over the house and in all parts of the room. Then it is said they are stuffy, but this I deny. A Bucharest drawing-room is no more stuffy than an English one. Certainly there is not the rush of cold air along the floor which is necessary in an English room to induce the smoke to go up the chimney, which, after all, it so often fails to do; but instead there is a nice genial heat everywhere, and one is able to inhabit the whole drawing-room, and not only the hearth-rug as we do in England.

Then a stove is far cheaper than an open fire; it gives less trouble to clean, and may be made to burn either wood or coal, or a happy mixture of both. Englishmen, however, have a rooted prejudice against stoves, chiefly brought about by the stuffy smelling iron things used occasionally; but it is a prejudice we shall, I have no doubt, get over when coals become so dear we are driven to adopt some cheaper method of warming ourselves than by filling an open grate and allowing 85 per cent. of the heat to escape up the chimney without doing any good.

Then another luxury one gets in every house in Bucharest is double windows, and it is marvellous how they contribute to the warmth, and how effectually they keep out draughts. In summer these outside windows are removed, and their places taken by pretty light Venetian blinds; but these I allow are not much

needed in England, as, thanks to the dull, half-shame-faced way the sun shines upon us here, there is rarely any glare.

Our visit to Bucharest was cut short by receiving a telegram from Rustchuck to say the ice was coming down the Danube; and fearing that we might be shut out of Turkey, perhaps for weeks, by the half-congealed floating masses, we started off early one morning with the intention of crossing the same afternoon; but man proposes and Wallach disposes, for on getting to the river nothing we could offer would induce the Wallachian boatmen to venture to take us over, as they feared being caught in among the floating ice after dark on the return trip. There was nothing to be done, therefore, but to make the best of it at the filthy, noisy, smelling hotel by the river side; shut up in a little dirty, draughty bedroom, cold, hungry, and in a temper.

All Wallachia has a peculiar smell of its own, quite distinct from anything to be found elsewhere, and ten times more objectionable than anything to be found in Turkey. There the smells are the usual ones common to all dirty and garlic-consuming people, but in Wallachia is added thereto that of petroleum; for, owing to there being petroleum springs in the country, everyone uses it, everyone spills and wastes it, and go where you will on the loneliest road, or in the grandest of the Bucharest houses, the fumes of petroleum are sure to assail you. I had suffered from it before, but never in my life as on this night; and had it not been for the

swarms of 'busy b—s' that speedily attacked us, and seemed extra lively and healthy, I should have been inclined to think that animal and human life could not have endured it. As it was, we saved the chamberman (it was a man) the trouble of calling us by lying awake all night, and as soon as it was light I went out and tried to hire a boat; but I was told the ice was too strong in the river, and that we must wait till it was frozen hard enough to walk across. I was just giving up in despair when I caught sight of a Greek boatman from Rustchuck, and on asking him what he was doing there, he told me he had come over short-handed from Rustchuck, and had not strength to take his boat back again. After a long discussion, and by offering him about five times his ordinary fare, and promising to help him if he got into difficulties, I at last persuaded him and his man to make the attempt; but part of the bargain was that we should cross over the arm of the river from Giurgevo to the big island, and then walk across that till we came to the river itself above Rustchuck, where we were to embark and take our chance.

S—— was soon dressed, and then, hiring some porters to carry our luggage off we started; but our progress was soon cut short by the horrid little river. It had been hard frozen for days, but on this morning the water had risen and covered the ice to the depth of about a foot. Fortunately there was standing on the river bank an old Turk in high boots, who offered to carry us over on his back; and forgetting, as one is apt to do, that everyone might not understand what we

said, I told him to 'pick up Madame and go ahead.' Now S—— had not understood a word of what was going on, and her face of astonishment and horror was comical when the Turk, going up to her, gave her a twist round and slung her over his shoulders; then, without heeding her remonstrances, plunged into the river and carried her over, her feet kicking out behind in a frantic manner!

During the night snow had fallen, and the ground was covered a foot deep, so that our walk across the island among stunted willows and rough grass was anything but a pleasant or an easy one, especially for a lady; but we had before us the prospect of a comfortable lodging in a friend's house, and we felt that at each step we left further behind us the horrid little room where we had passed twelve hours of misery; so on we hastened as well as we could. On reaching the river I confess I did not wonder at the boatmen's reluctance to venture upon it, for there in the water, looking dark and forbidding in its setting of deep snow, surged and crashed great blocks of ice of all sizes, from a few pounds' weight to several tons: so close were they packed together, it looked impossible to force a boat through them; but the boatmen were hopeful and willing, so, arranging our luggage, we stepped in and shoved off; then, all armed with poles, we pushed our way out, and, after many a narrow squeeze and an hour of hard labour, we managed to hit the Turkish shore some miles below Rustchuck. Willing hands were soon on the spot to help us out, and an hour later we

were eating breakfast in our friend's house, warm and snug.

On our return to Varna we found all the *employés* at the station in great excitement about a murder that had been committed that afternoon by a young Greek, who was employed by us as engine-cleaner.

It appeared that Christo (the delinquent) was what is called 'keeping company' with a young woman. As chance would have it, he was sent by the foreman on this afternoon to buy something, and taking the opportunity to pay his sweetheart a visit, had discovered her flirting with a rival. In a moment he out with his knife, buried it in the man's heart, and then bolted back to the workshops, where he was seen for a little time, but then suddenly disappeared. Just as we came in with the train, a dozen *zaptiehs* arrived to search for the man; so sending S—— on home in a carriage, I started off with them, and together we searched every hole and corner, but to no purpose. Feeling sure, however, that the man was concealed somewhere on the works, the *zaptiehs* kept watch all night, and when the train was just starting the following morning, the murderer suddenly appeared on the platform, walking coolly along. He had not quite reached the train when a *zaptieh* pounced upon him; but Christo calmly said, 'Hullo, now what do you want? do you take me for Christo? Donkey! don't you see these' (taking hold of his moustache)—'had Christo moustaches?' Altogether, he carried matters with so high a hand that the *zaptieh* was puzzled and let him go, just in time to jump into



a carriage and start off by the train. No sooner was he gone than some one told the zaptieh he had let the murderer go, and then for half an hour everyone abused everyone else, after which the head zaptieh galloped off to report it to the Pasha, who wasted another half-hour in saying 'Mashallah,' and then came waddling off to me to ask what should be done.

On my suggesting the use of the telegraph, he sent off a message in Turkish to the zaptiehs at Shumla Road Station to take the man out of the train, and soon received an answer back that he was captured, and taken off to Shumla under a strong guard. For two days everyone felt content at the successful termination of the affair; but at the end of that time it was discovered that the Shumla zaptiehs had taken the wrong man, and on enquiry, I found that the muddle-headed Pasha, having heard the man had something to do with the engines, telegraphed that he was the stoker, and, therefore, the zaptiehs seized that individual, who not only was not the right man but was not even a Rayah, being an Italian. To complicate matters, the zaptiehs, as is their wont, not only took him prisoner, but after chaining his hands and feet, gave him a rubbing down with their gun-barrels over his head and arms. The Italian consul took the matter up, and it ended in some one having to give the victim a bakshish to shut his mouth, and the Pasha and his zaptiehs earned everyone's contempt for the way they bungled the affair.

Christo continued his journey to Rustchuck, where he took the trouble to call on our locomotive superinten-

dent and ask him for leave of absence for a few days, as it was absolutely necessary he should pay a short visit to Bucharest! He afterwards wrote from that safe retreat to one of his friends, and told him that if ever he got into a row with the zaptiehs at Varna, he would find a secure, though rather cold and draughty, hiding-place in the little bell-cover over the engine shops!

Whenever a native in our employment 'got into difficulties,' and the authorities could not catch him themselves, they considered that we were bound to do so for them, and I have often been requested by the Pasha to find and deliver up a delinquent; but always declined to make the attempt, excusing myself by saying, I could not remember ever having been enrolled in the Turkish service as a zaptieh, and until I was I did not choose to act as one. The English consul would then be asked to use his authority to make me find the required man, and he in his turn would get into hot water by refusing to stir in the matter. In revenge the Pasha used to say, 'Very well, if you will not help us to catch people who have broken our law, we will not catch anyone who may rob you;' a threat that lost its force by our knowing that ninety-nine times out of every hundred he was unable to do so whether he wished it or not.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Sultan's Visit—Another important Stranger—Greek Nurses—A
crooked Donkey.

IN casting back my memory, it seems to me that the first year after my married life commenced, everything went on so smoothly that there was little incident, and therefore little that would interest my readers. I shall therefore make a jump forward and take up my narrative of our life and doings at the following August (1867), when we were all greatly stirred up and excited by receiving the news that Abdul Asiz, the Padishah, who was paying his memorable visit to England, would return to his capital over our railway. Fortunately, our former chef was at that time living in Wallachia, and he took upon himself all the necessary arrangements.

A very pretty saloon carriage was prepared for him, triumphal arches were erected at Varna and Rustchuck, the waiting rooms were gorgeously furnished, and for some days previous to the great day we did nothing but run trains up and down the line with the big people who had come up from Constantinople to welcome the Padishah back to his country. Never before had there been such an excitement in these parts, not even, I believe, when the armies of the hated Russians

were swarming all over the land, for the Turks were used to war from their earliest history, whereas this was the first time since the Padishah had given up the custom of leading their hosts to battle, that they had ever visited any of the provinces, and most assuredly the first time anyone of them had travelled by a railway in his own land. 'Bakalim (let us see), what will Allah say to it.'

If the excitement was great, the pleasure was not, at least for us poor railway officials, for not only was our work increased tenfold, but we were racked with anxiety. For fancy if anything went wrong!—if a pointsman should lose his head and make a mistake. Should a rail give way under the increased speed it was thought necessary to travel at, or should some of the thousands who came to see the sight drive their bullocks across the line, and so the great Sultan get killed! To prevent this every precaution was taken. Before the train started from Rustchuck telegrams were received from each station-master to say all sidings had been shut and locked. Everything was cleared off the main line, and to make all safe, mounted guards were placed within sight of each other the whole length of the line to keep off wandering cattle.

All was in perfect readiness early on the morning of the eventful day, and about noon the Sultan, attended by a swarm of local officials and others from Constantinople, arrived at Rustchuck station, and was shown into the large waiting-room, where it had been arranged that he should receive some of the great personages,

Christian and others, who had come to welcome him and wish him a prosperous journey. His behaviour during the ceremony was much criticised. It must be understood that up to this time it had not been considered etiquette in Turkey for the Sultan ever to return any salaams when in public; but he was, on the contrary, supposed to stand like a statue, and receive all as if he were a god; but on this occasion, when the old grey-bearded Greck high-priest came and grovelled before him, he received him with a hurried salaam, and in a moment all over the station might be heard such remarks as—‘The Padishah has become a Giaour; he salaams like other men; it is a pity; he never should have left his country; harm will come of it.’ Not only did he salaam, but he even so far forgot himself as to say a few words to some of the multitude, and then motioning to my brother, he moved off to the saloon carriage.

In the hurry of getting all ready one thing was forgotten till the last moment, and that was a carpet or rug to spread in the carriage in front of the sultan’s divan; on this being discovered at the eleventh hour a telegram was despatched to Bucharest, and a messenger arrived at the last moment with the most hideous production ever seen, or rather *we* all thought it so. It was a bright yellow mat, like a hearthrug, and in the centre of it was a blue Arab, with black eyes and brick-red complexion, perched on the hump of a crimson camel that was represented as going at a fearful pace. There was no time to get another, so down went the

horrid, vulgar affair, and we all felt the appearance of the saloon was as much spoilt as that of a man would be if he went to a ball in an evening suit with a sporting shawl-scarf on. Will it be believed that this rug was the one thing of all we had done in his honour that extracted any notice from the Sultan! No sooner was he in the carriage than he fixed his eyes upon it and said, 'Mashallah! this is beautiful! I must have it. Where is the Director?' and on my brother appearing he said, 'I shall take this lovely rug away with me as a pleasing souvenir of my journey over your line,' and calling up a Pasha he ordered him to roll it up at once and carry it off. Somehow, in the confusion at Varna the wretched rug was left behind, but in a day or two telegram after telegram arrived asking for it, and at last it was sent off, and I daresay is now in a place of honour in one of the Sultan's palaces.

The sultans of Turkey are such very great men that, unlike the poor little potentates of the rest of Europe, they cannot condescend to trouble themselves about the feelings of their subjects; and so it was that on this occasion the train had no sooner started than the Sultan stripped to his under garments, ordered his attendants to pull down the blinds, and then curled himself up on the divan and went to sleep; and though the train stopped at several of the chief stations, he never once showed himself to the thousands of his subjects who had congregated there, hoping that for once in their lives they might feast their eyes on the grandest of living mortals, the king of kings, the ruler of rulers.

No: he slept, or pretended to sleep, the whole way, and only roused up in time to put on his things just before he reached Varna.

At Varna station the waiting-room had been fitted up as at Rustchuck, and a double line of notables, consuls, pashas, priests and governors had been standing for hours drawn up in readiness to receive their sovereign. At the very end of all this line stood your humble servant, just inside the door of the waiting-room. Directly the train stopped and the door of the saloon opened, out waddled the Sultan, his knees well arched outwards and his toes turned inwards, and a look of intense disgust on his face. Without taking the smallest notice of the profound salaams of everybody, he hurried into the waiting-room, and then, turning to me as I was the nearest to him, said in a voice of fury, with his hands spread out and his shoulders hunched up, 'Where, where, where?' I pointed out a carriage and four that was standing at the door, and without waiting for anyone he scuttled into it, shouted out 'Go on, go on,' and away he dashed. Then followed the most ludicrous scene of confusion I ever witnessed. Ali Pasha, the next greatest man in Turkey, jumped into a one-horse carriage, and standing on the seat holding on by the driver, shouted to the horse and urged it on in pursuit. Zaptiehs, eunuchs, and servants blundered into state carriages, while governors and great men climbed into arabas, and a goodly lot of pashas went jogging off on foot, all swearing, all shouting, and not one in fifty knowing where to go.

But never mind, our trouble was over, for the great man was safely off our line and into the hands of his own subjects; so after giving a few orders to set things straight, we hastened home to dinner and rest.

Just as I was leaving the station I espied a rather nice-looking pointer dog drifting about in a 'don't-know-where-I-am' sort of a way, so taking compassion on it I induced it to follow me, and finally had it tied up with my own dogs. Afterwards I took the beast out shooting, but finding it quite useless I was on the point of sending it to Bucharest as a present, when a string of telegrams arrived, stating that it was the Sultan's dog, and that if it could be found and handed over to the Governor, the fortunate finder should receive two liras. So I gave the dog to Popa, and he, on producing it at the Konak, got the reward and was properly delighted.

When the Sultan arrived at the Konak, he sent at once for the Admiral in command of the fleet that had come up to escort him to Constantinople, and asked him what the weather was going to be; but as the old fellow had not been taken into the confidence of the clerk of the weather, and dreaded making a blunder, he hedged, and said, 'If it pleased God it would be fine;' for which wise remark he got snubbed and dismissed, and the Sultan determined to leave well alone and stay where he was till the next morning. So all was unpacked and settled for the night, but after supper had been eaten, and I suspect something stronger than water and coffee drunk, the Sultan mustered up sufficient courage to

face the dangers of the twelve hours' run down the Black Sea, and started off at a moment's notice for the harbour, and in less than half an hour was away out at sea, followed by some dozen steamers of all sorts, all popping off their big guns in answer to salutes from the land batteries.

A few days previous to the arrival of the Sultan, another stranger had put in an appearance, and though she did not make such a general commotion, yet to me and my household the birth of a small daughter was a far greater event than if a dozen sultans had arrived, and I am sure if they had they could not have been more despotic tyrants than this little mite of humanity was to all she came in contact with.

Even in England a birth in a house is far from a pleasant event, at any rate to the male portion of the household, but it is a mere joke to one in Turkey with the thermometer at about 95° in the shade, the doctor 140 miles away, and the only Mrs. Gamp to be had a drunken old Irish woman. Yet the child was not only born but lived, and is now able to read these lines and laugh over the troubles she brought upon her unfortunate parents. All I can now say is, that the instincts of a parent must have been very strong in me or I should have pitched the unfortunate baby out into the street, and the old nurse after it, for my life was made a burden to me for a month, and I was reduced to abject slavery. Day or night it did not matter which, in bed or out, I never escaped for half an hour from that fiend in human shape—sometimes maudlin drunk,

at others reproachful, at others furious; and did I but offer the faintest resistance I was ordered off to search the town for some utterly impossible food that was absolutely necessary for the child, knowing full well that Mrs. Gamp would avail herself of my absence to get drunk, and that on my return I should find her collapsed on the stairs, on my bed, on the dining-room table, or in my favourite arm-chair. Then what tortures I went through about the child! I did not know much about such creatures, but judging from my experience of young puppies and other small beasts, I felt sure it was not the proper thing to carry it doubled up on its stomach across your arm and to thump it on the back; neither did I believe it necessary to give it three or four sorts of food in large quantities during one hour, and then starve it afterwards till it was too weak to howl. I longed to turn the old woman out of the house, but I dare not do so as she was supposed to know her business, and the life of the mother was at stake; so I comforted myself by hiding first in one room, then in another, and picturing to myself the horrors I would like to subject her to when once I was safely out of this infernal wood; but no, there was no rest for me, not even when the old sot was got rid of, for then the baby was very ill, and to save its life I had to spend my time in the Greek and Bulgar quarter hunting up wet nurses, and I shall not easily forget my experiences, nor shall I ever be in Turkey again when a child is born to me, no, not if I have to walk barefooted out of the land.

With the help of some dozen volunteers, I succeeded after a whole day's search in procuring the needful article, but only to find, after she had been in the house some hours, that the child was starving, owing to her lacking the very thing she had been engaged to give ; and so the hunt began again. This time a really good, useful article was found ; but she was, I suppose, so monstrously afraid of losing her reputation in our house that she brought with her an old mother and three loathsome children, who were possessed with appetites that required one continuous meal, and all of them blessed with such an enquiring turn of mind, that they first ransacked the house, appropriating anything that took their fancy, and then when so fatigued they could move about no more, they brought ' the meal ' into the drawing-room, and squatting on the floor stared at me for hours, and kept on stuffing till I expected to see them go pop like the frog in the fable.

For three days I endured this, but then late at night the deputy mother quietly walked into my room, and said she was going home. I asked her why, and she said she found it dull. I explained, that if she left the child would die before morning, and she answered, ' Never mind ; ' but I did mind, and so bribed her to stop through the night by giving her a pound to do so.

After this we had a fresh nurse, on an average, one a day for a week ; and if, as is sometimes believed, a child imbibes the nature of those from whom it derives its nourishment, mine is a curious specimen.

Perseverance and hard cash at last procured a Greek woman, who did pretty well, but she kept us in a constant fright for a week by threatening to leave; but then a bright thought struck us which being at once acted upon, saved us a powerful lot of trouble. I bought a donkey, the most hideous half-starved beast I ever saw, with but one ear and no tail, but with a foal at her side, and, establishing this pair in the yard, I told Helenco, the nurse, that they would take her place if she left, and for the next nine months we had peace, and the child had good food and thrived and prospered.

Don't let my readers imagine that I have enumerated one-half of the troubles we went through, but do let me entreat them never to become a parent in Turkey; if they find themselves likely to become so, let them go home at once, or if this is not possible, let them take strychnine and so escape the most fearful misery that can befall them!

I look back to that crop-eared donkey as quite a bright spot in all this awful time! first, because it awed the nurse into behaving well, and, secondly, it did so enjoy its new life. From the time it was a year old, the poor little beast had been worked by a villanous-looking Armenian boy, fetching wood from the hills. I should think it had never had one satisfactory meal, and was beaten and ill-used till donkey life was almost driven out of it. With us it had nothing to do but eat, eat, eat, and little by little it grew fat and sleek, and so light-hearted it would play and kick by the

half-hour together. As was the mother so was the son, and by the time the baby was safe from the desertion of its human nurse, they had both become quite pictures, and I could have got a good sum for them ; but feeling they had served me well, though easily, I gave them to an old Turk, who worked them fairly and gave them more than enough to eat.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Sultan's Bakshish—Hiring a Tartar House—The Tartars—Tartar Ship-builders.

SOME months after the Sultan had passed over our railroad, I was asked by the governor of Varna to give him the names of those of the *employés* who had had extra work and trouble connected with his journey, as it was willed that they should have a good bakshish. This was soon done, and after another month or so I was asked to send all the men on the list to the Konak to receive the money; and as it illustrates the way Government officials in Turkey deal with public money, I must mention that one man who had 50*l.* to receive was paid in pieces of copper money valuing a fraction over twopence, and that he was cheated through the exchange out of exactly 5*l.*

The worries and anxieties we had gone through, aggravated as they were by the smells and the intense heat of the closely populated part of the town in which we lived, made us anxious to change our quarters, but for some time our enquiries for another house proved ineffectual, and I had begun to despair of getting one, when one day driving through the Tartar quarter, my wife drew my attention to two substantially

built houses standing first in the block of buildings and quite on the outskirts of the town. I asked the old Turk who was driving us if he knew to whom they belonged. He did not know, but offered to find out and let me know in the course of the day—an offer I accepted, and which he so well carried out, that before evening he came up to tell me the houses belonged to two Tartar brothers, but that the man who owned the second house was living at Kustendji as a corn merchant, and further that he believed I might have the house if it suited me; so early the following morning I called on the owner of the first house and accompanied by him looked over No. 2, and was delighted to find it well built and roomy, with many more conveniences about it than was possessed by any other house I had seen in the town.

In two minutes we concocted between us a telegram to the absent owner, asking if he would let the house, and if so, for how much, and within half-an-hour received his answer, ‘Yes, for 50*l.* a year.’ The brother then drew up a rough but concise agreement, and after we had both put our names to it we repaired together to the Government office to get the signature of the governor, for without this no one can let or hire a house in any part of Varna—never for a moment thinking we should have any difficulty. I did not myself go in with the contract, but let the Tartar do so, and after I had waited some time he returned looking furious to say the governor would not allow him to let the house,

because I was a Christian, and the house stood in a Mussulman quarter.

I then called on the governor myself, but was only referred by him to the Turkish high-priest, who told me it was against the law for a Christian to live amongst Turks, and even if he did give way for me, my life with such neighbours would not be safe. I offered to risk this and pressed my case as hard as I could, but it was of no use; and finally, as the old fellow would only chuck his chin in the air and give a click of his tongue for an answer, I also retired in a rage and joined my Tartar friend in the courtyard.

When he heard that I too had failed, he said, ‘Are you willing to trust me? If you are, pay me the rent for one year in advance, move into the house and it will be yours, and if that old idiot there makes a row, go to your consul to protect you. You do your part, and I will do mine, and risk the getting into trouble; but I do not think there will be any, for when once the Turks see you have got the house in spite of them they will leave us alone.’

I followed his advice—paid my rent and at once had the picking-up gang from the station to move us in bag and baggage; and there I remained three years, never once regretting what I had done, and never hearing a word more from the authorities about it.

In negotiating with the Tartar for the house, he only made one stipulation, and that was, that I should never on any occasion, no not even on my greatest feast-day, go out into the streets of the Tartar town

and howl, as was the custom with the Christians. On my assuring him that there were Christians and Christians, and that each had different customs, and that, unlike the Christians of Varna, it was my custom to stay quietly at home in the evening and under no circumstances nor at any time to howl, he looked incredulous, and said, ‘Well, if you wish to ever so much, *don’t.*’

For this one thing alone, I would far rather have given the 50*l.* a year for my new house than have lived rent-free in my old one. Here, as soon as night closed in, all was quiet, whereas in the old quarter, among the Greeks, night was made hideous, sleep broken, and temper lost, through the senseless and imbecile way the people yelled and shouted in the streets.

As the Tartars are new comers into Europe, and very few, if any, English have lived amongst them as I did, I will tell my experiences of them, and I have much pleasure in doing so, for of all the races of Bulgaria I believe them to be, after the Bulgarian himself, far the most industrious, intelligent, and peaceful. Inheriting as they do the nomad instincts of their forefathers, they do not shine as house-constructors, but in all other respects they seem to have quite got over their wandering proclivities and to have taken to commerce and husbandry with a perseverance and industry that ensures success. Coming as they did only eighteen years ago to Turkey, and bringing with them hardly anything but their strong arms, it is extraordinary how they have prospered and how they have changed the

face of Eastern Bulgaria. In the year 1857, when I first rode over the Dobrudja, more than two-thirds of the great plain was virgin grass, whereas now the Tartars have reduced this to less than one-third of the entire area, the rest being under corn cultivation.

On entering the Tartar quarter of any of the large towns, an observant traveller will at once be struck by the absence of the male portion of the population. In contrast to the Turkish quarter, a coffee-house is hardly to be met with, and even when there is one, only old men whose working-days are over will be found sitting there. Again, unlike the Christian quarter, no men will be seen sprawling about on the pavements during the day, or roaming the streets at night; for the very good reason that all are at some sort of labour during the day, and at night are tired with their toil, so are glad to stay at home and rest.

Even in his manner of walking the Tartar is superior to all other Mussulmen: he never lounges or swaggers as the others do, but walks quickly and brightly, and not only does he do so, but he makes his beasts follow his example; so that if you see a bullock-cart or araba coming along in the distance at a brisk pace, you may be pretty sure it is driven by a Tartar, who knows the value of time, a knowledge not acquired by any other Eastern.

In such towns as Varna and Kustendji the native trade is rapidly passing into their hands, and as fast as they can they are acquiring all the shops, driving the old Turks to the wall by their prompt way of attending

to business, and besides the retail shops, they have established many others, such as wheelwrights', carpenters', blacksmiths', &c., and in these they draw away the customers from the old shops by their very superior workmanship.

In the Crimea the German settlers built for the Tartars some strong light waggons, such as may be seen throughout Hungary and Transylvania; these the Tartars brought with them to Bulgaria, and when they wore out they replaced them by others made by themselves so exactly after the pattern of the old ones that the Germans themselves would have been proud of the workmanship. Like their relations the Chinese, they have a great power of imitating anything they see, and are always anxious to get models and try their hands at something new.

Two brothers, both under twenty-five years of age, the sons of one of our neighbours, started to work after their day's work in the blacksmith's shop was over, to fit up a boat in the harbour as a steam-launch, and though from want of tools and want of materials they did not make a very perfect job of it, yet they succeeded in making an engine that worked, and drove a cumbersome boat through the water at a steady rate of three miles an hour, and I have no doubt if these lads had been properly encouraged and helped, they might have turned out the Penns of the East. The father of these lads asked for the loan of my wife's sewing machine, saying, if we could let him have it he would make one like it; and I dare say he would, but unfortu-

nately we were just leaving Turkey, so could not spare it.

In outward manners the Tartars are a quiet and somewhat dull people, seldom laughing or joking, and even the small children play in a sedate business-like manner, with but little laughing and shouting. Like all people with strong characters, when they go to the bad they do so with a vengeance, and I must confess that I have known some arrant blackguards among my friends the Tartars, and more than one robber and murderer, but they are rarer among the Tartars than among either the Turks or Bulgars.

Like the Turks, they are kind to women, children, and animals; and I might hold them up as an example to some of my fellow-countrymen and women by mentioning that during the three years we lived closely surrounded by Tartar neighbours, we never heard any 'nagging' or hasty angry words—not even to the children, who yet appeared obedient and respectful to their parents.

Generally speaking, the Tartar, man or woman, is not a beauty, at all events, not in European eyes, though among the very young girls there are exceptions, and a pretty fresh round-about face may occasionally be seen; their faces are flat and round with high cheek-bones, and their eyes are narrow and long, like those of the Chinese, giving to the face a mean and cunning expression, which I should say from my experience of them quite belies the character of the man. In figure the Tartar is generally short, square, and powerful-looking, with good hands and feet, and a firm upright carriage.

I am sure no Tartar woman ever needs to visit the Truffitt of those parts for a plait to help out her own natural covering, for all have masses of the most beautiful hair. I fancy they are proud of it—at least one was I know. A young married Tartar woman who lived in a cottage just under our windows would often come out into the yard and undo the numberless rats' tails into which her hair was plaited and comb it out for my wife's edification. Not only was it fine and thick, but it was so long it reached down to her ankles, and hung round her like a cloak. It was brown hair, but was washed with henna, which gave it a ruddy chestnut hue.

I believe the Tartar women have no objection to allowing their faces to be seen, and that they use the yashmak chiefly to save offending the prejudices of their weaker Turkish brethren. Anyhow, in the yards commanded by our windows the women would stand and talk with me without the least attempt to hide their beauty; in fact they kept their yashmaks in the house, and only put them on when going out in the streets.

When first we went to live among the Tartars they seemed to avoid us, but at the same time were always civil and obliging when spoken to; but before we had been there long, we had a host of friends, and when at last the day came for our departure, two-thirds of the entire quarter came to see us off, and all insisted on shaking hands, and if half the kind wishes they poured on us were fulfilled, we should be the most fortunate people under the sun.

CHAPTER XXX.

An Intruder—Turk's Opinion of Christians—A fine old Turk—The Line Flooded—Buffalo on the Line—A Turk shot by an Englishman.

WITHIN a hundred yards of our house ran the wall of the town, and in an angle of this was one of the largest batteries, occupied always by a lot of lazy artillerymen. We had been in our house but two days, and were sitting in our pretty little upstairs drawing-room, chatting with the English Consul, when we heard a slow heavy step on the stairs, and the next minute a great loutish soldier swaggered into the room and began staring about him. At first I was too much astonished to speak, but on his advancing towards the divan, I jumped up and asked what he wanted. Without even condescending to look towards me, he said, 'Nothing.' I then asked why he came. 'Oh, just to stare about,' he answered, and the next moment he went toppling down the stairs, and I had a sensation as if my right boot had suddenly grown too short for me. Demetry and Christo, our two men, hearing the noise, ran out of the kitchen, and cheered on by Her Britannic Majesty's Consul (who behaved nobly), they fell upon the unfortunate soldier, and midst kicks and cuffs he was rolled out of the courtyard.

So little can even those who have lived for years

among the Turks follow the workings of their twisted, warped, Oriental minds, that I am yet doubtful whether this lout blundered up into our room knowing that he was doing a rude and cheeky thing, or whether it was crass stupidity that led him to do it ; perhaps a mixture of the two influenced him, with the addition that he held the Giaour in such contempt that it never entered his mind to consider whether he would like him to intrude or not—no more than it enters into the mind of one of us to consult a flock of sheep before we enter the field in which they are ; and I only hope he was as much astonished at the reception he got as we should be if the sheep flew at us and gave us a worrying.

Those Turks who as servants are brought into daily contact with Europeans may learn to like them just as we learn to like an animal, but underlying this there is a feeling of contempt for all who are not Turks, or perhaps rather a conviction of the vast superiority of the Turk over all others. In talking with one once on this subject, I asked him if he could not see that Europeans were more to be admired than Orientals, for their energy and cleverness ? and he answered me thus : ‘ Can you make a watch ? No. Well, then, do you think the man who can, very much your superior ? Well, we can’t do all that you can, but in other respects we are your superiors. In diplomacy you are babies to us, and then one Turk is equal to two of any other nation as a soldier ; so you see we have good reason to feel ourselves your superiors, even leaving out of account the advantage we have in our religion.’

Again, I once asked a Turk, who had worked for me for years, and who I had reason to believe liked me, what chance he thought I had of going to Heaven, and he said, 'If you were a Mussulman I should say you were quite safe, but as it is I do not know. Perhaps Heaven is like some of the big khans that have two sets of apartments, and Allah will give you good Christians a room to yourselves, but who knows! We shall see.' From the way he said all this I could see that the faint hope he held out of a poorish place in Heaven for me was given only to please me, and that in his own mind he would as soon have thought of a dog going there.

In some respects I agree with the first of the two Turks I have just quoted, for while not quite allowing that he beats us at diplomacy (though really I am not quite sure he does not), and utterly denying that he can fight any two Europeans, and further, knowing him to be a savage, yet I have known him do deeds that would do honour to the greatest hero in Europe, and display virtues that any Christian might be proud of. But yet so mixed and jumbled up is his character, that the Turk who will perform a heroic deed one day may the next be guilty of the meanest and lowest action. How often, for instance, has the soldier defended a rampart day after day surrounded by falling comrades, with almost certain death before him, and then, a few weeks later, has run from a mere handful of his enemies and given up position after position like the veriest coward! I know that for a very little any one of the Turks I worked with would turn against me, and that in case of

a fanatical outbreak, there was not one who would think of helping me ; and that the old cavass, who day after day carried my child about and devoted himself to her with untiring patience, would just as likely as not be the man to murder her should the outbreak ever arise. And yet the same man who would do this would fight to the death if led by his master—or if his master were ill with the most fearfully infectious disease, he would devote himself to his service, scorning to give one thought to the danger he was running.

Knowing them as I do, I cannot patiently listen to the Englishman who, having passed a few weeks in Turkey, comes home and talks of the faithful Turk who served him, and who would, he believes, under any circumstances sacrifice his life for his master's pleasure ; or the other, who comes home having discovered the Turk is the finest of heroes, honest, faithful, and really very fond of the Giaour ; or a third, who denounces him as bad throughout, a liar, a cut-throat, in fact a savage on a par with, or rather beneath, the Ashantee in all respects. He is neither the one nor the other. He is indeed a strange anomaly, and I do not believe the European is yet living who can say what he really is, or understand him in the least.

When the great fire broke out in Pera that consumed a quarter of the town, including the British Embassy, and in which 1,100 people lost their lives, a friend of mine, a Pole, who was hurrying from the flames, saw an old Turk standing opposite a house that was just beginning to burn, and heard him say, ‘ There

is a child in that house; if anyone will bring it safe to me I will give him five liras.' As no one responded, he continued, 'I will give ten liras, and if no younger man will make the attempt, I will do so myself.' A young Turk did make the attempt and succeeded in bringing the terrified child in safety to the Turk, who immediately paid the ten liras. The child was a Christian, had been probably deserted by its parents, and it must have perished had it not been for this fine old fellow. There are many Turks that I know who I feel sure would have done the same as this man did, but I should not care to be a child and within reach of any one of them if their blood was up and a massacre going on.

The Turks say that if there is plenty of rain during the month of March, the corn, which is all autumn sown, is sure to do well, and that from then till it is cut it will require no more rain. It is well it is so, for from the month of April till the beginning of October there is often no rain in Bulgaria, or only occasional thunderstorms, which from their severity often do more harm than good. Those who are accustomed only to the mild attempts at a thunderstorm that we have in England can hardly realise how grand and terrible a storm is in the East, or what a flood can pour out of the skies in a few minutes.

I remember on one occasion the passenger train on its way from Rustchuck left Sheitanjik Station in perfectly fine weather, but before it had gone ten miles it was effectually stopped by the floods, and narrowly escaped a dreadful accident. Just above Shumla Road

Station the railway passes for a couple of miles up a rocky gorge, nowhere more than twenty yards wide, with precipitous cliffs on either side. Further on the gorge opens out into several wide valleys, the water of which all drain down it. We had used what had been considered very extra precaution in the construction of this part of the line. The embankments were higher and wider than anywhere else, and when there was any fear of a rush of water, stone pitching had been used, and the iron-girdered bridges all carried high above the winding brook, and the abutments made of extra strength. Fortunately my assistant Mac, who always had all his wits about him, was on the engine, and when the storm broke in all its fury soon after they had left Sheitanjik, he insisted on the engine-driver creeping into the gorge at the most cautious pace. It was well he did so, for after passing safely over two or three bridges, they suddenly saw the entire superstructure swept off one immediately in front of them as easily apparently as if it had been made of straw. There was just room to stop the train, and then, seeing there was no hope of getting on, Mac gave orders to reverse the engine and push the train back to Sheitanjik. Just as they were starting Mac jumped off the engine, and telling the driver not to go faster than a man could walk, he ran back along the line in front of the train. On reaching the first bridge, the one that they had passed over within a few minutes, he found there was not a vestige of it left standing, but instead a deep gulf with sixteen feet of water rushing through with a

force that was quite irresistible. Half-an-hour before there had not been as many inches of water at this spot as now there were feet, and yet the storm, then falling, had not as yet extended over a mile square of country beyond them.

Fortunately the part of the line where the train was shut in was on a solid highland, so there was no fear of the rails being washed away from under it. Mac called together the passengers, pointed out the state of affairs, and as the afternoon was already advanced, he advised them to make up their minds to remain where they were, while he and the guard would struggle on to Shumla Road Station, and send for another train with food and help.

Through pelting rain, and often up to their waists in the turbid flood, the two laboured on, but it was night before they reached the station. Wet through, tired and hungry, but nothing daunted, Mac, after telegraphing to me to bring the necessary train, &c., started alone to battle his way back, but this time he was on horseback, and after many mishaps he reached the train, where he was received with complaints and abuse, and not one word of thanks for his plucky conduct! Abuse, because he could not bring a fresh train back with him, and because the unfortunate passengers were both uncomfortable and hungry. All night long Mac sat huddled up in the guard's van wet and cold, but as soon as it was daylight he set to work repairing the line with the help of some gangs of men that had been sent up the line during the night, but

the bridges he could not touch till he received material from Varna.

In the meantime I had started after dark with the picking-up train, some three hundred workmen, material, &c., but on reaching Pravady Station we began to find proof of how severe the storm had been, for on going into the telegraph office we found the instrument destroyed and the window near which it stood blown to pieces by the electric fluid. Just beyond the station the telegraph poles were shattered to pieces and the wires lying on the ground, and still further on the line began to be blocked up with trees and other *débris* that had been washed on to it. Luckily the storm had not struck this part of the telegraph wires until just after Mac had sent off his message, otherwise we should not have known the trouble the train was in.

We struggled on for some time, but at last, fearing an accident in the pitchy darkness, we were obliged to return to Pravady Station, and we did not renew our attempt till after daylight; which was fortunate, as we found the line in some parts perfectly buried in trees, earth, sand, big stones, and hundreds of loads of corn in the sheaf that had been carried down by the flood; and though we worked hard, it was some hours before we got near the scene of the previous night's accident. I say only *near*, for just half a mile below it we found Mac and his men busily at work repairing a gap through an embankment some twenty feet deep and twenty yards long.

We soon transferred the passengers to the newly-

arrived train, and sent them off to Varna, and then we started to work to repair damages. I tried my utmost to induce Mac to go back with the train, but he utterly refused to do so, and stuck to his work till all was finished, which was not till noon the next day, so that again he had to sleep out in the waggon wet and tired, and with only black bread for supper. Poor old fellow, if I had only known then, as I did afterwards, what a fearful risk he was running, I should have refused to let the repairing work begin until he had left, but he and I had roughed it many a time together, and had always lived to joke and laugh over it, and I never for a moment had any fear for him more than for myself.

On the return journey from this accident we very nearly had a fresh one, and this when, owing to the fatigue we had all gone through, we were scarcely in a fit state to begin again. Mac and I were fast asleep in a break van and, except the driver and stoker, I expect everyone of the three or four hundred men in the waggon were the same, when I was brought quickly to my feet by hearing the dreaded three sharp whistles from the engine which denote danger, and the next moment I was pitched on my head in the corner by the van taking what appeared to me a prodigious jump in the air. I was up again in a moment, and looked out just in time to see the end waggon of the train one after the other heave up and settle down again, and also to see the carcase of a huge buffalo half on and half off the line. As the whistling continued, I looked forward, and there just in front of the engine went another great

black beast at full gallop fair on the top of the rails. After going so for some few yards it seemed to strike it that it might as well give up the race, for it attempted to turn off, but the engine was too close upon it, and giving it a rap behind, I saw the beast dive head foremost into the thick black bog, and sink, and sink, till just as my van passed it, the tip of its tail slowly drew under, and the treacle-like bog looked as if nothing had happened.

We did not know to whom the buffalo belonged, so could not relieve their minds by telling them where their buffalo had strayed to! I only hope they did not trouble to search for it long, but doubtless its total disappearance was put down to the hated Circassians.

The driver told us the two beasts had dragged themselves out of the reeds in front of the engine when it was running fast, so there was not time to pull up. We were not always so fortunate as to escape an accident when running over an animal, and I have now a lively recollection of spending twenty-four hours in this stinking morass screw-jacking a locomotive on to the rails, inhaling fever with every gasp, and feeling half-poisoned by the combined smell of the dead animal and the putrid marsh. As our line made a nice short cut across the marsh from the village of Gebedji to Kara Aghaj, which was some four miles further on, the peasants insisted on using it, not only to walk on but to ride and drive over, and nothing we or the local authorities could say would keep them off. At last when this had become so bad that we dare not run faster than five miles

an hour over the marsh, I stationed an English navvy, named Richarby, at the end of the marsh to warn people off, with orders if they persisted in passing over the line to take them in charge and bring them into Varna. I selected a man who could speak Turkish, and for some days the would-be trespassers obeyed him, and turned back, but at last a Turk swaggered up, and being told he must not pass, he poured forth a string of oaths and declared he would. The Englishman placed himself in front of him, whereat the Turk whipped out a pistol and fired full in his face, but fortunately missed him. He instantly began pulling out the fellow pistol, but before he could fire again the Englishman's gun went off and over fell the Turk. Thinking this extreme measure might lead to trouble, Richarby ran off and came to me to report the affair. I at once went to the governor, who on hearing what I said looked very black, but proposed I should go up the line with a Turkish zaptieh and bring in the man. This I agreed to, and started off at once with an engine, but on getting to the spot the man was not to be found, and there was only a dark stain on the ballast to show where he had fallen. Not only was he gone, but I could not discover what had become of him, and it was not till three or four days had passed by that we heard anything more. Then I was called to the Konak, and to my astonishment found a most perfectly got-up Turkish priest, the picture of innocent respectability, standing in the Pasha's room, exhibiting a wound all along the top of his head, only skin deep, but so severe

that for the remainder of his life there would be no necessity for him to shave there. Richarby had described the man as a dirty, blustering fellow, dressed in the ordinary peasant style, so at first his clean clerical appearance staggered me, but I soon saw the dress and get-up was for effect, and dreaded the trouble it would be sure to give me.

Richarby was, very properly, put upon his trial, but, very improperly, about twenty witnesses were brought to confirm the statement of the Turk, that whilst he was quietly standing by the side of the line, Richarby, without a word, had shot him from a distance of twenty yards. It was no good pointing out that at twenty yards the shot from the gun would have spread, so that the neat little road across his skull could not have been so made; and indeed it was useless saying anything, the Turks one and all were determined to bring it in as an attempt to murder, and they succeeded; for after waiting some days for the decision of the judge, I got notice that Richarby was sentenced to two years' imprisonment, and I was requested to hand him over to the zaptiehs. Now I did not agree with the judge, but firmly believed what Richarby said, and besides, as I have said before, I did not consider it part of my duty to act zaptieh; so instead, I sent Richarby a message, and a train just starting for Rustchuck took him up there, and the same night he was safely over the river, and the following day went to work on the Giurgevo and Bucharest line which was then under construction.

If I had been a Rayah I should have got over this

difficulty in another manner. Either I should have judiciously expended a few pounds in bakshish, or I should have set to work, and for every witness brought against Richarby *hired* two for him, and so squashed the affair under a heap of perjury. I am sure no one in Turkey need ever fear being punished for his misdeeds if he is only rich enough to hire false witnesses. If the vagabonds only had organisation enough to form a sort of insurance society, they might all get off scot-free by using the two all-powerful weapons, bribery and perjury.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Stealing my own Cow—'Barley-water'—Respect for the Dead—
Turkish Doctors—Giving a Seidlitz Powder—Indifference to Pain—
English Visitors—European Friends—The Poles.

EVERY now and then I have myself used bakshish instead of the police. For instance, soon after we had moved into our new house we thought it would be a fine thing to own a cow; so bought one that had just had a calf; and, turning it out of the yard each morning, it wandered off to the town gates, and, joining there all the other cows of the town, was driven up into the hills by the herdsman, where it picked up a good living, costing us only the few piastres each week, which was paid to the man. At night it returned of itself to the house to be milked, or, rather, it should have done so; for after we had had it about a month, the cow one day disappeared. In vain we searched for it, and asked the herdsman about it. No one had seen it; so we at last gave it up as lost, when one night a message was brought me by a small boy that if I would come out into the dark, there was a man who could tell me where my cow was. I did go out, and tried to persuade the man to come into the yard, but this he refused to do. He told me he knew where my

cow was. That it had been stolen, and taken away into the hills; but that if I would promise to pay him one lira, he would steal it back for me! I gave the required promise, and within a week the cow appeared alone at the door; and after it had become quite dark, I was sent for to pay my thief, who was standing out in the street waiting for his bakshish. I paid the money, and the next morning had the cow sold, so that if it were to be stolen again, I should not be the loser. This was my first and last attempt to keep a cow; and I cannot say I found the speculation a paying one.

Bakshish in another form answered well for us whilst we were constructing the viaduct at Sheitanjik, as by its help we carried all before us with the civil governor of Shumla; but in this instance it took a liquid shape, and went down the old fellow's throat when he paid us a visit, which he did regularly once a week, in the form of whiskey. But we did not call it whiskey—no: whiskey is alcohol, and no good Turk will drink that—so we called it by its proper name, 'barley-water,' and so saved his conscience. There were two sorts of barley-water—whiskey and Bass's pale ale; so after making the old fellow very jovial on the first, we would put some half-dozen bottles of the latter under the seat of his carriage when he was leaving, and the result was, we were very great friends. A few pounds expended in bakshish often saved the company some hundreds.

At the village of Kajelidere, directly where we

wanted to carry the line, there was a monster graveyard, and the line would have to pass straight through it on a bank some ten feet high. There was no possibility of diverting it, as, owing to the formation of the land, we should have had to make a bank some 200 feet high on one side, or go into a deep rock-cutting on the other. We applied to the authorities; but were told if there was one thing good Osmanlis respected more than another, it was the sanctity of the graves of their dead. This brought us to a deadlock, till R. A. B., who generally knew how to get round a Turk, sent for the head man of the village, and offered to let the piece of line to him to make, saying that if he and his villagers agreed to make it where we wanted, he should have twenty pounds for himself beyond the contract price. There was no more said about the sanctity of the dead; and all who travel over the line go dashing over the bones of generations of the villagers without thinking there is any desecration in it.

Nowhere in any part of Europe is the art of medicine so little understood as in Turkey; and from what I have seen of the Turkish 'Hèkim,' I should say it would be far better for a man, when suffering from illness or wounds, to be left to the care of Dame Nature than fall into the hands of these gentlemen; and for myself, I would far rather be treated by the veriest old village goody in England than by the best Turkish doctor or surgeon. Fortunately there are very few Turkish doctors even in the towns; and as for the villages, such a thing as a doctor is never seen in them,

and is spoken of much as magicians are by us. A few charms are all that stand between the sick man and death, and therefore the simplest ailments that might easily be cured by a shilling's worth of drugs often prove fatal.

There is no doubt, however, that the natives of Turkey all appreciate the services of a doctor, as shown by the numbers that flocked to consult our very able medical man, and also by the peasants invariably asking a European traveller if he has any medicine. Sulphate of quinine, or 'sulphat' alone, as it is generally called by them, is well known by hearsay, and the poor fever-stricken wretches believe, if they can but get a dose of it, they will be made well for the rest of their lives. Like all uneducated people, they like their medicine strong and nasty. The stronger and nastier the better; and a free use of the most powerful pills, given in double or treble doses, would make anyone's reputation as a doctor. I remember once gaining such a reputation in a ridiculous and most undeserved manner. I was staying in a very poor Turk's house, little better than a shed, when, just before I left, the Turk asked me if I had any medicine with me, as he did not feel very well. He could not describe what his ailments felt like, nor in what part of his body they were located; and, as he looked the picture of health, I at first refused to give him the only medicine I had with me—namely, a few seidlitz powders; but the old fellow begged so hard for just a little, that at last I gave way; but then a difficulty arose. There was

but one drinking-vessel—an old tin cup—in all the house ; and I had, therefore, first to give the man the soda and then the acid ! He smacked his lips well over the first, but no sooner was the second down his throat than he looked fairly scared, and kept writhing about, and making awful ugly faces ; and well he might, for I expect he felt as if he had swallowed a locomotive blowing off steam ! After the suffocating sensation had gone off, which it did in a few minutes, he poured upon me profuse thanks, and kept saying, ‘ Ah, Tchellaby, you are a big Hèkim, and your medicine is lovely. I felt it in a minute, and it was so powerful I thought I was going to die. Oh, you are a great man, and may God reward you.’

By the Turkish law, however badly a man’s limbs are smashed and broken, and however necessary it may be to amputate one, the doctor is forbidden to do so without first receiving the permission of the sufferer ; such permission is rarely given, and the result is a one-legged or one-armed man in Turkey is very rare, because the man whose life might have been saved by sacrificing a limb has died ; yet the Turk can stand pain as few others can, and I have seen one laugh at the thoughts of taking chloroform before undergoing an operation, saying, ‘ I am not a child, to cry out because I am hurt.’

One can hardly believe that Turks feel pain like other people, and I do not believe they do, for otherwise they could not behave as I have often seen them when badly hurt. I once knew a Turk who was stem-

ming a hole charged with gunpowder when it exploded under his face, and a stone was thrown up which struck him and completely put out one eye, yet within an hour the man again appeared ready for work, and was only prevented from going on by being assured he would receive his pay whether he worked or not.

On another occasion, we sent a large sum of money up to Sheitanjik to pay the workmen, and, for its protection against robbers, we got the Governor of Varna to send a Bin Bashi (colonel) up in the araba and some dozen soldiers riding by the side. I suppose the Bin Bashi found time hang heavy on his hands, for he took to playing with his pistol, and finished by letting it off by accident, and blowing off one of his thumbs; yet when he arrived at R. A. B.'s house he came in and chatted with him, and R. A. B. only discovered what had happened when the Turk tried to drink a cup of coffee. He laughed when condoled with, and said, 'Ah! that is nothing to a soldier.' Now, I do not believe there is an European who could have behaved in this manner, and I know that if there is, I am not that man!

After our railroad was opened for traffic we did not feel so shut out from the world; for twice a week, when the post-train came in, we could see at the station a number of Europeans, and nearly always some few Englishmen, and not unfrequently these would break their journey at Varna, and stay a night or two with us; and no one who has not been for years cut off from

intercourse with his fellow-countrymen can understand how much we enjoyed these visits.

Besides the ordinary traveller who was merely passing by on his way elsewhere, there were others, such as Mr. Elwes, Mr. Buckley, &c., who came out to Bulgaria for a special purpose, such as shooting, bird-collecting, botany, or geology, and we often had pleasant expeditions with them during the day, and long chats about the old country in the evening, that is, when the bird-collector could spare time from his everlasting skinning, or the geologist tear himself away from his precious stones! Among the latter was a Mr. Arthur Lennox, who visited us several times; and not only was he a really scientific man, but one of the cleverest, brightest companions I ever knew, a favourite with everyone, and one of those fortunate people who seemed ever happy and contented, even were his bedroom a Bulgar hut and his food a piece of black bread.

Then, besides these, there was the man who, travelling all over the world, was for ever missing a train or a boat, or being detained because he had lost all his luggage! But whether they stayed for business or pleasure, all were welcome, and their visits seemed a link between us and the outer world.

Besides these outsiders, we were fortunate in having a capital set of fellows on the railway staff, some living at Rustchuck and some at Varna, and so far as men went we were well off for society—I say *men*, for nearly all were bachelors, and the only lady we could claim as a friend, within a hundred miles, was Madame Ostoya,

who being married to a Polish gentleman who had a berth on the railway, lived at Varna. Her pleasant little drawing-room was open to all comers, and she would make time pass quickly and merrily by her bright, amusing conversation, and stories of a more than usually eventful life spent in various parts of Europe, and embracing many a stirring scene during the Polish revolution, in which her husband had taken a leading part.

If there are any people who should have a good word for the Turkish Government, it is the Poles; for when foiled in their attempts to cast off the Russian yoke, and driven from their home by the dread of Siberia, they found a place of refuge in the land of the Turk, and, if they had any good in them, employment and a means of living. On the other hand, the Turks benefited greatly by their coming, for among them were clever, scientific men, like M. Ostoya, who often ably filled most responsible government appointments; and it may be safely said, that out of all that the Turks have done in the way of public works, the Poles have superintended and carried out one-half, and that the only half that is good for anything or that has produced any lasting benefit to the country.

Unfortunately, among the Turks there is such a feeling of jealousy against the employment of foreigners, that but few of these Polish gentlemen have ever obtained military service, and even those few have always been kept in subordinate positions. The fact is, not only are the Turks jealous of foreigners, but they cannot

stand their awful energy—an energy that if it were allowed its way would double the hours of drill, and actually want to make the army ready to fight when there is no fighting going on! And then no Turk can suppose for a moment that anyone knows so much about the art of killing as he does himself, or that European tactics can be better than the old Turkish ones.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Fires—A Visit from Mussulman Ladies—A Visit from Turkish Men—
A Shell fired in '28—Ancient Works—A Genoese Stronghold.

THERE is one thing which keeps one on the alert when living in a Turkish town, and which, sooner or later, is pretty sure to cause one a few hours of intense excitement, and this is the fear of fire. In Varna, moreover, this dread was considerably enhanced by the fact that in the very centre of the town stood a monster magazine, full to the roof with barrels of gunpowder—a quantity so large, that if it did go off, the whole town would accompany it; and, even placed far away in the extreme corner of the ramparts as our house was, we could not have expected to escape scot-free.

As it happened, Varna was wonderfully free from fires all the while we lived there, none of any great consequence occurring; but to make up for this, the very heart of Rustchuck was consumed under my eyes in the space of a few hours, and, though I had often been told how rapidly flames could travel, and how quickly these wretched houses—composed almost entirely of inflammable material—would disappear before it, yet the reality seemed to me most astonishing. It really ap-

peared as if the houses must have been saturated with turpentine and otherwise prepared, for the flames darted from house to house and enveloped everything in a few seconds, making truly ridiculous the efforts of three or four big squirts, carried on men's shoulders, to put it out. The more effectual plan of isolating the fire by pulling down buildings in front of it also proved useless on this occasion, for the high wind carried showers of sparks and burning thatch over the gap, and the fire went on as merrily as ever, and never stopped till it had run through the long street and consumed all that came in its way. The only things left standing were a few stone chimneys, and in the middle of the town a minaret, looking very much like a tallow candle that had spluttered out in the draught, and this had such a dangerous cast over the street, that it was thought necessary to pull it down. For hours the governor-general and his big wigs sat in chairs in the street, propounding impossible plans for its destruction, when at last one of our engineers settled the difficulty by toppling it over with a charge of powder.

In the middle of a bitterly cold night, when it was snowing heavily, we were aroused by a messenger from M. Ostoya, bringing a note to say that the street in which he lived was on fire, and the flames coming his way, and that probably he would have to quit his house with bag and baggage before long; but he did not intend to run till the notice to quit became very pressing.

I hurried on my clothes, and, after plunging through the deep snow-drifts, arrived at his house, where I found

Monsieur and Madame just sitting down to some excellent café au lait, and joking merrily over what was likely to befall them, as if they were used to being burnt out of house and home once a week. All their goods, down to Madame's canary-cage, were packed and corded, and the last look round had been gone over three or four times; the only thing they wanted was men to remove the heavy packages, and these I soon provided, for on going into the crowd round the fire, I found the foreman of our 'picking-up gang,' who quickly collected his men and posted them in readiness at the Ostoyas' door.

The fire crept on and on; but, fortunately, there were one or two stone houses in its path which delayed it a little; and then, just as it had gutted these, and had before it a nice gallop through some wooden buildings, round went the wind and swept the flames away over an open space between the town and the fortifications, and M. and Madame Ostoya quietly set to work to unpack again.

Three different times our house caught fire, but, fortunately, it was each time discovered in its infancy and promptly smothered; but we had such scares therefrom that we were ever after nervous, and have not quite got over the feeling now, in spite of living in a stone house with all insured.

We but just missed seeing the great Pera fire, in May 1870, when acres of houses were reduced to ashes, and 1,100 people, so it was said, burnt to death. We had been spending a week in Constantinople, but left

the day previous to that on which the fire broke out, and so missed what must have been a very grand sight, though a very terrible one.

We heard fearful accounts of it from friends who were on the spot—how unfortunate men, escaping on horseback down streets that were burning in their rear, found the flames carried forwards hundreds of yards in front of them, cutting off their retreat, and, being thus shut in by burning buildings, they were in a few minutes suffocated by the inky-black smoke. After the fire had burnt out, seven men were found in an iron tank literally boiled. They had doubtless jumped in to escape the flames, and then perished probably from suffocation. Many lost their lives whilst plundering, tempted into danger by the abandoned property. The strangest thing was that here and there, in the midst of the burnt district, single houses stood, without having received any apparent injury. This, of course, was either put down to the fact that the owner was a saint, or else that he had sold himself to the devil, who had excused him suffering in this world from the flames, of which he was to have so large a share in the next!

When the fire had worked its will, fever and a host of other maladies stepped in and claimed many victims, and for months a miserable crowd of sufferers were living behind charred walls in roofless dwellings, undergoing the most terrible hardships. No one pitied them very much, for fire and its consequences were part of the daily life of the place, and all felt *they* might expect to have their turn of it, sooner or later.

The government took advantage of the fire, and passed a law forbidding any but stone houses to be built in the place of the old wooden ones, and new broad streets were planned and talked of; but, like the fire, it began with smoke and ended in smoke, and little by little wooden houses crept up again, and will no doubt in turn be again burnt down, together with some few hundred human beings; but ‘Allah does it, so never mind.’

A few pages back I said that the only lady with whom we were on visiting terms was Madame Ostoya, but I should not have forgotten a few Turkish and Tartar fair ones, who occasionally paid us visits, which were duly returned by my wife; but as I was never allowed to be present on these occasions, I shall insert an extract from a letter, in which my wife gives a more exact description of our visitors than I should be able to do.

‘This morning a large party of Tartars (seven in all) have been to call on me. The grown-up ones shook hands *à la Franca*, but the three children knelt on one knee, kissed my hand, and then put it to their foreheads. They all came bundled up in yashmaks and long ferrajis (cloaks), but took them and their slippers off when they came in. They were dressed in every colour of the rainbow. The chief lady of the party had on loose pink cotton trowsers, then a yellow and white striped petticoat with a shorter one over it of purple satin open down the front, showing a red and black apron; the body was also purple satin, trimmed with gold braid, and sleeves em-

broidered with gold and beads. It was made like a Swiss bodice, and the open part was filled up with a stomacher of large gold coins the size of 5s. pieces. An embroidered handkerchief on her head was fastened with a brooch. The children wore little Greek caps covered with gold coins, and also necklaces of the same, and they all had enormous wide belts of leather with gold clasps. They spent the whole morning here, and you cannot think how ridiculously inquisitive they were. They examined everything in the whole house, opened every box and drawer, and searched into every nook and corner, even to the larders and store room! The Tartars sent us word they were coming this morning, and requested all men might be out of the way; so I sent the grooms out, and told Fideli to keep in the kitchen, and Harriet, instead, to bring up the sweetmeats, coffee, &c. But their curiosity was so great, that having inspected all the house, they would trudge across the yard to look into the kitchen; so out bolted Fideli, and the nearest place of refuge being the cow-house, he shut himself in there. Having peeped into all the saucepans and cupboards in the kitchen and servants' sitting room, and shuddered and spit at the sight of a ham, the next place that attracted their notice was the identical cow-house where Fideli was hidden! so away he fled again, this time to his own bedroom. They peered into the stables and harness-house, and then finding there was yet a place they had not investigated, they once more surprised poor Fideli in his retreat. This time he quite gave up and did

not attempt to run away, but exclaimed in a piteous voice, "*Oh, Madame, où puis-je aller?*" I suspect it was the *husbands* sent the message this morning, for in spite of not having their *yashmaks* on, the good ladies seemed quite content to see and be seen by the nice-looking moustachoed *Fideli*.'

As these visitations did not take place very often, my wife thought them rather amusing, and I daresay I might have found them so too had I dared to be present; but as it was, I thought it rather a bore to be turned out of house and home for an indefinite time, with the knowledge that one's house was being *ransacked*; but I would any day rather air myself for a few hours on a hill outside the town, whilst these ladies were inspecting my domain, then go through the infliction of receiving a visit from their husbands! Every now and then, generally when something I could not do was wanted of me, the Governor, or some other great man, would send word he proposed calling on me, and soon after would drive up in his carriage (his house was some five hundred yards distant), escorted by a dozen mounted *zaptiehs*, his Greek interpreter, and a few pipe-bearers. Fortunately we had a Turkish *divan* in our drawing-room, so the old fellow would waddle in and, having left his outer-shoes at the door, would squat himself cross-legged on it, taking no notice of me. Then after he had got over his gasping and grunting, produced by the exertion of walking upstairs, I would from my corner of the *divan* make my *salaams*, and say a lot of 'pretty-pretties,' to which he would

respond in like terms, and for the next hour or two we sat like two fools, making speeches to each other, and carefully avoiding the one subject that we wanted, or rather that the Turk wanted, to talk about. At last out it would come, and I had to get over the difficulty of refusing as well as I could, without making an enemy, and then after a few more salaams away waddled my visitor, leaving me weary and tired, but very thankful my troubles were over.

There are exceptions to all rules, and now and again a Turk would call on me and have a talk over his country and the habits of his people that was really interesting; but these would be men with whom I was intimate, and that were not merely paying a visit of ceremony.

I remember one of these men telling me of a curious occurrence that had just taken place in the yard of the Konak. An old wall was being pulled down, to make room for another building, when, embedded in the middle of it, was found a big shell, which was taken out in the yard and examined by a staring crowd of men and children. Having seen all that was to be seen on the *outside* of it, a man began prodding at the fuse-hole with an iron spike, to see what was *inside* it, when, bang! off went the shell, killing the man and wounding several others.

Now, from what I could make out, this shell could only have got into the wall when the Russians were besieging Varna in 1828, for though a Russian man-of-war did put a few shells into the town during the Crimean War, none of them fell anywhere near this quarter.

I tell this, for I think, in adding up the casualties of the war of '28, this man's death will never get entered except through these pages. One of the wounded in this accident was a little girl ten years old, who will carry the scar she then got to her grave; so, should she live till she is eighty years old, she will then be able to point to it and say, 'I got this scar from a shell fired at Varna by the Russians in '28;' and doubtless she will get the reputation of being the oldest person ever heard of, and might make a fortune by interviewing the curious.

I told this story to Palgrave, the celebrated traveller, who was paying us a visit, and I fancy he sent it home to some paper or periodical; but as I have not seen it in print, I venture to give it here again.

Some of my readers may be interested in knowing that, during the construction of the railroad, no sort of coins, statues, or curiosities of an ancient date were found, and nowhere near the line do I know of any Roman camp or other sign of the old invaders. This is the more curious, as barrows, I believe Roman ones, are thickly strewn all over the Dobrudja, and at Kustendji, besides Trajan's Wall, the foundations of buildings and fortifications were discovered, to say nothing of hundreds of other curiosities, showing it must have been a considerable Roman town.

On the headlands on either side of Varna Bay, there is what appears to have been an old barrow, and there are also a few barrows dotted about amongst the hills to the west of Varna, and some fifteen miles along the

coast, towards Kustendji, there is an old camp formed like those on Trajan's Wall, and evidently placed so as to command a deep and wide valley that runs inland just between the plains of the Dobrudja and the forests that extend to Varna.

Nowhere *inland* between the Black Sea and the Danube on the one hand, and the foot of the Balkans and Trajan's Wall on the other, is there anywhere, that I know of, the remains of a Roman camp, or any sort of stone building or foundation of such building; and yet, as I have said before, barrows are always in sight, often two, three, or four, placed close together, or, as at the rear of Kustendji, in some places a dozen, all within half a mile of each other.

At Cape Kalagria, some two miles from the Bulgar village of Kavarna, and about thirty to the east of Varna, there are the remains of, what I believe was, an old Genoese stronghold, which I once had the opportunity of thoroughly examining. The point stretches out some three hundred yards into the sea, and is shaped like a man's hand and wrist. The wrist (which is very narrow in proportion to the hand, being only about ten yards wide, whereas the hand in the thickest part may be forty) connects the point to the main land. The point is about two hundred feet above the sea, and the sides are everywhere so precipitous that nowhere could they be scaled. Across the wrist there are the remains of a deep ditch, protected, on the sea side by a massive stone wall, with an arched gateway in the middle, not more than three feet wide. This is all now in ruins,

and only part of the arch is left. On passing through the gateway there appears no sign of the point ever having been inhabited, but, on walking along the top, several round, well-like shafts will be seen descending into the solid limestone rock, and on taking a path that leads along the face of the precipice to some twenty feet below the top, three or four monster caverns will be found, evidently made by man, with great labour. Besides these, in the middle of the 'hand' there is a deep well, now dry, but evidently still of great depth, which, I suppose, went down below the sea level.

From the way the land gradually slopes out on each side towards the 'wrist,' men placed behind the wall would, even in these days, be perfectly covered, and, in the days of the Genoese, the fort must have been a very hard nut to crack, either from the sea or from the land, and would not now be a pleasant place to assault if held by a few determined men.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

An anxious Winter—Turkish Fever—Sandals—Pottery—Official Position—A Village Governor.

DURING the winter of 1867-68, we had a most anxious time, owing to the failing health of my old companion, Mac, and not only did we, his most intimate friends, feel it, but every European in those parts shared our anxiety, for everybody liked him, and for years he had been the life of our small community, the friend of all, rich and poor; and even the natives too, both Turks and Christians, had learnt to like and respect him, and, during the time he was ill, the enquiries after him were incessant, and, if good wishes could have helped, or any human power availed, poor Mac would soon have got well; but it was not to be.

Through all the summer of 1867 Mac had been poorly, and though he laughed at the anxious way our doctor questioned him, he got no better, and, at last, what had at first appeared only a slight, though persistent, cough, settled on his lungs, and we all began to realise how seriously ill he was. By our doctor's advice he determined to spend the winter in Turkey, as it was thought the excessively dry air there would be better

for him than a change to the damp climate of England ; and so it was arranged that once more he should share my house with me, and early in the autumn he gave up his bachelor quarters at Rustchuck, and the rest of his days in Turkey, and nearly all in this world, were spent with us. Poor fellow ! it was miserable to see him, failing day by day, getting weaker and weaker, and the terrible cough worse and worse. Yet he was always cheerful and bright, always with a smile for everyone, and ready for a joke, if we could only summon up heart enough to make one ; always brave and contented, and the only anxiety he ever evinced was to save trouble and to ease our minds, and therefore he would constantly chat about plans and schemes for the future, when we were all to meet in England and have a holiday together after our rough life in the East ; and yet I think he knew there was no hope, and only talked thus to reassure us.

At last the sad winter passed, and then, longing to be once more with his friends and relations at home, Mac left us, and in bidding us good-bye did so for ever in this world, for he only lived a fortnight after he reached England ; but, thank God, I believe he did not suffer much. Another Mac now calls my house his home, and my sincere wish is he may grow up such another man as he after whom he was named.

Some few of the English workmen had died before this, but I am thankful to say poor Mac was the only one we lost out of our small circle of friends in the East. We all constantly suffered from ague, and some had, in

consequence, to give up their work and go home, but when there they gradually got rid of it, and though possibly some may have their lives shortened by the fearful shaking the wretched fever gave them, yet they are now apparently quite well. This shows the fevers of Turkey are not to be feared like those of many other parts of the world, and that there is nothing in them that need deter Europeans from getting on very well in Bulgaria if they are reasonably careful, and have good constitutions.

To be *reasonably* careful the European should, in my opinion, eschew strong drinks entirely. Few can stand them long even in what is called moderation, and all are injured by them. I take it this will stand good in all warm climates, if it does not everywhere.

Then snipe-shooting on marshes that extend over thousands of acres cannot be reasonable—the biggest bag ever made will not repay a reasonable man for a ‘fit of the shakes.’ Night air should be avoided, or if it has to be encountered, it should be after a good meal, and not whilst suffering from great fatigue.

Freshly turned up lands apparently produce as much fever as marshes, and for this reason there is less fever in the large towns than in the country villages, but even in them the European will not escape, for the fever finds him out everywhere, even on the high hills of the Balkan.

On the other hand, there are not many other complaints to be feared, at all events out of the large towns. In them (doubtless owing to their disgusting filthiness)

now and then cholera, small-pox, or typhoid fever breaks out, but in the villages all these are very rare. Then consumption is hardly known. I can only remember two natives dying from it, and they were men from the milder climate, south of the Balkans. This, I suppose, is partly owing to the dryness of the air, but I cannot help thinking it is also partly owing to the way all the natives accustom themselves to bear the coldest winds and frosts with their chests and throats utterly unprotected. Little, delicate, fair-skinned Turkish children may be seen playing in the courtyards with their chests open down to their waists, and the men will face the keenest cold with nothing on but the tangled mat of hair that nature covers the chest with when an artificial covering does not take its place.

Even the women in the villages go about with their necks and chests bare, or at most only covered by a thin muslin bodice, and yet they wrap all the rest of their bodies in sheep-skins and furs.

I have no doubt that the plan adopted by all natives, Christian and Turkish, of wrapping yards of scarf round their waists, and so keeping that sensitive part warm and comfortable, is an excellent plan, and I would recommend all travellers in Turkey, whether in summer or winter, to follow it. I believe they would find it far better than wrapping up their *heads* à la Turca, as so many are fond of doing! I must say that, to my mind, of all senseless head-coverings man ever invented there is none so bad as the red Turkish fez. Neither in cold or heat does it protect the head, and it subjects

the eyes to the full glare of the sun. Then the cloth it is made of irritates the forehead, and the useless long tassel tickles the cheeks and neck. I don't think even the natives of Turkey would long stick to it, if that wise paternal government did not make them. Years ago the Turkish Government took to manufacturing the fez and, forbidding all private individuals to compete against them, they put up the price a hundred per cent. Naturally the people gave up buying them; but the government were not thus to be done; they taxed everyone that wore anything else, and so caught their customers one way or the other.

It is a marvel to me that the Turkish Government has never adopted the same plan with the other end of its subjects, and made them pay for their boots; but I suppose they think it would induce the entire population to go barefoot, or else they know that no shoes or boots they could make would do to walk about in. As it is, the peasantry dispense with boots at home, or slop about in stout slippers, well down at the heels, and with no stockings under them. When away from home, or on a journey, they first wrap the feet up in flannel rags, and then lash over all a piece of sun-tanned cow-skin, which, being previously well soaked in water, takes the shape of the foot as it dries and shrinks.

In dry weather these sandals are excellent, keeping the feet warm and giving a good foot-hold, and saving them from thorns and stones and other injuries; but in wet weather they are miserable things, for then they become soft and slippery, and soon wear, or rather melt,

from the feet, and the unfortunate wearer slips and slides about in the mud in a pitiable fashion. Once when on a shooting excursion, I was induced by my man Popa to try these sandals, and during the first part of the day I thought them the finest invention man ever conceived for covering the feet; but in the afternoon rain came on, and I soon changed my mind, and before I got home I had determined never to adopt anything Turkish again—no, not if I had to go stark naked! For days after my feet ached and smarted from the strains they had received from trying to keep my hold on the muddy ground, and from the blisters that the saturated and displaced flannels had produced.

The natives of Turkey would never take to our navy boots, for several reasons. First of all, the Turks would never take the trouble to lace them up; then, on entering a Turkish house, the boots, or outer foot-covering, must be left at the door; and thirdly, in the villages, the floors of the houses are all composed of dried mud, and thick boots would soon reduce the clean, smooth floor to the state of a ploughed field; and my readers will realise how this would be if they picture to themselves their room turned upside-down and themselves walking on the ceiling. In fact, most Turkish rooms—at all events, those of the better class—are turned topsy-turvy; for, whereas the floor will be made of plaster, the ceiling will often be planked. But this is in conformity with the strict rule of the Turks—always to do everything they can in the reverse way to Europeans. For instance, we take our hats off on entering a house;

they, their shoes. We sit up to table; they sit down on the ground. We get up into our bed; they get down into theirs. We begin to build a house from the foundation; they, from the roof. At dinner, we eat sweets after meat; they, before. We read and write from left to right of the paper; they, from right to left; and so on without end.

I think the Turks' plan of building a house from the roof is, perhaps, a better plan than ours. Even if the house is to be entirely of stone, the Turk erects scaffolding inside where the walls are intended to rise, and on this he places the permanent roof, and then runs up the walls to it; and thus gets all built in the dry, and avoids the wretched damp condition that new houses are in with us.

I have spoken of the way the Turk builds his house, but I should have said the way he gets it built; for the Turk never builds anything but the poorest and roughest village houses for himself. All the house-building is done by the Greeks, or else by the Albanians, who flock all over Turkey during the summer months as masons and carpenters. A Turkish carpenter, wheelwright, or mason is hardly known, and the only skilled labour they will ever be found doing is making a little rough earthenware pottery, or boring out pipe-sticks with a fiddle-stick.

At Rustchuck and some few of the towns in the neighbourhood, the Turks make of red clay (the same the pipes are made of) a rather effective sort of pottery. After having turned and carved the clay whilst it is

still damp, they insert small pieces of silver, beaten out very thin into different patterns, and then all is baked till the clay becomes jet black and shows the bright silver ornamentation in strong relief. But the things are so frail and brittle, that they are only fit for ornaments or very careful use. Some that I sent home to friends in England were so much admired that I was constantly being asked to procure more, so that, first and last, I spent a small fortune at the Rustchuck potteries.

When the Turk wishes to please, there is no one his equal in good manners, and high, low, rich and poor can, and often do, deport themselves in a manner that would be considered courtly anywhere, and might be copied with advantage by some of us in the West. What a difference there is between the way any ordinary village Turk makes his salaam and the stiff, awkward salutations one meets with at home! Just think of the constrained, self-conscious way in which most men make a bow. Then there is the jerky nod, sometimes downwards, sometimes upwards; and the thousand different ways of shaking hands! Also compare the pretty flowery speech, spoken as if the speaker was thinking of what he was saying, with our 'How d'ye do,' or, more often, half-inaudible grunt! No: if in nothing else, I think the Turk outshines us in this.

As the Turk can behave well when he wishes, so also can he behave badly—no one worse; and yet he even behaves badly like a gentleman. He does not shout and scream in his rages, but manages to throw

into every look and gesture the very concentrated essence of contempt, and the few oaths he makes use of are to the point, and, unlike ours, are never blasphemous, but simply grossly insulting.

Then all are alike in manners—the peasant and the Pasha, the soldier and his general, the judge and the hangman; and doubtless to this is owing the easy way in which the pipe-bearer of to-day is a Pasha to-morrow, and the soldier stacks his musket to pick up the mareschal's baton. There is no hereditary rank in Turkey, but all rise because they are rich, or are cunning, or are useful to some great man, or are successful rogues. It must not be supposed that any poor Turk can rise to a distinguished position through *real merit*. He may be as virtuous as Saint Paul, and as clever as a Bismarck, and yet, if he is not a tuft-hunter or worse, he will remain in the outer darkness of Government life. I say Government life, for all the distinguished men belong to it. There is no such thing as a Turk who is distinguished for anything else — for book-learning, science, or any kind of skill. Were I the father of a Turkish boy, and hoped to see him rise to distinction, I should tell him first to learn lying in its highest branches, then tuft-hunting, then vicious intriguing, and when he had mastered these, a little reading and writing; but these two last would only be as ornaments to the former, and not absolutely necessary.

The life of every Government official, from the Grand Vizier to the zaptieh, is one long grind at

intrigue. Either he is in office or out of it. If the latter, he intrigues to get in, and when in he intrigues to keep there, and to rise higher ; and the consequence is, his entire life is a series of ups and downs ; but if he has only money, the ups will preponderate, and if he has the power and pluck to spend it like water, he may hope to rise to the top of the tree in either the civil or military service, and this quite irrespective of any real ability to fulfil his duties decently.

In all countries it must be very charming to be a great man, and receive the respect due to one's position ; but this can nowhere be so thoroughly enjoyed as in Stamboul. There everyone perfectly adores (at all events in appearance) the man who holds a higher position than his worshipper ; and when the big man is a powerful Pasha, in some such post as a governor-general or commander-in-chief, he rises above humanity, and becomes a sort of earthly god. While his power lasts he can do anything ; and what is bad in ordinary men is a divine virtue in him. But oh, should he but get intrigued out of office, how great is his fall ! Say a provincial governor, whose every look has been studied by all beneath him in the hope to satisfy some small unexpressed wish, should suddenly receive a telegram to recall him, the very clerk who delivers it will show by his manner before the telegram is opened that the game is up, and in half-an-hour stories will be told in every *café* to prove what a poor little candle the extinguished light has been, and those with good eyesight will have caught glimpses of the really powerful light

on its way to take its place, though the name of it is as yet unknown. Neglect and contempt will surround the retiring Pasha, to reach a climax as he is received with a stare by the new man, and is shoved out of the way to make room for his old adorers to worship at the new shrine.

The most proficient of tuft-hunters is the Armenian, and after him—but some long way after him—the Jew. It therefore happens that wherever a big man is, there are congregated a swarm of Armenians, filling subordinate offices for next to no salary, and even this pittance only paid months after it is due; but, thanks to the influence they are known to have with the Pasha, they, one and all, make a very good living, and always look well clad, well fed, sleek and prosperous.

The Bulgar, from having been treated from the first day he fell under the Turkish rule as a veritable savage, little better than a pig, and far beneath a horse, has inherited such a dread of his masters, that he rarely puts in an appearance at the Konak as an official; but as he has the knack of acquiring riches, he often is able to 'square' the Pasha through some oily Armenian, who extracts a toll from the bakshish on its way up higher.

Once, when visiting the large annual fair at Hadji Oglu Bazarjik, I was received as a guest by the leading Bulgar of the place, who was a great sheep farmer; and on my telling him I was going to visit the governor of the town, he volunteered to accompany me,

for, he said, in my presence and with a word from me, he hoped he might accomplish an object he had some time had in view—namely, to rent from the Government a large tract of pasturage at a moderate figure. On reaching the governor's house about 11 A.M., we were told that the Bey Effendi had not yet risen, but that if we would wait in the verandah for a few minutes he should be called at once. We had not long to wait before we were ushered into a room, where we found the most unpleasant-looking young man, sitting up, partially dressed, on his bed, surrounded by dirty tumbled bedding, and in an atmosphere that was quite stifling.

The young gentleman was most condescending, however, shook hands *à la Franca*, ordered coffee and cigarettes, and evidently did his best to be agreeable; and I am sure we ought to have felt grateful for all the trouble he was taking, for not only had we roused him up, but, as he assured us, he was suffering from a severe headache, produced by having been drunk overnight on raki, a Christian practice which, it seemed, he indulged in nightly! After chatting for an hour or so, and after he had scared me dreadfully by saying he looked upon me as a brother, and that he would shortly pay me a visit at Varna, and make a night of it, the Bulgar at last broached the subject of the pasturage, and to my astonishment the Turk at once said, 'Yes; you shall have it for the money you offer because you are a great friend, so great a friend that I feel sure you would do me a favour, and lend me

20 liras. If you will give me the money, I will at once write you a paper making over the land.'

In a moment the Bulgar was gone, soon to return with the money, which the young man pocketed, and then in exchange handed over the coveted paper. Later on the old Bulgar assured me he had done a splendid morning's work, for if the land had been let to the highest bidder, as it should have been, he would have had to pay, in excess of what he had offered, three or four times the amount he had given as a bribe. I am happy to say the threat of visiting me was never carried out; I suspect, from what I saw, the Effendi was never sober enough to leave home, or perhaps he was prematurely carried off by the deadly poison he was constantly imbibing.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Escape from Prison—Turkish Gaols—Shooting a Murderer—Executions—The Bastinado—Turkish Honesty—A Turk in Difficulties—Good-bye to Turkey.

DURING the first autumn we were in our new house, we were all thrown into considerable excitement by hearing in the middle of the night the incessant hurrying past of people, some on foot, some on horseback, all talking so eagerly, and bustling about so fast that, at first, I made up my mind we were in for a fire; but on visiting the windows on each side of the house, and discerning no flames, I was puzzled to make out what could be the matter, but as no one troubled us, I troubled no one till the morning, and then I heard that during the night some twenty prisoners, undergoing various terms of imprisonment, had made a large hole through the wall of the gaol and decamped, some with and some without chains on. One would have thought that the former would easily have been retaken; but as it turned out, all effected their escape, and so relieved the governor of the trouble of feeding and guarding them.

As soon as I had finished my breakfast I paid a visit to the governor, whom I found looking very dejected,

partly, no doubt, from having been up all night, and partly from fear of the row that might be expected; and it was amusing to trace from his oft-repeated declaration that the worst class of prisoners were still locked up in another gaol, and that those who had escaped were only petty larceny lads, the line of argument he intended using to excuse himself.

With the Pasha's permission I paid a visit to the gaol that was burst open, and I was only astonished that anyone should have been unenterprising enough to stop in it for a single night, especially as it was the most disgustingly filthy place I ever saw for a human being to live in. It was a room some thirty yards long by eight wide, very low, very dark, very damp, with no ventilation and no beds or bedding; a few rush mats on the ground and a few heaps of dirty straw; an open cesspool in one corner, and a stench everywhere. The walls were only eighteen inches thick, built of rubble-stone set in decayed mortar, which could easily be picked out by the fingers; and yet some of the men who escaped that night had been shut up there for years.

I made an attempt then and several times afterwards to visit the gaol where murderers and other big criminals were confined; but, unfortunately, I expressed my feeling of disgust at anyone being shut up in such a pigstye before the officials; and I suspect they put the Pasha up to refusing my request, lest I should criticise unfavourably this place also. Anyhow, I did not get permission, and had to take the Pasha's word

for it that it was very strong, and that there was no fear of a lot of desperate ruffians getting out amongst us.

When my little girl could just toddle about, she was one day sent for a walk with her English nurse on the open space between the town and the fortifications, and whilst playing on the sheltered side of an old earth ramp, they suddenly heard a gun fired close by. They ran to the top, and were just in time to see a man, with chains on his hands, running from three zaptiehs, who were pointing muskets at him. The next moment one of the zaptiehs fired, and the man fell writhing on the ground, and the third stepped up and blew his brains out.

The nurse hurried home to tell us what she had seen, as well as the child, who was fortunately too young to take in all the horrors of it.

I at once ran down to the Konak, and calling on the Pasha's interpreter, asked for an explanation. He answered me with a laugh, 'Oh! it is all proper; the man was a Tartar, who committed a brutal murder a year ago and was condemned to death. Some busy-body (looking askance at me) wrote the other day and told the Minister at Constantinople that he was not yet executed, and this morning we had an order to kill him at once, and so we shot him.'

Just three ordinary policemen had taken him out chained, turned him loose in the open, and then took running shots at him till they had brought him to the ground, and after they had killed him they dug a hole

and buried him where he fell ! No one seemed to think there was anything strange in the manner of this execution, and when I expressed my astonishment they only said, ‘ Ah ! but he was a murderer ; what matters it how he died ? ’ The fact is life is so little regarded in Turkey, and is so often taken, that it is not worth criticising the means used, especially if it is by the hand of the law the man dies.

The general way of executing a prisoner in Turkey is to hang him in the quarter of the town where his co-religionists live, and then to leave him hanging for days as a caution to all beholders. I don’t think anyone ever takes the warning to himself, or that anyone is deeply impressed by the spectacle. Business goes on ten minutes after the man is dead as if nothing out of the way had taken place, and even the small children pay little attention to the strange object dangling from a balcony or bough of a tree, and I have certainly seen more excitement shown over a dead dog in an English village than the natives of Bulgaria have shown over a hanged murderer.

I never saw a man hanged myself, for the reason that I would rather at any time undergo a month’s imprisonment, but over and over again I have seen the unfortunate wretches hanging after they were dead.

When Midhat Pasha took to stamping out the first little feeble Bulgarian revolution, and, by the wholesale manner he hung all suspected people, sowed broadcast the seeds of future trouble, it was impossible to enter Rustchuck for weeks without seeing men slung up on the

cross-bar at the gates. Generally there were two hanging together, and to keep them from swaying about in the wind they had a cord from one of their feet, pulling them sideways to the upright posts, and in this position they were left till the bar was wanted for a fresh batch.

The fine old Turkish punishment, the bastinado, was stopped by law some ten or fifteen years ago, I believe through the remonstrances of Lord Stratford; but custom is here stronger than law, and small local governors keep the stick going as merrily as ever, with the old result—cripples and even death. I myself have been asked whether I would have a man bastinadoed or imprisoned, and three or four men were bastinadoed to my knowledge while I was in Turkey.

It used to be an old custom to nail a shopman to his door-post with a spike through his ear when discovered with false weights, but this I have never known done; I suppose because if it were, no one would be inside any shop to serve the customers, all having false weights, especially among the Armenians, Jews, and Greeks. The Turks are better, and as shop-keepers, are not, I believe, dishonest as a rule; in fact, the lower orders of the Turks are more to be trusted than any of their neighbours, and in their own peculiar way have a great deal of honesty about them.

An amusing illustration of the superior honesty of the Turk over the Wallachian was told me by a friend of mine. He was coming down the river from Vienna on board a post boat. Having run short of tobacco, he placed himself on the saloon deck, where stood a throng

of Wallachians, and as soon as the boat stopped at Widdin, he called to an old Turk, who chanced to be standing on the shore, and throwing him about five shillings, asked him to hurry up into the town, and buy some tobacco. No sooner had the Turk trotted off on his errand than the Wallachians began laughing and jeering at my friend. 'Ah, Monsieur, you who are such a great traveller to do such a thing! to throw away five shillings to that canaille; for do you really expect to see that man again? Well, we shall see; if you do you are fortunate, and the man a fool; for why should he not keep the money? it is against human nature that he should not,' &c. Their gibing was redoubled when first one rope was cast off and then another, and the boat slowly swung round to the current, for it really seemed as if my friend were to be done; but just as the paddles made their first revolution, the Turk dashed through the crowd and flung a big packet of tobacco on board, grinning and looking very pleased with himself. My friend threw him a small bakshish, and then turning to the Wallachs said, 'Now who was right? It is just because I am a traveller that I trusted that old Turk. I know them well and felt quite safe; but let me tell you I also know the people on that other bank of the river, and should not be fool enough to trust any living man there as I did the old Turk.'

In most countries such a very outspoken opinion would have been resented, but the only remark it produced was, 'Well, you have reason—what you say is

very true.' And here again the difference may be seen between the two people the great river divides. No Turk will listen to a word spoken against his country, whereas the Wallach is never tired of pointing out all his own defects; certainly he insinuates that all *might* be perfect, if so-and-so were done, or, to sum up all, if he, the individual, had the making of the laws.

I remember the same friend telling me another incident that occurred to him, and as it relates to the people of whom I am writing, I will repeat it here. Some years ago G. was travelling, as he was constantly in the habit of doing, from Italy into Switzerland *viâ* the Simplon Pass, when on stopping at the hotel at Brigg, the landlord came to him to say that, knowing that he was a good linguist, he hoped he would help him with a traveller who had arrived ill at his hotel some few days before, adding, 'No one can make out what he is, and no one can understand a word he says.'

G. was then shown by the landlord into a room where he found, curled up in his bed, a woe-begone-looking old Turk, who, only seeing in my friend another tormentor, turned wearily away, but when G. spoke to him in Turkish a powerful change took place in his appearance. He sat up, looked bright, and began pouring forth such a volley of words it was almost impossible to follow him; but at last G. learnt that the man was a veritable Turk, and that he was going on to Switzerland to buy cows for his master, Sultan Abdul Azis, that is to say, if Allah would allow him to live

long enough. He could not speak a word of any language but his own, and the last person he had seen who could understand him was at Trieste. He then went on to say that he had been taken ill on the Pass, and was forced to stop at the hotel, and that since he arrived there he had been starving, for, he said, with a look of intense horror, ‘These beasts have again and again given me pig to eat, and, as you know, I cannot eat that, nor dare I eat any other cooked food, for doubtless the same utensils are used to cook all in—ugh!’

On calling the landlord in and explaining who the man was, and that Turks did not eat pork, G. was assured none had ever been given him, all the meat used in the house being either veal or mutton. Now the Turks never eat veal, and therefore the old fellow had mistaken it, from its white appearance, for pork. He was delighted at discovering this, and in a few minutes was making up for lost time by handing calf cutlets down his throat in a long continuous procession. Before G. left, he wrote out a *menu* of every meal the Turk was to have, settled his bill in advance, explained the money of the country, and helped him in many other ways; and when he left, the old Turk stood at the door, and, besides heaping blessings on him, kept shouting out, ‘Allah sent you—Allah sent you.’

Some time after, G. found himself at Trieste; and, on making enquiries, heard that not only had the Turk returned, *viâ* that place, safe and well, but that he had with him a herd of Swiss cows. So, in some unac-

countable way, he had succeeded in fulfilling his master's orders; and I think it speaks volumes for both him and his master. For him, in that he surmounted his great difficulties, and for his master, for being such an ignoramus as to give him such an amount of labour. It would be about as sensible for our Queen to send a village bumpkin to Constantinople to buy crown jewels, as for the Sultan to have sent this man to Europe to buy cows!

Ever since the year 1857, when, as a lad, I had arrived in Turkey, I had constantly suffered from fever, and most of the time from rheumatism also. Once before, the two had driven me from Turkey for a while, and now again they were so bad that life began to be a burden; and so, most reluctantly, I determined to resign my appointment, and return home to see if native air and rest would not in time rid me of my two great enemies. And I was further induced to do this, as both my wife and small child continually had the ague, and were getting thoroughly out of health.

We had always looked forward with pleasure to the day when we should quit the East for good; but when that day arrived, we found it anything but a happy one, and it was with heavy hearts that at last we bid good-bye to the place where, on the whole, we had spent a very pleasant time. Lightened, as it was, by the kind wishes expressed by our numerous friends and old companions, our last day in Turkey was yet a sad one; and it was not till we were well on our way to another and an older home that our spirits revived;

and even then we were glad to comfort ourselves with the hope that at some future day we should once more return to the old familiar scenes.

Since then many strange changes and fearful misfortunes have befallen that land ; but, in spite of all, I cling to the hope that there is a happy future to arise in Bulgaria, and that I may be able to revisit it before I am quite forgotten by the different people I lived amongst, many of whom I look on as friends, and in all of whom I take a lively interest.

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