

WAR IN BULGARIA:

A

NARRATIVE OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCES.

BY

LIEUT.-GENERAL VALENTINE BAKER PACHA,

IMPERIAL OTTOMAN ARMY;

AUTHOR OF "CLOUDS IN THE EAST," ETC., ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

WITH PLANS AND MAPS.

London :

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON,

CROWN BUILDINGS, 188, FLEET STREET.

1879.

[All rights reserved.]

110:07/1140

+

PREFACE.

THE following pages do not attempt to record a history of the Turko-Russian war.

Such a work, to be accurate, must be the result of years of careful study. The collection of the necessary data will demand immense trouble and research; and it is improbable that such careful details as characterize the German Staff account of the Franco-Prussian campaign will ever be forthcoming.

My object has been simply to portray those scenes of the war with which I was personally connected, and for the accuracy of which I can absolutely vouch.

Written during the few leisure hours which could be snatched whilst busily engaged in superintending and preparing for the defence of Constantinople, these volumes have been compiled under considerable difficulties.

Few opportunities have been given to me of correcting from Russian sources the numbers and constitution of the armies which were on so many occasions opposed to us.

To the student of war this may prove an advantage. He will see the forces of the enemy not perhaps actually as they were, but as we at the time thought that they were. It is too usual, in reading the history of a campaign, when time has elapsed, and the numbers, movements, and positions on either side are accurately known, to forget that the generals opposed to each other had not the advantages possessed by the reader.

I have dwelt much upon the minor tactics of the respective actions, for to the young officer these minor tactics form a useful study.

The large map of the Line of the Lom, which accompanies the first volume, will be found to be very unequal in its details. The reason is obvious. It is a correction of an enlarged Austrian Staff map, which—though, perhaps, the best extant—is often very inaccurate. The corrections naturally only extend to the parts of the country which were visited.

Many of the roads shown were made by the

respective armies, but in numerous instances where no roads are shown on the Austrian map, paths will be found connecting village with village.

Some confusion may arise from the difference in the spelling of names of places which are often referred to on the map. The fact is that the Austrian map does not spell these names according to the Turkish pronunciation.

Time has been wanting to me in order to make the necessary changes, but I have preferred to lay these hastily-written pages before the public, with all their crudity, whilst the great events of the recent struggle are fresh in every mind.

The difficulties which have attended the publication must plead as my excuse for any errors of this nature.

INTRODUCTION.

For some few years prior to 1876, a dark cloud seemed to hang over the European situation.

Trade languished, and even the flourishing revenue of Great Britain lost its accustomed elasticity.

Able European diplomatists searched in vain around the political horizon: the quarter from which the threatening storm would burst was veiled in mystery.

In England especially, there was a growing want of confidence in the future. An attempt had been made to educate the people to a policy of selfish isolation, and, for a time, the experiment appeared to be successful. But the manhood of the country had, at last, become convinced that the destinies of a great Empire could not be shaped on purely huckstering principles, and the

nation had boldly rebelled against the obnoxious doctrine and changed the Government which advocated it.

Still, darker and darker, danger seemed to loom.

Since the Franco-German struggle of 1870-71, all eyes had been turned towards those two countries as the probable next disturbers of general tranquillity. The gigantic and highly-organized military power of the latter hung like an incubus over Europe. What would she do with it?

Would Germany pursue a policy of moderation, or was she meditating some fresh *coup*, which might again change the map of Europe? Ominous rumours of a contemplated occupation of Holland were very generally accepted and believed.

And then the alliance of the three Emperors—was it a substance or a shadow?

There were wise men from the East, who saw the still, small cloud in a different direction. They boldly declared that the long-impending Eastern Question was drawing to a climax.

At the Treaty of Paris, England had taken

upon herself grave responsibilities towards Turkey. As the consequence of the war of 1854-55, English influence was supreme at Constantinople; but the selfish foreign policy mania had since enwrapped our relations with the East, and British responsibilities were everywhere ignored.

We had, it is true, taught the "Sick Man" that all his ailments could be cured by swallowing unlimited doses of foreign gold, without regard to their subsequent effect upon his constitution. But, as the pleasant and soothing draughts became more and more difficult to obtain, he had gradually turned towards his old enemy as a new and friendly adviser.

Of what importance was this to England—a country that had resolved to have no interests beyond her own existing boundaries?

But British Eastern specialists openly declared that the new adviser, under the guise of friendship, was quickly hastening the dissolution of his patient.

It was boldly averred that Russia, by means of secret agents, was sapping all the foundations upon which Turkish empire still rested. It was

said that an organized system had been established by which insurrection could be excited in any part of the Ottoman dominions, whenever the proper hour to suit Russian interests should arrive. Turkey had long been living in an almost chronic state of civil war, and the elements of discord were rife.

At length the period for Russian action seemed to have been reached. Bosnia and Herzegovina were in a state of open revolt, and already the press teemed with accounts of Turkish cruelty and injustice towards those provinces.

A general indictment was framed against Turkish maladministration.

Russia thrust herself forward as the champion of the oppressed, and the question became European.

Then followed the Andrassy note and the Berlin Memorandum.

England showed herself cautious in reversing the policy which in the past it had cost her so much blood and treasure to maintain, and held aloof from the latter.

Did she already see how hollow were the

Russian professions of a wish to restore good government to the Ottoman Empire?

This British defection upset the Russian plans. Bolder measures were requisite, but the match had been duly laid.

Servia, virtually independent, and having no cause of quarrel with Turkey—never having even paid the small tribute which was annually due—suddenly declared war. Montenegro joined in the general league, and in Bulgaria an insurrection, which has since been directly traced to Russian agency, burst out, accompanied by horrors which baffle description, perpetrated by the so-called Christians upon the Mahomedan villagers.

By Russian advice, Bulgaria had previously been denuded of regular troops. Irregular levies were hastily raised by the Turkish local authorities, and a civil-religious struggle desolated that fair province. The retaliation of the Mahomedans was terribly unjust and extreme.

Still, something more was wanting to thoroughly discredit Turkey in the eyes of Europe, and, at Russian instigation, she repudiated the interest on her debt.

The Sultan had become a mere tool of Muscovite designs ; but now the nation rose against their sovereign, and Abdul Aziz was dethroned and died.

It had appeared certain that the whole fabric of the Ottoman Empire was so rotten that these successive blows must lead to its dissolution. But when roused to energy the "Sick Man" began to show unexpected vitality. Whatever may have been the faults of Abdul Aziz, he had laid the foundations of a considerable and fairly effective army and navy.

Instead of Servia, as the tool of Russia, marching forward towards Constantinople, aided, as was believed, by a general rising of the population, she soon found herself struggling hopelessly to defend her own boundaries.

Her case was growing critical ; and then Russia partially threw off the mask. With a political treachery which has never been equalled in history, she poured in officers, soldiers, and money, to the aid of her secret ally, whilst she still openly maintained her amicable relations with the Porte. But all was in vain. The Ser-

vian troops were driven gradually back, until their very capital appeared in danger.

In the meantime, Russia had concentrated a large army on the Roumanian frontier, ready for prompt action, should her more hidden plots continue to fail.

She now boldly intervened with an ultimatum, in order to save her discomfited accomplice. Europe weakly joined in the undeserved rescue, and Serbia escaped from the consequences of her perfidy, and resumed her ancient boundaries.

The relations between Turkey and Russia had become so strained that nothing but European intervention could prevent hostilities. Roumania also had evidently been tampered with, and was lending herself as an instrument of Russian designs.

And then the Conference of the Great Powers met at Constantinople.

But in England, some time before, a powerful and noisy section had successfully blinded the nation to its own interests, in an unreasoning and unjust crusade against the Turks. The terrible atrocities which had been committed during the

Bulgarian struggle had been seized upon, by party agitators, for political purposes.

The hands of the Government were hampered and tied by the widespread morbid sentimentality which had been foisted upon the country with such a complete but demoralizing effect.

It was just a time when England, acting boldly and unanimously, might have easily stilled the threatening storm, and averted war. She might have checked Russian ambition, and forced and watched over the necessary reforms in Turkish administration. But in the then spirit of the country she could do neither the one nor the other.

What oceans of innocent blood now weigh upon the heads of those who so led the public mind astray !

The decision of the Conference bore hardly upon Turkey, though she would have been wise to have accepted it. But the Porte looked upon its proposals as mere pretexts for fresh Russian aggression, and, with a brave spirit which we may deplore but cannot fail to admire, determined to resist its dictum.

The Ottoman Government did not carefully

weigh the many dangers that beset Turkey on every side.

Russia had imbued all the surrounding countries with the idea that the breaking up of the Turkish Empire was a political certainty, and that each might hope for some share of the spoil in the inevitable partition which must ensue.

In Europe, Roumania would evidently side with Russia, Montenegro was ready to recommence the war, and Servia could not be trusted. Greece was agitating in Thessaly and Epirus, and held exaggerated ideas of benefiting herself by the general disruption. In Asia, Persia was assuming a threatening attitude.

Yet Turkey boldly, and, as it then seemed, madly, threw down the glove to Russia, and prepared for a desperate contest with her many foes.

But it was not with external enemies only that the Ottoman Empire had to contend.

Midhat Pacha, a Turkish statesman who had shown great administrative capacity as governor of several provinces, had been the leading spirit in the new school of Turkish reformers. He had now succeeded to the position of Grand Vizier, and he met the remonstrances of the Great Powers

by inducing the Sultan to issue a general Constitution for the whole Empire, outbidding in its liberality the proposals of the Conference.

Europe disbelieved in the sincerity of this measure, and refused to accept it as sufficient.

Had England then only guaranteed its execution, how much difficulty might have been spared to the world! But the country was not in the mood for the acceptance of such a responsibility.

Although the new Constitution had been adopted by all the Turkish Ministers, it was secretly opposed by many, and Midhat soon fell. Internal dissensions were rife.

At this critical juncture of Ottoman history, Redif Pacha held the position of Minister of War.

He was a man of a low order of intellect, but bold and unscrupulous. His first measures for meeting the coming struggle with Russia and her numerous allies, were stamped with incapacity. Instead of selecting for the chief commands in the Turkish army the generals who were known to be most competent, he made his appointments subservient to personal or political prejudices.

Abdul Kerim, an old man incapable of mounting a horse, was appointed to the supreme command

on the Danube. Ahmed Eyoub, a general little remarkable for the activity of his operations during the Servian campaign, was made second in command.

During the Servian war, Redif Pacha had so completely broken up the system of army organization which had been established by Abdul Aziz that all the military departments were in utter confusion.

This was the state of affairs when, in April, 1877, war between Turkey and Russia was openly declared.

A considerable Turkish force had been concentrated in the Danube Provinces, and, unwarned by previous experience, it was fondly hoped that the celebrated river would prove an impassable obstacle.

In Asia also a fairly strong army had been collected in front of Erzeroum, and placed under the command of Mukhtar Pacha.

The general military opinion throughout Europe had decided that it was impossible for the Turks to resist the gigantic league which had been formed against them. Opinions varied relative to the efficiency of the Russian army, but

it was decided that by mere weight of numbers it must prevail. Military specialists even calculated the time by days that it would take the Russian troops to reach Constantinople.

And, at the commencement of the struggle, it seemed as if their prophecies would be realized.

Serious operations first commenced on the Asiatic frontier. Batoum resisted a Russian attack, but Ardahan soon fell; Kars was invested, and the Russians seemed to be marching almost unopposed to the very gates of Erzeroum.

But in Europe some hitch seemed to have occurred. The great Russian army assembled around Kischeneff had been for months preparing for the coming strain. Yet, when it received orders to act, the vast machine appeared to be out of order, and would not move with the expected facility. Week after week passed away, and, beyond concentrating in Roumania, it made no sign.

But in June this inactivity suddenly disappeared, and soon evil tidings reached Constantinople. The Russian army had passed the Danube at Schistowa, at first not in great force.

Ahmed Eyoub, with a vastly superior Turkish

army, remained supinely looking on near Biela; and directly small parties of Russians advanced, he fell back with his whole command.

Abdul Kerim was supposed to have a "plan," but it was soon evident that it consisted in drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes at Shumla.

Without any serious fighting, the Turks were pressed back to Rasgrad. Communication between that place and Rustchuk was cut. On the other hand, Osman Pacha, on hearing of the passage of the Danube, had pushed on from the neighbourhood of Widin to Plevna.

But still more alarming news soon arrived. Gourko had passed the Balkans, and was in full march on Adrianople.

Then there was a strong expression of feeling at Constantinople. Abdul Kerim was replaced by Mehemet Ali Pacha; and Redif, the powerful War Minister who had already done so much mischief, was disgraced.

And now a turn came in the Russian tide of success. The change was heralded by a great victory by Mukhtar in Asia. Then battle succeeded battle, and soon the whole Caucasian

Muscovite army was retreating demoralized to the Russian frontier.

In Europe, the timely arrival of Suleiman's force from Montenegro had checked the advance of Gourko, but the Russians had been allowed to fall back unmolested to the north of the Balkans.

Early in April the Grand Vizier, Edhem Pacha, had suddenly proposed to me to go at once to Shumla, in order to act as a sort of Staff military adviser to Abdul Kerim. I had been previously employed in organizing the new Turkish Gendarmerie, and held the rank of Major-general in the Ottoman army, but the influence of Redif Pacha, and his known hostility to foreigners, had eventually enabled him to cancel the Grand Vizier's idea.

A few days later, and I was laid up at Therapia, by a severe attack of typhoid fever, which, for three months, utterly incapacitated me from taking part in any active operations.

Early in August a telegram arrived from Mehemet Ali Pacha, at Shumla, requesting my immediate presence at the head-quarters of the Army of the Danube; and asking that I might

be accompanied by a small staff of the English Gendarmerie officers.

I had long been pining under the forced inactivity of life at Constantinople, and no time was lost in preparations for departure.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

Start for Varna—Sali Pacha—War Uniforms—Prince Hassan—Devna Lake—Shumla—Mehemet Ali Pacha—Raouf Pacha—The Tent of Aziz—Projected reconnaissance—Foreign military attachés—Turkish volunteers—Russian prisoners—Eski Djumaa—Suffering refugees—Cossack and Bulgarian cruelty—A Turkish camp—Sanguine hopes—Move to the front—The deserted village—A scene of war—The Russian camp—General alarm—An outpost skirmish—Around the camp fire—Mehemet Ali's plans—Defection of Suleiman—Intrigues at Constantinople—Superiority of Russians in cavalry and artillery—A plan of campaign—My English staff	1
--	---

CHAPTER II.

A Turkish division—False position—Distant guns—A Russian attack—Critical moments—The wounded Pole—A fatal shell—Russian repulse—Mehemet the aide-de-camp—Harmless artillery fire—A night attack—The Turkish cheer—The lost position—Anxious hours—Gallant Mustapha—A bold stroke—Russian panic—The Tepé retaken—In the heart of the	
---	--

	PAGE
enemy's position—No supports—Ali Riza—Reinforcements arrive—Thirst conquers fear—Russians retire—Disorderly retreat—A parting shell . . .	20

CHAPTER III.

Improved <i>morale</i> —After the battle—Turkish and Russian graves—Numbers on the dead—Barbarous Bashi-Bazouks—Indignant soldiers—Roads and fortifications—Egyptian troops—A commanding hill—Fired at by outposts—A Council of War—The plan of attack—Suleiman's losses—Amateurs—Mr. Ashbury—Major Molloy—A ruse on correspondents—View of a battle-field—Disobedience of orders—Hours of suspense—Attack on Karahassankeui—Commencement of the battle—Russian guns retire—Dispersion of force—The fatal sword—General depression—Heavy fire—My horse killed—Russian counter-attack—Timely arrival of battery—Russian retreat—Cavalry charge—Up to the village—Dilatory General—Colonel Briscoe leads on the cavalry—Capture tumbrils—Russian intrenchment—Dead artillerymen—A night ride—In the enemy's lines .	43
---	----

CHAPTER IV.

Reflections on the battle—The Turkish staff—Red-tapeism—Army administration—Want of manœuvring power—Mismanagement of force—Ammunition—Entrenching tools—Water-horses—No dépôts—Raw battalions—Reserves too far in rear—Turkish and Russian fire-arms—Cavalry attacking infantry—Degenerated cavalry—Scouting duties—Bad tactics of Russians—Russians retire from Popkeui—An advance decided on—Country beyond Karahassankeui—The village the day after the battle—Russians burned	
--	--

	PAGE
—Reconnaissance Hill—Sabit's movement—Half-buried corpses—Dangerous coffee—Dead Russians in a well—Morning start—No advanced guards—Find the Russians—Circassians kill Cossack—Back to camp	72

CHAPTER V.

Return of Izzet Bey—A trying position—A blindfolded drive—Grand Duke Nicholas—Cossack inhumanity—Wounded women and children—Good conduct of Turkish soldiers—A bitter war—A wounded Russian—Bashi-Bazouks—Armed villagers—Barbarous behaviour to the dead—Circassians—Personal bravery—Russian reinforcements—Kara Lom—Solenik Lom—Ford and ravines—Battle of Casaljevo—No news—Long-range shooting—Turkish and Russian cavalry—A general retreat—An easy prey—Proposed pursuit—A lost opportunity—In the Russian camp—The enemy escape—A Russian <i>Parlementaire</i> —A frank avowal—Loss of touch	91
--	----

CHAPTER VI.

Heavy rains—Accounts of the battle—Arrival of Mehemet Ali—Offensive or defensive—Demoralized Russians—Ahmed Eyoub—Attack from Rustchuk—Junction of forces—A strong garrison—Biela or Tirnova—Extension of force—A short line of operations—The south of Biela—Reinforcements from Soukoum Kalé—Plan communicated to Suleiman—Russian divisions—High <i>morale</i> —A turn in the tide—A chance for Suleiman—Turkish telegraph—Sali Pacha's division—The Rasgrad army—Circassian reports—Out in advance—A reconnaissance—Lost cavalry—A peaceful scene—Cowardly Bashi-

	PAGE
Bazouks—Cossack skirmishers—Send for reinforcements—A Circassian scout—The cavalry arrive—Russian infantry and guns—A fine battalion—Take the hill—Russian retreat—Maltreated dead. . . .	108

CHAPTER VII.

Bastinadoing Bashi-Bazouks—Camp followers—A brigade <i>en marche</i> —Reconnoitre the left—The Russian right—A fine position—Non-arrival of Ahmed Eyoub—Orsikova—A distant fight—Attempt at surprise—Repulse of the enemy—A Russian general—Gallant Circassian chief—Preparations for attack—Storming the vineyard—Fears for the right—Night fighting—Critical situation—Desultory orders—The Russians retreat—Above Teherkovna—Burnt village—A Mahomedan guide—A change of plans—Danger of delay—Want of support—Suleiman does not move—Old plan resumed	133
---	-----

CHAPTER VIII.

Azim's battery—Sadetin's advance—Mehemet attacks the Cossacks—The battery hill—The key of the enemy's position—Advanced entrenchments—Krupp and Russian guns—Try the range—Distant fire—The Cossack picquet—Kopritza—Corn-field ridge—The tumulus—Russian field hospital—Road to Biela—The position of Biela—A possible disaster—Arrival of Sabit's division—Projected plan of attack—Opposition of Sabit and Rifaat—Arrival of battalions from Soukoum-Kalé—Careless staff—Krupka the Pole—Supporting movements—The best divisions—Position of the Egyptians—Attack before daybreak—Biela or Tirnova—The passage of the Baniska Lom—Troops to carry fascines—An alternative plan—
--

	PAGE
Many disadvantages—Ali Riza and the Egyptians—	
False tactics—Extreme dispersion	148

CHAPTER IX.

A decisive issue—Concentrated guns—Fever-stricken troops—Watching the enemy's lines—The Marshal's Staff—Intrigues against Mehemet Ali—Disobedience of Suleiman—Resignation—Rifaat Pacha—Sanguine hopes at Constantinople—Turkish selfishness—Want of patriotism—Incompetent Staff—Reports from Staff—Key of position still unoccupied—A good screen—A lovely camp—A late Council—Impassable country—Trust to a peasant guide—Urgent remonstrances—Desultory orders—Ill-conceived plan—Salih suffers from fever—A rendezvous for the morning	167
---	-----

CHAPTER X.

An early call—Advantages of attack at daybreak—Sleepy Russians—No Turkish troops in position—Sadetin asleep—No orders—Brigades of attack unready—Useful fog—Last chance—Arrival of the Marshal—Sabit's division wrongly placed—Batteries open fire—Russian superiority—Artillery duel—Advance of Ismail—Commencement of attack—Russian fire—Turks press on—No supports—A rush at the trenches—Russian reinforcements—Attack repulsed—A fatal mistake—Attack entrenchments in front—Shrapnel fire—Desultory attacks—Azim's brigade still in hand—Miss Salih—A countermand—Fatal effect—Gallant conduct of Turkish soldiers—Ammunition supply—Ismail does not persevere—Irretrievable confusion—Arrival of fresh Russian brigade—Taking of Verboka Hill—Too late—Night falling—Turks
--

	PAGE
still hold position gained—Council on battle-field—A	
fresh delay	179

CHAPTER XI.

False organization—Bad tactics—Movements of Ismail—	
Ali Riza in the rear—Numberless errors—Covering	
an attack—Turkish artillery—Bad handling—	
Splendid Turkish infantry—Russian commander	
misled—The next morning—Verboka Hill not en-	
trenched—Gap still open—Non-arrival of Fuad's	
division—Two more battalions—Fresh gun <i>emplace-</i>	
<i>ments</i> —Utter apathy—Angry troops—Russian bri-	
gade withdrawn from Kopritza—Mustapha wounded	
—No counter-attack—More delay—A fresh re-	
connaissance—Russian negligence—Bad engineering	
—More intrigues—To-morrow—Russian view of	
attack—Height over Kopritza—Sick and wounded	
retiring—A Red Cross emissary—Knave or fool—	
A Circassian raid—A Russian patrol—Murderous	
attack	199

CHAPTER XII.

Attack abandoned—Movement on Tirnova negated—	
The force at Yaila—Uncertainty—A secret—Retreat	
decided on—Want of transport—Camp difficulties—	
Alast fond look—A gleam of hope—A weary night	
—Mud and disorder—With the rear-guard—Diffi-	
culties commence—Lost in the fog—Change of	
route—Stragglers—A burning depôt—Careless	
marching—Broken-down transport—Painful feelings	
—Guns stick in mud—A deserted camp—Incessant	
rain—Loss of stores—Our baggage—A straggling	
column	219

CHAPTER XIII.

	PAGE
Intense depression—A forgotten battalion—The wet season—Village houses—Start for Kadikeui—Sadetin's brigade—Valley of the Solenik Lom—Battle-field of Kacelievo—Turkish shelters—Solenik—Sabit's division—Natural amphitheatre—Peasant arabas—Unfortunate villagers—Village of Pisanza—Mehemet Ali's disgrace—Suleiman appointed—Interview with Mehemet Ali—Inconsistency—Attack from Rustchuk—Mr. Elliot—A painful parting—Popularity of Mehemet Ali	235

CHAPTER XIV.

Village of Kadikeui—Nedjib's division—Change in appearance of troops—Azaf Pacha—Animosity towards Suleiman—His inaction—Errors at Constantinople—Ahmed Kaisserly—Arrival of Suleiman—Dismissal of Ahmed Eyoub—A Turkish military bridge—Ottoman outposts—Interview with Suleiman—Vermin—Lost servants—High-road to Rasgrad—A lying Bulgarian—Letter to Prince Hassan	248
--	-----

CHAPTER XV.

From Rasgrad to Sarnasufflar—Retreat of Egyptians—Preparing for winter—Abdel Kader—A new residence—A female blockade—Failure of Selim—Success of Mehemet—Circassian foray—A lodging in the bean-field—Circassian surgery—A bribe for humanity—Reconnoitre—The Russian position—Popkeui—In the maize—Heavy shell fire—No casualties—Value of artillery fire—Moral effect—Military reconnaissances—Health of troops—Austrian and Russian maps	258
---	-----

CHAPTER XVI.

	PAGE
Start for Osman Bazaar—Mahomedans and Bulgarians— —A true friend—Rich villages—Said Pacha— Saving of treasure—Cheap military supply—A visit from the Mutessarif—Life of a Turkish Pacha—The camp at Yaila—A gap in the line—Useful Bashi- Bazouk—A grateful comrade—An intelligent Staff- officer—A reconnaissance skirmish—View of Kesa- rova—Neglected advantages—Chance still open— Large force available—Raouf and Suleiman—General character of the former	273

CHAPTER XVII.

Plevna—Loftcha—Advantages of the latter—The Trojan Pass—Retreat of Osman—Mehemet Ali and Osman —Bonfire signals—Russians towards Tirnova—A good squadron—Ishiklar—Unwatched road—An alerte of Cossacks—A practical joke—Arablar—A Russian reconnaissance—The old Circassian chief—A charmed life—Domestic arrangements—Reilly and the Turkish servants—Unintelligible conversations— Major Sartorius—Karahassankeui heights—Move- ments on Lower Lom—Flaming despatches—Stupid Staff—An old fort—A village militia—A changed scene—Circassian stories—A good purchase—Rus- sian movements	286
---	-----

CHAPTER XVIII.

Inactivity—Want of books—A pleasant companion—A miserable Bakal—Telegram from Suleiman—Russian veracity—Urge an advance by Kesarova—Nedjib and Fuad—A distant cannonade—Turkish camp- dinners—The fighting Tartar—In the front of the battle—Visit of Suleiman—Fingers or forks—Dis-

	PAGE
tant sound of guns—A smart brigade—The relief of Plevna—Adieu to Sarnasufflar—Start for Shipka—Mehemet's sword—The Slimnia Pass—Kazan—Bulgarian sufferings—Slimnia—The brother of Dervisch	302

CHAPTER XIX.

A salmon river—Lovely scenery—Haim-Boghaz—Shukri Pacha—Bulgarian orphans—A veteran nurse—Shukri's position—Cossack horrors—Consul Blunt—The story of Eski-zajhra—A cruel desertion—False despatches—A generous determination—The position of Shipka—Fort St. Nicholas—Useless sacrifice of life—Suleiman's influence—Guns and mortars—Captain James—Major Campbell—A misplaced fortified camp—Start for Eski-zajhra—Kezanlyk—Cossack cruelties—Suleiman's guilt—A ruined town—Djemil Pacha—The fortifications of Adrianople—Constantinople	317
--	-----

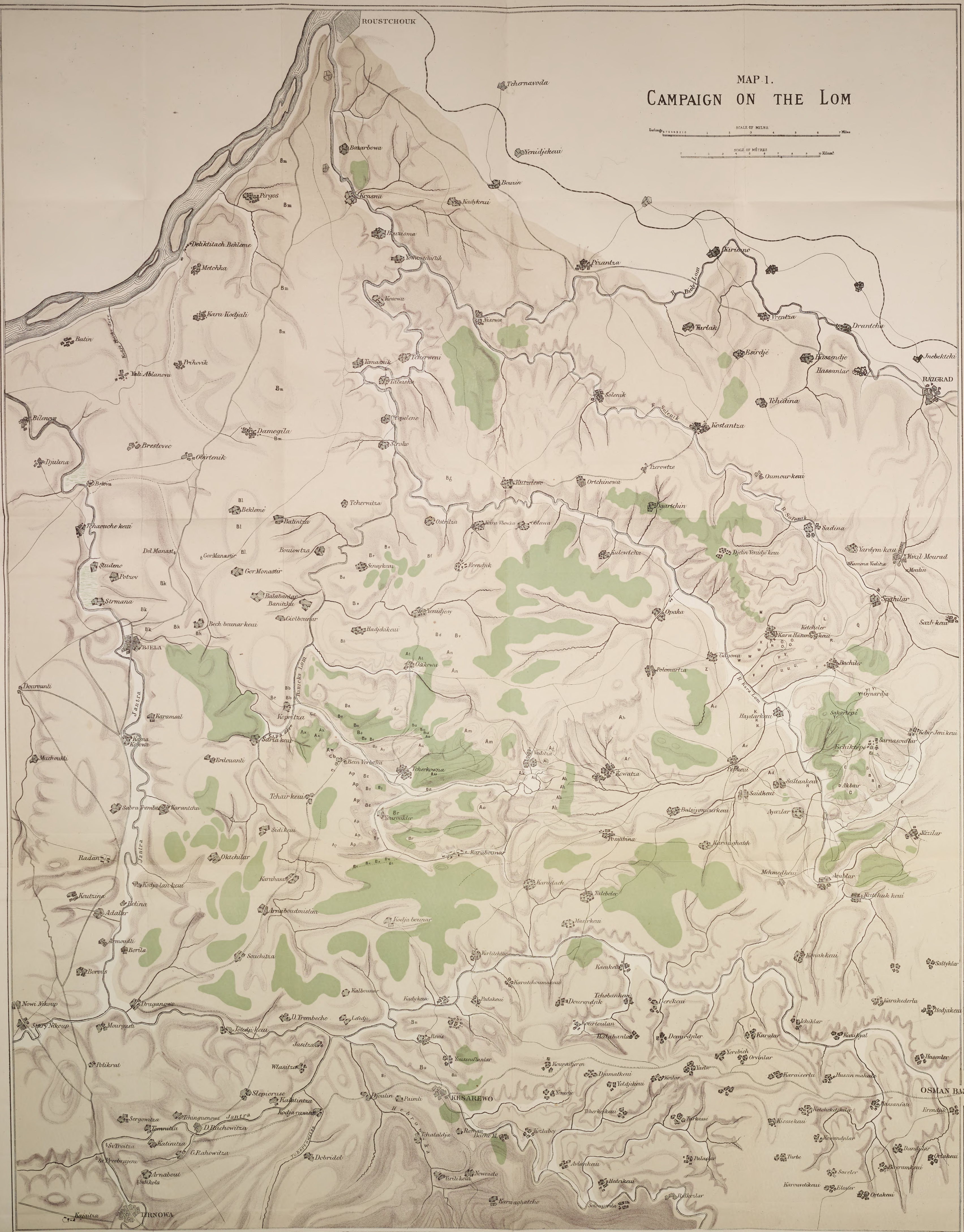
CHAPTER XX.

The Grand Vizier—Edhem Pacha—Inefficiency of Mehemet Ali's army—The Mustaphiz—A diversion from the Lom—Doctors, Engineers, and Soldiers—Offer of a division—Dispersion—A profound secret—Suleiman at Shipka—His career—Literary ability—Montenegro—Old battalions—A rapid transit—Intense jealousy—Successful intrigues—The Czar at Plevna—A bloody fête—An Emperor's failure—Influence of Mahomedanism—The Turkish soldier—Official changes—Spirit of intrigue—The line of reform	333
--	-----

CHAPTER XXI.

	PAGE
Movement on Tirnova—Resources of Suleiman—Turkish and Russian strength—Turkish state in October— Superiority in infantry—Effect of the advance on Plevna—Constantinople denuded—The campaign in Asia Minor—Mukhtar Pacha—False movement on Soukoum—Batoum—Depopulation of Circassia— Mingrelian swamps—A disastrous defeat—Advance of Gourko—Occupation of Plevna—Osman at Loftcha—Despised Roumanians save the Russians— Farewell visits—Strong everywhere	350

Scale of Miles
 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Miles
 Scale of Mètres
 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Kilom.^{ts}



WAR IN BULGARIA.

CHAPTER I.

Start for Varna—Sali Pacha—War uniforms—Prince Hassan—Devna Lake—Shumla—Mehemet Ali Pacha—Raouf Pacha—The tent of Aziz—Projected reconnaissance—Foreign military attachés—Turkish volunteers—Russian prisoners—Eski Djumaa—Suffering refugees—Cossack and Bulgarian cruelty—A Turkish camp—Sanguine hopes—Move to the front—The deserted village—A scene of war—The Russian camp—General alarm—An outpost skirmish—Around the camp fire—Mehemet Ali's plans—Defection of Suleiman—Intrigues at Constantinople—Superiority of Russians in cavalry and artillery—A plan of campaign—My English staff.

ON the 14th August, 1877, I left Constantinople for Varna in the "Polluce," one of the largest of the Austrian Lloyd steamers trading in the East.

Some English officers of the new Imperial Ottoman Gendarmerie accompanied me to the front, and Major Sartorius, of the Indian Staff, joined our party as an amateur anxious to have

an opportunity of studying the military features of the campaign.

We met on board the "Polluce" Sali Pacha, a Turkish general of division, who had been recently promoted, and who was on his way to take a new command under Mehemet Ali. He spoke French perfectly, and proved a most intelligent and agreeable companion, giving many hints as to all that might be useful to us during the war.

I found that the ordinary uniform of the Turkish officers, as seen at Constantinople, had been discarded for a much more practical and serviceable dress of the brown hand-made Bulgarian cloth called shiak. That worn by Sali Pacha was particularly neat, consisting of a sort of loose monkey-jacket, pantaloons, and boots. The gold lace denoting rank had been maintained, and nothing could look more soldier-like and comfortable.

As we steamed up the Bosphorus and passed Therapia, many of our friends turned out to bid us adieu by a general waving of pocket-handkerchiefs, and ere it grew dark we were ploughing the waters of the Black Sea with all the discomfort of half a gale of wind and a crowded ship.

The usual voyage to Varna takes about fourteen

hours, but twenty-two had elapsed before we cast anchor in Varna Bay. Although this was the port by which Mehemet Ali's army received its supplies, there was little of that bustle which might have been expected. H.M.S. "Rapid" lay at Varna, awaiting her mails, but she steamed away to the northward shortly after our arrival. A nasty surf was running, and we were told that it would be impossible, in consequence, to land our horses that night.

I went on shore with Sali Pacha to pay our respects to Prince Hassan, who, with an Egyptian garrison, was now holding the place and doing his best to improve the fortifications. For, although in 1828 Varna had made a gallant resistance to the Russians, the ancient works were little calculated to resist the improvement which had taken place in rifled guns. It was, in fact, completely commanded by the heights on either side of the valley in which it lay, and it had become necessary to include those heights in the new lines of fortification which were being constructed.

Prince Hassan received us very courteously, and we found him surrounded by a Staff composed of officers of many nationalities.

No regular trains were running to Shumla, but

a special train would be ready for us in the morning if the weather permitted the disembarkation of our horses.

Varna, from its position on the coast north of the Balkans, and as the terminus of the Rustchuk railway, must always remain a post of considerable importance. But the roadstead is very unsafe, and there is not only no harbour, but it lacks even a landing pier that is tolerably safe in a gale from a northerly direction.

Only a narrow strip of sand separates the bay from the deep Devna Lake, but money and enterprise have been wanting in order, by cutting a channel through the sand-bank, to convert the lake into an admirable port.

On the morning of the 16th, the weather had moderated, and, our horses being disembarked, we started for Shumla.

By one of those strange omissions, which are not uncommon in Turkish arrangements, the railway line between Varna and Rustchuk passes nine miles away from the great fortified camp of Shumla, which does not therefore block the line to an enemy in case of war.

We found plenty of carriages waiting for hire at the Shumla Road Station, and arabas, or country carts, were available for our baggage.

The town of Shumla lies nestled in a valley of the rocky table mountain, with its precipitous sides, which assists so materially in the defence of the place. But the old lines have been much enlarged, and now extend three miles away in the direction of the railway.

A much smaller force was assembled here than I had expected, only fourteen battalions of infantry, and four batteries of field artillery were acting as a garrison. These troops were encamped on the undulating plains between the forts to the east and the town.

A number of very large green tents marked the head-quarter camp. In the largest of these we found Mehemet Ali, and he came out and received us with that warmth and geniality which has always made him so popular with the officers under his command.

Mehemet Ali, a German by extraction, was born at Magdeburgh. Disliking the restraints of school, he ran away from home as a boy, and, getting on board a small trading vessel, soon found himself at Glasgow, in Scotland. From there he made his way to Constantinople, acting as cabin boy, and bitten with an ardent desire to see the glorious capital of the East. At Constantinople he was taken up by one of the Pachas then

in power, and sent to the military school, from which he joined the army, and gradually worked his way up to the higher ranks. His successes and tact, when employed against the insurgents in Thessaly, brought him into notice, and when the Servian war broke out, he was appointed to an important command.

Again successful at Yavor, he gained the reputation of being one of the most intelligent of the Turkish leaders. After the Servian war he was employed against Montenegro, but under the general orders of Suleiman Pacha. From this position, which he held at the outbreak of the war with Russia, he was, on the failure and disgrace of Abdul Kerim, appointed Commander-in-Chief of all the armies acting against the Russians on the Danube. This post he now held, and he had been for some few weeks busy in getting into order the scattered forces bequeathed to him by his predecessor.

In the tent with Mehemet Ali we found Raouf Pacha, then Commandant of Shumla. He had only recently been appointed, and was still smarting under his defeat by a superior force of Gourko's army, which the want of concert on the part of Suleiman had brought upon him.

Raouf Pacha is a perfect type of a high-class

Turk. His gentle, well-bred manner, and straightforward kindness of disposition, make him a general favourite. An admirable French scholar, a very brave soldier, and an ardent and excellent sportsman, Raouf Pacha would shine socially in any country. He held the rank of Marshal.

Mehemet Ali invited me to dine with him, and a large adjoining tent, which had belonged to the unfortunate Aziz Pacha, killed in a recent engagement, was told off for my use. But my tenancy of it was not destined to be very lengthened, for, at dinner, Mehemet Ali informed me that he should be starting early in the morning on a reconnaissance of a few days in the direction of Eski Djumaa and Rasgrad, and he begged me to accompany him.

In the morning, I found that M. de Torcy, the French military attaché, whom I had known well at Constantinople, was to be of our party, and soon afterwards Colonel Lennox, R.E., the English attaché, and Lieutenant Chermiside, his assistant, appeared, ready to join our expedition.

There is a good road to Djumaa from Shumla, and carriages had been prepared for us, the horses being sent on.

Four battalions and a battery had left Shumla for Djumaa early in the morning, and we passed

them *en route*. One, a very strong volunteer battalion, had been entirely clothed, armed, and organized by a wealthy and patriotic Armenian of Constantinople, popularly known by the name of Altunazada. It was dressed entirely in a uniform made of the brown Bulgarian cloth, and looked smart and serviceable. We also met *en route* four Russian prisoners, coming in from Osman Bazaar, where they had been captured in a skirmish. They were tied together by loose cords, but the Marshal immediately ordered these to be taken off, and reprimanded the sergeant in charge of the party. They were young and rather weakly-looking men, and contrasted strongly with the brawny Turkish soldiers that formed their escort. They belonged to the 11th Russian Corps, a division of which had for some few weeks been held in check by a Turkish brigade in front of Osman Bazaar.

On our arrival at Djumaa we found this pretty and prosperous-looking town swarming with refugees, who had left their homes in the neighbourhood of Popkeui—then occupied by the Russian 13th Corps—and the surrounding villages. They were in a state of terrible destitution, and told vivid and consistent stories of the brutalities

that they had endured at the hands of the Bulgarians and Cossacks. No less than 15,000 of these refugees were now in Djumaa, and the Caimacam, or Turkish governor, was in distress as to their probable fate, from the scarcity of food.

On a height about a mile north of the town, on the road to Popkeui, a Turkish division, which, with the new arrivals from Shumla, would comprise thirteen battalions, was bivouacked in huts formed of branches of trees. No one would have imagined that so large a force was present, and I have always remarked, subsequently, the singular way in which Turkish troops conceal their numbers. There was not as much fuss and commotion on the road to the camp as would have been the case with a newly-arrived English battalion.

On reaching the camp we made a careful examination of the fortifications, which had been thrown up to prevent an advance of the enemy from the direction of Popkeui. The general decision was that the position was badly chosen, and offered few facilities for defence.

The Russians were still about thirteen miles distant, occupying the plains of Popkeui.

Some bell tents had been prepared for us, but as we were rather crowded we had an *al fresco*

dinner with the Marshal, and it was determined that we should start the next morning, in order to reconnoitre the position of the Russian 13th Corps.

That night we had long conversations relative to the military situation.

On quitting Constantinople I had left the Turkish authorities, as usual, most sanguine. The continued successes of Mukhtar in Asia, and the retreat of Gourko after his advance towards Adrianople, had inspired ardent hopes, and every day a general advance of Mehemet Ali Pacha's army was expected.

I found that at the front these sanguine aspirations for offensive action were viewed with disfavour.

All the military attachés who had been following the Turkish army for some time past were unanimously of opinion that it was in no condition to make an offensive movement. It lacked generals, staff, administration, and the habit of manœuvring and marching with anything like order and precision. Still, it was evident that some decision must shortly be arrived at, for it was well known that very large Russian reinforcements were moving down, including the Guard Corps, and in a few weeks they would so strengthen

the Russian army in Bulgaria as to make the Turkish military situation most precarious.

From Djumaa to the position then held by the Russians, there ran a long and narrow valley. The heights on either side only rose to about four to five hundred feet. The slopes were broken. Sometimes covered with low oak forest or brushwood, sometimes cleared for cultivation. A little sluggish rivulet ran through this valley. The road, very indifferent, like most Turkish roads, but perfectly practicable for artillery, constantly crossed this stream by dilapidated wooden bridges.

At a very early hour on the morning of the 18th, a regiment of cavalry and three battalions of Turkish infantry had been sent forward in order to strengthen the small Turkish force keeping guard in front, and to drive in the Russian outposts, if necessary, so as to allow the Marshal to make a reconnaissance of the position of the 13th Corps.

Our horses having been sent on to near the village of Yenikeui, about nine miles distant, we started in carriages to that point.

The valley, for the first few miles, swarmed with flocks and herds that were being driven away by refugees to escape from the clutches of

the dreaded Moscovs. The few villages we passed were entirely deserted. Near Yenikeui the valley opened out, and a branch road ran through another valley in the direction of Rasgrad. Here we mounted our horses, and pushed on for about two miles, following the main road.

At this point, occupying good positions, we found two battalions of the Turkish troops entrenching themselves.

We then left the Popkeui road, and moved up to our right, between two spurs of the mountain ridge, for about a mile, when we arrived at the village of Sarnasufflar. A prettier or more rural scene it was difficult to imagine. Nestled between the two spurs of the mountain lay the peaceful looking little hamlet. Numberless fruit-trees were dotted about, the branches bending under the weight of ripe plums, apricots, and pears. On a grassy sward, which had the appearance of a village green, stood a well, and flocks of geese, notwithstanding the arrival of the troops, wandered untouched around. The day was oppressively hot, and our men soon drew up the bucket full of deliciously cold, clear water, with which we quenched our thirst. The mountain slopes were thickly clothed with oak trees, but with occasional large clearings.

It was a charming spot. Little did we then think how familiar all its features would soon become to many of us, or what a sad change the ravages of war would bring upon the fairy scene. On entering the village a painful stillness struck us; it was entirely deserted.

Strong bodies of Turkish infantry had been pushed forward, and we gradually ascended the low mountain ridge by a path through the wood. On reaching the crest we emerged on to a corn-field, and now crept slowly and cautiously forward to a projecting spur that commanded a magnificent and extensive view of the plain in front.

A splendid scene of war presented itself.

From this height the really undulating ground below looked like a level plain, and almost at our feet, as it seemed, it was dotted with Russian camps. At the village of Popkeui, about four miles distant, lay a whole division, with a considerable force of cavalry and guns. To our left, near the village of Ayaslar, and within cannon range, stood four battalions of Russian infantry, two squadrons of cavalry, and a battery of guns. To our right, and only a little more distant, near the village of Haidarkeui, a brigade of Russian cavalry was under arms.

We stood on the projecting spur of a range of wooded heights. From it many similar bluffs jutted out. Straight in front lay the great undulating plain, generally clear of wood. To our left, and about five miles off, another wooded ridge stretched out at right angles. Below us the river Lom ran like a silver streak at the foot of the hills, then turning more towards the north near the village of Haiderkeui it wound through the plains until it entered a high bluff gorge about eight miles distant. Nearer to us and to the right of this gorge, and lying rather high, stood the village of Karahassankeui. Here another Russian camp was visible.

Far away to our right front over several ranges of hills, with good glasses, we could just detect some of the works of the Turkish entrenched camp in front of Rasgrad. Within long rifle range on our immediate left stood a Cossack outpost.

The valley we had come by to Yenikeui runs on to Ayaslar through a gorge. The heights on either side commanding the entrance from the plains were evidently held by the Russian posts.

The advance of our few battalions had put the whole Russian army on the alert. From our perfect look-out hill, nothing was concealed, and we calculated that the entire 13th Corps and

two divisions of cavalry lay in sight below us. Occasional dropping shots told that the outposts of the two armies were very slightly engaged.

Having carefully scanned the whole Russian position we returned to Yenikeui, and reached Eski Djumaa just before night. There sitting round the camp fire we had a long discussion upon future military action.

During the day the Marshal had expressed to me his fear that Rustchuk might soon be surrounded. He gave me the choice either to join that garrison as second in command, and thus to assist in its defence, or to remain as a General available for special services with the Djumaa force. As I could see no reason why Rustchuk should be surrounded I chose the latter. The Marshal treated me with the most perfect confidence, and sought my opinions on the military situation.

I found that the Turkish force that could be brought to bear on the line of the Lom was very considerable, but, like all Turkish armies, it was utterly scattered. At Djumaa there were now 13 battalions; at Osman Bazaar, 7; at Shumla, 10; at Rasgrad, 46; Rustchuk, 20; Silistria, 17; Tatar Oglou Bazardjik, 13; Varna, 10. This

gave a force of 136 battalions in all on the Eastern Danube.

It is true that a considerable part of that force was locked up in garrisons, like Rustchuk, Silistria, Shumla, and Varna. But in the field acting against this Turkish force, as far as we then knew, the Russians had only Zimmerman's Corps in the Dobrudscha, much decimated by sickness; the 12th Corps on the Lower Lom, the 13th Corps at Popkeui and the Upper Lom, and the 11th Corps in front of Osman Bazaar, Elena, &c. It was evident from our reports that Zimmerman could not make a forward movement at present.

The Marshal explained to me his general position. The Russians after their defeats at Plevna, and disorderly retreat, had not been followed, and were now reorganizing their western army for a fresh attempt on that place in conjunction with the Roumanians.

His information led him to believe that the Russian force at Shipka was small. Whereas opposed to them, Suleiman, including the force recently concentrated at Adrianople, had 95 battalions under his command, and the flower of the Turkish army. It was evident that pressed heavily on either flank the Russians could not afford to risk a fresh raid through the Balkans. Both

the Slimno and Haim Boghaz Passes were open.

The Marshal's idea was that Suleiman, leaving some 45 battalions to watch the Shipka Pass and garrison Adrianople, should pass through the Slimno and Haim Boghaz Passes, and, forming a junction with Mehemet Ali's army near Osman Bazaar, should push in between Biela and Tirnova.

But Suleiman strongly opposed this movement, and had sufficient interest at Constantinople to thwart Mehemet Ali's plans. The Marshal had sent an aide-de-camp to Constantinople to explain the situation, and to urge their junction, but at present without effect.

Under these circumstances what plan should be decided on? Should we act entirely on the defensive, or should we, concentrating near Rustchuk, make a movement towards Biela?

Both these ideas seemed to me to be unsatisfactory.

The first exposed us to certain defeat on the arrival of all the Russian reinforcements, and it left the Russians at rest during this the time of their weakness.

The second was also, to my mind, very dangerous.

We had reports that the Rustchuk side of Biela

was strongly fortified, and to move against these fortifications over a perfectly open country with an army unaccustomed to manœuvre seemed very unadvisable. Moreover, the more than fourfold superiority of the Russians in cavalry and artillery would specially tell in their favour on the open undulating plains near the Danube.

In place of either of these projects I proposed to the Marshal to strengthen the Djumaa force by slightly weakening the now unnecessarily strong garrisons, and by calling in some of the troops from Oglou Bazardjik.

Then to commence a series of such small forward movements as would compel the Russians to attack us.

If they were repulsed, we might form a junction with Ahmed Eyoub's force from Rasgrad, and gradually assume a more active offensive.

No definite decision was arrived at, but it was generally agreed that the Djumaa force should be strengthened immediately, and that it should advance and take up a position near Yenikeui, which was both more suitable for defence and nearer to Rasgrad.

The following morning, Aug. 19th, the Marshal left for Rasgrad. I remained at Djumaa with Sali Pacha, and was joined from Shumla by

Colonels Briscoe, Swire, Fawcett, and Allix, of the new *Gendarmerie*. Major Sartorius had come with me from Shumla, and also Major Jenner, an Englishman, who held a subordinate post in the *Gendarmerie*, and who accompanied me as extra aide-de-camp and interpreter.

The troops, with the exception of a battalion, a battery, and two squadrons of cavalry, moved forward into their new positions.

CHAPTER II.

A Turkish division—False position—Distant guns—A Russian attack—Critical moments—The wounded Pole—A fatal shell—Russian repulse—Mehemet the aide-de-camp—Harmless artillery fire—A night attack—The Turkish cheer—The lost position—Anxious hours—Gallant Mustapha—A bold stroke—Russian panic—The Tepé retaken—In the heart of the enemy's position—No supports—Ali Riza—Reinforcements arrive—Thirst conquers fear—Russians retire—Disorderly retreat—A parting shell.

THE force in front of Eski Djumaa now consisted of thirteen battalions of infantry, three batteries of artillery, and nine squadrons of cavalry.

The infantry were divided into two brigades commanded by Sabit and Azim Pachas.

I started on the morning of the 20th August, with Major Sartorius, to visit the advanced position which had been taken up by the division, and which had been selected by the Marshal's Chief of the Staff, Rifaat Pacha.

To my mind it was very faulty.

Instead of concentrating the force in an excellent position which existed at Yenikeui near

the junction of the two valleys, the two brigades had been pushed forward in different directions. Sabit occupied the heights immediately above Bachiler (Y, Map II.), whilst Azim's brigade had taken up a very extended line from the village of Kizilar on its left to the height above Sarnasufflar, from which we had made our reconnaissance, on its right.

Between the two there lay, at least, two miles of impenetrable wood, and it resulted that until a road could be made through it, the two brigades were cut off from mutual support, and the defeat of the one entailed the immediate retreat if not the loss of the other.

As Sali Pacha had many arrangements to make relative to the supply of his division, he did not intend leaving Djumaa until the next day. Having seen the road commenced, I returned to Djumaa and reported to him the position which had been selected.

It was arranged that we were to start early on the following morning and to take up our headquarters close to the village of Yenikeui, as a central point between the two brigades, until the new road was completed.

When, on the 21st, the hour appointed for our start arrived, Sali Pacha was still busy with

his work of administration; and so the day wore on.

At about eleven o'clock I felt convinced that I heard three distant guns in the direction of Sarnasufflar. I mentioned this to Sali, and we soon afterwards started.

When about half-way to Yenikeui, an orderly arrived with a report from Azim. There had been an affair of out-posts. A Russian battery at Ayazlar had fired a few shots, but all was again quiet.

It was a lovely day but intensely hot, and we strolled easily along chatting and smoking. Presently Colonel Allix and Major Sartorius passed us in a carriage on their way to Yenikeui.

We had arrived within about two miles of Yenikeui. All was perfectly quiet, and not a sound was to be heard.

Suddenly a horseman appeared coming towards us and galloping furiously.

A glance with my glasses showed me that it was Colonel Allix. He was mounted on an artillery trooper, and brought strange news.

But little more than three miles from us Azim's brigade was heavily engaged, and being slowly driven back by a very superior force of Russians. Allix had very properly galloped

back to find us, and we now pushed on at our best pace.

As we neared Yenikeui, although the smoke of the guns was visible but two miles away, by a curious condition of the atmosphere no sound could be heard. A little in front of Yenikeui we passed two of our guns in position in reserve; and on reaching the turn in the road to Sarnasufflar, things indeed looked serious.

From the high reconnaissance hill, Eshek Tepé, above the village and in front of it, a spur (B, Map II.) ran down almost blocking the valley we had come by. This was our main position.

On our left of the valley, and in line with this spur, a wooded knoll (C, Map II.) had been intrenched and armed with two of our field and two mountain guns. Here a battalion had been placed and a small Polish company. Only about three hundred yards in front of this battery two guns were firing, and this puzzled us.

Two of our battalions were falling back from the direction of Sarnasufflar. We halted them. At this instant the guns that had so puzzled us plumped two shells into the middle of our party at only 800 yards distance, and to our dismay we saw the line of skirmishers, the only

force that now held the main ridge (B, Map II.) rapidly retreating.

Another moment and the position would be lost.

Dashing up the slope of the spur, we called to the line of skirmishers to follow, and led them back to the crest that they had abandoned.

It was an affair of seconds, for we met the Russian skirmishers mounting the ridge, and drove them down into the valley beyond.

Quickly bringing up the supports, we again secured the spur (B); and getting two guns into position against them, the advanced Russian guns retired from the concealed ground that they had occupied so close to our battery (C). We now visited this battery on the left of the valley, and found that it had suffered heavily. We came across the major of the Polish company, a very intelligent man who spoke French perfectly, lying with his legs shot off. Seventeen men of his company lay around him killed or wounded.

It was growing dark, and the Russians, finding that they had failed to gain the key of our position, slowly retreated.

Night fell, and Sali Pacha ordered up the battalion and battery which still remained at Djumaa.

As so often happens with a Turkish army there were no doctors to attend on the wounded. We did the best we could for them, poor fellows ! and as there was a hospital at Djumaa, we sent them there in our carriages and in arabas filled with straw. The Polish major was quite conscious, and even hopeful ; poor man ! he died two days afterwards.

That night Sali Pacha and I held a little Council of War, and it was determined that we should push on in the morning, and seize the whole main ridge (D, F, E, Map II.) that lay above Ayazlar, and thus gain possession of the valley which led to that village and the bridge across the Lom. We had made out that there were only eight battalions of Russians engaged against our six, and trusted to the moral effect of their repulse.

At dawn our force advanced ; but the enemy made little resistance, falling back into the wood, and eventually we saw the eight battalions crossing the Lom in a most disordered state, and retreating through Ayazlar. A Russian force with three batteries moved out of Popkeui to cover their retreat.

We had now got possession of the whole main ridge, together with a most important Tepé (D, Map II.) or hill, which was the key of the

range, and looked right down upon Ayazlar. It also commanded the defile, through which ran the main road from Ayazlar to Yenikeui. How the Russians could have abandoned it so easily, was indeed a wonder. We placed two battalions there, and immediately commenced intrenching it. We also, with some difficulty, dragged a field-gun up to the reconnaissance hill (A, Map II.), which was intrenched and occupied by a battalion.

The battalion and battery left at Djumaa had arrived, and they brought good news. A brigade of seven battalions and a battery had reached Djumaa from Shumla. Sali immediately ordered them up, and we calculated that they would reach us before night fell.

We also intrenched the spur (B, Map II.) forming our old position in front of Sarnasufflar, placing here three battalions, and a battery and a half. We still retained the same force as before on the battery hill (C, Map II.) to the left of the valley, and it was guarded by a battalion and what remained of the Polish company. Kizilar, to the extreme left, was occupied by 300 Circassians.

The reconnaissance hill (A) gave such an admirable point for the observation of all the enemy's

movements, that I placed Allix there with a good telescope, and he sent us down reports every hour.

The day passed quietly away, and I visited our new intrenchments all along the line.

Rather late in the afternoon Allix reported that the enemy was advancing some batteries from Popkeui to Ayazlar, and soon afterwards a heavy cannonade was heard. On going to the hill, we found twenty-four Russian guns concentrating their fire on the wood, in front of the Tepé, which was being intrenched. There was no one in the wood except the sentries, and very few shells fell on the Tepé.

This proved a very singular instance of the harmlessness of artillery fire under certain conditions. The Russians fired nearly 500 shots, and we had only one man wounded in the hand. A little before dark the cannonade ceased, and, all being quiet, we returned to our tents at Yenikeui.

Sali Pacha had brought with him, from Montenegro, two aides-de-camp, Salim and Mehemet. Both were gigantic specimens of men, but Mehemet was quite a character—very young, with a frank, good-tempered face; he was as active as a deer, and had the most extraordinary intuitive military instinct that I have ever met

with. He seemed to know everything that was passing, and could detect the enemy's movements almost as far off as we could with our field-glasses. He was as bold as a lion. On one occasion during the Servian war, Sali Pacha was very anxious that Servian prisoners should be taken, in order that some information might be gained relative to the troops opposed to the Turks at that point. Without saying anything, Mehemet mounted his horse. Presently he was seen quietly cantering towards the enemy's lines. The Servian sentry seeing him approach, levelled at him and fired. Dashing at the man, Mehemet caught him—with one hand lifted him from the ground and threw him across his saddle, and under a shower of balls from the astonished Servians, cantered quietly back, bringing his struggling prisoner with him.

On returning to camp I dined with Sali Pacha. At about ten o'clock at night Mehemet appeared, and said, "I hear infantry firing." We immediately listened attentively, but could distinguish nothing, and, as no reports came in from the front, Sali told him that he must be mistaken.

About half-an-hour later he came again, and said, "I am certain I hear firing, and it is growing heavier."

Sali and I now went to the top of a neighbouring hill, but all seemed quiet. We laid our ears to the ground to listen, and then we also thought we could distinguish the sound of infantry fire. The horses were immediately ordered, and we again started for the front.

As we approached the Sarnasufflar spur, there could no longer be any doubt, for a continuous roar of musketry from the direction of the newly captured Tepé (D, Map II.) was plainly audible. From the top of the spur (B) the Tepé was clearly visible.

The sight was splendid.

The night was very dark, and the whole Tepé looked like some gigantic firework, with an inner and outer ring of fire. The Russians had almost surrounded it, and were making a most desperate night-attack.

Whilst we had been at Djumaa, Mehemet Ali, each evening, revived a custom current amongst the Turkish troops during the Montenegrin war. A given sound on the bugle was repeated by all the buglers in camp, and then all the troops broke out into a shout of "Allah," repeated again and again, each time that the buglers sounded. The result was something very like a British cheer. Mehemet Ali had told us stories of this

shout being used with very good effect in various engagements, and declared that it often produced a most dispiriting effect upon the enemy.

The thought of this appeared suddenly to strike Sali Pacha now. For just when the encircling Russian flame of fire grew so hot that it seemed as if our two battalions in the Tepé must soon be exhausted and overwhelmed, he sounded the signal for the well-known cry.

The three battalions around us took it up; and then from our extended detachments it came back through the night air like an echo from the distant hills.

It seemed to give fresh courage to the defenders of the Tepé, for, from the mountain top, there came a shout that drowned for a moment the roar of musketry.

The effect upon the Russians was electrical. Their fire ceased as suddenly as if by order, and soon only a few dropping shots from the occupants of the work told us that the attack had been repulsed.

We sent up four more companies, all that could be spared from our small reserve, as a reinforcement, and waited until two o'clock in the morning, but the danger seemed over, and we retired and lay down to rest.

On our way, Mehemet whispered something to Sali.

“What do you think he says?” said Sali. “He declares that the officer commanding the Tepé is going to retire and give up the work. It is only Mehemet’s nonsense.”

“Pray send an order,” I replied, “on no account to give up the work, but to defend it to the very last.” The order was sent.

We had not laid down more than about two hours when a fresh report came in.

Sali sent and begged me to come to him. Mehemet’s warning had arrived too late. The Tepé (D, Map II.) had been abandoned, the Russians had occupied it, and were now preparing for an attack on our main position (B).

We mounted our horses, and again galloped to the front.

Anxiously we looked back down the valley for the coming brigade from Djumaa, but there were no signs of its arrival, and no news of its movements.

This brigade was commanded by one Ali Riza Pacha, the same general who, retiring precipitately, when not even seriously followed by Zimmerman in the Dobrudscha, had given up and abandoned Kustendji without a struggle.

Our position was now growing critical, for, as daylight broke, it was evident that we were being attacked by a very superior Russian force, probably the greater part of the 13th Corps.

The officer in command of the Tepé had endeavoured to repair his blunder in abandoning the work, by attempting to retake it from the Russians; not only had he signally failed, but the Russians, driving him down into the valley, were pressing upon our main position (B), and evidently massing their forces for a serious attack.

I had been very anxious about one point in that position ever since our arrival.

As has been before explained the spur, which we held, ran from the main ridge, almost across the Yenikeui valley. But it left the main ridge fully half a mile from the Reconnaissance Hill.

The Tepé (D), which the Russians had taken, was on the ridge. Therefore, if they could only move from it to the point where the spur and ridge bifurcated (E, Map II.) they might march right down into the village of Sarnasufflar, and take our whole position in rear. I had often spoken to Sali Pacha about this point, and now strongly pressed him to secure it.

He begged me to go personally and to supervise its defence. He was not aware how it was held,

but sent four companies of infantry, and about fifty Circassians to strengthen it.

I moved up with them, and all my English staff of officers accompanied me. As we reached the spot, our one gun on the Reconnaissance Hill (A) was playing over our heads with excellent effect upon the Russians in and about the Tepé (D).

Our arrival was most opportune, for I found the important point (E) only watched by one company of infantry.

Having well searched the woods to the right to be certain that no advance was being made in that direction, I placed the little force to the best advantage to defend the neck of land on the main ridge between the Reconnaissance Hill and the Tepé.

It was evident that the position of our whole force was critical; no assistance could be derived from Sabit's Brigade (Y, Map II.), for he was separated from us by the wood. The road was not finished, and he reported, by way of Yenikeui, that he also was threatened.

The Russians had massed their forces, and were moving down to attack our main line.

Just at this moment an orderly arrived with a despatch from Sali. The long looked-for brigade

was in sight, and would arrive in less than half an hour.

About four hundred yards in advance of where we stood was a little patch of underwood (F, Map II.); if it could be occupied it struck me that we could enfilade a part of the Russian line as it advanced to the attack of our main position (B).

I pushed two companies cautiously forward, but no sooner had they reached it than they poured a heavy fire down into the woods on their right, instead of into the valley on the left, as I had intended.

On riding up the reason was explained.

They had met a Russian column of several battalions, just making its way up by a path which led from the plains below to this point. Their fire, poured into the head of the Russian column, had caused it to retreat precipitately. This column had evidently been sent for the purpose of occupying the very point which had caused us such anxiety.

Our two advanced companies, their numbers concealed by the brushwood, now opened a heavy enfilading fire upon the left of the Russian line as it advanced to the attack of our main position (B, Map II.).

The effect was most extraordinary.

The whole of the Russian left wavered for a moment, and fell back in confusion. Then the panic extended all along the line, and it retreated precipitately to some fields of Indian corn to its right rear, and away from the Tepé (D).

I was watching the Tepé at that moment, and felt sure that its garrison also had abandoned it in the panic, and fallen back into the woods.

If we could only recover that Tepé the day would yet be ours.

It was one of those extraordinary chances in war when a great risk must be run for a great result. But to rush forward to the Tepé with the woods near it occupied by many Russian battalions, without being certain that the work itself had been temporarily abandoned, would, with my little force, have been madness.

I called for a volunteer from the Circassians to ride on and reconnoitre, but they all shook their heads.

Then a little lieutenant of infantry, named Mustapha, stepped out, and declared that he would go on foot, and alone.

I promised him promotion if he succeeded, and we watched him eagerly, as he boldly pushed forward towards the Tepé.

The scattered Russians in the woods and maize fired at him as he advanced, but still on he went.

I kept my glasses fixed on the Tepé. I could see Mustapha making his way through the groups of dead and dying that lay around. He halted for a moment, and I thought that he was hit, but on he went again.

He was now within three hundred yards of the Tepé, and not a shot had been fired at him from it.

Then I felt that the hill was, for the time, abandoned, and ordering the two advanced companies to follow as quickly as possible, and gathering together the small band of horsemen about, my staff, orderlies, and a few Circassians, we galloped straight at the work.

The Russians had massed all their batteries on the plains near Ayazlar. For a part of the way they could see our advance, and they poured in a shower of shells, but we were soon under the crest of the ridge, and their shots generally passed a few feet over our heads doing but slight damage.

In little more than a minute we were at the work.

Except its dead occupants, not a man remained there, but shots came quickly at us from the woods around.

I knew that Sali must have seen our advance, and that a whole brigade had arrived as a reinforcement.

Soon the two companies came trotting along at the double. I pushed them into the work, but would not let them fire and thus show the weakness of our numbers.

The Tepé, the key of the enemy's positions, was ours, when would the reinforcements arrive?

Sali sent me up a squadron of cavalry, but this was of little use. The woods within two hundred yards of us swarmed with Russian riflemen, and I had to hide the cavalry in an undulation of the ground. Colonel Briscoe led them forward occasionally, if a few adventurous Russians attempted to advance and leave their cover.

The day was intensely hot, and the poor wounded men were suffering terribly.

I hurried off aide-de-camp after aide-de-camp to Sali, telling him of our success, but urging immediate reinforcements.

The situation was one of great anxiety. The two companies in the Tepé had become aware of the numbers of the enemy around them, and as the Russians kept making desultory attacks as if to retake the work, its little garrison would come streaming out, declaring it could not be held.

But we drove them in again, and kept a sort of guard at the gorge.

Fortunately the Russians could not detect our weakness. They had seen a considerable fresh force arriving from Djumaa. Then a sharp attack had been made on their left, and a General with a considerable staff had ridden into the heart of their position, bringing, they would naturally suppose, the newly-arrived battalions.

In the manœuvre which had proved so successful I had calculated upon this impression.¹ But how long could the situation last if no reinforcements arrived?

We strained our eyes toward the road, on which we hoped, each moment, to see the head of our relieving column appear, but all in vain.

Although pretty well hidden by the ground, and by the work, the desultory Russian fire was telling upon our little force, and it became each moment more difficult to keep the men at their posts.

I looked anxiously at my watch, a whole hour had passed, and there was no sign of the coming battalions. I had sent Colonel Swire to bring up the two companies that had been left behind, but Colonel Fawcett, who had remained with them,

¹ The Russian despatches afterwards proved that this was the impression.

sent word that they would not face the heavy shell fire which swept the ridge. At length Col. Allix came back from Sali. Reinforcements would be sent, but Ali Riza who commanded the new brigade declared that it was too tired to advance.

Too tired, and they had only marched thirteen miles in twenty-four hours !

We had run a great risk in order to save the Sarnasufflar force at a very critical moment. Perfect success had crowned the movement ; yet now we found ourselves apparently deserted and left entirely unsupported in the heart of the enemy's position.

Again I sent Col. Allix to urge immediate reinforcements.

Every moment the situation became more critical as the little force dwindled away under the enemy's fire. Yet we must hold on to the last.

The gallant sakars² of the two companies had followed closely up, but their water-skins were empty. I sent them into the valley in search of more water. One fine fellow was wounded but he stuck to his work.

Another hour had passed when a joyful shout arose from the men in the work. Down from our main position (B, Map II.) about a mile distant

² Water-carriers, with pack-horses bearing skins.

there came a living stream of men. Help was at length at hand.

I told the defenders of the work how many new battalions had arrived, and that their trials would soon be over.

Had Ali Riza plucked up courage, and was the whole brigade advancing?

No. Colonel Allix came back, his horse dead beat. Sali had sent me a battalion of the troops that had now been engaged for two days. He could not get Ali Riza on.

The battalions came up slowly. The sun poured down with fearful force, and the men were utterly exhausted. They lay down in numbers by the side of the road calling for water to quench their burning thirst.

Riding down to meet them, we urged them forward, but to get into the work they had to pass under the enemy's fire, and they hesitated. It was in vain that Col. Briscoe cheered them on and addressed them with endearing Irish epithets, they still hung back.

Just then the two water-carriers came up with a fresh supply. I pushed them into the work, and then telling the faltering battalions that water in plenty was there before them, again urged them forward.

The effect was excellent. The much longed-for draught was within their reach. Thirst overcame all other considerations, and they rushed up to the Tepé.

We now opened a heavy fire upon the scattered bodies of Russians in the vicinity of the work. In a short time it was evident that the whole of the enemy's force was gradually retiring; and that all fear of a counter-attack was over.

Had Ali Riza's brigade come up as it should have done, we might have followed their retreating columns.

We rode down and met Sali, and together went up to the Reconnaissance Hill. From there we saw eighteen Russian battalions emerge from the wood in utter disorder. A large force of cavalry and artillery had been concentrated on the plains below, near Ayazlar, to cover the retreat.

Our gun threw a few shells at very long range amongst the retreating masses, and the few battalions that maintained some cohesion scattered over the fields, and retreated towards Popkeui.

Reports came in from Sabit's brigade on the extreme right. Not only had he been threatened, but a small force of the enemy, moving secretly through the woods, had actually reached Sakar Tepé (Y, Map II.), the highest point in Sali's

position. They had, however, been completely repulsed, with considerable loss, by half a battalion of Turkish troops that held this strong position.

From the number of Russians left dead upon the field, and the quantity of arms left behind, we could not estimate their loss in these actions in killed and wounded at less than 1100 men. The Turkish loss was comparatively small.

CHAPTER III.

Improved morale—After the battle—Turkish and Russian graves—Numbers on the dead—Barbarous Bashi Bazouks—Indignant soldiers—Roads and fortifications—Egyptian troops—A commanding hill—Fired at by outposts—A Council of War—The plan of attack—Suleiman's losses—Amateurs—Mr. Ashbury—Major Molloy—A ruse on correspondents—View of a battle-field—Disobedience of orders—Hours of suspense—Attack on Karahassankeui—Commencement of the battle—Russian guns retire—Dispersion of force—The fatal sward—General depression—Heavy fire—My horse killed—Russian counter-attack—Timely arrival of battery—Russian retreat—Cavalry charge—Up to the village—Dilatory General—Colonel Briscoe leads on the cavalry—Capture tumbrils—Russian intrenchment—Dead artillerymen—A night ride—In the enemy's lines.

THE moral result of the fighting before described was greater than the actual.

The career of the Eastern Turkish army south of the Danube had, since the commencement of the war, been one of almost uninterrupted disasters and retreats. Officers and men had lost confidence in themselves, and begun to believe that all they

could hope for was to hold for a given time the strong defensive positions which had been prepared.

It was true that our success had not proved the capacity of the Turkish army for attack. But it was the result of a forward movement.

The Sarnasufflar force had held its own against three times its numbers, and at the end of the action it held a more advanced position than at the beginning.

The Turkish soldier had seen his dreaded enemy retreating before him disorganized and demoralized.

Not only had the Russian dead remained upon the field, but the wood around the Tepé showed signs of hasty flight. Arms, drums, and many revolver pistols were picked up in profusion.

From the numbers on the shoulder-knots and kepis of the dead, we could tell precisely the regiments and brigades which had been engaged.

We had tables of the whole organization of the Russian army south of the Danube, and the ease with which the troops engaged could thus be recognized gave rise to military reflections as to whether this marking of regiments when on active service was not a mistake. The Turkish dead gave no clue to the force to which they belonged.

The next day we rode over the battle-field. Little graveyards had been carefully made for the repose of those who had fallen. Muscovite and Mussulman lay side by side, a small upright stone only distinguishing the latter from his quondam enemy.

But already a pest which proved most troublesome hereafter had developed itself. Armed villagers, *mauvais sujets*, attracted by the hope of plunder, hung about the army. If they could do so unobserved, they robbed the dead of their clothing, and instances of mutilation of the bodies were reported. During a lull in the fighting they would push forward, only to rush madly to the rear when danger showed itself. On this occasion the soldiers made a formal complaint, through their officers, relative to the conduct of these wretches, and I strongly urged upon Sali Pacha to bring the matter forcibly before the Marshal.

No rest was given to the men, and for the next two days the whole force was employed in throwing up fortifications and completing the so-much-wanted road through the wood, which would connect us directly with Sabit's Brigade on our right.

We moved the head-quarter camp to a pretty

knoll within a few hundred yards of the village of Sarnasufflar.

It had been determined to materially strengthen both the Sarnasufflar and Osman Bazaar columns by troops drawn from Tatar Oglou Bazardjik, and Varna. More battalions were also arriving from Constantinople. The Russians, after their defeat, had fallen back to their old encampments on the plain, and they still held Ayazlar and Haidarkeui with strong advanced guards. We made a road up to the Reconnaissance Hill, and placed a battery where the one gun had stood which had played so useful a part during the action.

On the 26th, the Egyptian troops from Varna began to arrive. They were fine, lithe, active-looking men, uncommonly well dressed and drilled; in fact, very far superior to the Turks in both respects, and they formed a strong contrast to the ragged battalions that had fought so well a few days before. By the 28th, eight battalions and three batteries had come in. Our previously weak line was now strongly occupied, all roads that could be useful had been completed, and the high ridge looked most formidable. The next day Prince Hassan himself arrived, and, being senior to Sali Pacha, he took command of the

whole force. He brought with him a large staff of European officers, many different nationalities being represented.

I had remarked that in front of the high peak of Sakar Tepé a wooded spur juttet out (J, Map II.) and ran almost within easy cannon-range of the village of Haidarkeui. It was important to know whether this was occupied, for, if not, it gave us complete command of the Russian position near the village. I accordingly made a personal reconnaissance of the point, first having requested that the Turkish outposts in the wood might be informed of my intention. I was told that this had been done, but as we rode forward the outposts fired into our party. The bullets whistled round our heads, but fortunately without doing any harm. I found the spur unoccupied, and we got unperceived within rifle-shot of the Russian picquets near the bridge over the Lom.

On the 29th, Mehemet Ali Pacha arrived, and a Council of War was held, composed of the Marshal, Prince Hassan, Sali Pacha, and myself, to consider the general military situation and the movements that should be carried out.

It had been determined that we should take the offensive. What line of action should be

adopted? A general attack on Popkeui appeared a feasible operation with a fairly-drilled army. But Popkeui was a strong position, and we had seen the Russians busily engaged for some days past in throwing up entrenchments to guard all its weakest points. Moreover, it was quite evident that the Turkish army entirely lacked the habit of manœuvring in large bodies, and had no competent staff for any large operation *en rase campagne*.

The Turkish army on this side had, as yet, made no successful offensive movement. It appeared to me of the utmost importance that the first attempt should have every chance in its favour. A successful offensive would immensely raise the *morale* of the troops, whereas a defeat might, on the contrary, have a disastrous effect. It therefore seemed wiser to undertake at first only a comparatively small movement, and to bring as large a force as possible to bear.

The mass of the Russian 13th Corps was in and around Popkeui, and on the left bank of the Kara Lom, but we had seen that Karahassankeui, on the right bank, was occupied, as we believed, by a brigade of infantry, a brigade of cavalry, and a battery (eight guns) of artillery. A reconnaissance made a few days before from Rasgrad

had reported that Sadina, on the Solenik Lom, was also occupied by the enemy's cavalry.

After considerable discussion, it was determined that Karahassankeui should be attacked and taken, and that, at the same time, the enemy's strong advanced guard should be driven in, both at Ayazlar and Haidarkeui, so as to occupy his attention all along the line.

A few days before, Nedjib Pacha's division from Rasgrad had been moved forward to near the village of Saslikeui. It was therefore available for the attack, and the Marshal considered it sufficient. But, as a much stronger force could be employed, I urgently pressed that it should be used, and the Marshal at length consented. The following plan was agreed upon :—

Nedjib's division was to march a little before daybreak, so as to occupy Spahilar at an early hour. At the same time, a brigade of Azaf's division and a cavalry regiment from Rasgrad were to move upon Sadina. These places taken, Nedjib was to attack Karahassankeui. Azaf was to support his right, whilst, at the same time, Sabit's brigade was to push through Bachiler, and, advancing on the right bank of the Kara Lom, was to threaten the communications of the

Russian force at Karahassankeui, and, if necessary, to join in the attack.

It was supposed that Karahassankeui might be strengthened by a Russian force that lay near Gagova, unless, indeed, it were abandoned on our approach.

Ali Riza's brigade, directly the attack on Karahassankeui was fully developed, was to push across the Lom and turn the Russian entrenched position near Haidarkeui. In order to accomplish this, it was to occupy, the night before, the projecting spur which I had reconnoitred, and there to construct masked batteries in the wood for eighteen guns, which would thus enfilade the Russian gun *emplacements*, and shelter trenches in rear of Haidarkeui. He was to have fascines made, to assist in crossing the river, which here was between three and four feet deep, about eighteen feet wide, but with one ford close at hand. At the same time Azim, on the left, was to advance upon Ayazlar, to push the Russians out of it, if he found them weak, but only to make a demonstration, and keep them engaged, if they were reinforced strongly from Popkeui.

The Marshal and his Staff were to take up their position at Sakar Tepé, from which a magnificent

panorama of the whole scene of operations lay visible below.

We had a long consultation over the general state of the campaign. Izzet Bey, the Marshal's aide-de-camp, had returned from Constantinople, but with no satisfactory result relative to the co-operation of Suleiman. It was reported that he was intriguing against Mehemet Ali in order to obtain the chief command; and by way of proving that he could not leave Shipka, had lost at least 12,000 of his best troops by hurling them constantly against impregnable positions.

Although the Osman Bazaar force had been strengthened to ten battalions and three batteries, the Marshal was very anxious about his left. Fresh telegrams were sent to Suleiman urging him to detach even a small force to co-operate with the columns at Osman Bazaar, and the Marshal buoyed himself up with the hope that his appeal would at last be successful.

Several amateurs had joined our camp. Mr. Ashbury, M.P. for Brighton, and Lieut.-Colonel Hume, who was travelling with him. Major Molloy, a distinguished officer of the Indian army, was carefully following the campaign. With the English and French military attachés, and the large international staff of Hassan Pacha, the

European element was strongly represented. Izzet Bey had been sent that day as a *Parlementaire* to the Russians, relative to some arrangement for carrying out more accurately the provisions of the Geneva Convention. He was to make his way, if possible, to the camp of the Grand Duke Nicholas. We had seen him with our glasses enter the Russian lines, and were anxious to know where he would be during the battle of the ensuing day.

Our camp swarmed with correspondents who, having heard of the late fighting, and rightly judging that it would be followed by some further movements, had, notwithstanding orders to the contrary, hurried to the spot. Day and night the Marshal was besieged for exemptions from the order which had been issued, and his good nature made it difficult for him to refuse.

One evening we were having a conversation as to the disadvantage suffered by modern generals from the constant presence of correspondents in or near their camps, and the consequent impossibility of keeping movements secret from the enemy. The Marshal was deploring the difficulty.

"Why not make use of them for disseminating false intelligence?" I suggested.

"How could it be done?" said the Marshal.

"Easily," I replied, "and without their lending

themselves to it. When the leading correspondents come to you for information, tell them, in confidence, that you have determined to cross the Danube at Silistria, and cut the Russian line of communication. Telegraph to Silistria and order a bridge of boats to be commenced across the Danube. In two or three days the secret will leak out. The Russians will get hold of it, and probably a whole division will be kept engaged in watching the Danube at that point.

The Marshal jumped at the idea. The telegraph clerk was sent for and the telegram despatched. Shortly afterwards some correspondents arrived, and the despatch of the telegram was confidentially communicated. A few days later news came that a Russian force was being assembled to watch Silistria from the left bank of the Danube. But the sequel of this little event was curious. Mehemet Ali forgot to countermand the bridge of boats, and, some time afterwards, the Governor of Silistria sent to say that it was nearly ready, and asked for orders for his action when it was completed. It had the effect of neutralizing a considerable Russian force during this stage of the war.

Early on the morning of the 30th, the Marshal, his staff, and a very large suite moved up to Sakar

Tepé (Y, Map III.). The day was clear, and with good glasses the whole of the enemy's position could be closely scanned. Many of the Russian tents at Popkeui seemed empty as if a portion of the force had been detached. A considerable part of the Russian troops from Haidarkeui was falling back on Popkeui, leaving, apparently, only a battalion, a regiment of cavalry, and a battery of guns to defend the intrenched positions (K, Map II.) in rear of the village.

We could see, as yet, no signs of Nedjib's movement, and all seemed quiet in the neighbourhood of Karahassankeui.

But on our side the inattention to orders, and want of an efficient staff which so characterized the Turkish army during the war, were already evident. No masked batteries had been made on the wooded spur (I, Map II.) above Haidarkeui. Ali Riza's brigade was not in position. But a mixed Turkish and Egyptian force stood formed up below Sakar Tepé, and a battery had taken up a position quite exposed to the enemy's guns which lay in the *emplacements* near Haidarkeui.

We had not long to wait for the result of this stupidity. Two little white puffs of smoke burst out from the Russian entrenchments, and two very well placed shells fell near the battery, which

now began to return the fire but with very inferior effect. This little artillery duel went on just below us for a considerable time until the Egyptian battery, finding that it was getting the worst of the contest, withdrew into the wood and kept up a slow fire from there. Orders were sent down to make the preparatory arrangements that had been indicated, for the subsequent attack on Haidarkeui; but it was already evident that the defence of that point would not be serious in the face of the immensely superior force we could employ.

Never did spectators of a battle-field have a more advantageous point of view than that afforded by the peak of Sakar Tepé. All eyes were strained in the direction of Spahilar, anxiously expecting the appearance of Nedjib's column; but, as yet, no sign of its advent was visible.

Presently, a Russian picquet on the high ground (L, Map II.) between Spahilar and Karahassan-keui appeared to be unusually disturbed. Several orderlies were sent from it to the rear at a gallop, and soon afterwards, first a squadron of cavalry, and then an additional squadron and two guns moved up to the support of this picquet.

The reason was shortly apparent; for, preceded by a regiment of cavalry, the division of Nedjib

came streaming down the hill above Spahilar. We soon lost sight of it again in the valley; but its cavalry, after a little time had elapsed, appeared moving in the direction of the Russian horsemen. Then little puffs of white smoke told that the cavalry skirmishers on either side were engaged.

Nearly an hour passed and no onward movement could be discerned.

Then, suddenly, an artillery fire commenced, slow and desultory, and the Russian advanced force fell rapidly back on the village of Ketcheler about a mile and a half from Karahassankeui. A part of the Turkish infantry had evidently been moving up the valley which led towards the former village. In it we could plainly see that there lay a small force of Russian infantry.

Soon a line of Turkish skirmishers came swarming down from the ridge above the village, and a rapid musketry fire showed that the infantry were at length engaged. But there was no check in the advance; and in a few minutes groups of Russian soldiers were seen running towards Karahassankeui in utter disorder. The cavalry and guns had already retired.

The advancing Turkish force seemed very small, but it pushed on rapidly.

The village of Karahassankeui lies on a rather high bluff on the right bank of the Kara Lom and about a mile and half distant from it. North of the village, and nearly three quarters of a mile distant, some steep wooded heights rise to a considerable elevation and completely command it (M, Map II.). From the bluff on which Karahassankeui stands, several spurs run down to the Lom, and between each spur there lies a rather deep valley. The road from Karahassankeui to Gagova runs down through one of these valleys and crosses the Lom by a wooden bridge with stone piers.

The south side of the village, towards Haidarkeui, gave a strong position, which the Russians had improved by earthworks for guns and infantry (N, Map II.). A narrow strip of high wood ran north and south from the village to these batteries, and gave good cover. To the east of this wood, south of Karahassankeui, and towards Ketcheler, there lay a very level, open grass sward of about fifty acres (O, Map II.). In the corner of this wood, between the wood and the village, there stood an extensive old cemetery (P, Map II.).

The position had evidently been prepared for an advance from the side of Sarnasufflar and

Haidarkeui, and not from Ketcheler. Still, from that side, the village on the left, the cemetery in the centre, and the wood, with the open green-sward in front, on the right, gave a strong natural position.

As the Turkish skirmishers advanced, we could see that this was the line which the Russians had occupied. We had been surprised at the weakness of the Turkish force which pushed forward to the attack of the village. Nedjib's division numbered thirteen battalions and three batteries, yet we could only detect two battalions anywhere near Karahassankeui.

This was soon partly explained, for a whole brigade and two batteries became visible, formed up on a knoll near Spahilar, four miles away from the point of attack. (Q, Map II.) The remaining battery had come into action upon the village from two points (L, R, Map II.), but at distances of over 4000 yards, and was producing but little effect.

When Nedjib's division had first become visible, Sabit's brigade (nine battalions), with a battery and four squadrons of cavalry, had moved forward through Bachiler, but, instead of advancing, they halted on the far side of that village.

At the same time we had seen, in the distance

over Sadina, the battery of Azaf's brigade in action, but it also did not seem to advance.

Notwithstanding all these mistakes there were signs that the enemy did not contemplate a very serious resistance, for the guns in the batteries at Karahassankeui limbered up, and, escorted by two squadrons of cavalry, fell back towards the Lom.

All the interest of the situation now rested upon the assault on the village. We had excellent glasses, and, although a long way off, every movement was visible. We saw the Turkish line of skirmishers come streaming over the open ground that lay between Ketcheler and Karahassankeui; they breasted the hill, and emerged on to the open, grassy sward. Then white puffs of smoke wreathed up all along the line of the wood and from the cemetery. The quick pace of the advance was checked, but, rapidly answering the fire, the thin line still pushed on.

The Turks were now half-way across the grass, but from the number making their way painfully to the rear—from the many dark forms that lay prostrate on the sward—it was evident that the Russian fire was telling heavily. Soon the line halted; there was a momentary pause, and then the whole crowd of men went rushing back in confusion towards Ketcheler.

The Russians saw their advantage, and pushed forward in pursuit; but, as they crossed the open ground, they were received by the fire of the Turkish supports, and they, in turn, fell back to their former positions in the wood and cemetery. Still, we could only make out two battalions of Turks as engaged. Where was the rest of the division?

We now saw the Turkish pack-horses come up with entrenching tools, and the men then set to work to make shelter-trenches on their side of the grassy sward (S, Map II.), but the working party evidently suffered considerably from the constant, though distant, Russian fire from the wood.

Half an hour elapsed, and then another attack was made on the Russian position, but with the same result as before. Again the Russians strove to advance, but the deadly level sward was fatal to either side that attempted to cross it. A constant but desultory fire was maintained between the two contending lines.

Another hour slipped away. Then two more battalions at length appeared as reinforcements for the Turks. Once more a fresh attack was made, but only to be again repulsed.

Hour after hour passed away in desultory fight-

ing. Sabit's brigade stood motionless in front of Bachiler, although an advance would have struck right at the enemy's communications. Another brigade of Nedjib's division still stood with its two batteries on the same hill as before, four miles from the battle-field. There was no further sign of Azaf's presence on the extreme right.

And now, encouraged by the resistance of their troops, we saw the Russian guns returning to their positions, and additional Russian reinforcements arriving from Gagova.

No less than twenty-eight Turkish battalions and five batteries had been told off to assist in the attack. Hours had passed away since the battle had commenced, and yet only four battalions and one battery had been engaged. It was already half-past three o'clock, and there was not the slightest sign of a more energetic line of action.

It was perfectly maddening to remain a spectator on our point of observation, and to see a battle so completely thrown away. I could stand it no longer, and begged Mehmet Ali to let me go down and order a general advance upon the village. It had originally been intended that the assault on Haidarkeui should be made directly

Karahassankeui had fallen, but it was evidently no time to wait, and the chief ordered an immediate attack. Collecting my English staff—Colonel Allix, Colonel Briscoe, and Major Jenner—and accompanied by Major Sartorius, we pushed rapidly down the steep declivity and galloped off in the direction of Bachiler. In the valley close to the right of the village (T, Map II.) we found Sabit's battery and four squadrons of cavalry; the men were dismounted and listlessly waiting. I ordered them to advance rapidly.

On the ridge (U, Map II.) about 3500 yards from Karahassankeui we came on Sabit's brigade. The men were lying down in the maize fields, but two battalions had been pushed forward and lay in skirmishing order on an advanced ridge (V, Map II.), not more than 1200 yards from the Russian guns, which had now returned and re-occupied their old positions (N, Map II.).

Inquiring anxiously for Sabit, I was told that he had gone away to the right, to try and find Nedjib Pacha. But Nedjib's nearest brigade lay two miles away, towards Spahilar. I sent Major Jenner to give the Marshal's order for its advance, and directed Colonel Allix to try and find Sabit. Then, with Colonel Briscoe, I rode on to the ridge (V) where lay the skirmishers, in order

to see what Russian force stood in front of them. There was nothing to the right of the Russian guns, and a quick advance would inevitably take the whole position. This gap (W, Map II.) had been lying open all the day, and no advantage had been taken of it.

The heat at this season of the year was intense, and, as the Turkish fez affords no protection from the sun, I and all the English officers with me were in the habit of wearing white covers wound round our head-dress. After we had ridden up and down the ridge for a short time the Russian batteries turned their fire on to us, following us wherever we went.

It was in vain that we urged forward the line of skirmishers to the attack. A general depression seemed to have set in. Their own general was absent. The officers had made up their minds that the day had gone adversely, and no one appeared willing to make an effort to retrieve it.

The Russian guns certainly made beautiful practice, and burst their shells every time within a few yards of us. The men were lying down and showed no sign of unsteadiness, nor any desire to go to the rear, but all our efforts to lead them forward in the face of this heavy artillery fire were

unavailing. They were immovable. Colonel Briscoe's horse had his flank torn open by a splinter of shell; my own was mortally wounded.

At this moment an incident occurred which turned the whole tide of events.

The Russian reinforcements coming up from Gagova, seeing that the whole of their communications between Karahassankeui and the Lom were exposed, suddenly determined upon a counter-attack upon Sabit's brigade. Extending for nearly a mile, and with their right flank resting on the Lom, a long line of Russian skirmishers came sweeping on (W). On arriving within about 800 yards of the Turkish line, they halted and opened fire. The Kranker rifle, with which they were armed, was miserably ineffective at this range, whilst even at that distance, the answering fire of the Turks with the Henry-Martini told heavily.

Just at this juncture the welcome sound of wheels was heard, and, bursting their way through a field of maize, the battery, which I had ordered up from Bachiler, dashed into its position on an adjacent ridge. At the same moment the four squadrons of Turkish cavalry moved up a neighbouring valley. This arrival was most opportune, and I told the commander of the battery to open a rapid fire of shrapnel on the Russians.

The Russian infantry nearest to the Lom, finding themselves completely exposed, turned and retreated hastily. Again we urged forward our men to the attack.

Then with a shout up rose the Turkish line, and drove straight at the enemy. There were a few moments of hesitation amongst the Russian infantry, but a fresh shower of shrapnel burst amongst them. Their foe was pressing heavily on; a sort of a tremor seemed to run along their line, and in another instant they were hurrying to the rear. I sent Colonel Allix to Ushreff Bey to push rapidly up the valley of the Lom with his cavalry, and to endeavour to harass or cut off the enemy's retreat.

We now turned our attention towards Karahas-sankeui. The Russian guns, seeing the advance of the Turks, limbered up, and retired at a gallop. But the Russian infantry were still more than holding their own in the wood and cemetery near the village. From our position we completely enfiladed them, and I turned the fire of our battery heavily upon their flank.

At this moment a fresh reinforcement from Neshet's, and also from Azaf's brigades, reached the Turkish troops at Karahassankeui. The Russians, who had fought admirably all day, seeing

their guns retiring and their communications threatened, while fresh forces of the enemy were massing in their front, now turned and fled in utter disorder.

Close up with the Turkish troops at Karahassankeui, were two regiments of cavalry under Kerim Pacha. If they now pressed boldly on, it would be impossible for the guns and this mass of broken infantry to escape across the Lom. But moving slowly forward, Kerim formed in column in front of the so lately contested wood, and halted there (X, Map II.).

Just as the Russian retreat in front of Sabit's Brigade commenced, we had heard the sound of infantry fire to our left, and, looking over the valley towards Haidarkeui, could see that the Turkish attack on that point had been completely successful, and that the Russian infantry and cavalry were retiring hastily in the direction of Popkeui.

Soon afterwards Sabit came up. He had never found Nedjib, but he now pushed on his reserves. At this moment a squadron of Russian cavalry, hoping to check the pursuit of their retreating infantry, charged the Turkish line of skirmishers. The latter never attempted to gain any closer formation, but, simply halting for a mo-

ment, poured in a withering volley upon the advancing horsemen, and sent them quickly to the rear.

In the meantime, Colonel Allix had gone forward with Ushreff Bey, and his four squadrons of cavalry, up the Lom valley; but the latter, moving his regiment in column, came under the fire of two fresh Russian batteries, that had come into position on the heights of Gagova (Z, Map II.) in order to protect the retreat of the disordered masses pouring across the Lom from Karahas-sankeui. Instead of taking a more open formation, and thus following the enemy's infantry and guns, he kept his squadrons in column, and, after experiencing some loss, fell back, and made no further attempt at advancing.

All resistance on the part of the Russians had now ceased, but, as usual with Turkish armies, no active pursuit was being made.

Just then we were joined by Selim Effendi, the Turkish Civil Commissioner at headquarters, who had much distinguished himself during the Servian war, and who always preferred military to civil duties. Accompanied by Colonel Briscoe, we galloped up to the village. Just outside the wood we found Kerim Pacha standing motionless with his two cavalry regiments. He had lost the

golden moments which would inevitably have given him all the Russian guns.

I urged him immediately to pursue. Colonel Briscoe's Irish blood was roused, and, drawing his sword, and calling to the cavalry to follow, he pushed on in the direction which the Russians had taken. The commanders of the two regiments answered willingly to the call, but their chief remained behind.

As we galloped down the valley, the excitement of the troops became immense, and, yelling "Allah!" and brandishing their weapons, they pressed eagerly forward. Their new leader caught the enthusiasm; waving a gigantic sword over his head, and shouting "Allah!" in a stentorian voice, and with a shade of a brogue, he led them down the ravine at headlong speed.

"It is all right, General," he said to me, as I came up. "These fellows have got their blood up at last, and I know now that they will follow me anywhere, if only it is not too late."

But it was too late. The precious moments had been lost by Kerim. We captured some ammunition waggons, but, as we burst out suddenly upon the valley of the Lom, it was clear that the real prize had escaped. The guns and infantry were already across the river, and two

fresh batteries of Russian artillery, and three battalions of fresh infantry, were drawn up on the opposite heights, and swept the bridge with their fire.

There were no infantry at hand; the shades of evening were fast falling, and, ordering cavalry posts to be placed all along the line of the river, we rode slowly back towards the village. As we passed near the wood, the Russian dead were lying thickly around, nearly all killed by the enfilading fire of Sabit's battery. The whole vicinity of the wood was strewn with arms, knapsacks, and every sign of a hasty and disordered flight.

We had a long night ride before us to reach our camp at Sarnasufflar, but we picked up two Circassians on the way, who declared that they knew the road.

We passed the strong entrenched position which had been occupied by the Russian guns, whose fire had cost me my poor horse. Some of the artillerymen were lying there stark and wan in the moonlight. Our guides declared that our best way was by Haidarkeui, which we, of course, supposed to have been occupied by our troops. We crossed the Lom by a deep ford, and made our way into the village. Not a

Turkish soldier was to be seen, and it seemed deserted.

At last we heard voices, and, as our guides were at fault as to the way out of the village, we made towards the sound. We came upon a party of Bulgarian peasants, evidently men who had been following the Russian army. They were frightened, and anxious to escape, and they either could not or would not give any information. But it was quite evident that our troops, after having taken the village and entrenchments, had retired, and that we were within the enemy's lines.

The Circassians, however, managed to discover the road, and after some trouble we found the bridge over the Lom leading towards our position and which had not been destroyed. In the dense wood below Sakar Tepé the Circassians were completely at fault, and it was not until reaching these woods that we came across our own outposts.

Thus if the Russians had been well served by their cavalry, they might have reoccupied Haidarkeui during the night, and we should have fallen into a trap on our journey homewards.

It was very late when we reached our camp at Sarnasufflar. The kind-hearted little Marshal was

still up with Prince Hassan. He had been very anxious about me, and was delighted at my safe arrival. Major Jenner, on his return from taking the order to Nedjib Pacha, had been unable to find me, as I had moved forward. The news of my horse having been killed had been exaggerated into my being killed, and I had already been telegraphed as missing.

The Marshal was good enough then and there to present me with the decoration of the Osmanić.

CHAPTER IV.

Reflections on the battle—The Turkish staff—Red-tapeism—Army administration—Want of manœuvring power—Mismanagement of force—Ammunition—Entrenching tools—Water-horses—No depôts—Raw battalions—Reserves too far in rear—Turkish and Russian firearms—Cavalry attacking infantry—Degenerated cavalry—Scouting duties—Bad tactics of Russians—Russians retire from Popkeui—An advance decided on—Country beyond Karahassankeui—The village the day after the battle—Russians burned—Reconnaissance Hill—Sabit's movement—Half-buried corpses—Dangerous coffee—Dead Russians in a well—Morning start—No advanced guards—Find the Russians—Circassians kill Cossack—Back to camp.

ALTHOUGH the battle of Karahassankeui had proved a complete success for the Turkish arms, still the events of that action gave rise to very serious reflections.

On my first arrival at Shumla, the military attachés of the different powers, who had availed themselves of the opportunity of following the earlier phases of the Danube campaign, were unanimous in their conviction of the utter want

of manœuvring power of the Turkish forces. Although, fortunately, from the immensely superior force employed at the objective point, the result of the action had been successful, still scarcely a single error had been left uncommitted in carrying out the carefully considered plan of attack.

The inefficiency of the Turkish staff had been singularly apparent. In the Turkish army the Staff occupies a position towards its general very different from that of any other army in Europe. Young officers are trained at the Staff College. They attain a certain amount of theoretical proficiency which is not, as a rule, prevalent amongst the generals whom they serve, but they lack experience in practical manœuvring in the field. At the same time they are eaten up with the knowledge which they think they have acquired.

As in the organization of the Ottoman army many of those branches which constitute the efficiency of European forces are absolutely deficient, so an immense stress is thrown upon the Staff officer. Although an Engineer corps nominally exists, the force is so small as to be practically useless. The consequence is that all the scientific work of the army falls upon the

Staff, which, even numerically, is quite inadequate to bear this strain.

There is a general opinion throughout Europe that the Turkish army has a rough-and-ready organization, from which red-tapeism is entirely omitted. The very reverse is the fact. There is no army in Europe so cumbered with reports, returns, and official correspondence. As a rule, a Turkish general spends the greater part of his day entirely occupied with office work. He rarely visits his troops, and he seldom exercises them in the practical manœuvres of a campaign.

The work which is usually done by the generals of other armies falls entirely upon his senior staff officer. The consequence is, that although outwardly showing the subserviency to his superiors which is characteristic of Oriental custom, the Chief of the Staff in an Ottoman army really holds a higher and more commanding position than in any other organized army in the world. Yet, as a rule, the young officers holding these positions are utterly unacquainted with the practical staff duties which are so carefully taught in Continental armies. They can describe the campaigns of Napoleon and Frederic the Great, but they have no idea of placing a division in its positions for an attack. The war has, it is true,

developed some brilliant exceptions, staff officers that any army in Europe might be proud to own, but they are few in number.

At the battle of Karahassankeui, no less than seven brigades had been in action along the whole line. Opposed to this force was only the Russian 13th Corps, which had its head-quarters at Popkeui; but the Turkish army employed was not, numerically, so immensely superior as might appear. The Turkish battalions were far inferior in strength to those of the Russians. By the Turkish system of purely regimental administration, an immense number of men are always taken out of the ranks, and the administration of the Turkish army, in time of war, is curiously conducted. Each battalion had attached to it a large number of *mekaré*, or pack-horses. Depôts of provisions and stores were assembled by the civil governors at certain points in the rear of the army. These were gradually pushed forward by means of country arabas to other depôts nearer to the line of operations. Then each battalion was responsible for drawing all the supplies that it required from the forward depôts so constituted. In addition, a Turkish battalion carries with it a very large supply of ammunition; each man has on his person 100 rounds; attached

to the battalion are thirty pack-horses, each carrying two boxes of 1000 rounds, or practically an additional reserve of 100 rounds per man; another hundred rounds per man follows with the reserve of the army. Attached to each of the eight companies of every battalion was one pack-horse, carrying the spades and pick-axes of the company, for working purposes—eight of each. In addition, a *sakka*, or water-horse is attached to each company. Thus, for these purposes alone, forty-six pack-horses attend each battalion. As no regular administrative service exists, large numbers of men are also withdrawn from the ranks to assist in the management and distribution of supply.

The system of organization adopted at Constantinople during the war, tended still further to reduce the numerical strength of the battalions. Instead of forming dépôts for the different regiments which were actively employed in the front, the whole object of successive Ministers of War appeared to be to raise fresh battalions out of the raw levies that were constantly pouring in, and to send these battalions half officered and undrilled to take their place in the general line of battle. The result was, that the older battalions of the army, only fed occasionally by a few recruits,

dwindled gradually away under the stress of war. At the period of the action of Karahassankeui, few of the battalions numbered more than 400 men in the ranks, whilst the battalions of the Russian army were generally from 700 to 800 strong.

As a military operation, the battle of Karahassankeui had resolved itself into a series of detached movements upon different points. The main object was, naturally, to drive the Russian forces from that village, and to acquire the right bank of the Lom. Amongst the many errors committed in the execution of this project, one which had been described to me by witnesses of former phases of the war as common, was painfully apparent. It appears to be a mania with Turkish generals to keep the mass of their forces in reserve, and to retain that reserve so far in rear that it is practically useless as bearing upon the objective point of attack. This error was curiously evident during the action.

The division of Nedjib Pacha had been ordered to attack and occupy Karahassankeui. On his right a brigade of Azaf Pacha's division was to advance upon Sadina, and support the attack of Nedjib. On Nedjib's left, Sabit Pacha was advancing from Bachiler, and would protect and

support him on that flank. These four brigades, or a whole Corps d'armée, with five batteries, and three regiments of cavalry, were absolutely available for the attack; yet, with all this force disposable, during the greater part of the day the assault itself was left to only two battalions. It was not until these two battalions were utterly exhausted and demoralized, that they were fed by two more from their own brigade. This force, proving still insufficient, was eventually strengthened by the two remaining battalions of Ibrahim Pacha.

During all this time the brigades of Sabit, of Neshet, and of Azaf, stood looking on at nearly an hour's distance from the battle-field. Had it not been for the eventual advance of Sabit's brigade on the left, notwithstanding the immense numerical advantage of the Turks near the objective point, Karahassankeui might have resulted in a demoralizing defeat. It is only just to Nedjib Pacha to state that the orders for attack were issued by the Staff in so confused a form, that he imagined only a reconnaissance in force was intended.

During the action the great superiority of the Turkish fire-arms was singularly apparent. The Russians on their advance near the Lom, opened

fire almost out of range of the inferior rifle with which the Russian infantry were then armed. The consequence was that they suffered heavily from the fire of the Turkish line which, itself, remained practically untouched.

The attack of the small Russian force of cavalry upon the skirmishing line of the Turkish infantry near the Lom, had shown that steady infantry can, with the new arms of precision, repulse an ordinary cavalry attack, even in open formation.

Nothing was more evident than the bad handling of the Turkish cavalry. After the Crimean war the whole Turkish army was remodelled upon the French system. The half-irregular cavalry which had distinguished itself so much in the campaigns of 1828-29, was clothed, equipped, and drilled, upon the French model. The result was that they lost entirely the *élan* which had characterized them in the earlier days of the Turkish Empire. Turkish cavalry officers had not studied or acquired the knowledge of the new action of cavalry which the campaigns in Austria and in France had developed. Although the individual soldier was intelligent and trustworthy, the officers were utterly deficient in that activity and intelligence which must characterize effective cavalry in these modern days.

The cavalry was nearly always to be found well in the rear of the infantry line. Scouting and reconnaissance duties were rarely attempted.

No more favourable opportunity could have occurred for the action of cavalry upon a beaten army than after the retreat of the Russians from the village ; yet Kerim Pacha, with two regiments at hand, had stood idly doing nothing whilst the Russians withdrew their guns and a part of their *matériel*.

But, if the management of the Turkish forces showed many errors, it must be admitted that the tactics of the Russian army were but little superior. In committing themselves to so serious an action at Karahassankeui, and only supporting the troops which occupied the village with a comparatively small force, the Russians laid themselves open to defeat. It is evident that they should either have abandoned the village without a very serious resistance, or that they should have supported the position with all the force which was available by making a counter-attack.

Although but one division of the Russian army had been severely handled, the defeat, coupled with their want of success in the attack on Sarnasufflar, must evidently have had a most demoralizing influence upon the 13th Corps.

The result of this was evident the day after the battle, for, as morning broke, it could be plainly seen that the position of Popkeui had been abandoned, and that the main Russian army had fallen back upon Balsa-Yourmakeui, and a high ridge in rear of Polomarca (Ab Map I.). The line of the Lom, towards Karahassankeui, was only watched by three battalions of infantry, and some squadrons of Cossacks. With good glasses we could see that they were entrenching themselves all along the line.

A Council of War was held in the morning before the departure of Mehemet Ali Pacha for Rasgrad. It was determined that the whole right bank of the Lom should be occupied.

Not only had the Russians held Karahassankeui previous to the battle, but they had also occupied all the ground lying between the Solenik and Kara Loms. They had also pushed across the river at Yovan Tchifik to Kadikeui, near Rustchuk. As the Rustchuk garrison numbered, at this time, twenty battalions, it was determined to employ a part of this force in driving back the detachment of the 12th Russian Corps to the other side of the Kara Lom. This movement was successful, and it seemed improbable that the Czarewich would risk any considerable force in the angle

formed by the Kara and Solenik Loms after the fall of Karahassankeui. It was further determined that the whole Rasgrad army should advance and take up this line.

Above the village of Karahassankeui, as has been before explained, there rise some wooded heights of considerable elevation (M, Map I.). These heights, marked with many undulations and ravines, follow the course of the Lom, right away to its junction with the Solenik Lom below Kacelievo. The day after the battle they were occupied on the Karahassankeui side by a brigade of infantry, and a battery of guns was pushed forward to a commanding peak which sweeps the valley of the Lom in the direction of Opaka.

On his way to Rasgrad, Mehemet Ali Pacha passed through the village of Karahassankeui, and we accompanied him, and had an opportunity of studying all the details of the battlefield. We found it difficult to judge, with precision, the actual force of Russians which had been engaged. Some prisoners, who had been taken, reckoned it as low as eight battalions, whilst others placed it as high as sixteen. But from the number of dead left on the field, and the immense quantity of arms and *matériel* found

in and around the village, it was evident that the loss must have been very considerable, and the demoralization very complete.

During the different phases of the action the village had been set on fire in many places, and was more than half destroyed. In the remains of one burning house a very large number of Russian dead were found. Report rated the number of bodies as high as two hundred. It is impossible to account for so many being thus discovered. Had the Russians during the action piled away their dead in this position? Or, had it been used as a temporary hospital?

From the returns which came in from the Turkish forces we found that our total loss was upwards of nine hundred men, but the moral result was immense. Officers and soldiers forgot the errors of the day in its subsequent success, and all became convinced that they could attack the Russian forces in the open field with confidence of victory.

Having waited for some hours in Karahassan-keui, Mehemet Ali Pacha pushed on to Rasgrad with the intention of making, within two days, a general advance upon the line of the Lom. We returned to our camp at Sarnasufflar.

On September 1st, the whole head-quarter camp

at Sarnasufflar was moved up to the Reconnaissance Hill above the village (A). From this high ground a splendid view of the position which the Russians still occupied could be obtained. Prince Hassan and his staff had brought with them some excellent telescopes. Mr. Ashbury had lent me a deer-stalking glass of very great power. These were established upon stands, and officers were constantly kept on the watch to report all the movements of the Russian forces which lay in the distance below. The result was most useful. Every minor movement could be detected, and thus gave us an excellent idea of the enemy's positions and probable tactics.

Prince Hassan had brought with him large tents and all the luxuries of European civilization. The sleek and well-conditioned horses of the Egyptian officers and cavalry formed a marked contrast to the hard-worked animals of the Turks. We had experienced considerable difficulty in purchasing horses for our own use. I had brought up only two with me from Constantinople—one my old grey "Imaum," whom I had bought during a journey through Central Asia some four years before. He had carried me for many a hundred miles through the wilds of the Turkoman country, and I had taken him back to England, and then

out to Turkey. The other, a more common but very useful horse that I had purchased in a hurry just before leaving Constantinople.

I generally rode my old favourite, but on the day of Karahassankeui some presentiment, I suppose, had come over me, and at the last moment I had ordered the saddle to be taken off him and placed on the other. That poor little grey was mortally wounded as we came riding along the ridge near the Russian battery. I had only, in addition, been able to buy ponies, but for our rough, ordinary work in scrambling up and down the hilly wooded sides of these mountains we found them more useful than horses. The high-class Arabs of the Egyptian officers proved little suited to this work.

On September 2nd, it was expected that the advance of the Rasgrad force would be commenced. We knew that Sabit's brigade from Karahassankeui was to make a movement towards its right in support of the advance of the Rasgrad divisions. I had arranged to move forward with that brigade, in order to be present, should any serious opposition be offered to our general advance. Major Molloy accompanied me, together with several of the military amateurs from Sarnasufflar.

On arriving at Karahassankeui, I found a whole

Corps d'armée occupying the village. There had been an idea that the Russians might make a counter-attack. Consequently, the whole division of Nedjib and the brigades of Azaf and Sabit had strongly occupied and entrenched the position. On reaching the village, we found its sanitary condition most defective. No care had been taken in the burial of the Russian dead. The carcasses of horses and animals were lying untouched, and the smell of the whole place was most intolerable. Along the road that we followed, mere heaps of earth had been thrown upon the Russian corpses, and heads, arms, and legs were protruding from the ground and exposed to the action of a powerful summer sun.

I immediately paid a visit to Azaf Pacha, who was the senior officer in command, and pointed out to him the necessity of at once correcting this careless and barbarous system. Fatigue parties were then told off to perform the duties towards the dead in a more satisfactory manner.

We were hospitably entertained by Neshet Pacha, who gave us over for the night a little shelter, made of branches of trees, which had been erected for him by his troops, and we slept on the ground wrapt in our blankets. In the course of the evening an unpleasant incident occurred. We

had just been served with coffee, when the soldier-servant rushed in with some intelligence which evidently produced a great effect upon all the officers present. On inquiring the cause, we found that it had been discovered that the village well was full of putrid Russian corpses! We all looked curiously at each other. Where had the water come from with which that coffee had been made? Some of our party grew pale with horror and disgust. Our hosts assured us that their water would in future be brought from a more distant spring, but we all made a mental vow not to touch the apparently harmless fluid during the remainder of our stay at Karahassankeui.

Some of the houses in the village were still burning. Animals pent up in out-houses had been destroyed by the flames, and the smell and surroundings of the whole place were so obnoxious that few of us slept with any comfort during the night.

Before daybreak the brigade of Sabit Pacha was under arms. He was to move down by the mountain road to Sadina, and then to push forward by another path which led through the mountains to the village of Djelin Yenikeui. At the same time, it was expected that the Rasgrad force would move by Solenik upon

Kacelievo and Tzerovtza. I inquired from Sabit whether the cavalry had been sent forward to reconnoitre the country through which it was proposed to advance, and he informed me that they had moved to Sadina for this purpose on the previous day. A force of 300 Circassians was also encamped in the neighbourhood of Sadina.

On our arrival at that village, which lay in a broad part of the valley of the Solenik Lom, we found all the cavalry still assembled there. A few vedettes occupied the neighbouring hills, but no reconnoitring parties had been sent forward. The whole cavalry force, including the Circassians, now moved up the mountain-path, immediately followed by a brigade of infantry and a battery of guns. Positions lay in front which, if they had been occupied by the enemy's artillery, would have completely swept our little column as it wound through the defiles. No military precautions of any kind had been taken. I think Sabit must have seen my look of amazement, for he came to me at last to ask whether I thought that a squadron of cavalry should be pushed farther to the front, and, on my agreeing with him, the whole column was halted, and small cavalry parties were detached in all directions to recon-

noitre the country through which we had orders to advance.

No sign of the enemy was apparent until the village of Djelin Yenikeui was reached. The Circassians, in their wild, irregular manner, pushed on over the hills in front of the village, and soon a few shots told that the enemy's picquets had been found. The infantry and guns took up a position on the Sadina side of the village, whilst we went forward with all our cavalry to reconnoitre the strength and position of the Russian forces.

We looked down into the deep valley of the Kara Lom. The Circassians had stalked and killed an unfortunate Cossack vedette, and now brought in his horse and arms. Two squadrons of Russian cavalry occupied a knoll of ground about a mile distant, and a squadron of Cossacks kept up a desultory fire from a wood to our left front. On the other side of the valley of the Lom there lay a camp of about a regiment of infantry, and, away to our right, still occupying the right bank of the Lom in the direction of Tzerovtza, more considerable bodies of cavalry could be detected with our glasses, but on that side no infantry were discerned.

We waited until evening in the hope of seeing

the advance of the column from Rasgrad, but eventually information reached Sabit that the movement had been delayed.

It seemed so improbable that the Czarewich would risk a certain defeat by maintaining a part of the 12th Corps in the angle of the two Loms near Kacelievo that I came to the conclusion that the right bank of the Kara Lom was now only occupied by the enemy's cavalry, and as it appeared likely that some further movement would shortly be made by the Sarnasufflar force, we returned that night to our old camp on the Reconnaissance Hill.

CHAPTER V.

Return of Izzet Bey—A trying position—A blindfolded drive
Grand Duke Nicholas—Cossack inhumanity—Wounded
women and children—Good conduct of Turkish soldiers—
A bitter war—A wounded Russian—Bashi Bazouks—
Armed villagers—Barbarous behaviour to the dead—
Circassians—Personal bravery—Russian reinforcements—
Kara Lom—Solenik Lom—Ford and ravines—Battle of
Casaljevo—No news—Long-range shooting—Turkish and
Russian cavalry—A general retreat—An easy prey—Pro-
posed pursuit—A lost opportunity—In the Russian camp
—The enemy escape—A Russian *Parlementaire*—A frank
avowal—Loss of touch.

ON our arrival at camp on the Reconnaissance Hill we found that Mr. Ashhury had unexpectedly taken his departure. He had, however, kindly left us all his stores, which proved most valuable, and, in addition, the deer-stalking telescope which had been such a treasure to us in our reconnaissance duties.

The next morning Izzet Bey returned from his visit to the Russian camp. His description of all the vicissitudes of his journey was very interest-

ing. He had left, it will be remembered, the afternoon previous to the battle of Karahassankeui. We had seen him safely reach the Russian advanced posts near Ayazlar, and were under the impression that he had been immediately conducted to Popkeui. Such, it appears, was not the case.

On his arrival at Ayazlar he was met by a Russian officer, who informed him that he must remain with the advanced posts until the Russian general had been communicated with. He had to sleep that night in a Russian soldier's tent, and being perfectly aware that a military movement upon Karahassankeui was to take place in the morning, he felt under considerable apprehension as to what might be his probable fate if an attack were made upon Ayazlar before his departure. Early the next day he heard the opening guns in the direction of Haidarkeui, and he was immediately hustled off blindfolded to (as he imagined) Kovatza. He could hear the battle raging away to his right, and, on arriving at Kovatza was taken to the house of the general in command, from whom he received rather scant courtesy. The whole place was in utter confusion. Aides-de-camp galloped about, and from the general surroundings he already gathered that things were

going adversely for the Russian arms. He was then placed in a carriage blindfolded and driven for hours over bad roads till he arrived at what he considered must be Biela. There he made a short halt, and was well entertained by the Russian officers. Shortly afterwards he again set out on his journey till he imagined he had reached Gorni-Studini.

At this place he had an interesting interview with the Grand Duke Nicholas.

The Grand Duke made serious complaints with regard to the barbarous conduct of the Circassians and Bashi Bazouks. Izzet Bey replied by calling attention to the unexpected inhumanity that had been shown, not only by the Bulgarians, but by Cossacks acting in concert with them.

The Grand Duke tried to explain away the occurrence which had recently attracted so much public attention, and in consequence of which Turkish women and children, wounded by Cossack lances, were to be seen in numbers in the hospitals at Shumla. He endeavoured to prove that the affair had originated by the Turks opening fire upon the Cossacks, and that then an indiscriminate attack, which he much regretted, had been made by Bulgarians and Cossacks. He said, "I take off my hat to the conduct of the

Turkish regular soldiers ; but I sincerely trust that the Turkish Government will do their utmost to repress the excesses of the Circassians and Bashi Bazouks."

Izzet Bey, after resting one night, was sent back in a carriage with the same precautions as before. On his arrival at what he imagined to be Kovatza, he found the Russian General, Behrenhoff, in a considerable state of excitement, and he gathered from his conversation that we were already in possession of Karahassankeui, if not of Popkeui as well. He was then forwarded on through our outposts, and arrived safely that afternoon.

His conversation with the Grand Duke will bear testimony to the conduct of the Turkish soldiers generally during this period of the war.

Although, no doubt, the excited state of the two armies will account for considerable animosity and severities in the heat of action, still, all who witnessed the behaviour of the Turkish regular soldier cannot fail to absolve him from anything approaching the barbarous charges which were often, with justice, laid to the share both of Circassians and Bashi Bazouks, Bulgarians and Cossacks.

We had ourselves seen on our visit to Karahas-sankeui, two days after the battle, a singular

incident which tended to prove the humanity and kind feelings of the Turkish regular troops.

A Russian soldier, wounded during the battle, had crept into a house, and, terrified by the reports which were then so current in the Russian army as to his probable fate if taken prisoner, concealed himself, although without food or water, for a period of two days. He was then discovered by some Turkish privates, and was brought before the General who commanded the brigade, Neshet Pacha.

Not only was every attention shown to this man, as might have been expected, by the General and his Staff, but the soldiers themselves pressed forward eagerly to give him a part of their rations. Others hurried off to draw water for the thirsty man, and not a few offered him a share of their scanty portion of tobacco.

But it is much to be feared that the charges brought against both the Circassians and the Bashi Bazouks, though generally exaggerated, were often true. The term "Bashi Bazouk" has, however, been much misunderstood by the British public.

"Bashi Bazouk," to the Turkish mind, conveys the idea of what we should term a civilian. By the English public it has been accepted as repre-

senting a body of irregular troops in the Turkish service. But the men to whom the term "Bashi Bazouk" was so freely applied during the war, were really armed villagers—*mauvais sujets*—from all parts of the country, who followed the army in the hope of plunder.

To be distinguished from these, must be reckoned the armed villagers driven from their homes by the advance of the Russians. These men had in many cases seen their wives and families shamefully maltreated both by Bulgarians and Cossacks, and it is not to be wondered at if, in some instances, they were guilty of retaliation.

Both these parties added much to the difficulties of Turkish generals. As no military police force was attached to the army, it was impossible to keep an accurate watch over their movements.

Many harmless villagers were wandering about the country—driven from their homes by the barbarous character of the war—and it was utterly impossible to distinguish between these men and the so-called "Bashi Bazouks," or plundering camp followers.

It has been mentioned that after the action at Sarnasufflar, the Turkish regular troops had made a formal complaint, through their officers, with regard to the conduct of the latter class of Bashi

Bazouks. They stated that these men were guilty of most barbarous conduct towards the dead; that they pushed forward into the line of battle at moments when they thought that all danger had ceased, and were the first to run to the rear directly any firing recommenced. This, the soldiers complained, had a most demoralizing effect on the troops themselves; and they respectfully urged that some measure should be adopted to prevent the nuisance.

With regard to Circassians it was well known that they had ever conducted their warlike operations in a bloodthirsty and relentless spirit. Their value to the army at this time was very problematical. They acted under their own chiefs, but drew rations from the Government, by whom they were supplied with arms and ammunition. Their whole mode of action was so irregular that they could not be trusted to perform any military operations with certainty. They were under no possible control. At times they would swarm in front of the army, and, acting as scouts, with that intuitive military instinct which undoubtedly distinguishes them, would bring back information of value. But they would only go upon those expeditions just when the fancy suited them.

Although instances of extreme personal bravery

were common amongst them, they were not to be trusted in bodies when acting in front of the Russian regular troops. They had a wholesome terror of shells, but distinguished themselves more especially in the capture of outlying Russian picquets, or in other irregular incidents of regular warfare. There was such a dearth of cavalry at this time with the Turkish army that the Government was afraid to dispense with their services.

We remained on the Reconnaissance Hill in a state of utter uncertainty relative to the date of the probable movement from Rasgrad. It was evident that there was considerable danger in any lengthened delay in our military operations. It was well known that the Russian reinforcements were already on their way through Roumania, and it was necessary to strike at once, now that the tide of fortune seemed to be turning so completely in our favour.

In order fully to understand the operations which were contemplated, it will be well to give a cursory description of the country bordering upon the valleys of the different branches of the Lom.

The Kara Lom which runs in front of Sarnasufflar and past Karahassankeui, enters near the latter village a deep, broad valley. Thence it winds down till its junction with the combined Solenik

and Beli Loms below Kacelievo. From that point to the Danube it runs through an undulating country, its banks being marked by steep and impassable cliffs. It is only at some few places that these can be passed even by a single person on foot. Between this point of junction and its entrance to the Danube near Rustchuk, the Lom affords an excellent line of defence. It was only necessary to watch the few bridges or fords across the river, where the ravine could be ascended, in order to guard the whole line.

The banks of the Solenik Lom, which runs past Sadina, are of precisely the same character, and there are only a few places where its passage by an army is practicable. Two of these lie near Solenik, and it seemed highly improbable, from the reconnaissance which we had made with Sabit, that if the Czarewich had intended to maintain the Kacelievo position in force, he would have left the difficult passages near Solenik undefended by earthworks and troops.

Our knowledge of the nature of the country confirmed us all at Sarnasufflar in the opinion that the advance of the Rasgrad force to the line of the Kara Lom would not be attended by any serious resistance.

On September 5th these ideas were destined to be falsified.

Early on that morning the sound of cannon in the distance told us that an action of some importance was taking place in the direction of Kacelievo. Looking down the deep valley of the Lom, we could see with our glasses the projecting point which marks the position of Kacelievo, and we watched anxiously for some indication of the turn which the action in that direction was taking. Hour after hour passed away and the firing grew heavier and heavier; but it was not till the afternoon that we could distinctly detect, even with our best telescopes, the absolute movement of troops upon the point in question. Soon we could plainly distinguish the guns that were in action, and we eagerly looked to the direction in which their fire pointed. It was evident that they were Turkish artillery, and their forward movement indicated sufficiently that a fresh defeat was being inflicted upon the Russians.

Evening fell, and with it the action ceased, but no news came as to the result of the battle.

That evening we held a small Council of War in Hassan Pacha's tent. A report had come in that, late in the afternoon, troops, apparently belonging to the 13th Russian Corps, had been seen to move

down in the direction of Opaka, in order to render assistance to the hard-pressed forces of the Czarewich. It seemed important so to occupy the 13th Russian Corps that it might not be able to lend its aid to the Russian troops then acting against the Turkish forces from Rasgrad.

It was therefore determined that a reconnaissance in force should be made on the morrow. Part of the troops were to advance from Ayazlar towards Soultankeui, and in the direction of Popkeui, whilst the cavalry pushed forward in advance of Haidarkeui towards the thick woods in which a few Russian infantry had still been detected (A c Map II.). At the same time three batteries of guns were to be placed on the wooded spur (I.) near Haidarkeui, which could thus check any Russian advance if our reconnoitring parties were pushed rudely back.

Accordingly, the next day, a part of Azim's brigade from Ayazlar, with a battery of artillery, moved forward to the high ground, just above Soultankeui (A d, Map II.). The Russians strengthened their cavalry force, which was guarding Popkeui, with a battalion of infantry and a battery of guns. The Turkish artillery officers on the wooded spur near Haidarkeui were of opinion that the nine centimetre Krupp guns

would carry as far as the Russian entrenchments at Popkeui (A e, Map II). The distance was certainly 6000 yards, but, by sinking the trails of their guns in the ground, they did manage to throw some shells—though wildly directed—amongst the Russian troops which had taken up their position near Popkeui. Although the Russian cavalry were in immensely superior force in front of Haidarkeui, they fell back before the small detachments of Turkish regular cavalry and Circassians advancing from that village. Towards evening a tremendous storm of rain induced the cessation of military operations. Our reconnoitring parties retired; but in the movement of the Russian troops during the day there had been indications of very considerable uncertainty and demoralization.

At daybreak, on the morning of September 7th, Mehemet, with a most joyous expression upon his face, popped his head into my tent with the news that the Russians had gone, and I soon gathered from him that the whole 13th Corps was in full retreat. I immediately repaired to the tent of Salih Pacha, and we determined to go to Prince Hassan, who was in command of the army of Sarnasufflar, and to urge a vigorous and rapid pursuit.

Our telescopes had shown us that the Russian force had completely abandoned all their positions in the valley of the Lom; and that they were then concentrated in and around Kovatza in a crowded mass. They had left their entrenched works near Balzi-yumurkeui, and in rear of Polomarka (A b, Map I.), and covered by a small rear-guard, were waiting in the valley (A f, Map I.) whilst a number of arabas, guns, and pack animals, were making their way along the narrow road which led by a bridge over a ravine from Kovatza, in the direction of Voditza and Kopritza, towards Biela.

It was evident that these troops should be pursued in the state of confusion that must arise whilst they were still encumbered with such a mass of transport. Their roads to the rear were blocked by trains of artillery and stores, and they would fall an easy prey to a general advance of the army from Sarnasufflar, encouraged, as it had been, by the constant tide of recent successes.

Hassan Pasha seemed at first inclined to agree to our proposal; but, after a consultation with some of the more trusted members of his staff, he urged the great responsibility which would devolve upon him if we became seriously engaged before he had received fresh instructions from

Mehemet Ali Pacha, and knew the actual result of the action at Kacelievo.

Both Salih and I urged strongly upon the Prince the great opportunity which lay before him, and he eventually consented that we should each move forward with a brigade—Salih upon Balsi-yumurkeui, whilst I was to occupy the abandoned Russian entrenchments between Polomarka and Kovatza. It was evident that by the time our forces reached those points more than half of the 13th Corps would be winding through the valley of the Baniska Lom, on its way to Biela. The remainder, completely commanded from the two points in question, could yield no effectual resistance, and it seemed probable that all the guns that remained behind, and a large number of Russian prisoners and stores must inevitably fall into our hands.

The brigades were immediately placed under arms, and Salih and I had mounted our horses, and were on the point of starting when we received a countermand from the Prince. His staff had dissuaded him from taking the responsibility.

Utterly depressed, Salih and I, having sent on the cavalry to press as much as possible the retreating Russians, followed ourselves in the direction of Popkeui.

We rode up through the now deserted village that had so lately been occupied by the headquarters and a large portion of the 13th Corps. There were traces in the numerous graves that surrounded the encampment, of the heavy loss which the Russians had sustained during their stay in that position. We pushed through the wood in rear of the village, and eventually reached a point from which we looked down upon the mass of retreating Russian troops at a distance of only about a mile.

Our cavalry had advanced together with the Circassians, but they had naturally been checked by the mixed rear-guard of cavalry, infantry, and guns, which had been left by the Russians to protect their retreat. Had our two brigades, with batteries of artillery, pushed forward, as we had so strongly urged, it was evident that nothing could have saved a large portion of the Russian 13th Corps.

We waited for a considerable time, in a state of utter disappointment, watching the movements of the retreating enemy. Occasionally they threw a few shells amongst our advanced parties of cavalry, but without producing any serious effect.

On our return, when near the village of Popkeui, we met a Russian officer who had been to

Shumla as a *Parlementaire*, bringing the answer of the Grand Duke Nicholas to the letter which Mehemet Ali Pacha had forwarded through Izzet Bey. His eyes were blindfolded, and he requested to be sent on to the village of Popkeui to the head-quarters of the 13th Corps of the Russian army. His surprise was extreme when he was told that he was then at the village of Popkeui, and found himself surrounded in that position by Turkish officers and soldiers. The changes which had taken place during his absence were explained to him, and it was urged that, for his own safety, it would be advisable that he should wait until the operations of the day had ceased, when we would forward him with every care to his own picquets.

On our return to camp we reported the result of our expedition to Prince Hassan. He most openly and frankly assured us that he was aware, on reflection, that he had made a mistake, and had lost an opportunity, and that he had been too much actuated by the fear of the grave responsibility which would rest upon him as the Commander of the Sarnasufflar army, had any reverse taken place which might hamper the projected movements of the Commander-in-Chief.

On the following morning the weather, which

had hitherto been tolerably fine, changed suddenly. Heavy and unremitting rain set steadily in. The Turkish cavalry had been recalled towards the evening to their former positions near Haidar-keui. The Russians had entirely retreated, and the consequence was that all touch between the two armies had been completely lost. Instead of the retiring enemy being followed by scouts who might report upon their line of retreat, and the points which they had eventually reached and occupied, two days passed away without any reliable information being given relative to the positions of the Russian forces.

CHAPTER VI.

Heavy rains—Accounts of the battle—Arrival of Mehemet Ali—Offensive or defensive—Demoralized Russians—Ahmed Eyoub—Attack from Rustchuk—Junction of forces—A strong garrison—Biela or Tirnova—Extension of force—A short line of operations—The south of Biela—Reinforcements from Soukoum Kalé—Plan communicated to Suleiman—Russian divisions—High *morale*—A turn in the tide—A chance for Suleiman—Turkish telegraph—Sali Pacha's division—The Rasgrad army—Circassian reports—Out in advance—A reconnaissance—Lost cavalry—A peaceful scene—Cowardly Bashi Bazouks—Cossack skirmishers—Send for reinforcements—A Circassian scout—The cavalry arrive—Russian infantry and guns—A fine battalion—Take the hill—Russian retreat—Maltreated dead.

THE ground had become so deep from rain, that the movement of cannon was almost impossible. In the ploughed fields, on the top of the Reconnaissance Hill, where our camps were pitched, we waded about in seas of mud. It was evident that until a change took place in the weather all military operations must remain at a standstill.

On the evening of the 10th we were agreeably surprised by the arrival of the English and French military attachés, who had been with the Rasgrad army during the action at Kacelievo. Their account of the battle was listened to with intense interest. The brunt of the action had fallen upon Fuad's division, and Sabit's brigade had not been seriously engaged until the Russians were driven across the Kara Lom; but the general result of the action was decisive. They estimated the strength of the enemy at a division of the Russian 12th Corps. The Russian loss had been serious and the victory complete.

It was evident that the constant tide of recent successes must lead to some important change in the general plan of the campaign.

Mehemet Ali shortly afterwards arrived, and it was decided that a Council of War, to consider questions of the gravest importance, should be held the next morning in the tent of Prince Hassan.

Early on the morrow the Council met, as had been agreed upon. It consisted of Mehemet Ali Pacha, Prince Hassan, Salih Pacha, Ismail Pacha, Commander of the Egyptians, and myself. Mehemet Ali explained to us that, although he had so persistently requested the co-operation of

Suleiman on his left, no news had arrived which would lead him to believe that the support so urgently pressed for was likely to be forthcoming. He laid before us the question of whether we should still continue to remain upon the defensive; or whether, taking advantage of the constant series of victories which had followed each other so rapidly in the course of the past few weeks, we should seize the opportunity for an offensive movement before the arrival of the Russian reinforcements.

We were all unanimous in the opinion that to wait until these reinforcements arrived, and to allow the demoralized Russian troops, then in our front, to recover from the depression which was so distinctly evident, would be a fatal mistake. The Russian reinforcements, which were expected to arrive during the ensuing month, were so large in number, that they must plainly have a most serious influence on the campaign unless some fatal blow could be struck prior to their arrival.

An offensive movement having been thus determined upon, the Commander-in-Chief gathered from us respectively our views as to the form which the operation should assume.

It appeared that a consultation had already taken place before his departure from Kacelievo,

and that he had asked the opinion of Ahmed Eyoub, and of some of the superior officers there present, and that by the former, at least, an advance from the side of Rustchuk had been strongly urged. Prince Hassan, Salih Pacha, and myself, had all along been much averse to this plan for the following reasons. Firstly, as we knew Biela to be strongly fortified on that side; secondly, that the superiority of the Russians in cavalry, artillery, and manœuvring power would give them immense advantages on the open plains of the Danube; and, lastly, that by pushing forward towards Rasgrad, in case of a Turkish reverse, the Russians could cut the line of Turkish communications, and probably surround the whole beaten army in or about Rustchuk. We were unanimously of opinion that a more complete junction should take place between the army of Sarnasufflar and that of Rasgrad. Mehemet Ali did not conceal from us his fear that Ahmed Eyoub might resist this combination in order to keep his own command more distinct; or, at least, might fail to give that complete support on which any movement based upon the junction of the two armies must eventually depend.

It was already plain that the Rustchuk garrison of twenty battalions was unnecessarily large for

the pure defence of that fortified position. The successful result of detaching eight battalions for the operation against Kadikeui, without too seriously diminishing the strength of the garrison, had shown that those eight battalions, at least, might still be employed to watch and guard the few passages over the lower course of the Kara Lom.

Although Hassan Pacha, Salih Pacha, and myself differed with regard to the best plan to be selected, we were thoroughly united in the idea that the army should be strengthened as rapidly as possible by every battalion available, and that a direct movement upon either Biela or Tirnova should be rapidly executed.

Hassan Pasha urged a feasible plan for a direct advance upon Tirnova, and a junction of the Sarnasufflar army with the thirteen battalions which now, under the command of Mehemet Salim, held the position of Yaila, in front of Osman Bazaar, whilst the forces occupying the Lom between Kacelievo and Karahassankeui should extend to their left in order to guard our right as that advance was made. He argued with much plausibility that such a movement, if successful, as there was good reason to expect, must

compel a forward action on the part of Suleiman Pacha.

It was, however, considered that this extension of the Rasgrad army might be accompanied with some danger, and we urged as an alternative plan, by which the advance on Tirnova might be attained without dispersion of force, that the united armies of Sarnasufflar and of Ahmed Eyoub should move forward to the line of the Baniska Lom, the right resting near Sinankeui, and the left upon the fordable branch of the Yantra, which alone would separate it from connexion with Mehemet Salim at Yaila.

A glance at the map will show that by this movement a much shorter line of operations was taken up than that which we now occupied in the arc of the circle formed by the river Lom.

We urged that by one night's march the concentration of the whole of the Sarnasufflar and Rasgrad forces might be accomplished at any objective point, and that we might thus fall with greatly superior strength upon the already demoralized Russian troops, which were supposed to be covering Biela to the south.

The 12th Corps, which occupied the position between the lower Lom and the Yantra, could evidently be thoroughly occupied by demonstra-

tions made from the strong garrison at Rustchuk and by the detached force which had operated at Kadikeui and Yovan Tchifik.

As the southern side of Biela was known to be far weaker than the northern, we urged that an advance might be made upon that point. Then, even if on our arrival the position appeared to have been too strongly fortified for us to incur the risk of a direct attack, we might either pass the Yantra at Kosna Kosowa, or a portion of our force might strongly entrench the positions east of the Baniska Lom, whilst a part might be detached to act with the force of Mehemet Salim to sever the Russian communications between Tirnova and Biela. In fact, we urged a concentration instead of a dispersion of force.

After much discussion, this plan was eventually decided upon, although the Marshal openly avowed that the thorough support of Ahmed Eyoub in carrying it out was extremely doubtful.

News had arrived that nine battalions, coming from Soukoum-Kalé, had already reached Varna and Shumla. By a little despatch they might arrive in time to take part in the operation. The junction of the two forces now contemplated, with the addition of these new arrivals, would raise our army on the Baniska Lom to ninety

battalions. Twenty more would remain upon our right at Rustchuk, and watching the lower line of the Lom, whilst thirteen would guard our left at Yaila between the branch of the Yantra and the Balkans.

We also urged that Mehemet Salim should push forward to Keserova, and thus place himself in more immediate communication with us, and in what would be a better position when we were once thoroughly established upon the line of the Baniska Lom.

It was decided that this projected movement and its great importance should be immediately communicated to Suleiman Pacha, and that he should be again strongly urged to support it, as he might so easily do, by a forward movement of even a small part of his force through the Haim Boghaz Pass upon Elena. We had every reason to believe that the Russian troops in front of us all along the line between Verboka and the Balkans consisted only of a division of the 11th Corps—one brigade of this division near Keserova, whilst the other held a position near Tchairkeui. The beaten and demoralized 13th Corps covered Biela near Beshbounar and Kopritza; and the partially demoralized 12th Corps occupied the whole country extending from Gor Monastir by

Damogilo to the Danube near Pirgos. The Russian divisions numbered sixteen battalions. Each battalion was composed of five companies, and the fifth or chasseur companies in each battalion were formed into a fourth battalion attached to each regiment. Thus they had only eighty battalions to oppose to us all along this line, and their battalions were now so weakened that they were no stronger than those of the Turks.

It was known that the Russians had constructed a bridge, or, as some reports said, a steam ferry, near Batin; and it seemed probable that the 12th Corps would cling with its left towards the Danube in order to prevent any advance from Rasgrad upon this, to them, important line of communication.

On the whole it appeared certain that, with the high morale which now actuated this portion of the Turkish army, and the depression of the Russians after the many defeats they had so recently experienced, a bold and decisive blow struck on any part of their long and badly-protected line might turn the tide of the campaign completely in favour of the Turkish arms.

Should Biela be taken, or even the line of the Yantra be turned by a successful attack, it was evident that nothing would remain to the Russian

forces but a hasty retreat from both Biela and Tirnova, and a concentration of their army upon the *tête du pont* at Schistova. This, at last, must open the Shipka Pass to Suleiman Pacha, and he would be able to find no plea for still retaining his large and excellent army south of the Balkan range.

The plan was generally decided upon at the Council, and it only remained to communicate it to Ahmed Eyoub, and to carry it into effect as rapidly as circumstances would permit.

It had been determined that the forward movement should be commenced on the following day, but wet and foggy weather hindered all military operations. We were now in telegraphic communication with all the forces along the line of the Lom.

The Turkish army had no system of field telegraphs, but a civil telegraphic department was attached to the army, and it followed its movements and established communication by the ordinary poles and wires. The system was slow and cumbrous, and, of course, on a retreat, all the material was lost and left in the hands of the enemy. Still the department worked hard, and we were never left many days in any position without complete communication with all parts of the

army being established. We were also, of course, in telegraphic communication with Suleiman at Shipka, and as far as Orkhanié in the direction of Plevna.

The telegraph is used more in the Turkish than in any other army in Europe. The most ordinary official communications are made by telegraph, and, as the Ottoman official letters are very diffuse and wordy, and the entire system of reports and returns most cumbrous, it is not singular that they should seek refuge in the telegraph for greater brevity and despatch. This constant use of the telegraph is good, and it might be imitated with advantage in many armies, more especially in the British, for in England military telegraphic communications are few, on account of the expense, and when field telegraphs are established, they are not used to the extent that they might be with advantage.

The detailed military operations which were to be carried out on the advance were as follows :— A division had been formed comprising Ali Riza's brigade (seven battalions), and the Egyptians (eight battalions), under Ismail Pacha, the Egyptian. Sabit Pacha had been promoted after the battle of Karahassankeui, and was now with his old brigade, increased to a division, near Kasalievo.

Salih Pacha's division consisted of the brigade of Azim at Sarnasufflar (seven battalions), and the Brigade Sadetin, at Karahassankeui (nine battalions).

These two divisions were to move forward and occupy the line between Orsikova and Karabournar, while the three divisions of Fuad, Sabit, and Azaf were to cross the Lom and occupy the heights between Orsikova and Ostritza. I had urged the Marshal to use Nedjib's division also, but he determined to leave it at Kasalievo.

It seemed to me that with the line between Orsikova and Ostritza strongly occupied, Kasalievo was unimportant. The army once united on this line, could evidently be rapidly concentrated on any point near Tcherkovna or Kopritza, as might be determined upon.

Although the touch of the enemy since their retreat had been completely lost, still Bashi Bazouks and a few Circassians, attracted by the hope of plunder in the villages which the Russians had deserted, had crept onwards. We gathered from their vague reports that the 13th Russian Corps had fallen back upon Kopritza and Beshbunar, in front of Biela, and that the 26th Russian division was in an entrenched position in front of Tchair-keui.

The morning of the 13th proving fine, the order was given to commence the march.

I had spoken strongly, the day before, upon the necessity of pushing forward our little cavalry force before dawn, in order to reconnoitre the country well in advance; and was assured that this would be done. It was nearly nine o'clock before the column commenced its movement, and, as I was anxious to join in the cavalry reconnaissance, I trotted on, only accompanied by my staff and orderlies, along the road to Kovatza. We passed Popkeui, which appeared now to be partly reoccupied by the Mussulman portion of its villagers. Leaving Balsi Jumourkeui to our left, we followed the valley along the main road until we reached the village of Kovatza. Here a few returned villagers and Bashi-Bazouks had established themselves. On all sides were signs of the old Russian encampments, and in the Popkeui direction, about a mile and a half from the village, some considerable entrenchments had been thrown up.

We inquired when the cavalry had passed, but no one had seen anything of them.

After leaving Kovatza the broad valley ended suddenly. A narrow wooded ridge ran across from the hills on either side. The road crossed a ravine by a bridge, and ascending this ridge passed

through the wood, and then descended into a valley about a mile broad. Rough, irregular hills about 600 feet in height and with much wood, rose on either side. The valley was open and cultivated, but the corn had been left uncut. A small stream ran through the valley in the direction of the Baniska Lom.

On reaching the wooded ridge by the main road, the large village of Voditzka lay in a nook to the right of the valley, about a mile and a quarter distant, whilst to our right front, and about three-quarters of a mile off, a prominent hill jutted out, the village lying just below it but farther off. (A g., Map I.)

It seemed to me that this hill would give a good point for observations, and we ascended it.

We could see that near Voditzka another road branched off from the valley roadway, and running through the village, then ascended a steep height to the right, and beyond it. This evidently led to Orsikova. The heights over which it passed appeared much wooded. Looking straight down the valley, we could see that at about five miles distant it turned to its right. A high bare ridge seemed to run across its mouth. On this ridge we could detect signs of entrenchments and troops working.

Not a Turkish cavalry soldier was visible, and

the few Bashi-Bazouks we came across declared that they had met none. Where could they be? They must have come up the valley if they had started in the morning, and it seemed impossible to believe that three brigades would move in one column and by one road without having first reconnoitred the ground in advance.

Having completed our observation, we rode down into the valley, and halted for breakfast by a vineyard, on a little knoll about half a mile from the village of Voditzka. We could see that the village was swarming with Bashi-Bazouks, and I sent an orderly forward to make fresh inquiries for the missing cavalry.

We were all sitting on the green turf, discussing our *al-fresco* repast. Our party consisted of Colonels Briscoe and Allix, Major Sartorius, Major Jenner, and myself. Mr. Krupka, a Pole, who was in my service in a topographical capacity, was busy sketching the ground. The orderlies were standing by, holding the horses. The weather was charming after the recent rain; and the whole valley with its rich uncut corn, and the little stream winding through its centre, looked so peaceful and pretty, that it was difficult to believe that we could be near any scenes of war.

But this tranquil landscape was soon destined to be rudely disturbed.

We had just finished breakfast. The orderly had returned, reporting that he could hear no tidings of our cavalry. Some villagers, emboldened by the Russian retreat, were passing forward on the road, leading the arabas, which contained their wives, families, and household goods.

Suddenly, we saw a crowd of Bashi-Bazouks emerge from the village of Voditzka. They gained the hill above the village, and stood and gazed back for a short time, and then, as if in fear, rushed hastily along the road towards the point where we were sitting. There must have been nearly two hundred of them, and they were evidently in a state of intense alarm.

Krupka rode on to inquire the reason of their hasty retreat. They declared that the Russians were advancing, and that the Cossacks had already entered at the other side of the village. We rode forward to a point from which a better view could be obtained.

On the other side of the valley about twenty Circassians were retiring across the fields. Now and again they halted and fired, but as yet we could see no enemy.

Presently a long line of Cossack skirmishers

approached. They stretched right across the valley and were coming on steadily, about a mile distant. A little in their rear several squadrons of regular Russian cavalry were soon visible.

It struck me that we might utilize the Bashi-Bazouks, who were nearly all armed with some kind of weapon, by forming them up at the edge of the wood, and that they might delay the advancing enemy, whilst I sent for reinforcements. It was most important that the Russians should not advance to the crest of the ridge in the wood. If only cavalry, and they reached it, they would be able to see the road that ran through the valley from Sarnasufflar, and could judge the strength of the advancing column. If they had with them infantry and guns, they might possibly inflict heavy loss upon that column if it advanced with usual Turkish carelessness.

I immediately sent back Colonel Allix to warn the head of the column, and to bring me some troops.

The attempt to utilize the Bashi-Bazouks proved an utter failure, for directly the bullets of the Cossack skirmishers began to fall amongst us, the cowardly wretches bolted to a man, and rushed off along the road in the direction of Kovatza. We were left alone, and there was nothing for it but to retire.

The Cossacks appeared to think that the wood might be occupied, for they advanced but slowly.

Near Kovatza, I came across a most communicative young Circassian. He assured me that he had ridden forward in the morning, and had arrived within about a mile of Tcherkovna when he saw a Russian column advancing. That he crept into the woods in order to watch them, and saw three squadrons of Cossacks, a regiment of regular cavalry, four battalions of infantry, and a battery moving up the road. We had seen no infantry and guns, but he was very positive that they were following.

I could see the Sarnasufflar force moving along the road in column of route, at about a mile and a half on the other side of Kovatza, apparently without any military precautions. If the Circassian was right, they might fall into a trap and march in this formation right under fire of the Russian guns, unless we could stop the occupation of the wood in time.

I could detect with my glasses that the missing cavalry were marching leisurely in front of the column. I saw Colonel Allix reach them, and, after a brief conversation with him, they broke into a trot, and came on rapidly. There were six weak squadrons.

As they came up, I briefly explained the general position to their commander, and impressed upon him the necessity of preventing the Russians from occupying the wood. I directed two squadrons to move up rapidly and occupy the hill above Voditzka (A g, Map I.), which was the key of the position. Two more pushed forward to the left of the wood, and two advanced with me along the road.

The Cossacks had just reached the skirts of the wood (A h, Map I.) as we arrived, but the Turkish cavalry galloped forward with such a bold front that they immediately fell back upon their supports, and it seemed as if we were going to have a very pretty little cavalry fight, as the Russian regular regiment was only about four hundred yards in rear.

A party of Russian cavalry had already taken possession of the important Voditzka Hill, but the two squadrons of Turks dashed up at a gallop, and soon drove them down into the village.

All was going well. The men were in excellent heart, and we were pressing back the whole force of Russian cavalry, when suddenly, only about a thousand yards distant, appeared a long line of infantry skirmishers stretching right across the valley. Three battalions of infantry in line of

columns were following in reserve (A i, Map I.), and a battery of guns which had taken up its position in rear of the infantry (A k, Map I.) immediately opened fire upon us.

I sent Colonel Allix quickly back to hurry up some infantry to support us.

The Russians had evidently realized the importance of the Voditzka Hill (A g), for their infantry were moving up to occupy it, and the two squadrons of Turkish cavalry that had taken it were slowly falling back. But instead of retiring down into the valley, they very wisely fell back along the heights, and halted directly the ground afforded them cover.

It was impossible that our four weak squadrons of cavalry on the open ground could hold their position against the strong force of cavalry, artillery, and infantry that were advancing against them.

I directed their commander to fall back upon the wood, and to hold its edge as long as possible, dismounting some of his men so as to give the enemy the idea that it was held by infantry, and thus to gain time. They carried out the order with great calmness and regularity, and it had the desired effect.

The Russian columns halted, and made pre-

parations for a regular attack upon the ridge and wood.

This state of affairs could not last long, and I looked anxiously to the rear for the expected reinforcements.

Coming rapidly down the hill into the village of Kovatza, I saw one strong battalion arriving, but only one. I rode to meet it, and to give the commander the necessary instructions before he should become involved in the wood. I could see at a glance that both the battalion and its commander were just what we required for such an emergency.

Quickly forming into column as they emerged from the village, the men came up the hill with the dash of a good pack of hounds being thrown into covert.

I indicated the importance of the Voditzka Hill (A g), and ordered two companies to retake it. Forming the remaining six into skirmishing order, they plunged into the wood with splendid dash.

I moved forward with my staff towards the Voditzka Hill (A g), as, that point once gained, a great tactical advantage was secured. The ascent was somewhat difficult to mount, but the men breasted it in gallant style, notwithstanding their previous march.

The Russians turned the fire of their battery upon the companies, but there was not a moment's hesitation.

The two Turkish cavalry squadrons saw the advance of their infantry, and, just as the latter reached the crest, the combined forces, with a cheer, dashed straight at the enemy and swept them down into the valley below, leaving thirteen Russians dead upon the summit.

I had intended that the six companies thrown into the wood in skirmishing order should relieve the hard-pressed cavalry in its defence. But they passed right through it, and emerged on the open ground beyond, and then, with that military instinct which is so constantly found with good Turkish troops, they realized at a glance the advantage that had been gained by the capture of the Voditzka Hill (A g), and without a moment's pause, drove straight at the Russian line in their front.

Though superior in numbers by more than four to one, and supported by the fire of their guns the Russians recoiled.

Pushing rapidly down the Kovatza hill against the left flank of the enemy, the two companies that had captured it, occupied the vineyard near the village (A l, Map I.), and thus brought a

flanking fire to bear on the left of the Russian line. The Russian guns limbered up, and retired, and in a few minutes their whole column was moving hastily to the rear, pursued by the very thin line of Turkish skirmishers, and the six squadrons of Turkish cavalry.

Evening was just falling, and I sent to Djelal Bey, the commander of the Turkish battalion, not to push forward too far with his unsupported force.

Just then two Turkish guns, brought up by Salih in person, came up to the Voditzka Hill, but the enemy was too far away for their fire to be effective. On this occasion again the Russian battery turned its fire on the white cap covers of myself and staff, following us wherever we went.

This brilliant little affair was over, and it had reflected the highest credit upon all the troops engaged.

Not long before the Turks had themselves begun to believe that their forte did not lay in attack, and that it was only behind trenches that the Turkish infantry soldier was really formidable. Yet here in the open ground one Turkish battalion, without artillery, and acting purely on the offensive, had driven before it four

Russian battalions, supported by a battery of guns.

The Turkish cavalry had also acted admirably.

As usual, directly victory seemed certain, the cowardly Bashi-Bazouks, who had deserted us in the morning, when there was some danger, pressed forward in the hope of plunder. On returning over the Voditzka Hill a disgusting sight presented itself. They had not only stripped the Russian dead, but the wretches had slashed the dead bodies with their swords. Had I but caught them in the act I would have had them shot without the slightest hesitation, but they had no doubt seen us returning, and had moved away, and were lurking, like wolves, upon the hills around. It was, of course, impossible to prove which were the guilty parties; but, furious at the disgraceful spectacle, I rode back to camp, and made a formal complaint to the Marshal. He again pointed out to me the difficulty under which he laboured, from having no military police attached to the army, but he issued an order, that any Bashi-Bazouks seen mutilating the dead were immediately to be shot.

The Marshal was delighted at the result of the day.

The whole Sarnasufflar force had halted in rear

of Kovatza, but it was to move forward a short distance on the morrow.

The action, although the numbers employed were small, was much talked about by the troops, on account of the disproportion of the Turkish and Russian forces engaged. It tended again to raise the *morale* of this portion of the Turkish army, which was now admirable.

CHAPTER VII.

Bastinadoing Bashi-Bazouks—Camp followers—A brigade *en marche*—Reconnoitre the left—The Russian right—A fine position—Non-arrival of Ahmed Eyoub—Orsikova—A distant fight—Attempt at surprise—Repulse of the enemy—A Russian General—Gallant Circassian chief—Preparations for attack—Storming the vineyard—Fears for the right—Night fighting—Critical situation—Desultory orders—The Russians retreat—Above Tcherkovna—Burnt village—A Mahomedan guide—A change of plans—Danger of delay—Want of support—Suleiman does not move—Old plan resumed.

ON the morning after the action, I started out on a reconnaissance with Salih Pacha.

The Marshal had given him full powers to punish the Bashi-Bazouks in any manner that he might think fit. Near the scene of the fight we found many groups of these men sitting under the trees, and it was determined that a severe example should be made. We had taken out with us a considerable escort. Each group was paraded. Their bundles were carefully examined, and if Russian clothing were found, the culprit was

immediately laid upon the ground and received a severe bastinadoing.

All this was very well, and it had an excellent effect, but it was evident that something more would be requisite before this pest could be thoroughly extinguished. The only plan which was likely to have a complete result was the establishment of a corps of Gendarmerie or military police attached to the camp, whose duty it would be to make careful examinations of the armed villagers following the army, and to distinguish between those who were really seeking to re-occupy their villages and those who were simply attracted by the hope of plunder. As Salih Pacha said to me, "It is impossible that I, with all the military work upon my hands, can be going about all day bastinadoing Bashi-Bazouks." Still, for some days the news of the punishment of their comrades had evidently been spread abroad, for no Bashi-Bazouks were to be seen in the vicinity of the camp.

On reaching the high hill above Voditzka, which had been taken from the Russians on the previous afternoon (A g, Map I.), we saw to our right the brigade of Sadetin on its march from Karahassankeui. It was evident that we must move forward and occupy the heights in front of

Voditzka, but those heights appeared to be very much wooded, and, seen from this point of view, did not seem very suitable for military movements.

The head-quarter camp had been moved forward to a position near Voditzka, just on the site of the action of the previous day. It was determined that Azim's brigade should advance to the heights on the right (A m, Map I.) on the following morning, and that Sadetin's should push forward in conjunction and occupy a position just in rear of Orsikova (A n, Map I.).

That evening news arrived from the force in front of Osman Bazaar that the Russians had on the previous day made a reconnaissance in force in front of their position, and had been repulsed with some loss.

On the morning of the 15th September I started at daybreak, as I was determined fully to reconnoitre the Russian position from some hills which we had occupied on our left. Ali Riza's brigade had been moved up to the wooded heights on that side of the valley, and from a high point (A o, Map I.) occupied by one of his battalions it appeared that a good view could be obtained of the enemy's entrenched lines in front of Tchairkeui.

Taking with me a small party of soldiers, I pushed forward to some distance through the wood, whence I could plainly see the whole of the Russian entrenched camp (A p, Map III.). It was evident that they imagined that it might be turned on its right, for they had taken especial care to throw back the defences on this point, and that flank, with the whole of the front, was strongly fortified, and formed a very formidable position.

As I moved forward through the wood and looked in the direction of Verboka, I could see that the woods which had so much troubled us in front of Azim's and Sadetin's brigade were not of great depth. In front of them jutted forward some bare spurs (A q, Map III.), which would form an admirable position, at about 5000 metres distance from the entrenchments of the Russians.

The Egyptian brigade had been kept in reserve in the valley near to the head-quarters, and we were every day expecting the arrival of the battalions from Soukoum-Kalé, which we knew were already on their march from Shumla.

I returned to camp, and made a report to Mehemet Ali relative to the position in front of Salih Pacha's division. He had been inclined to believe that, from the wooded nature of the

country, it was not advantageous to advance; but it was evident, from what I had seen in the morning, that the wood itself might serve to screen a very considerable force, and that the position in front of the wood, if strongly entrenched, would be almost unattackable.

Mehemet Ali started at about ten o'clock with his whole staff, and with Prince Hassan, to pay a visit to Ahmed Eyoub, who was supposed to be at Sinankeui.

It was plain that the arrangement which had been concluded relative to the disposition of the Rasgrad divisions had not been carried out, for no troops were visible between the right of Sadetin, near Orsikova, and a Turkish camp which could be discerned on the heights of Sinankeui.

We rode with Mehemet Ali as far as Sadetin's position (A n, Map III.), which had been already entrenched. It was not a very desirable one, in a military point of view. Close in front of it a wood commenced and ran down a sloping valley, at the head of which lay the village of Orsikova. Posts had been pushed forward into the wood, but still the position was very open to surprise; whilst, from the want of concert on the part of Ahmed Eyoub, the right was completely exposed.

Near the pathway, which led down into the village, stood a tumulus. This had been hollowed out, and formed a battery for one gun. About a mile distant, to the front, the wood ended, and a large extent of open country, covered with standing corn, stretched away towards the valley of the Baniska Lom.

We had not been long at our point of observation on the tumulus, when the sound of guns in the direction of Sinankeui attracted our attention. We could see with our glasses that a Russian force, apparently composed of five or six battalions and two batteries of artillery, had crossed the Baniska Lom and were keeping up a desultory fire with a Turkish force which was in position at Sinankeui. The fire of the Turks appeared to be superior to that of the Russians, and after a time the latter retired a little, and the action ceased.

Watching the Russians with our glasses, we detected, however, that a part of the force was trying to move undiscovered up one of the ravines which led towards the Turkish position. This they appeared to be accomplishing with complete success, for no fire came from the Turkish line. It was most tantalizing to see all this going on before us, and to be able to give no information to the Turkish commander. The Russian battalions

crept slowly up, and it seemed to us that the surprise could not fail to be successful.

The Turkish picquets were apparently quite unconscious of the near approach of the enemy. The Russians moved up to within 600 yards of the Turkish troops, and the latter did not appear to be even standing to their arms. Suddenly, some of the Russian skirmishers opened fire prematurely. The alarm seemed then to be given. The Turks rushed to their arms, and poured in a heavy fire upon the advancing enemy. For some little time neither side appeared to have much advantage; but soon the retirement of the Russian guns showed that the attempt had been unsuccessful, and the force which, from the number of wounded, had evidently suffered severely, fell back unpursued across the Baniska Lom. We found out afterwards that the unopposed advance of the Russians was a *ruse* on the part of the Turks, in order to draw them into an unfavourable position.

The action had not long been concluded when a small party of Cossacks, with a General and his Staff, appeared on the corn-field ridge beyond Orsikova (A r, Map III.). The General was evidently making a reconnaissance of our position, and the object of this reconnaissance became shortly apparent, for a whole squadron of Cossacks pushed

forward in skirmishing order. They proved to be the advanced guard of a further force approaching in this direction.

A singular incident now occurred.

A considerable number of Circassians had moved forward with the army from Sarnasufflar. Amongst them was a fine old Circassian chief, always dressed in a long yellow robe. He was a man of some property, and had armed, equipped, and mounted no less than forty followers.

To our surprise we now saw him, with our glasses, riding about alone close to the hill which the Cossacks were going to occupy. We were at first under the impresssion that he was unaware of the proximity of the enemy; but in this we were soon undeceived.

We saw him quietly riding his horse backwards and forwards at a walk not 400 yards distant from the Cossack line, and coolly loading and firing his Winchester rifle at the advancing horsemen. The Cossacks halted, and began to return his fire. For nearly ten minutes the little duel of the one man against fifty continued. The balls were falling all around him, but both he and his horse escaped unhurt.

Presently a whole infantry battalion advanced in rear of the Cossacks. The Circassian now

seemed to consider that the odds were too great, but not condescending to go out of a gentle jog-trot, he quietly fell back through the village, and rejoined us on the heights.

The Russian battalion in the corn-field broke into skirmishing order, and pushed down towards Orsikova. To the right of the village lay a vineyard (A s, Map III.) on the steep side of a hill. It was surrounded by a wattle fence, and below the fence a grassy slope ran down towards the village.

It was evident that a serious attack was contemplated, for the head of a Russian brigade appeared in support of the advanced battalion and moved into the woods in the vicinity of the village.

Soon a battery took up its position upon the knoll (A r, Map III.) where we had first seen the Russian General making his reconnaissance. The one gun on the tumulus (A n, Map III.) opened fire upon the Russian infantry, whilst the Russian battery began to shell the wood in our front, which, however, at this time was only lightly occupied.

In the vineyard to the right, Sadetin had placed a battalion of infantry. We could see them now creeping down through the vines, and lining the

wattle hedge. It was certain that the enemy had reached Orsikova, for file-firing burst out from the Turks behind the hedge, and soon we saw the Russians swarming up the grassy slope, and making a desperate but unavailing attack.

Fresh Turkish troops were pushed forward into the wood (A t, Map III.) as supports, and the vineyard was reinforced by an additional battalion. It was late in the afternoon when, just before dusk, a heavy fire broke out all along the line. The Russians were moving up through the wood and endeavouring to force their way through and storm the position of Sadetin.

We looked anxiously towards our right. A deep ravine ran up only about half a mile distant, and a gap at this point of nearly five miles separated us from the nearest troops of Ahmed Eyoub.

It seemed probable that the attacks on Sinankeui and Orsikova might have been made in order to cover the advance of a much larger force which would push forward and cut in between our right and the position of Ahmed Eyoub.

The action continued till it grew quite dusk, and just as night fell our fears were increased when news arrived that a fresh Russian force had turned the position of the vineyard which the Turks had been compelled to abandon. For

nearly an hour after dark a desultory skirmish was continued in the wood. Then the action broke off, but news came in from the picquets in front, that the Russians had taken possession of the vineyard, and were in considerable force in the village of Orsikova and the adjacent woods.

On returning to the head-quarter camp, we found that Mehemet Ali Pacha had not succeeded in reaching Ahmed Eyoub. We pointed out to him the dangerous position now occupied by Sadetin from the neglect of Ahmed Eyoub to occupy the position which extended between Sinankeui and Orsikova.

It seemed probable that the Russians, strongly reinforced during the night, might turn Sadetin's position in the morning, and place the whole of our army in a critical situation.

A despatch was sent to Ahmed Eyoub, ordering him at once to move a brigade along the main road which ran from the rear of his position to Orsikova, in order to guard the right of Sadetin, should the Russian attack be renewed.

Before daybreak on the morning of the 16th we moved up to the tumulus, expecting that a heavy day's fighting lay before us.

The desultory way in which Turkish orders are almost invariably carried out was soon apparent,

for not a sign of the brigade which had been ordered from Sinankeui was visible, although the road which ran through Helvedji Yenikeui could be distinctly traced for a considerable distance.

But soon the welcome intelligence came to us from Sadetin's picquets that the whole Russian force which had occupied Orsikova and the vineyards had fallen back during the night. They had left behind them a large number of their dead, and it was evident that the retreat had been made in some disorder.

As all seemed safe in this position, Salih Pacha paid a visit to the line which had been entrenched and occupied by Azim above the village of Tcherkovna (A m, Map III.). Here, also, the disadvantage of a thick wood in front of Azim's position was equally apparent.

Taking a company of infantry, we moved forward along the wooded spur which jutted out towards the Baniska Lom to the left of Tcherkovna. We followed an old pathway through the dense underwood for a distance of more than a mile until we looked right down upon the village (A u, Map III.). It appeared to be only occupied by a few Cossacks. Tcherkovna had been burnt by the Russians, and scarcely a house spared by the flames.

From the point where we stood unperceived in the wood, we were not much more than 4000 yards distant from the Russian batteries in the entrenched position in front of Tchairkeui, and the spot would evidently form so good a point for the construction of a masked battery that three battalions were immediately set to work to cut a road and to throw up the necessary entrenchments.

Just before the action had commenced at Orsi-kova on the previous evening, a Mahomedan inhabitant of the village had emerged from the wood, and we had gathered from him all the information possible relative to the roads and paths which led from our position in the direction of the village of Verboka. He pointed out to us a little path (A v, Map III.), to the left of Sadetin's entrenchments, which he informed us led through the wood and out on to the bare knoll which stood on our side of the Baniska Lom and to the right of Tcherkovna. It was determined that, if Mehemet Ali gave his sanction, Sadetin's brigade should push forward on the morrow and occupy this position (A q, Map III.).

On reaching camp, we found that Mehemet Ali had returned from his visit to Sinankeui. He had

seen Ahmed Eyoub and held a Council of War with him and with some of his generals, and to our distress we learnt that the whole plan of operations had been changed.

Ahmed Eyoub, Sabit, and Rifaat, chief of the Marshal's Staff, had urged him to abandon entirely the idea of moving forward to the left of Biela or towards Tirnova. They had persuaded the Marshal to resort to an attack upon Biela from the direction of Rustchuk, and orders had actually been given for the commencement of this movement on the part of Ahmed Eyoub's forces on the following morning.

This change was most strongly opposed by Prince Hassan, Salih Pacha, and myself. We pointed out that to get the troops into their positions for this new plan of attack must take at least from ten to fifteen days; that by that time, in all probability, the Russian reinforcements would have begun to arrive, and that all the disadvantages which had led us to abandon this plan of campaign, when it had been so carefully considered at Sarnasufflar, would then reappear with redoubled force.

The Marshal at length agreed with our views, but he strongly urged the difficulties that surrounded him, and the want of co-operation on the

part of Ahmed Eyoub in the present plan of operations. He also expressed the fear which he felt for his left at Yaila, from the non-arrival of any news of a supporting movement on the part of Suleiman through the Balkans at Haim Boghaz or at Slimnia.

After a lengthened conversation a despatch was forwarded to Sinankeui countermanding the movement towards Rustchuk, and adhering to the original plan of campaign.

CHAPTER VIII.

Azim's battery—Sadetin's advance—Mehemet attacks the Cossacks—The battery hill—The key of the enemy's position—Advanced entrenchments—Krupp and Russian guns—Try the range—Distant fire—The Cossack picquet—Kopritza—Corn-field ridge—The tumulus—Russian field hospital—Road to Biela—The position of Biela—A possible disaster—Arrival of Sabit's division—Projected plan of attack—Opposition of Sabit and Rifaat—Arrival of battalions from Soukoum-Kalé—Careless staff—Krupka the Pole—Supporting movements—The best divisions—Position of the Egyptians—Attack before day-break—Biela or Tirnova—The passage of the Baniska Lom—Troops to carry fascines—An alternative plan—Many disadvantages—Ali Riza and the Egyptians—False tactics—Extreme dispersion.

THE next morning we again moved up to the tumulus, and arrangements were made for the advance of Sadetin's brigade.

Azim had completed the road through the wood above Tcherkovna, and had already placed a half battery, masked, in an entrenched position (A u, Map III.)

The pathway (A v), through the wood which

had been indicated by the Mahomedan peasant had been explored. Sadetin, with nine battalions, moved forward by it, and, as no fire came from his advanced picquets which had been sent to the front, it was evidently unoccupied.

After visiting the right of our line, we ourselves followed the brigade. About 300 yards from where the pathway emerged on to the open ground looking down on the Baniska Lom we found Sadetin with his troops formed up. He had just advanced a company to reconnoitre the ground in front.

Salih's aide-de-camp (Mehemet) had shortly before been sent forward with an order to Sadetin, and he had not reappeared.

We had nearly reached the edge of the wood when several shots and a loud shouting in front attracted our attention. The company of infantry doubled rapidly up, and on emerging upon the open ground we saw Mehemet, all alone, galloping madly after about a dozen Cossacks, who were flying before him at their best pace. He was quite half a mile from us, and fearing that he might be cut off, we sent forward at a gallop every available orderly to lend him assistance. But the Cossacks did not halt; making the best of their way towards the village of Tcherkovna,

they joined a squadron of the enemy, which we could distinguish at that point.

We now made a careful reconnaissance of the whole of the enemy's position. It was evident that the open ground which we had reached would form a splendid defensive line.

The Russian entrenched works in front of Tcherkovna lay rather to our left. Between us and that position ran the broad valley of the Baniska Lom, and on the other side of this valley, immediately in front, and lying in a nook formed by two projecting spurs, stood the village of Verboka. To our right of that village a high-wooded mountain-top rose up (A w, Map III.), which not only completely commanded the village, but which, if it could be occupied, would entirely enfilade the whole proper left of the Russian line.

We carefully scanned it with our glasses, but could see no sign of entrenchments on this point, nor of its occupation by the enemy in any force. A small Cossack picquet stood in the wood. It was merely low brushwood, and the presence of this picquet of cavalry so near the highest point seemed to prove that it had not at that time been occupied by the enemy's infantry.

To the right of this point there stretched some high wooded spurs in the direction of Kopritza

(A x, Map III.), and with the exception of a few Cossack vedettes, not a sign of the enemy was visible in this direction.

We had purposely moved forward on to the open ground, only a little before dusk, intending to occupy it and entrench it during the night, before the enemy could disturb us by an attack.

To the right of the spur on which we stood, a lower spur projected, the point of which (A y, Map III.) lay not more than 3000 yards from the village of Verboka. Two battalions were sent forward after dusk to occupy and entrench this position. It was determined that in the morning we should move up a battery to the position close in front of the wood (A q, Map III.), and try the range with the nearest Russian battery to the proper left of the Tchirkeui entrenched position.

We were under the impression, from the experience of the war, that the Turkish Krupp field guns ranged farther than those of the Russian artillery, and it seemed possible to make use of this advantage, and thus to shell the enemy's battery at long range, without his being able to return the fire effectively. During the night *emplacements* were made for six guns, and soon after

daybreak, a battery having taken up its position, the order was given to open fire. We calculated the distance at about 5000 metres. After one or two shots, which fell short, the artillerymen succeeded in throwing their shells right into the Russian work (A p, Map III.).

The Russian gunners soon replied, but our ideas seemed to be verified by the result. All the Russian shells fell from 400 to 500 yards short. Nothing is so disheartening to an enemy as to find that he can himself be reached by an opposing fire which he cannot effectively return.

In the morning more gun *emplacements* were constructed, with the object of keeping up a distant but harassing fire upon the Russian battery which lay upon the entrenched ridge near to Verboka.

I now rode forward to our most advanced point (A y) looking down upon the Baniska Lom. The Russians turned their guns on to us as we rode along the ridge, but made bad practice. To the right rear lay a deep and concealed valley (A z, Map III.) which would give an admirable position for collecting troops previous to an attack upon Verboka, and the hill, which was evidently the key of the enemy's position. It was apparently still unoccupied by infantry. The Cossack

picquet stood there, as on the evening before, and as I could see with my glasses that the underwood only reached to the horse's girths, its growth would form no serious obstacle to an advance.

I could look some distance down the valley towards Kopritza, and no Russian troops were visible in that direction. We had heard from spies that the Russians had established a very large field hospital in the village of Kopritza, which was still supposed to be occupied by a portion of the 13th Corps. It became evidently most important to make a reconnaissance in that direction.

I rejoined Mehemet Ali Pacha, and gave him a report of my observations, and, taking a squadron of cavalry with me, moved away to the right, in order to push forward as near to the village of Kopritza as the enemy's position would allow.

I passed the corn-field ridge (Ar) which the Russians had occupied previous to their attack on Orsikova. Towards Kopritza, in this direction, the country was open and undulating, the fields being covered with uncut corn. Feeling my way carefully forward, I moved on for a distance of about three miles. Before me lay a tumulus (Ba, Map III.) close to the edge of a wood, which

would apparently give a good point of observation.

On reaching this I looked right down into the valley in which lay the village of Kopritza. A Russian camp, of about a brigade of infantry, two regiments of cavalry, and two batteries of artillery lay in the valley to our right of the village (B b, Map III.). Some very large tents, and upwards of 200 ambulance waggons, showed that our information relative to the establishment of a hospital at that point was correct.

Looking to the left, across the valley, in the direction of the new position which we had occupied near Verboka, no Russian troops were visible nearer than the entrenched position (A p).

To my right of the village of Kopritza, and bearing towards the right, ran a road which evidently led by Beshbournarkeui to Biela (B c, Map III.).

After most carefully scanning all the opposite heights between Kopritza and Verboka with my glasses, I felt convinced that the whole of that line was entirely unoccupied, except by the Cossack picquets of the enemy.

This gap would give an admirable point of attack. If the wooded heights (A x, A w, Map III.) could once be seized—an operation which evi-

dently was easy—it would cut in two the whole Russian army of the Lom. The 26th Division would be severed from its communication with the 13th Corps. We knew that the 13th Corps, which covered Biela, was shaken and demoralized by its continued reverses. Kopritza lay only eight miles from Biela. It was reasonable to suppose that if a bold advance were made by a very superior force through the gap which the enemy had left in their line, it would compel an immediate retreat of the Russian army to the west of the Yantra. Biela, if occupied, would offer a splendid position for the Turks. It had been abandoned by Ahmed Eyoub in the early part of the Danube campaign without any sufficient reason, and was far stronger as a military line for the Turks looking west than for the Russians facing to the east. The Yantra lies on its western front, passed by a long stone bridge.

If the Russian troops could be compelled to retire across the river, boldly followed by a superior Turkish force, it seemed probable that the Muscovite armies would find no good holding ground short of the *tête du pont* at Schistova.

Should Osman at the same time be able to inflict a fresh reverse on the Russians in front of Plevna the whole fate of the campaign was sealed.

Tirnova would have to be hastily abandoned. The splendid battalions of Suleiman might push forward in pursuit, and the three armies of Osman Pacha, Suleiman, and Mehemet Ali would arrive at Schistova, driving before them the beaten and demoralized enemy with the broad waters of the Danube at their back, and only one narrow pontoon bridge as a possible means of retreat. A disaster, greater even than had fallen upon the French in their late campaign against Germany, seemed to be impending over the Muscovite hosts.

When Mehemet Ali had determined to revert to the plan of campaign which had been adopted at Sarnasufflar, it evidently became necessary to strengthen the position to the right of Orsikova by a part of Ahmed Eyoub's force. But so much opposition was offered by this general to the original plan which had been agreed upon, that the arrangements contemplated had never been carried out. In answer to Mehemet Ali's request that the whole line should be occupied, the division of Sabit was detached from Sinankeui, and moved to a position in rear of Orsikova (B d, Map I.). Azaf, with thirteen battalions, now held the strongly entrenched position at Sinankeui (Be, Map I.); Faad's division, of sixteen battalions,

lay in the rear of it, near the village of Erendjik (B f, Map I.); Nedjib, with thirteen battalions, still remained near Kacelievo (B g, Map I.).

We strongly urged upon the Commander-in-Chief the advisability of strengthening the right of Sinankeui with Nedjib's division, and moving the whole of Fuad's and Sabit's divisions during the night to the front of Orsikova (B a, A r, Map III.). Then, with the combined divisions of Fuad, Sabit, and Salih, we might push on through the gap which so evidently existed in the Russian line between Kopritza and Verboka. Ahmed Eyoub strongly resisted this idea.

On the arrival of Sabit's division we found that it was composed of many indifferent battalions which had been drawn from other divisions, and it had been forwarded with only one battery of light calibre.

That evening a Council of War was held in the tent of the Marshal. My projected plan was supported by Prince Hassan and Salih Pacha, but opposed by Sabit and Rifaat, the Marshal's Chief of the Staff. After considerable discussion, an attack on the enemy's position to the left of Biela was eventually determined upon, but the question of the support of Fuad's division, which

we considered necessary, was left in abeyance when the Council broke up.

Seven battalions of the force expected from Soukoum-Kalé had already arrived together with an additional battery of artillery. Two more battalions might be expected within two days.

It was necessary before making the attack to get the divisions together in their respective positions. Through the carelessness of the Staff, the brigades had become much mixed in the occupation of the line of entrenchments, which had been constructed upon the heights looking down upon the Baniska Lom. It was therefore agreed that the next day should be employed in reorganizing them, and that the attack should be made upon the following morning.

Early the next day the Council again met to decide upon the plan of attack.

Through Mr. Krupka, a Pole attached to me for topographical purposes, I had succeeded in making a very fair map of all the positions occupied by our troops, together with those of the enemy as far as they could be observed.

At the Council of War I brought forward the following plan of attack, with the system of support which should be afforded along the whole line. It must be remembered that the

Russian army occupied, as far as we could judge from reports, the following positions. The 26th Division on the right near the Balkans, one brigade near Kesarevo (B i, Map I.), the other in front of Tchairkeui (A p, Map I.). The 13th Corps around Biela and Beshbounar (B k, Map I.) The 12th Corps with one division between Gor Monastir and Bekleme (B l, Map I.), and one division, with a considerable force of cavalry and artillery, extending from Damogilo to Pirgos (B m).

I proposed that from Rustchuk and Kadikeui on the right, forward demonstrations should be made in order to engage the attention of the 12th Corps, and prevent reinforcements being sent in the direction of Biela.

Nedjib Pacha, leaving a battalion at Kacelievo (B g, Map I.), which at night was to make large fires on the heights, as if a considerable force still remained there, was to pass the Lom and join Ahmed Eyoub at Sinankeui (B e, Map I.) A brigade of Azaf's was to be detached to Hodjakikeui (B h, Map I.) whilst the whole of Fuad's division was to take ground to its left from Erendjik, and to join in the attack in conjunction with Sabit's and Salih's divisions. Ahmed Eyoub, from Sinankeui and Hodjakikeui, was to make a demonstration along his whole

line, but to avoid engaging himself as much as possible.

On the extreme left Mehemet Salim Pacha, from Yaïla, was to advance to the heights above Kesarova (B n, Map I.), and thus to completely occupy the attention of the Russian brigade of the 11th Corps, which was opposed to him.

Probably the two best, and certainly the strongest divisions in the army at this time, were those of Fuad and Salih. They were composed of excellent regiments, and both were flushed with their recent victories at Sarnasufflar, Voditzka, and Kacelievo. They were each composed of sixteen battalions, and I proposed that these two should bear the brunt of the attack. Fuad was to take up a position in the woods, looking down into the valley between Kopritza and Verboka (B o, Map I.); Salih's division to be hidden in the wooded valley (B p, Map I.), immediately opposite to the high wooded hill which completely commanded the village of Verboka. Sabit was to occupy with one brigade the wooded point which looked down upon and commanded the village of Kopritza (B a, Map I.) His other brigade was to be posted on the corn-field knoll (A r, Map I.), from which it would be available as a reserve either for Salih or Fuad. The advanced entrenched position (A y,

Map I.), where we had established our battery, and also that where the battery of Azim Pacha had been constructed (A u, Map I.) above Tcherkovna, were to be held by the seven battalions which had arrived from Soukoum-Kalé.

The Egyptians would remain in reserve in the main valley (B q, Map I.) leading from the Tchairkeui position to Voditzka, and would be available for pursuit. Ali Riza was to advance along the heights to their left, through the woods to the position above Yuruklar, and in front of Karabunar (B r, Map I.), where he was to make large fires during the night, and to give the idea that a considerable force had been concentrated in this position.

During the darkness, *emplacements* for twenty-four guns were to be made on the bare advanced knoll nearest to Verboka (A y) whilst the same number of guns were to be placed on each of the wooded knolls (Bs, Map I. or III.), the nearest points to the height which formed the key of the enemy's position. The troops were to move forward to attack half an hour before daybreak. Thus a force of forty-five battalions would drive in like a wedge through the unoccupied gap between Kopritza and Verboka, and twenty-two more would be available as a support. The

position held by a brigade of the 26th Russian division in front of Tchairkeui, would be taken in its left rear, and that brigade would have no option but to make a hasty retreat in the direction of Draganova, or on the other road to Tirnova, probably with the loss of the greater proportion of its guns.

If the general movement were successful, an advance upon Biela, from Tchairkeui, would probably compel the retreat of the whole Russian army.

If Biela were found to be too strongly fortified, nothing would be easier than to hold in check the Russians in that position, whilst a considerable part of our force might be detached to the left to combine with the division of Mehemet Salim, and threaten the enemy's communications between Biela and Tirnova, the real object of the whole plan. This movement must cause the retreat of the Russian troops engaged in the Shipka Pass, and it would thus open out the road for Suleiman, who could follow with at least sixty-five battalions, and make a direct movement upon Schistova.

I had been anxious about the passage of the Baniska Lom by the columns of attack, and had ridden down myself to the banks of the stream. I had not been fired upon, and found that it was

no obstacle for infantry, although it might be advisable to send down a certain number of fascines with the attacking column, in order to fill up its banks, and so prevent delay in the passage. It would not be necessary for us to attempt to pass our artillery across till the wooded heights between Kopritza and Verboka were completely occupied. The mass of our batteries would already be in forward positions near the Verboka valley, within easy range of the opposite ridge, and, as the occupation of the wooded height must entail the retirement of the enemy from his entrenched position, the artillery would be so advanced that it could readily cross the Lom, and move up the Verboka road, in the direction of Tchairkeui, whenever the opportune moment should arrive.

This plan was strongly resisted by Rifaat and Sabit Pacha; and the Staff of the Marshal put forward a different proposal, which, to my mind, was open to most serious objections. It was urged that Ahmed Eyoub might object to send Fuad's division; that, instead of advancing upon the key of the enemy's position, which we knew to be unoccupied, the division of Ismail Pacha should move to its left, between Yuruklar and Karabunar, and, taking a wide circuit through

the woods (B t, Map I.) which lay between Karahassankeui and Kodjabunar, should attack the right of the enemy's position, and, if possible, occupy the Tirnova road. The mass of the troops were at the same time to be engaged in a front attack.

From previous reconnaissances which I had made, I had found the whole Russian right in the direction of Sidikeui strongly entrenched; from observations which I had also made I saw that this flank movement could not be supported by the fire of our artillery from the heights near Karabunar. We should, in fact, be attacking the enemy upon all his strongest points. The repulse would be disastrous, and would cost the loss of an immense number of men.

By the proposal which I had suggested, the whole fire of our artillery would cover our advance. We should move upon the weakest point of the Russians, and the result must be completely to sever their army in its centre. There was, to my mind, another most serious objection to the Staff plan. The division of Ismail would have to make a difficult march through a wooded country, of which we knew nothing, not even whether there was any available road. This division was composed of the brigade of Ali Riza,

who had not distinguished himself on any previous occasion, and of the Egyptians, who were untried troops.

The advantages and disadvantages of these two plans were warmly contested. I naturally lost at the Council the support of Hassan Pacha, who could scarcely urge that his own troops should be kept in reserve in preference to the alternative plan of employing them, proposed by the Marshal's Staff. Ismail Pacha was silent for the same reason, and, contrary to the strong objections of Salih Pacha and myself, the proposal of the Marshal's Staff was finally determined upon, but, in deference to our objections, they suggested that the brigade of Azim and the division of Sabit should be kept in reserve on the right, and that thus the attack upon the unoccupied position on the Russian left might be made if the other failed.

It was in vain that I urged that this was a mere repetition of the fault which had cost the Russians so dearly in their first attack upon Plevna; and, utterly disgusted at the result of the Council, and the evident follies that were about to be committed, I returned to our camp.

Mehemet Ali had promised me the night before that he would send a positive order for the arrival of Fuad's division, but the counsels of Rifaat and

Sabit had afterwards prevailed, and it was evident that this division would not take part in the attack.

Extreme dispersion—the common fault in all Turkish operations—was again about to be repeated.

CHAPTER IX.

A decisive issue—Concentrated guns—Fever-stricken troops—Watching the enemy's lines—The Marshal's Staff—Intrigues against Mehemet Ali—Disobedience of Suleiman—Resignation—Rifaat Pacha—Sanguine hopes at Constantinople—Turkish selfishness—Want of patriotism—Incompetent Staff—Reports from Staff—Key of position still unoccupied—A good screen—A lovely camp—A late Council—Impassable country—Trust to a peasant guide—Urgent remonstrances—Desultory orders—Ill-conceived plan—Salih suffers from fever—A rendezvous for the morning.

It was clear to me that the movement of the next day must, in one way or the other, entirely decide the whole fate of the campaign. It was impossible to believe that the Turkish army could eventually resist the Russians if all the reinforcements now moving to the south were suffered to arrive before a decisive blow was struck. If that blow were dealt with heavy force, and by the concentration of all our available troops upon one objective point, the army of the Czarewich lay at our mercy. But it was evident that the errors

which had characterized the Turkish movements during the whole period of the campaign upon the Danube were about to be renewed.

I had pointed out to the Marshal the immense advantage which would be gained by concentrating a large number of guns on the wooded knolls (B s, Map III.) to the right of our position which commanded the height above Verboka and the village. A road had been made from the corn-field ridge (A r) leading to these points. This road was concealed by the wood from the view of the enemy. Any number of guns might be placed in the wood. They would be masked until required, and would completely sweep Verboka and the commanding height.

We rode forward to this point and made a careful reconnaissance of the left of the enemy's position. These knolls were now held by some of the battalions that had recently arrived from Soukoun-Kalé. The men were suffering very severely from the malaria fever which they had contracted there, and they formed a strong contrast to the fine, healthy troops which comprised the rest of the Lom army.

I had established the excellent field-glass which Mr. Ashbury had lent me, close to the point where our battery had been constructed (A q, Map III.),

and officers of my Staff were constantly employed in watching the enemy's lines and movements. The folly of the Russians in not occupying the key of their position (A w, Map III.) to the left of Verboka appeared to be so great that this point was watched with intense interest. Each hour one looked towards it with dread in the fear of seeing the commencement of entrenchments and the occupation of the heights by infantry. But the Cossack picquet still stood there as before, and all seemed to promise that it would be found only held by this cavalry force on the morrow.

The Marshal had agreed to my proposal that twenty-four guns should be placed upon the wooded points (B s, Map III.) which we had visited. We had only found two gun *emplacements* already constructed there, but there were many admirable positions, and the wood was so high that, although the enemy's lines and the Verboka hill could be clearly seen, the guns would be perfectly masked. The plan for the projected attack seemed to me to be terribly vague, and the Staff appeared to have no idea of placing the troops in such positions as would enable them to give each other relative support. I had felt so strongly and expressed my opinion so forcibly that a coolness had sprung up between Rifaat and myself. The

flippancy and want of interest shown in all the military arrangements for the coming struggle were absolutely disgusting to any one having the true feelings of a soldier. Every proposal which I urged was decidedly opposed, and the kind-hearted Marshal, with whom I was upon the best of terms, perhaps naturally, at this time, lent his support to his own Staff.

The position of Mehemet Ali Pacha at this juncture was most unenviable, and the system of intrigue, which is so general amongst the Turks, and which, notwithstanding the nature of their troops, has never failed to mar all their military operations, was now at its utmost height.

Mehemet Ali had been appointed as Commander-in-Chief of all the armies acting upon the Danube. This comprised not only the army of the Lom but those also of Suleiman Pacha at Shipka, and of Osman Pacha at Plevna. But though nominally Commander-in-Chief, he was utterly hampered in his action by the want of support which was given to him by both Suleiman on his left and Ahmed Eyoub on his right. Nor were his plans generally carried out. Mehemet Ali had been most anxious that Osman Pacha should retire from Plevna and take up a position nearer to Orkhanié. Subsequent events have proved the wisdom of his view, and

the order was actually sent, but it was negatived by instructions from Constantinople.

To commanders of European armies it would seem a simple thing to overcome this want of co-operation by stringent and positive orders ; but Mehemet Ali was well aware that at this time intrigues were being carried on by both the generals named, in order to oust him from his command in the hope that they themselves might succeed to it. Repeated messages had been sent to Suleiman, and twice had the Marshal forwarded his own aide-de-camp to Constantinople to urge the want of support which cramped and might possibly hinder the whole success of his plan of campaign ; but these representations had been without effect.

It may be said that under these circumstances the Commander-in-Chief should have resigned, and doubtless this would have been the proper course to pursue. But, himself of a generous and open-hearted disposition, incapable of intrigue, the Marshal still believed that he should win over his enemies to assist him in his views. Instead of being able to devote his whole mind to the operations of war, he lived in a perpetual state of anxiety relative to the intrigues which were proceeding against him.

Rifaat Pacha, his Chief of the Staff, was a near connexion of Ahmed Eyoub's.

At Constantinople the most sanguine hopes had been entertained that by a general advance of all the Turkish armies the Russian forces might be swept into the Danube. It was evident to the intriguing generals, acting both on the right and on the left, that if delay could be obtained, the force of public opinion at Stamboul, at what would be considered the dilatory action of the Commander-in-Chief, would compel his supersession, and then there would be hope that either one or the other might succeed to his command.

It seems difficult to believe that such intense personal selfishness could operate so seriously at this supreme crisis of the fate of the Turkish Empire, but, unfortunately, past history reveals the fact that in the hour of extreme national danger personal intrigue amongst the majority of Turkish Pachas has ever proved stronger than patriotism. In the desire to oust Mehemet Ali Pacha from his command, both Suleiman and Ahmed Eyoub appeared to have lost all feeling as to the fate of their country.

It is difficult to paint the disgust with which the indecision consequent upon this system of intrigue now impressed me. I went back to our

small camp in the wood melancholy and depressed. That we had reached the point which must, for either one side or the other, decide the fate of the campaign was as plain to me then as it is now. I felt sure that the Marshal's Staff were perfectly incapable of organizing an attack which was likely to be successful. Still, there appeared to be some hope on account of the small Russian force, which we as yet had been able to detect as occupying the entrenched position. My own observations, verified by those of my Staff, had never been able to discover more than one brigade in actual occupation of the Russian works. The nearest brigade that could support it on its right was probably near Keserova, and the nearest on its left, that at Kopritza. The former was much too far distant to render it any service. Even the latter must arrive too late if the attack had been well devised, and were boldly made. But this was just what was sure to be wanting.

Almost hourly reports came to me that the much-coveted hill above Verboka was still unoccupied, and I buoyed myself up with the hope that even if affairs went wrong in the foolishly planned attack on the enemy's right, we might still have sufficient troops in hand to seize this, the key of the position, and thus to compel the retreat of

the whole Russian force from their entrenchments.

The details for the attack had been left entirely to the Staff, and were not communicated to the Council of War, but it had been settled that the movement should commence just before day-break, and I had arranged with Salih Pacha to meet him very early in the morning in order to take up our positions, near the battery (A q, Map III.). The wood (B u, Map III.), would so completely screen the movements of his division that it must be impossible for the enemy to guess what force lay concealed by it.

At the Council of War I had indicated the corn-field ridge (A r, Map III.), and the spur (B a, Map III.), near Kopritza as advantageous positions to be occupied by the division of Sabit. Provided that his troops were so placed, even if things went wrong on our left, as I had a strong foreboding that they would, Azim's brigade and the division of Sabit would still be available for a dash upon the unoccupied heights near Verboka.

We had formed our camp at this time on a lovely spot in the woods about a third of a mile in rear of our battery. At this point of the wood there was an open patch of park-like ground. Beautiful green, grassy turf lay between the pic-

turesque clumps of fine trees that were dotted around. It had been intended that the whole head-quarter camp should move forward to it; but there had been a change of plans, and it had remained upon the heights close in front of Voditzka about two and a half miles distant.

I had gone to bed early, to be in readiness for the morning, when at about ten o'clock an orderly arrived from the Marshal, begging my immediate attendance at a Council of War at head-quarters. These miserable Councils of War invariably led to nothing definite or sensible.

On galloping over as quickly as possible, I found all the generals and Staff assembled, and the Marshal informed me that communications had been received from Ismail Pacha and Ali Riza, stating that they had discovered that no position existed from which their guns could be employed to cover their attack, and that there were no roads by which the guns could be further advanced. They also informed him that the path through the woods, which the division would have to take in order to make its flanking movement, appeared to be very narrow, and would consequently cause considerable delay in the advance.

These were the very points that I had previously urged, and known from my own personal recon-

naissance, and which had induced me to discountenance as much as possible a movement in this direction. The whole country to our left was so broken and thickly wooded, that it was quite unsuitable for military operations. But Rifaat was still obstinate. He declared that he and Husni Bey, his assistant, had themselves reconnoitred the ground in this direction, and that he had secured a peasant as guide, who would conduct the column to a position where it might concentrate for an attack upon the Russian right. He did not seem to see the folly of trusting an important military operation to the vague report of a village guide.

I made a last attempt to change the plan of operations, and again strongly urged that the movement of Ismail should be abandoned, that they should make a demonstration only on the Russian right and on the Russian front, whilst the whole force of Salih and of Sabit should be pushed into the gap between Verboka and Kopritza. But all my remonstrances and forebodings of disaster were in vain, and it was determined that the plan of the Staff should still be adhered to.

I then urged that if they were determined to make a movement upon the Russian right, that

it should not take the form of an attack, but of a distant turning movement by Kodjabounar and Arnaboudmislim, which should compel the enemy to shift his position for fear of being taken in rear.

This proposal proved equally unavailing.

Rifaat did not seem to treat the projected attack as a great and serious military operation upon which the fate of the campaign might depend. The behaviour of the Staff was frivolous and childish. They were buoyed up with the most sanguine hopes of success, and did not appear to consider it necessary to take those precautions which alone could make that success a certainty.

I was perfectly sick of these constant and unsatisfactory Councils of War, which never came to any conclusion, and only served as excuses for delay.

From the vague way in which all the details of attack had been left unconsidered, I felt sure that, on the morrow, we should find, as had been the case at Karahassankeui, that no careful orders had been sent out for the execution of even the ill-conceived plan which had been decided upon. The Council of War broke up at a late hour, and with sadly indefinite conclusions.

Salih Pacha was, unfortunately, ill with fever,

but not so seriously as to prevent him from commanding his division. It was now arranged that we were to meet at the battery (A q), about an hour and a half before daybreak, in order to see that all the dispositions had been correctly taken.

I then returned to camp.

CHAPTER X.

An early call—Advantages of attack at daybreak—Sleepy Russians—No Turkish troops in position—Sadetin asleep—No orders—Brigades of attack unready—Useful fog—Last chance—Arrival of the Marshal—Sabit's division wrongly placed—Batteries open fire—Russian superiority—Artillery duel—Advance of Ismail—Commencement of attack—Russian fire—Turks press on—No supports—A rush at the trenches—Russian reinforcements—Attack repulsed—A fatal mistake—Attack entrenchments in front—Shrapnel fire—Desultory attacks—Azim's brigade still in hand—Miss Salih—A countermand—Fatal effect—Gallant conduct of Turkish soldiers—Ammunition supply—Ismail does not persevere—Irretrievable confusion—Arrival of fresh Russian brigade—Taking of Verboka Hill—Too late—Night falling—Turks still hold position gained—Council on battle-field—A fresh delay.

I HAD given orders to be called at about half-past three in the morning. At that time my servant Reilly came to awaken me, and reported that the night was wet and foggy.

At about two hours before daybreak the rain ceased, but the fog still remained. Soon after-

wards I started with my staff for our position near the battery.

It had been evident that an immense advantage would be gained if the columns of attack moved forward and crossed the Baniska Lom just before dawn, and, as our outposts were actually along the right bank of the river, no difficulty existed in carrying out this operation. By the time the troops had crossed the stream, and were advancing to the attack, there would be sufficient daylight to direct them upon their objective points, and the loss which must have been sustained from the effects of the enemy's batteries would be almost entirely avoided. I had also remarked that the Russians were extremely careless just about daybreak, and for the hour succeeding it. We had repeatedly noticed that their works seemed but only slightly occupied during the night, and that it was often one and sometimes two hours after daybreak, especially if the weather were wet and uncertain, before they brought up their reinforcements to occupy the positions.

In order to reach the battery, we had to pass by the camp of Sadetin, whose brigade was to be employed in the attack on Verboka, and the left of the enemy's position. According to the

arrangements which had been canvassed at the Council of War, this brigade was to be placed during the night in the ravine to the right of the advanced ridge (A z, Map III.), where it would be close to the banks of the river. Azim's brigade, it was understood, would be on the wooded heights (B s, Map III.) to its right. The proposed arrangement for the guns and construction of *emplacements* has already been indicated.

On reaching the tent of Sadetin, all seemed perfectly quiet in the surrounding camp, and I was nearly passing on without inquiring for him, as I imagined that the stillness indicated that all the troops were in their positions in front. To my surprise, on questioning the sentry, I found that Sadetin was still in his tent and asleep. On waking him up, he told me that he had received no orders whatever relative to the projected attack. He had received instructions to make a few gun *emplacements* on the advanced hill (A y), and the order for the execution of these had been given on the previous evening. He had also been told that guns were to be placed in them just before daybreak, but beyond this no orders had arrived which indicated any preparation for an attack.

He said that a part of Azim's brigade which

ought, according to the idea of attack, to have been on the wooded ridge, was still occupying the entrenchments (at A y) in front of the position, and Sadetin informed me that his brigade and that of Azim were still so mixed up that it would be impossible for them to take up the positions which I told him had been indicated in less than three or four hours. I urged him to immediately commence the necessary preparations, and sent back to Salih to tell him the position of affairs. It was quite evident that all attempt at surprise was hopeless.

We remained watching near the battery till daylight dawned.

The fog still hung over the hills. The battery which should have occupied the advanced position had not yet arrived.

The blue sky could be seen overhead, and it was evident that the mist was lifting quickly.

Shortly afterwards we heard the rumble of the guns, and, although it was now nearly clear, a little fog-drift still hung across the ridge, and enabled them to advance unperceived to take up their positions (A y). Nine guns had also occupied the battery (A q) and adjacent *emplacements*.

As daylight completely broke, we saw the whole Russian position tenanted by only a few

companies of infantry. The guns were still in their earthworks, but only small guards had been left in each battery. It was more than an hour after daybreak before four battalions moved forward for the more complete occupation of the batteries and entrenchments. Had the attack been made as projected, there seemed the strongest probability that the entrenchments and batteries would have been carried before this reinforcement arrived.

At about eight o'clock, Major Jenner, who was now acting on the Staff of the Marshal, rode up. He had been sent forward by Mehemet Ali to see whether the fog had cleared sufficiently to enable the attack to be carried out. The weather was now bright and clear, but the golden opportunity of surprise had been lost. Sadetin's and Azim's brigades were gradually getting into their positions, and there seemed to be no unusual stir in the enemy's lines, nor anything to show that they suspected our projected attack.

At about nine o'clock the Marshal himself arrived with his Staff. It was clear to me, from the few questions that I put, that everything was in utter confusion, and that the most foolish arrangements had been indicated.

It appeared that Sabit's division, instead of

watching the height near Kopritza and the corn-field ridge, had been placed on the heights in the rear of Orsikova (B v, Map I.), about seven miles distant, so that there was no possibility of its rendering support in time to any movement made by Salih's division.

The ground towards Kopritza (B a, Map III.) had only been occupied by some cavalry. Thus, if Sadetin's brigade were once employed in a front attack, nothing but Azim's brigade would remain available for carrying the heights which command the village of Verboka.

Ismail, with his division, was now on the march to execute the flanking movement upon the Russian right. It seemed important that the state of unreadiness which appeared to pervade the Russian troops should not be disturbed until that movement had been thoroughly completed; but, as a commencement of the errors which characterized every operation of the day, an order was given to our batteries immediately to open fire. It was in vain that I protested that this would give the alarm all along the Russian line; and that it would indicate the probable direction of a serious attack, and enable reinforcements to be brought up, probably from the direction of Kopritza or Biela.

It was very soon evident that the arrangement for the points to be taken up by the guns had, as usual, either never been indicated or had not been carried out. From the position in the wood near Tcherkovna (A u, Map III.), which had been made by Azim, to the wooded ridge on our right (B s), only twenty-one guns were in position, whilst we could count thirty-six in the batteries along the line of the Russian ridge (A p). Moreover, the Russian guns at this time were, for the most part, of a heavier calibre than ours. The idea that their guns would not range as far as our battery soon received a rude shock. An answering fire of artillery burst out all along their line, and the very first shells which arrived plumped straight into the battery (A q), and it was soon evident that the Russian fire was far superior to our own. The batteries towards the left and centre of their position opened heavily upon the gun *emplacements* for six guns, which had been constructed on the advanced ridge (A y). This artillery duel continued for about two hours.

It had been decided by the Marshal and his Staff that no movement should be made by Salih's division until Ismail's attack was fully developed, and we watched anxiously with our glasses the wooded slopes that lay on the enemy's right

for some indications of this projected attack; but it was nearly twelve o'clock before any sign of the advance of Ismail became apparent. Then a slight musketry fire burst out in the valley on the left of Yuruklar. It increased gradually, and it was evident that the Russians had pushed forward some detached forces into the valley which were now retiring upon their main position.

Soon afterwards a line of Turkish skirmishers emerged from the woods (B x, Map I. or III.), and engaged with the retiring Russians. They advanced steadily towards the right of the Russian position; but the Turkish force, which was thus pushing forward, appeared to be very inconsiderable, and we saw no indication as yet of the fifteen battalions which were under the command of Ismail Pacha.

The Russians had moved up supports to the assistance of their advanced skirmishers, and a heavy fire was maintained between the two lines.

Still, the Turks pressed steadily onwards, and we saw them gradually beginning to ascend the slopes which led up to the entrenched positions of the Russians (A p).

As far as we could distinguish, only about three Turkish battalions were engaged.

The Russians fell slowly back upon their entrenchments. The fire grew hotter and hotter, and the enemy's guns now played within easy range with shrapnel upon the loose ranks of the advancing Turks.

Not a Turkish gun could answer in reply.

We saw moving quickly along the heights another Russian battery, which was evidently being thrown towards their right, whilst Russian battalions hurried from the centre and left to the threatened point of attack.

The Turkish line had now arrived within rifle fire of the Russian shelter trenches. We looked eagerly towards the rear of the Turks, but could see no sign of reinforcements or supports.

Still, without a check, and with the most admirable steadiness, the Turkish troops pushed on.

They had arrived within 300 yards of the entrenchments, when a fresh battalion of Russians came up at the double in support of their troops which were engaged. The Turkish advance grew slower under this increased stress, but it still continued; and now, with a rush, we saw the whole line push forward at the double as it dashed straight at the entrenchments of the Russians.

At one point, on the left of the Turkish line, the Turkish soldiers actually entered the en-

trenchments of the enemy, and, small as was the force that had been employed, it seemed as if, at that moment, notwithstanding every error, the attack was certain to succeed. The whole left of the Russian position, near Verboka, was almost destitute of troops, and now was evidently the time for the advance of Sadetin and Azim upon the village of Verboka and the height.

The Marshal's Staff were jubilant. All difficulties were declared to be over, and the advance of Sadetin and Azim unnecessary.

But just at this critical moment three Russian battalions arrived suddenly upon the scene of action. No supports were coming up to aid the now much-thinned Turkish line, and, although the troops held to the positions which they had gained with extraordinary tenacity, they were soon driven, by sheer dint of numbers, backwards, down the hill.

At first the retreat was slow, and well sustained, but gradually, as the whole Russian force moved forward in pursuit, the Turkish line fell quickly back to the woods (B x, Map I. or III.), from which they had emerged.

The attack had failed, as might have been expected; but the success of the day was, as yet, in no way imperilled. The Russians had completely

weakened their left in repulsing the Turkish attack on their right, and the Russian troops there engaged had followed for more than a mile in pursuit. A sharp attack, made by the brigades of Azim and Sadetin upon the Russian extreme left and the height (A w) near Verboka, must certainly be successful.

In place of this movement being carried out, a fatal mistake was made in what was supposed to be an effort to assist the discomfited forces of Ali Riza.

Instead of Sadetin's brigade being directed upon Verboka, and the left of the enemy's position—which was actually the nearest point—it was pushed down through Tcherkovna, towards a small wood (B y, Map III.) lying in the valley, and which faced the strongest part of the whole of the enemy's entrenched line. Three battalions moved forward into the village of Tcherkovna, whilst six more still remained upon the heights.

The small wood was occupied by an advanced Russian battalion, but this was immediately driven out. The three Turkish battalions spread into a long extended line, right in front of the enemy's entrenchments.

The Russian batteries almost ceased firing

upon the Turkish artillery, and, using shrapnel within easy range, six-and-thirty guns poured in their fire upon the thin line of advancing Turkish infantry; but the latter still moved steadily on with the most determined gallantry. In one respect the nature of the ground was rather favourable to the attacking party. The slopes of the hills had been cultivated, and this cultivation had formed little terraces, which gave cover to the Turkish infantry as they slowly pushed up the hill in the direction of the enemy's works.

No supports had, as yet, moved down into the village of Tcherkovna, and again the action resolved itself into the forward movement of a long, thin, unsupported line, throwing itself boldly upon the strongest face of the Russian position. It was quite evident that these weak, detached, and unsupported attacks must be beaten back by the enemy in detail.

Although it must have been apparent to the Russians that an important engagement had been commenced, there were, as yet, no signs that the height to the left of Verboka had been occupied even by a company of infantry. Azim's brigade lay ready upon the advanced wooded ridge (B s). Unless immediate action were taken in that direc-

tion, there appeared to be no hope of a Turkish success.

I had always urged the point above Verboka (A w) as the key to the enemy's line, and I now went to the Marshal and begged him to let me go personally to the right and lead up the whole brigade of Azim to this point as rapidly as possible. The three battalions of Sadetin would hold in check the Russians in front of their position, and the remainder might be used to co-operate with the attack of Azim's brigade by moving upon the village of Verboka and from this upon the extreme Russian left.

Mehemet Ali consented; only very properly ordering me to see Salih Pacha first, and to inform him of the order which he, the Marshal, had given.

I heard that Salih had just previously ridden forward to the advanced position (A y), and I galloped on with my staff to find him. This point was right on the road towards Azim's brigade. On reaching it I learnt, to my distress, that Salih had moved back by another way in the direction which the Marshal occupied near the battery (A q). Retracing my steps at a gallop, I, at last, found Salih, and gave him the order of the Marshal. To my dismay, he told me that he had

that instant received a fresh despatch from the Marshal countermanding this projected attack.

On what trifles do great events depend ! Had Salih remained in the forward position five minutes longer, I should have found him there. Azim's brigade would have advanced before the arrival of the countermand, and would certainly have taken the height, for it was unoccupied, and we should as certainly have held it. This must have entirely changed the fate of the day, and, with it, in all human probability, the fate of the whole campaign.

The three battalions of Sadetin were still engaged within 300 yards of the Russian entrenchments. Although unsupported, and exposed to a heavy and superior infantry fire from the Russian shelter trenches, and to the combined fire of their batteries, they showed not the slightest sign of retiring. Every now and then the men of a Russian battalion, emboldened by the small number of the force to which they were evidently opposed, would dash out of the trenches, and charge down the hill. But each time they were received by so steady a fire from the Turkish line, which took every advantage of the terraces which have been mentioned, that the Russians invariably fell back in confusion upon their

trenches. Each of these attacks was generally followed by a slight advance of a small portion of the thinned Turkish force opposed to them.

The whole scene lay just below us, and, with our glasses, we could watch the action of every man. The behaviour of the Turkish soldiers was simply magnificent. They could plainly see that they were left entirely without support, but there was not the slightest sign of hesitation, and not a man was seen making his way towards the rear.

As the heavy fire which had now been so long maintained would soon exhaust the supply of cartridges carried on the soldier, the ammunition horses, which had been left well in the rear, would every now and then move to the front with the same steadiness as if on parade. Constantly a horse would fall, or his leader would be seen to drop, as he came under the fire of the Russian line; but another always moved up in his place, and the distribution of cartridges would be carried out with a coolness that was perfectly astounding.

The wounded remained where they lay, and, unless absolutely incapacitated, were still to be seen occasionally firing in the direction of the foe.

But it was evident that all this gallantry was being utterly thrown away. The Russian

entrenchments at this point were so strong that it was hopeless to expect any success by a front attack. Moreover, by this time the attack of Ismail had been completely repulsed, and there were no indications of its renewal, although twelve battalions of that division had never been engaged.

We could see the Russian battalions, which had been sent to the right as reinforcements, now making their way back towards the centre, in order to support the troops which were engaged against Sadetin.

When things began to look serious, and the failure of the attack of Ismail was certain, the Marshal sent to Sabit to advance in support, but Sabit was seven miles away, beyond Orsikova.

We had forty-eight battalions that might have been employed in the attack. The afternoon was drawing rapidly forward, and, as yet, only six battalions had been brought into action, and these at two different periods; and so badly had the arrangements been made, that no troops, except Azim's brigade and the remainder of Sadetin's, appeared to be immediately available for an attack upon the true key of the Russian position. Moreover, the Marshal became anxious lest a Russian advance might be made between

Yuruklar and Tcherkovna, and he hesitated to employ the remainder of Sadetin's brigade on this account.

The thin, attacking Turkish line had now held its position (B z, Map III.) for upwards of three hours, under an incessant fire. Azim's attack had been countermanded, and everything seemed to have drifted into the most irretrievable confusion.

Just then a fresh cause for anxiety arose.

Moving along the road which led from Tchairkeui towards Verboka (C a, Map III.), a whole Russian brigade and battery could be seen coming up as reinforcements. To our surprise, on their nearing the village of Verboka an infantry fire broke out from that place against them. It appeared that the commanders of two of the advanced battalions of Azim, seeing that they had no enemy in their front, had pushed forward across the Lom, and actually entered unopposed the village of Verboka. A small detachment had mounted the height (A w, Map III.), the attack of which I had so constantly urged, and, driving away the picquet of Cossacks, found themselves in absolute possession of the key of the enemy's position. Unfortunately, the order for Azim's advance had been

countermanded, and he did not support this desultory forward movement with the rest of his brigade.

The Russian brigade, on reaching Verboka, of course soon drove out the single company which had established itself in the key of their position (A w); but the remainder of the two Turkish battalions near the village made a most determined resistance.

Thus, all along the Russian line there were only five battalions of Turks engaged, and these were left entirely unsupported.

Evening was drawing on, and the flashes of the rifles could now be plainly seen in the dusky light. Azim's two battalions were falling slowly back towards their position, but, notwithstanding the arrival of the Russian reinforcements, the three battalions of Sadetin that had been engaged all the afternoon still clung to the ground (B z) which they had taken, with a pertinacity which was simply extraordinary.

Sabit's division had not arrived. No report had yet been received from Ismail.

As darkness fell over the battle-field, we could see from the desultory flashes on either side that Sadetin's brave troops still lay in the forward position which they had gained.

A short Council of War was held round a camp-fire, to decide upon the movements of the morrow.

I was strongly of opinion that the gallant soldiers of Sadetin should not be recalled from the position which they had taken and held, but that Fuad's division should be brought up during the night, and that a general attack should be made the next morning. This would give us fifty-six battalions that had not been engaged, and eight that had. We had seen that the whole Russian force in front only even now, when reinforced, counted but sixteen battalions, and they had, we knew, suffered heavily during the day. The great gap in the Russian line between Kopritza and Verboka still remained open, and instead of thrusting the brave troops straight against entrenchments, a reasonable plan of attack might be formed.

This idea met with general favour, except as regarded its execution on the following day.

The Turkish love of delay was again apparent, and it was urged that one day's rest must be given, and that then the plan should be executed. Eventually this arrangement was carried against me.

Sadetin's men, who were still lying within three

hundred yards of the Russian entrenchments, were furious when ordered to retire, and it was some time before their officers could get them to fall back. "Why should we retire?" they said; "we are not beaten. Only give us the slightest support, and we will take all the Russian guns in the morning."

Brave fellows! They had suffered a very heavy loss of about five hundred men in the three battalions, but their *morale* was as good as ever.

As we passed through the wood (A v), on the way to our respective camps, we saw by the camp fires that Sabit's division had, at last, arrived, but far too late to be of any service for that day.

CHAPTER XI.

False organization—Bad tactics—Movements of Ismail—Ali Riza in the rear—Numberless errors—Covering an attack—Turkish artillery—Bad handling—Splendid Turkish infantry—Russian commander misled—The next morning—Verboka Hill not entrenched—Gap still open—Non-arrival of Fuad's division—Two more battalions—Fresh gun *emplacements*—Utter apathy—Angry troops—Russian brigade withdrawn from Kopritza—Mustapha wounded—No counter-attack—More delay—A fresh reconnaissance—Russian negligence—Bad engineering—More intrigues—To-morrow—Russian view of attack—Height over Kopritza—Sick and wounded retiring—A Red Cross emissary—Knave or fool—A Circassian raid—A Russian patrol—Murderous attack.

THE whole conception and execution of the plan of the battle of Verboka had been a consecutive series of errors. Moreover, at this time there existed with the Lom army a system which was in itself fraught with evil.

Mehemet Ali Pacha was Commander-in-Chief of all the armies acting against the Russians in European Turkey. Under these circumstances, Hassan Pacha, as the senior officer present, should

have commanded the Sarnasufflar divisions, and Ahmed Eyoub those of Rasgrad. If these forces came into communication, then an officer should have been appointed to the supreme command of the united armies.

This was not the case. Hassan Pacha did not command, but the Sarnasufflar force received its orders from the Marshal's Staff. Divisional generals even complained that their brigades would receive orders direct from head-quarters without those orders being sent through them.

Primary military rules cannot be violated with impunity. The Marshal's Staff was utterly incompetent, yet it had unbounded and undue authority.

The superiority of the Turkish forces in front of the Russian 26th Division was so great, and the error of the Russian commander in leaving the unoccupied gap between Verboka and Kopritza was so manifest, that it really required a study on the part of the Turkish Staff to avoid a successful result. The troops and officers seriously engaged had fought so magnificently that no fault lay with them. Let us trace in detail the unbroken series of mistakes which alone could have led to the untoward and useless expenditure of life.

Firstly, it was evident that had the attack been

carried out at daybreak, as was settled at the Council of War, the success would have been positive and immediate, for the Russians were not in their positions until an hour after dawn.

From what happened subsequently, it was also clear that if the attack had been made upon the Verboka Hill (A w), it would have been occupied without resistance; and, once occupied in force, it entailed the retreat, if not the loss, of the whole of the Russian troops in the entrenched position in front of Tchairkeui (A p).

It was only on the subsequent day that we learnt all the details of the movements of Ismail's division. Ali Riza's brigade had been pushed forward to make the turning movement. They had found the advance very difficult, as the force could only move by a track through the wood, where sometimes the men had to pass in single file; hence the great delay. The Egyptians had halted on the heights near Youruklar, and never came into action. When Ali Riza's leading regiment attacked, that chief was still in the rear. The men had pushed on splendidly, actually forcing their way into the Russian entrenchments, and it was evident that if supported by the four battalions in reserve at that point, they would have carried the position notwithstanding its strength.

But they had been left entirely unsupported, and, although the division numbered fifteen battalions, of which only three had been engaged, the twelve had remained idly looking on during the rest of the day, and gave no assistance whatever to the three battalions of Sadetin, which, in the foolish idea of aiding them, had been thrown against the centre of the enemy's position, and had maintained their gallant but unavailing struggle for nearly five hours.

The folly of this movement was also apparent. Sadetin's brigade was previously all united, and had it moved upon the Verboka Hill and village, as was intended, even at that late hour of the day, all hope was over for the Russians. The Tchairkeui force would have been in full retreat before the arrival of the brigade from Kopritza, and, as Azim's whole brigade was also available, the Russian force would evidently have been crushed in detail.

Sabit's division would also have reached that point by nightfall, and thus a whole Corps d'armée could have been thrust into the gap, and the retreat of the Russians in the direction of Tirnova might have been followed by Ismail's division. Moreover, the sending of these three battalions of Sadetin against the front instead of

the flank of the enemy's position, had neutralized, though unnecessarily, the remaining six battalions of that brigade all through the afternoon.

Again, notwithstanding all these errors committed, had Azim's whole brigade been sent forward to occupy the Verboka Hill (A w), in the afternoon, all would still have been well; for those fine soldiers would certainly have held that strong position against the Russian brigade which arrived shortly afterwards, and Sabit's division could have reinforced Azim at nightfall.

What had become of Sabit's division all day no one could understand, as, notwithstanding the urgent messages sent, it was quite dark ere it arrived.

The opening of a heavy artillery fire on our right for some three hours before the attack by our left was made, was characteristic of the superficial and theoretical experience of the Marshal's Staff. They had read that an infantry attack should be preceded by an artillery fire, and, consequently, thought that it must be the prelude on all occasions. They omitted to distinguish, first, that this fire did not bear with preponderating effect upon the point to be attacked; and, secondly, that it gave the alarm all along the Russian line, and doubtless led to the despatch

of the Russian supporting brigade from Kopritza.

Nothing could have been worse than the whole arrangements for the action of the Turkish artillery. There were seventy-two guns available, yet only twenty-one were ever brought into action. The Russians, with their thirty-six guns, actually held a superiority of fire all through the day. The Turkish artillery engaged, showed great want of intelligence; they devoted their whole attention to the Russian batteries, which were protected by carefully-prepared earthworks, and they scarcely ever fired at the enemy's troops. When the Russian brigade arrived from Kopritza some of the battalions moved forward within easy range in column, but the Turkish artillerymen took no notice of them, and kept on firing at Russian batteries four and five thousand metres distant. When Azim's two battalions fell back before the new Russian brigade, the Turkish guns gave them no assistance, although the Russians were exposing themselves to an enfilade fire at only two thousand yards.

Of the behaviour of the Turkish infantry engaged, it is impossible to speak in terms of too high praise. What might not good commanders have done with such troops? The dash of their

attacks was never exceeded by the best French infantry; whilst English soldiers have never surpassed the tenacity with which the thin, and entirely unsupported line of Sadetin's battalions clung to their advanced position (B z), without losing an inch of ground, through a fierce and unceasing fight of nearly five hours. The admirable coolness with which the reserve ammunition had been brought up to the men was very striking, and it goes far to prove that the Turkish system for the supply of ammunition in the field is the best in Europe.

The folly of not bringing up Fuad's division, and repeating the attack early on the following morning, is only too evident. From the desultory nature of the action, and the absurd mistakes that had been committed, the Russian commander may very naturally have considered that the movement was only a hard-pressed reconnaissance in force, preparatory to a general attack; and it has since transpired, that had he been strongly threatened on the following day, he had applied for and obtained permission to retire. He might, with good reason, urge the impossibility of maintaining his position in the face of such superior numbers. But the non-occupation of the Verboka Hill was a radical

error, which should have cost him the loss of half his guns.

The Russian army at this period was much demoralized by its constant reverses. Although not known to us at that time, it is probable that the recent severe repulse at Plevna was known to their army, and Russian officers of high position have since acknowledged to me that had the Turkish movement so strongly urged at our Council of War, been carried out, nothing but a miracle could have saved the whole Russian army south of the Danube from annihilation.

Early the next morning, I moved up to the battery hill (A q), to see what fresh dispositions had been made by the enemy during the night.

The hill above Verboka (A w) was still unfortified, but, in the vineyards (C b, Map III.), between that hill and the village, a whole regiment of infantry had been placed. The force occupying the Russian trenches which had been attacked during the action appeared to remain as before.

It was quite evident that if Fuad's division had been brought up in the night, and a determined attack had been made at daybreak, it would have been impossible for the enemy to have offered any serious resistance, as the gap between Verboka and Kopritza remained unoccupied. The Marshal

had agreed the night before, that Fuad's division should be sent for. The arrangement had been made at the little Council of War, which was held on the battery hill after the action, that a fresh attack should take place the next day but one. I was under the impression that these instructions had been sent to Ahmed Eyoub, but not a sign of Fuad's arrival was to be perceived. Sabit's division occupied the wood (A q, Map III.), in rear of the battery hill (A a), so that even without the arrival of Fuad, we were quite strong enough to recommence offensive operations.

The night before, two fresh battalions had arrived from Shumla, and, although the returns that had come in showed our casualties to amount to over 1200 men, this reinforcement would compensate for that loss.

I had urged that a number of fresh gun *emplacements* should be made, both on the wooded ridges (B s) and the advanced ridge (A y) towards Verboka, and, although these were being thrown up in open day, the enemy made no attempt to interfere with their construction by artillery fire.

The want of arrangement which had led to the unsuccess of the action of the previous day had been too evident, yet no preparations were being made for the attack which had been agreed upon

for the morrow. Everybody seemed sunk in utter apathy. The attack was talked about as certain, but no Council of War was held, nor could I find from my inquiries from the Staff, that any plan had yet been devised.

We could gather from the different commanders that the action of the previous day had produced no really demoralizing effect upon the troops, but an angry feeling pervaded the whole army. The small numbers that were engaged had rather proved their own power, and they felt sure that it was want of support alone that had prevented their efforts from being crowned with success. This mood is not uncommon in armies when a slight reverse succeeds to a career of victory, and it is by no means a bad mood to prevail previous to a fight, as those who have long commanded troops in the field must well know. The men had not lost that sense of power which a steady course of success always gives; but they were angry at the check that they had experienced, and anxious to prove their ability to redeem it.

News had come to us from the cavalry outpost above Kopritza (B a) that the Russian brigade had been withdrawn from near the village, when the action of the previous day became serious.

Everything led us to believe that this was the brigade which, passing well in rear of the wooded heights (A v) on the Russian side of the Lom by a pathway which was known to exist, had reached Verboka late in the afternoon. It had arrived just at that critical moment when the two battalions of Azim's brigade, as far as could be learnt, acting from the good sense of their commanders, but without superior orders, had occupied Verboka and the Verboka hill. I found that one of these battalions was that of Djelal Bey, who had played so brilliant a part in the engagement of Voditzka. The other was my old battalion which had taken and held the Russian Tepé in the action at Sarnasufflar; and I heard that the gallant little Captain Mustapha had been wounded, but not seriously. Both these battalions, however, had experienced a loss of upwards of 120 men each.

The road which led along the valley from Tcherkovna to Kopritza was, of course, impassable for the Russians, as our infantry in the woods could fire upon it at easy range. The Kopritza brigade had therefore been obliged to make a long detour to the rear.

We heard also that Kopritza had been left unoccupied during the battle, except by a battalion of infantry and some cavalry and guns; and it all

went to prove how complete would have been the success had the original plan I urged so strongly at the Council of War been carried into effect.

Notwithstanding that the heavy fire of the guns all day must have been heard right along the Russian line, not an attempt at a counter-attack had been made by either the 13th or 12th Corps. Ahmed Eyoub, it appeared, had made a slight demonstration with his force; and we were under the impression that orders had been given to Mehemet Salim at Yaila to move forward and occupy the high ground above Kesarova; but we afterwards learnt that, by some usual forgetfulness on the part of the Staff, these orders had never been forwarded.

The day passed away, and evening came; and although I took every opportunity to urge the importance of losing no time before the attack was recommenced, I learnt at nightfall that no arrangements had been made, that it was now considered to be too late, and that the attack must be put off for yet another day.

It was evident that the crisis of the campaign had been reached. Every hour was of such importance that it was perfectly maddening to find the apathy which prevailed at head-quarters. In answer to my repeated pressure upon this point

I was always met with the same reply, "What does it matter whether the attack is made a day sooner or later?"

Early the next morning I received a note from the Marshal, begging me to make a careful reconnaissance of the enemy's position near Verboka, and to send him a report. I moved forward to the advanced ridge (A y) and, taking with me Mr. Ashbury's telescope, made a most minute examination of the whole ground around Verboka, the left of the enemy's position, and the Verboka hill.

A report had come from the cavalry in front of Kopritza that the infantry which had left on the day of the battle, had returned to their encampment. This news seemed to be verified by my observations, for the whole left of the enemy's entrenched line was very weakly held, and only one battalion had been left to guard the Verboka hill (A w) and the village. There was not a sign of even a shelter trench having been constructed, and thus the key of the enemy's position was again at our mercy.

It is impossible to account for this negligence on the part of the Russian officers. One would have supposed that the very fact of its having been reached, though only by a Turkish company, would have led them to pay some regard to its

extreme importance; yet, judging from their movements and preparations, they still seemed to think that a fresh attack would come as before on their right and upon their centre.

On examining our new gun *emplacements* which had been constructed on the advanced ridge (A y), I found that the staff-officer who had superintended the work had endeavoured to secure as much cover as possible for the men, and for this purpose had made them with embrasures; but, on examination, I discovered that only two out of the thirteen new *emplacements* could fire upon the vineyard and Verboka hill, which was the object of their construction. These are the general occurrences which thwart the views of the commander of Turkish troops. The absence of an engineer corps, the want of proper commanders of artillery, and the stress which is thrown upon an insufficient and overworked staff, are difficulties which have constantly to be surmounted.

That afternoon I went to make a verbal report to the Marshal, and seized the opportunity to urge again and again the value of all these days which were passing so rapidly away. He was still deep in his difficulties on account of the intrigues and want of support on the part of Ahmed Eyoub and Suleiman. He could not believe that

which I so deeply felt: that the crisis of the war had been reached, and that if within a few short days we did not take advantage of the great opportunities which circumstances had given to us, the last chance of a victorious campaign must be lost for the Turkish arms. He laughed at the depression which I felt so keenly on account of the dilatory action of our movements, and argued that the events which were now taking place were but as mere trifles in the general course of the campaign. It was evident that the strong pressure which was being brought to bear by Ahmed Eyoub and his supporters was inducing the Marshal to incline to their views, and to still dream of changing his plan of operations and making a forward movement from the side of Rustchuk.

I strove hard to get some arrangement made for the attack on the following morning, and pointed out that we had gained experience by the misfortune of the first attack. I urged that the enemy's weak force had probably suffered as great a loss as our own, and that the fact that the heights between Verboka and Kopritza were still left unoccupied, showed how weak must be the whole Russian line.

We had brought so few of our troops into action in comparison with the numbers which the Russian

commanders must know to be in front of them, that the battle would probably be regarded by them in the light of a strong and hardly-pressed reconnaissance which was to determine a subsequent general attack.¹ The very fact of their allowing us to make gun *emplacements* within easy range of their artillery gave an idea of depression. But all my arguments were of no avail. The Marshal still declared that an attack should be made, but the day passed away without any plan being prepared.

I determined, the next morning, to push forward to the height above Kopritza (B a, Map III.), and to see what alteration in the Russian position had been carried out there since my last visit. On reaching the tumulus, I found that, with the exception of a small battery which had been thrown up on the height to the Russian right of the village (C c, Map III.), and which apparently was guarded by a battalion of infantry, everything remained as before.

The Russian camp was still pitched in the valley, and would have been under the fire of our

¹ This, from subsequent information from Russian sources, appears to have been the view taken. The officer in command applied to the Grand Duke Nicholas for permission to retire if a further and general attack were made upon him. This request was granted.

guns, had they been placed on the wooded hill near the tumulus which commanded the village. This point was occupied by our cavalry, and no attempt had been made by the Russians to disturb them, although we were within long cannon-range.

I could see that trains of sick and wounded were moving from the hospital in the direction of Beshbounar and Biela, whilst many arabas, laden with what appeared to be military stores, were also taking the same direction. All this pointed to depression, and to an idea of retreat, and I went back to the head-quarter camp and made my report accordingly.

On my arrival there, I heard of a singular occurrence. A Russian hospital assistant, bearing on his arm the *brassard* of the Red Cross, had been found within our advanced cavalry posts, in the direction of Kopritza. He had been sent on by the officer in command of the posts, and the question was occupying the Marshal and his Staff as to what was the proper course to pursue under the Geneva Convention.

We had many Poles attached to the head-quarter Staff who spoke Russian fluently. The man was very loquacious. He gave a lame account of his reasons for being found within the

cavalry lines, merely stating that he had gone out for a walk and had lost himself amongst the woods. He declared that he did not wish to go back to the Russian camp, and was apparently anxious to give every information in his power relative to the Russian positions and numbers. He was evidently, constitutionally, a man of rather weak intelligence, or else was assuming a part. He stated that on the day of the action of Verboka he had arrived with a fresh division in the neighbourhood of Beshbounar, near Biela, and that they had passed another division of troops near Schistova, which was also moving upon Biela.

To this account the Marshal and his Staff attached considerable importance. It was in vain that I pointed out that the man was either a knave or a fool, in neither of which cases could we lend any value to his statements.

Whilst waiting at head-quarters, we suddenly saw a throng of Circassian cavalry approaching. On the previous day several of the Circassian chiefs had come in. They declared that towards Kadikeui, in the direction of Kesarova, they had discovered that a Russian patrol of about sixty infantry moved along a certain road at a given hour on every evening, and that they had made

up their minds to assemble their men and to cut off this patrol during the night.

As many of the projected Circassian expeditions of this nature were never carried out, we had not attached much importance to their statement; but now upwards of a hundred of them arrived, and we soon saw that they had brought with them three Russian prisoners. These poor men were in an abject state of fear. Two of them were wounded, though not very severely, and they themselves gave us an account of the whole affair.

It appeared that the Circassian report was correct, and that the Russian infantry patrol was in the habit of moving along the Kadikeui road to a certain wood, remaining there during the night, and returning in the morning. The patrol to which they belonged comprised two officers and sixty-three men. They took up their usual position. No sign of an enemy was apparent. They had piled their arms, and only the sentries were on the alert. Suddenly, with a yell, bodies of Circassians dashed in upon them from every side, and, with the exception of themselves, not a single man of their patrol had been left alive.

When they found themselves carefully treated, their wounds dressed, and every attention paid to

their wants, they expressed the most extravagant joy at their wonderful escape.

The Circassians had brought in the horses of the officers, and also of three Russian dragoons whom they had managed to cut off in the same direction.

CHAPTER XII.

Attack abandoned—Movement on Tirnova negated—The force at Yaila—Uncertainty—A secret—Retreat decided on—Want of transport—Camp difficulties—A last fond look—A gleam of hope—A weary night—Mud and disorder—With the rear-guard—Difficulties commence—Lost in the fog—Change of route—Stragglers—A burning depôt—Careless marching—Broken-down transport—Painful feelings—Guns stick in mud—A deserted camp—Incessant rain—Loss of stores—Our baggage—A straggling column.

THAT evening another Council of War was held. The certainty that large Russian reinforcements had arrived near Biela was strongly urged by all the opponents of active measures, and, notwithstanding the opposition offered by Salih Pacha and myself, it was eventually determined that the Verboka heights should be abandoned.

I urged most strongly that if this determination were adhered to, we should at least revert to the arrangement which had been agreed upon when the plan of campaign had been undertaken, namely, that if an advance upon Biela proved to

be unadvisable, we should hold and entrench the forward position on the Baniska Lom, and then, detaching a part of our force to the assistance of Mehemet Salim in front of Kesarova, we should force that position, and so completely turn the right of the enemy's line, and threaten Tirnova.

Salih Pacha supported me in this view, and we begged the Marshal to allow us to move to the left with his strong division, and at least make an attempt to drive back the enemy, and cut the communications between Biela and Tirnova.

The very fact that for many weeks the Russians had allowed a force of only seven Turkish battalions to hold the position at Yaila, without their once having made a serious forward movement from the side of Kesarova, proved that they could not be very strong in that direction. A Russian movement made in force along the Tirnova, Osman Bazaar road would have had a very serious effect upon the whole of the Turkish position on the Lom; yet these seven battalions had more than held their own in all the small encounters which had taken place. Mehemet Salim had now thirteen battalions under his command. With the addition of Salih's force, we should have twenty-nine good battalions available, and it was

well known to us that there were only two widely separated brigades of the 11th Corps anywhere near Kesarova.

But all our remonstrances proved useless. Sabit and the supporters of Ahmed Eyoub still argued that the advance from Rustchuk offered the greatest advantages.

It was in vain that we pointed out the inconsistency of their arguments, and that if the Russian reinforcements had already arrived in such numbers as to make our advance upon Verboka impossible, their arrival would still more strongly tend to show the impossibility of an advance from Rustchuk. Such a movement could only be attempted after a delay of at least ten days in moving the troops from their present positions, and making preparations for a fresh plan of campaign.

No definite arrangement was decided upon, but it was evident that the Marshal had given up the idea of a fresh attack. On the following morning I paid another visit to the tent of Mehemet Ali, in the hope that some change of plan might still be possible. Several people were in his tent, and he was talking as if the projected attack would be carried out; but when they had left, he, in strict confidence, told me that he had determined to

commence the retreat of the Sarnasufflar forces upon that very night.

Ahmed Eyoub was to recross the Lom, and to commence a concentration of his divisions upon Kadikeui near Rustchuk. Sabit's division, with Azim's brigade, was to accompany him. The division of Salih, made up by Ali Riza's brigade, and Ismail, with the Egyptians, were to fall back during the night, and to take up their former positions at Karahassankeui and at Sarnasufflar. He was anxious that this movement should be kept a profound secret until the moment came for its execution.

This secrecy placed me in a most unpleasant position with regard to our own personal effects. Major Sartorius had kindly undertaken the management of all our domestic arrangements, and three arabas were always told off to carry the baggage and tents of myself, Staff, and servants. At this time the transport of the army was carried out, to a great extent, by arabas pressed into the public service by the Mutessarifs of the districts in which military operations were taking place. These arabas were only expected to serve for one week, but, through the exigencies of war, they were often retained with the army for much longer periods. Fearing this, the

arabadjis seized every opportunity for deserting.

Two of our arabadjis had gone off a few nights previously, and I had urged on Major Sartorius the necessity of immediately replacing them in case of, as I then hoped, a possible forward movement. He had found some difficulty in doing so, and, on my return to our little camp, I discovered that no sufficient means of transport existed for the removal of our baggage and effects, whilst it was evident that I could not point out the urgency for preparing for our immediate move without in some way divulging the secret which the Marshal had confided to me.

The day was dull and foggy, but cleared a little towards the afternoon.

I went forward to the battery hill to take one last fond look at the much-coveted position which had so long been easily within our grasp, and which was now about to escape us for ever.

On examining the enemy's lines with my glasses, I found that the whole of their left entrenchments were unoccupied. Not a man was to be seen on the Verboka hill, and from even the eastward batteries at the left of the entrenched position, both the guns and the troops had been withdrawn.

It was a last gleam of hope.

I immediately sent up a despatch to headquarters, trusting that this news must at least lead to a reconsideration of the arrangements for a retreat. I recalled to Salih Pacha's memory the incident of the battle of Bapaume, where, after the action, both French and Prussians, thinking themselves beaten, retreated from each other during the night. But we soon received the disheartening reply that orders had already been given, and that the arrangement would be carried out.

As evening drew on a heavy rain began to fall, and a dense fog set in.

Long trains of arabas had already begun to move to the rear.

In anticipation of serious military operations, a very large depôt of ammunition had been established. The roads were already deep in mud. The carts were constantly sticking, or breaking down, and it was plain, even thus early, that the retreat would be slow, and the losses of matériel considerable.

Salih's newly-constituted division was to march in two bodies. Ali Riza's brigade, with the whole of the Egyptians of Ismail, were to move back past Voditzka, and by the Kovatza and Popkeui

road to our old position at Sarnasufflar. Sadetin's brigade was to move over the hills, by a small country road which led in the direction of Karahassankeui. Some of his guns, with an escort of infantry, were to march in front of the train of arabas which carried the ammunition and supplies destined for that point. His other troops were not to move until the whole main train of ammunition and supply was well upon its road through Voditzka. It was expected that these would all be on their way by eight o'clock in the evening, but it was nearly midnight before the road became clear.

It had been arranged with Salih Pacha that he and I, after seeing all the troops depart, should fall back upon Voditzka, and retire with the rear-guard of the army.

There had been great consternation in our camp when I was able to divulge the news of our retreat. It was evident that the one araba would not carry one-third of our baggage. Every spare pony was called into requisition, and every useless article was ordered to be destroyed. Salih kindly managed to send us five pack-animals, and with these heavily laden, our transport proved barely sufficient. As always happened on these occasions, the one araba was so piled up with things

by the servants that there seemed little hope of its reaching its destination. But at last all our tents and baggage were despatched by about eight o'clock in the evening.

We had to sit patiently in the rain, before a small camp-fire, while the long baggage-train went slowly creaking and rumbling on.

At length, when the road seemed perfectly clear, the order was given to withdraw the guns from the advanced position which was still occupied by a battery. The path through the wood was now in such a state that this could only be slowly effected by drag-ropes, and with the constant aid of a large number of infantry soldiers. Over and over again a gun would slip off the road altogether, and upset, and then the whole column of infantry and artillery had to be brought to a standstill.

It took us more than an hour to get clear of the wood—a distance of only about a thousand yards—and when we emerged on to the open ground beyond, the fog was so dense that it was absolutely impossible to trace the mountain-path which led in the direction of Karahassankeui. 'Twas in vain that staff-officers and orderlies went forward through the fog. After a few minutes they themselves would become lost.

Fresh orderlies had to be sent on to call them back, and, after a halt of nearly three-quarters of an hour in the pouring rain, the attempt proved utterly hopeless.

Salih and I held a short consultation. It was agreed that, even if the path were found, it would be impossible for the column to make its way over the hills on such a night, and it was determined that it would be the wiser course to follow the track of the train column which had passed through Voditzka.

Sadetin's brigade would thus become the rear-guard of the army, and might diverge towards Karahassankeui after passing through the village of Kovatza.

But even when once on the main route our troubles were not over. These country roads in Turkey are mere tracks, very practicable in fine weather, but deep in mud after a few hours of heavy rain.

The column dragged slowly on. Every five minutes a gun would come to grief, and we had to halt until it was righted.

We passed the place where Sabit's division had been encamped, and had to wake up some of his men, who were still asleep before their camp fires, although his troops had moved off some hours

before, and nothing but the enemy remained behind them.

At starting we had only been about three miles from Voditzka, but daylight was beginning to break as we entered that village.

The disasters of the retreat had already commenced. The village was blocked by broken-down arabas; and hundreds of cases of ammunition were lying about in all directions. The house which had served as a depôt for our stores was blazing furiously, and it had evidently been determined to sacrifice all those stores for want of transport; so hurriedly had this most unnecessary retreat been arranged.

Salih was furious. It appeared that no arrangements had been made by the head-quarter Staff, and the whole retiring movement was being carried out in utter confusion.

As we came down the hill which led through the village, the road ran over the side of a sloping ridge, and it was so slippery that horses and guns rolled over into the ravine below. We brought up straw from the village, and piled it on the track until the horses could keep their foothold. This caused another long delay.

The men were struggling on through the deep mud, constantly slipping and falling. All that

irregularity which ever characterizes a Turkish army when in column of route was rampant.

This careless system of marching had been painfully apparent, even when the army had been moving forward in the tide of its success. Directly a Turkish battalion takes the formation of column of route, it appears to be a signal for general disorder. Every officer marches just as he likes, and leaves the road altogether, if it suits him to do so. His superiors have probably already done the same, or at least are not marching with their divisions or brigades. The non-commissioned officers and soldiers follow the example. Thus a Turkish army on the march soon becomes a disorganized mob. There is such an innate soldierlike spirit amongst the men that they rally together again in a very surprising manner. But the gravity of the fault is evident.

As we reached the hill which leads from Voditzka, in the direction of Kovatza, the whole road was blocked with broken-down arabas, and when daylight dawned we saw on the hill-side, above the village, a considerable camp, the tents of which had never been removed.

Some soldiers reported to us that there were no less than 400 stand of arms still in a house in

the village, belonging to men who had been wounded and sent to the rear.

As far as the eye could reach, everything was a perfect chaos of disorder and confusion.

I suggested that we should take up a position on the old ground where I had fought the action of Voditzka, and that there we should remain with Sadetin's brigade until some arrangement should be made for withdrawing all this matériel. We should thus avoid the disgrace of allowing it to fall into the hands of the enemy.

It would be difficult to paint the feelings of the chiefs of the retiring forces at this moment. We were all under the most perfect conviction that the retreat in itself was not only ill-advised, but absolutely unnecessary.

The *morale* of the whole force had been perfectly admirable; yet here we were retiring in greater confusion than might have been expected from an utterly routed army, and leaving tents, arms, ammunition, and stores scattered around, and certain to fall into the hands of the Russians.

As it became perfectly light, we saw Ali Riza's brigade, which was moving directly down the valley, and would here join in the general column. The arrival of this additional force only added to the difficulties which were already so serious.

Coming up the hill, after leaving Voditzka, all the guns stuck in the mud, and we had to put fourteen horses to each gun and caisson, and so bring them up one by one.

The rain poured down in torrents without a moment's cessation. A heavy mist hung around. With some trouble we got a regiment formed up, whilst we sent on to Kovatza, in the hope of finding some few spare arabas that might bring away the matériel which had been left in and about Voditzka.

Orders were issued to Sadetin's brigade to break open the ammunition cases which were left upon the sides of the road, and for each man to fill up with as many rounds as he could carry.

As it was evidently quite hopeless to attempt to remove the large number of tents that were still standing above the village, a small force of cavalry was sent to burn them; but this, in the pelting, pitiless rain, was very difficult to accomplish. Fortunately, there was straw in almost every tent. This had remained dry, and by setting it on fire the tents were, for all practical purposes, destroyed.

We made a halt of some hours on the hill-side.

The rain never ceased for one moment, but poured down like a torrent. Yet it would take a

long time for the arabas to arrive, and we must wait. But we were all so tired and worn by the events of the last twenty-four hours that, when a little order was established and the troops were all formed up, we dismounted and sat down and fell fast asleep in the deep mud.

After a time, a few arabas arrived from Kovatza. We collected all the arms and as much ammunition as could be carried, and sent on the carts towards Sarnasufflar.

The road for about a mile had now become tolerably clear, and the column was again set in motion.

As we came to the hill over Kovatza, a far worse scene of confusion presented itself. At least a hundred arabas and some carriages, which had belonged to superior officers, were lying smashed and utterly disabled in the deep mud. Biscuit, barley, and stores of all description strewn the road. We could see that the brigades in front of us seemed to have completely broken up, and the whole force was moving down the valley and over the hills without the remotest approach to military organization.

On the other side of Kovatza we made a fresh halt. Here we found that Neshet Pacha, the chief of Hassan Pacha's Staff, had succeeded in

forming up three battalions. All this time there was not the slightest sign of a pursuit on the part of the Russians.

We now turned off Sadetin's brigade from the main road on to that which led to Karahassankeui, whilst we fell slowly back in the direction of Popkeui. The whole valley was knee-deep in mud and slush. Many of the men, utterly exhausted from marching all night under such circumstances, were lying about in the fields sleeping.

We came across a part of our own baggage which had reached this point in safety; but it was evident that it would not gain Sarnasufflar before night-fall. It was very apparent that there was no possibility of the long araba train getting farther than Popkeui before dusk, and it was therefore determined to form up a part of Ali Riza's brigade on the heights above the village, and four battalions of the Egyptians on the hills on the other side of the valley, and thus to give protection to the disordered transport column in case of any attempt at pursuit.

It was nearly dark before the head-quarter Staff reached the village of Sarnasufflar.

All that night the struggling train and disorganized battalions came slowly in, and even at day-break the next day the whole road between

Sarnasufflar and Popkeui was still covered by a mob of disordered camp-followers, scattered soldiers, and broken-down arabas.

Even late on the ensuing evening the whole train had not reached the position of Sarnasufflar, but the battalions had drifted into shape as quickly as Turkish battalions will, after disorganization which would utterly destroy any other army.

The men were mad with rage and disappointment. They had felt their own power, and now what had it come to? They had seen that even in the retreat the enemy made no attempt to follow them, and they were disheartened and demoralized by the scenes which they had witnessed whilst retiring.

CHAPTER XIII.

Intense depression—A forgotten battalion—The wet season—
Village houses—Start for Kadikeui—Sadetin's brigade—
Valley of the Solenik Lom—Battle-field of Kacelievo—
Turkish shelters—Solenik—Sabit's division—Natural
amphitheatre—Peasant arabas—Unfortunate villagers—
Village of Pisanza—Mehemet Ali's disgrace—Suleiman
appointed—Interview with Mehemet Ali—Inconsistency
—Attack from Rustchuk—Mr. Elliot—A painful parting
—Popularity of Mehemet Ali.

As no tents had arrived when we reached the village, we took shelter in some of the small Turkish cottages. The necessary arrangements were made for re-occupying all the positions on the line of heights which we knew so well, but the rain poured down almost without intermission for the two following days, and we all subsided into a state of intense depression.

Scouts that had been sent in the direction of Kovatza and Voditzka reported that even two days after our retreat not a Cossack was visible, and a singular incident had occurred, which gives a

fresh instance of the carelessness of the Staff of the army at this period.

One of the recently-arrived battalions had, it appeared, not been attached to any brigade prior to the retreat. It was occupying a position in the advanced trenches nearest to the enemy, and thus had been entirely forgotten by the Staff. When the army fell back during the night its commander was unaware of the movement, and he held his position on the following morning. Towards mid-day he expected to be relieved, and as no relief appeared, he sent an officer to the rear to discover the reason. His surprise may be imagined when the report came in that the whole army had vanished, and that he stood alone with his battalion in front of all the Russian forces. Nothing daunted, he leisurely commenced his retreat, and, halting for the night near Kovatza, he marched steadily in, unpursued, on the following morning.

The wet weather seemed regularly to have set in, yet the villagers unanimously declared that the real wet season in this part of the country should not commence until the middle of October. The Egyptian troops had moved up to occupy the different works along the crest of the heights, and were busily employed in housing them-

selves and adding to the strength of the fortifications.

On account of the non-arrival of our tents on our first reaching Sarnasufflar, we had now settled down permanently into the small houses of the village. These, for the most part, were of a very inferior description. The roofs were so low that one could not walk about in the one or two rooms which generally composed them, without stooping considerably.

Sarnasufflar looked very different from the time when we had first entered the pretty village about six weeks before. The little village green had become a sea of mud, but we were still destined to view it under a much worse aspect. The Turkish soldiers respected private property in a very remarkable degree; but so much cannot be said for the Arabs, who still seemed to retain their nomadic propensity for plunder, and who destroyed the fruit-trees for fuel in utter thriftlessness.

On the 29th the morning cleared a little, and we went up to the Reconnaissance Hill, for purposes of observation. Two squadrons of cavalry had been placed at Popkeui, the remainder of the regiment occupying the village of Haidarkeui. We learnt from our reports that the Russians had

not advanced, but had merely occupied Kovatza with a small detachment of Cossacks.

Although strongly opposed to the movement which Mehemet Ali still projected from the side of Rustchuk, I was anxious to be with him, if he still determined to advance in that direction, and, as there seemed no probability of any military operations taking place in the vicinity of the Upper Lom, I made arrangements to start on the morrow, viâ Karahassankeui, in order to join the Marshal at Kadikeui. If no movement were made, I should still have the opportunity of reconnoitring the valley of the lower part of the Lom, and completing the correction of the Austrian Staff map, upon which I had been busily engaged.

I started on October 1st, with Colonel Allix and Colonel Briscoe, and we halted for the night at the camp of Sadetin, at Karahassankeui.

The weather had cleared, and Sadetin, by means of his troops, was busy in collecting some of the uncut crops which lay spoiling around. He was making use of the village mills for the purpose of grinding it, and was thus entirely supplying his brigade without drawing from the hard-pressed Commissariat.

There was no sign of the enemy in his front,

and he reported that although small detachments were sent forward to Polomarka each day, with arabas to collect the corn, not even a Cossack had been seen in that direction.

Early next morning we moved on to Sadina, and thence followed the road which led down the valley of the Solenik Lom. We passed the large village of Costanza, and the people had all returned to their abodes. Villagers were engaged in collecting the crops, and all signs of war had disappeared. We marched through a rich valley but with abrupt cliffs of rock on either side. The lower hills were covered with brushwood of many varieties, and autumn had tinted the leaves with every kind of hue.

We were in considerable doubt as to the positions which were now occupied by the respective divisions which had moved down towards Rustchuk, but I felt sure that Kacelievo would still be held, and determined to pay that point a visit on my way to Kadikeui.

Turning off to the left, just before arriving at the village of Solenik, we made our way up the heights. We were suddenly surprised to find a number of peasants, and arabas full of women and children, hastily retiring. The poor people were in a state of panic. On inquiry they declared that

the whole of the Turkish troops which had occupied the advanced position looking down upon the Lom valley had retreated, and that the Cossacks were following. But we could still see Turkish cavalry in front, and, pushing forward, soon passed what had evidently been the site of the battle of Kacelievo. Graves lay about in every direction.

On looking to the right we could see a whole division of Turkish troops falling back in the direction of Solenik, but the cavalry were still watching the valley in front. The Turkish army at this time carried very few tents; but, provided that there were woods in the neighbourhood, the men had a remarkable aptitude for erecting little huts for themselves with the branches of trees. These afforded a far better shelter from the sun than tents, and by throwing a little earth over the tops of these huts they offered some resistance even to heavy rain. From the number of them covering the whole position it was evident that a very large force had been established here for a time.

We moved forward to the advanced point, which looked down into the Lom valley, and here some earthwork batteries had been constructed. Far away in the direction of Gor-Monastir the

tents of a division of the Russian 12th Corps were plainly visible. I had last seen the same camp from the height above Kopritza. The Turkish cavalry were moving along the crest of the valley of the Lom, and we were left alone.

After having made careful observations I determined to fall back upon Solenik, and, if possible, to push down the valley of that river as far as Nisova before night.

On reaching Solenik, the head of Sabit's division was passing through the village, and, instead of taking the direction of Kadikeui, was moving up the height on the east of the Solenik Lom, thus entirely abandoning the commanding position of Kacelievo. Azim's brigade was passing through the village, and we were warmly recognized by the officers and men who had been with us in the different preceding actions. Little Mustapha came up to me, now quite recovered from his wound, but disconsolate at the rearward movement.

Soon afterwards Sabit himself appeared. He told me that he was about to take up a position in rear of Solenik; that the divisions of Azaf, Nedjib, and Fuad were concentrated at Kadikeui, and he believed that some forward movement was in immediate contemplation. As far as he knew,

he was to be left to guard the position of Solenik. He informed me that there were no troops at Nisova, and, as it was quite possible that the Cossacks might have penetrated to that place, advised me to move up on to the heights and pass the night with his division. I could then go on the next day by the road of Pisanza to Kadikewi.

The column was already ascending the hill on the eastern side of Solenik. The narrow road, after passing the village, ran up the right side of what looked like a gigantic natural amphitheatre.

As we reached the summit of the hill, the view below was most picturesque. Either the constant action of water, or some convulsion of Nature, had scooped out the rocks in the quaintest form, and the effect was grand. Sabit's column, extending for upwards of four miles, with its long train of arabas, was followed by a crowd of peasants, who had again left their homes upon the retreat of the army and the possibility of the advance of their dreaded foe. They were winding in a long thin line down into the valley, whilst guns and troops, moving up on to the heights, had already begun to form their encampment.

We pitched our tent near the brigade of Azim. Colonel Briscoe had been taken ill with dysen-

tery at Karahassankeui, and had been compelled to return; but Colonel Studdy, of the Ottoman Gendarmerie, who had made his way up from Constantinople under considerable difficulties, had joined our party. He appeared to have been most unfortunate with regard to his baggage, which, through a series of mishaps, seemed to be distributed in almost every part of European Turkey.

The condition of the Turkish villagers all along the scene of military operations was now most pitiable.

When the Russians had first advanced, the Mahomedan peasant population had fallen back in rear of the Turkish lines; but when a Turkish advance commenced, and the Muscovites had been driven back into the neighbourhood of Biela, the people gained heart, and, pushing onward again with their wives and families, re-occupied the villages which they had originally quitted. Following in their tracks were also numerous families, who moved forward under protection of the army, hoping that by means of a still further advance they also might be able to regain their homes.

The retreat of the Turkish forces had brought fresh misery upon these poor people, and again

they were falling to the rear, but still clinging to the skirts of the army, in the hope that the retreat might be merely temporary. The train of arabas which carried their families and the few household effects which remained to them formed a serious embarrassment to the movements of the troops. The roads in this part of the country were usually narrow and bad, and when either an advance or a retreat became necessary they were found constantly blocked by the country carts of the peasants.

We started the next morning for Kadikeui, and made our way through an undulating country, covered with uncollected maize, which was now ripe and spoiling.

After travelling for about eight miles, we at last reached the heights overlooking the village of Pisanza, and came upon some deep ravines which near that village mark the course of the Beli Lom. To my surprise, moving forward along the road, I saw Izzet Bey, the aide-de-camp of the Marshal.

On meeting him, he told us some startling news.

Arrangements had been made for the passage of the Lom at Yovan-Tchiflik at daybreak that morning. The orders had been issued, and the

troops were under arms, when just at that moment there arrived a telegram from Constantinople deposing the Marshal from his command.

Suleiman Pacha was to succeed him.

Izzet Bey informed me that this change had produced a most painful effect upon the army; but the Marshal had left at once, and was then halted for breakfast in the little village of Pisanza below us. Izzet Bey had asked and obtained permission to attach himself to the Staff of Prince Hassan at Sarnasufflar, and was now on his way to that place.

Riding down to the village, I found the Marshal, with a very small escort, sitting in the verandah of a house, and he welcomed me warmly. He was evidently much depressed and discouraged by the heavy blow which had fallen upon him, and he now began to see how thoroughly he had been playing into the hands of his enemies. The result which I had already anticipated had been completely verified. The very men who had urged the Marshal to change his plan of operations at this critical period of the campaign were the first to urge against him the delay and want of decision which this change of plans had brought about.

Mehemet Ali described to me the object of his

forward movement, which was to have commenced that morning.

Although I would not press the point now, in the hour of his trouble, this projected attack seemed to me to be perfectly inconsistent. We had retreated from our position on the Baniska Lom, where we had six divisions, which could be united for attack, because it was supposed that such large Russian reinforcements had arrived as to make an advance impossible. How could it be expected that three divisions and a half, which were all that could be collected at Kadikeui, could now make a successful movement upon the very strongest side of Biela? Moreover, from the retreat of the Sarnasufflar force, the Russians would be able to unite their whole army, which lay in front of the line of the Yantra in order to repel the projected movement from the direction of Rustchuk.

After breakfast the Marshal was to start on his way to Constantinople. A carriage was awaiting him, and he expected to meet Suleiman Pacha on the road. Just at this moment Mr. Elliot, a son of the Ambassador, rode up. He had got only a week's leave from Constantinople, but had employed it in visiting the army at Kadikeui.

I parted from the Marshal with the greatest pain and regret. Although I had latterly been constantly opposed to the views which had been urged upon him by Ahmed Eyoub and by his own personal Staff, and which he so unfortunately had adopted, his kindness of heart and general good nature had much endeared him to all the officers by whom he was surrounded.

I determined still to push on to Kadikeui, in order to learn what military operations might be probable under the change of commanders which had taken place.

CHAPTER XIV.

Village of Kadikeui—Nedjib's division—Change in appearance of troops—Azaf Pacha—Animosity towards Suleiman—His inaction—Errors at Constantinople—Ahmed Kaisarly—Arrival of Suleiman—Dismissal of Ahmed Eyoub—A Turkish military bridge—Ottoman outposts—Interview with Suleiman—Vermin—Lost servants—High-road to Rasgrad—A lying Bulgarian—Letter to Prince Hassan.

THE village of Kadikeui lies upon the large undulating plains which mark the lower slopes which trend down from the Balkans towards the Danube. About half-way between Pisanza and Kadikeui we had quitted the partially-wooded country which forms the general feature of the Upper Lom, and had emerged on to these plains.

Beyond the village, in the direction of Rustchuk, we could see that a considerable number of troops were bivouacked. We first came upon the division of Nedjib. The men had evidently suffered much from the recent wet weather. There was no wood which could afford them their

usual shelters, and there were no tents, except for the superior officers. The whole force looked very different from the splendid army which, only ten days before, had moved from the heights over the Baniska Lom.

Amongst the large numbers of men now assembled around Kadikeui, I found it difficult to obtain information as to the position of the head-quarter camp. I fortunately stumbled upon Nedjib Pacha himself, who kindly sent a mounted orderly with me, in order to show us the way; but, after going a short distance, we found that even this orderly was at fault. I then came across the camp of Azaf Pacha, whom I had already met at Karahassankeui, and he indicated to me the direction which I should take. At last I found Husni Bey, late second Chief of the Marshal's Staff, and paid a visit to Ahmed Eyoub, who had been left in command. Here also I met for the first time Fuad Pacha, who had been the principal actor in the action of Kacelievo, and who had a great reputation for energy and dash.

It was evident that a very strong feeling existed in camp relative to the appointment of Suleiman. Although there had been much difference of opinion relative to the plan of campaign pursued by Mehemet Ali, he was

extremely popular both with the officers and the men. It was well known through the army that Suleiman had persistently thwarted all the operations of the late Commander-in-Chief, and for weeks we had been waiting for some movement on his part which must have had a decisive effect upon the general issue of the campaign. He had clung to Shipka, and had given no assistance either to Osman Pacha, on his left, nor to the army of the Lom, upon his right. Had he even moved to Trojan, and, by forcing the position of Loftcha, given effective aid to the hard-pressed forces of Osman, it is probable that the Turkish army of the Lom would have forgiven him for not coming to their assistance.

But he had done neither the one nor the other. Although the majority of the officers believed that the army which had so recently been formed upon the Baniska Lom could have advanced without any exterior aid, and forced the Russian position at Biela, still there could be no doubt that the want of the support of Suleiman had been the main cause of the alteration in the Marshal's plans.

In conversation with the superior officers of the Turkish army assembled at Kadikeui, I found intense depression existing from the Marshal's

supersession, and the new appointment of Suleiman as Commander-in-Chief. They declared that it seemed as if Russia must have some friends at Constantinople, who had the power to thwart all efforts that might tend towards military success. The superior appointments of the army were apparently granted to those who had most distinguished themselves by incapacity and inefficiency, and who had paved the way for the downfall of the Empire.

In the tent of Ahmed Eyoub I found Ahmed Kaiserly, the then Governor of Rustchuk. With the extraordinary vicissitudes of position which ordinarily characterize the career of a Turkish official, Ahmed Kaiserly had before held the appointment of Capitan Pacha of the Fleet. He was an old man, but a good specimen of the ancient Turk. In the attempt at a general assassination of Ministers which had been made at Constantinople with such disastrous effect a few months previously, Ahmed Kaiserly was the only Minister who boldly resisted the assassin. He was wounded on that occasion, and, having given up his naval duties, was appointed governor of the important fortress of Rustchuk.

At one time it seemed as if Rustchuk would shortly be beleaguered. Ahmed Kaiserly was

known to be a man of energy and determination, who would probably hold the fortress to the last extremity, and so far the appointment was a good one.

Late that night Suleiman arrived. Heavy rains had set in, and the whole camp was muddy and uncomfortable.

I found here assembled Colonel Lennox, the English military attaché, Lieut. Chermiside, his assistant, and my old friend of the Sarnasufflar heights, Major Molloy, all in a state of anxiety as to what would be the result of the recent change of commanders.

The next morning I had an interview with Suleiman Pacha. His appearance and manners were certainly not prepossessing. There was nothing of the soldier about him, but his features gave the impression of considerable shrewdness and cunning. He wore a dilapidated suit of clothes, lined with fur, which would certainly have been rejected by any Israelitish London dealer, and was without an approach to uniform of any description. He never seemed to wear a sword nor any insignia which would give the idea of military rank. Altogether, he did not, either in appearance or manner, give the impression of the high class of man that one would have been

anxious to see Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish forces now operating against the Russian army in Europe. We learned that the first act of Suleiman had been to dismiss Ahmed Eyoub from his command, and that Marshal had already left the camp. Had Mehemet Ali done this only three weeks before, how different might have been the issue of the campaign !

That afternoon I crossed the Lom by a bridge near Yovan Tchiflik, and visited the Turkish cavalry outposts on the open but undulating plains beyond. Lower down the river, another bridge had been made at Yovan Tchiflik, in order to facilitate the passage of the troops, but it was already in a dilapidated condition. Engineers are rare in the Turkish army, and this bridge had been constructed in a very primitive manner. Large gabions had been made. These, having been placed in rows in the water, had been filled with earth, and so acted as piles, on which planks rested, and thus formed a bridge for the passage of infantry. But the stream, which here was rather rapid, had washed the earth out of the gabions, and in many places they had collapsed.

A Turkish army carries with it no pontoon train nor any material for the construction of trestle bridges, and this want might have been

serious had the fortunes of war permitted a further advance.

From the extreme Turkish outposts no Russian vedettes could be distinguished, but it was known that considerable forces of Russian cavalry lay not more than three or four miles distant.

On riding through the camp, I could see that the men were suffering terribly from exposure to the constant rains without any covering, and, as I was informed, they were very badly fed. They had now been for some days living entirely upon biscuit, although within four miles of the railway station. The sudden change in the plan of operations had caused great difficulties in the supply of the army.

I was anxious to find out if there were a possibility of immediate active operations on the Lower Lom, as I had otherwise determined to return to Sarnasufflar.

The next morning I had an interview with Suleiman Pacha, and he told me that he had no idea of making any immediate attack in that direction. He gave me a letter to Prince Hassan relative to reconnaissances which he thought it necessary to be made at Sarnasufflar, and I started that afternoon, intending to reach Pisanza in the evening.

We had sent on the arabas with our baggage some hours before, but came across them just beyond the village of Kadikeui. They had been delayed, and had lost some of the servants.

On arrival at Pisanza, we found the place swarming with refugees from the villages about Kacelievo, who had been driven back by the Cossacks. They gave melancholy accounts of their ill-treatment. We selected a decent-looking Bulgarian house, where we determined to put up for the night, and the refugees, for a consideration, were willing to move elsewhere.

Evening came without any sign of the arabas or servants, but we made a fire in one of the rooms which appeared to be decently comfortable; but, on lying down, we found that the place was infested with vermin, and there was no chance of obtaining a moment's rest during the night. It was curious to note the difference in this respect between Bulgarian and Mahomedan houses. The latter were nearly always clean, and very free from disagreeable visitants, whilst the Bulgarian houses, even of the better order, generally swarmed with vermin.

Early the next morning my servant Reilly and the baggage appeared. It seemed that they had lost their road in the darkness, and, having only

reached the village in the middle of the night, had been unable to find out where we were established.

The weather was very cold, and it poured incessantly with rain, but we started early, intending to reach Rasgrad that day. We were now on the high road which leads from Rustchuk to Rasgrad, and, trotting on rapidly, we arrived at the latter place early in the afternoon.

From information that had been given to us, we had learnt that there were two hotels, one at the railway station, and one in the town of Rasgrad, the two being separated by a distance of between two and three miles. We had ordered the servants to go to the former, but on our arrival at Rasgrad we found that this would add considerably to the next day's journey, and we therefore proceeded to the wretched little hotel in the town, which was kept by a Bulgarian.

We paid another Bulgarian to go back along the road, in order to give the information of our change of movements to the servants. He demanded an exorbitant price, but, as it seemed to be the only way of getting our effects before night, we were obliged to give it.

He came back after an absence of some hours, and said that the arabas had broken down and

been compelled to stop at a village about five miles from Rasgrad for the night. As the letter to Prince Hassan was of importance, I was obliged to start the next morning; but, just as I was leaving, we came across the Polish captain who was in charge of our camp, and learnt from him that the Bulgarian's story was a pure invention; that he had never been out to meet our servants, and that they had consequently gone up to the railway station, and were surprised at our non-arrival. That Bulgarian was sought for, but never found.

CHAPTER XV.

From Rasgrad to Sarnasufflar—Retreat of Egyptians—Preparing for winter—Abdul Kader—A new residence—A female blockade—Failure of Selim—Success of Mehemet—Circassian foray—A lodging in the bean-field—Circassian surgery—A bribe for humanity—Reconnoitre—The Russian position—Popkeui—In the maize—Heavy shell fire—No casualties—Value of artillery fire—Moral effect—Military reconnaissances—Health of troops—Austrian and Russian maps.

FROM Rasgrad to our camp at Sarnasufflar was a distance of about fifteen miles. There was a great difference of opinion as to which was the best road ; but, taking the line which led through Kizil-Murad towards Spahilar, I then tried a short cut from the latter place to Bachiler, but we found some difficulty in making our way through the large wood which lies on the hills above that village. At last we stumbled upon one of the roads which Sabit had cut through the wood when he occupied that part of the position. We followed this military road to the Reconnaissance Hill, where I thought it possible that Prince

Hassan might have re-established his camp ; but it was only occupied by a battery of artillery and a battalion of infantry. They had constructed huts for themselves.

Everything looked wretched and miserable. The whole place was knee-deep in mud, and the sides of the hills were so slippery that some of my Staff had awkward falls.

On my arrival at Sarnasufflar I found that here the appointment of Suleiman Pacha had been even worse received than in the camp at Kadi-keui. Prince Hassan was determined at once to return with his troops to Varna, and sent off a despatch to Suleiman to that effect. The latter appeared to have a knack of making himself extremely distasteful to superior generals ; and it was declared that, with the large army which he had so long commanded at Shipka without making any movement, not a single general of division was present.

I found Prince Hassan and Salih Pacha established in the two best houses which the village of Sarnasufflar could boast. Each contained two small rooms, in which it was just possible to stand upright ; in this they were distinguished from the remainder of the village. Reilly and the baggage did not arrive until the following day.

The whole country was now deep in mud, and it was quite evident that, for the present, all military movements were impossible. There was already a considerable change in the weather. The inhabitants declared that winter did not usually set in so early; but it began to be seriously canvassed whether a winter campaign might not be impossible, and orders were given to the troops to make every preparation for passing some months in their present positions.

Both the Turks and Egyptians had made themselves excellent huts. The quantity of wood in the neighbourhood gave great facilities for their construction, and also promised an unlimited supply of fuel during the cold weather which seemed to be approaching.

On the 9th, Prince Hassan's artillery began its march towards Varna, and four battalions of infantry started on the following day; but a telegram arrived in the afternoon from Suleiman, begging the prince not to remove the remainder of his force until arrangements had been made to replace them with some fresh Turkish battalions.

Commanding one of the Egyptian battalions which was leaving was Abdul Kader Effendi, who had been with my brother, Sir Samuel Baker,

throughout the whole of his journey in Central Africa, and who had lent him such valuable assistance. Until this, the very day of his departure, I had no idea that he was present with the Egyptian army, and he was delighted to be able to pay me a visit before he left. All the Egyptian Staff gave him the very highest character, but he still remained only commander of a battalion. I spoke very strongly to the Prince in his favour, and hope that it may have had some effect.

On the 11th, Prince Hassan left, a general of brigade and four battalions of Egyptians still remaining at Sarnasufflar camp.

As from want of height we had been obliged to walk about in my cottage in a doubled-up attitude, I seized this opportunity of acquiring a better residence. I had spoken to Salih Pacha on the subject the day previously, and he told me that he would place a sentry on Prince Hassan's house in order to keep it for me after his departure.

Trusting to this promise, I made all the arrangements for sending up the baggage, and, after riding up to the Reconnaissance Hill to see if any Russian movement could be detected, came down to the new abode, expecting to find everything established. To my surprise I found Reilly and

all the servants in a state of consternation. The baggage was still in the arabas.

Some of the women belonging to an adjacent house had, it appeared, taken a fancy to my would-be residence, and, having got into the rooms, had closed the doors and refused permission to enter. It was in vain that the owner of the house explained to them that he had let it to me, and that they must immediately quit. They steadily and absolutely refused.

Their male relatives were sent for, but female obstinacy still triumphed. Thinking that the old adage, "Possession is nine points of the law," might be brought usefully into play, I ordered all the baggage to be unpacked and placed in the verandah. This sign of determination was entirely without effect.

In despair, I went to Salih Pacha and acquainted him with my troubles. Salih had a great, hulking aide-de-camp, named Selim, who has already been mentioned—a man of a most fierce and determined character.

"Wait here a few minutes," said the Pacha, "and I will send down Selim. He'll arrange it all directly."

I did wait for about half an hour, but no news of success arrived. On going back to the cottage,

I found that Selim was completely nonplussed, and that the women still maintained the blockade which they had established. I came back to Salih and taunted him with the failure of his gigantic aide-de-camp.

"Never mind," he said, "I still have a card to play. I'll send Mehemet."

Mehemet was an immense favourite with the fair sex, and I followed him, curious to see what would be his plan of operations. He was not long in making up his mind as to the course to be pursued. Boldly pushing open the door by main force, he rushed in amongst the women. In another minute there was immense chüchling and laughing within, and the whole troop poured out, apparently on the best of terms with Mehemet, who immediately handed me over the abode which I had found so difficult of access.

Our lives now became most dreary and monotonous. The weather still remained very wet and stormy. No sign was to be seen of any Russian movements, but we heard that they had occupied Posapina and Kovatza in small force.

On October 15th some Circassians came in. They had been on the foray, and had killed five Russian dragoons who had been on outpost duty in advance of Posapina.

It appeared that the Government had issued an order that each Circassian who had been wounded during the war was to receive a certain gratuity, and they came up to our head-quarters in the village in order to show their wounds and claim the promised reward. But there seemed to be great discontent on the part of those who had been wounded during the Servian campaign, and who could see no reason why they should be excepted from the premium which was to be given to those who had suffered in the campaign against the Russians.

We had some amusing conversation with these Circassian chiefs, and Salih gave me a curious insight into their habits and customs. When engaged in war, it appears that, if a Circassian is killed in battle, it is a point of honour for his nearest friend to obtain his shirt, which he is bound personally to restore to the female relatives of the deceased. They are a wild, quaint race, and never seem to settle down to the comforts of a quiet life. Their villages are wretched. I remember an amusing incident with regard to a Circassian who formed one of my escort whilst the Turkish army was lying in front of Constantinople. He had gone in to Therapia with one of my Staff who was staying for the night with

our Consul-General. The handsome young orderly was made much of in the servants' hall, and it appeared that he ate with a knife and fork, and altogether conducted himself with great propriety. A good room had been prepared for him, with every requisite for passing the night comfortably. But he was evidently uneasy, and requested to see the Consul. He then explained that he was unaccustomed to such luxuries, and asked for permission to sleep in a neighbouring bean-field.

Some of the old chiefs who had come in had been engaged in the former wars of Circassia against the Russians, and could boast as many as five or six wounds which they had received in these and later campaigns.

They explained to me the Circassian mode of treatment for gun-shot wounds and sword-cuts, and declared that their surgeons were far superior to any that could be found in Europe. In proof of this they stated that, even if a man lost part of the bone of his leg or arm, the Circassian doctors would replace it with a bone taken from a sheep or lamb, and that the flesh would grow over and the limb would become as serviceable as it was before. As an example of this they sent for one of their comrades who had been subjected to the

operation. The man certainly had an awkward limp, but he steadily refused to show the wound which his companions were so anxious to exhibit.

I urged upon the chiefs the cruelty of killing their prisoners, as they almost invariably did when engaged in these outpost forays, but found that my ideas of humanity were by no means well received. As the Circassians are supposed to be particularly open to pecuniary influences, I thought I would try the effect of offering a monetary reward for any prisoner brought in alive. I promised to give ten pounds for the first that they should be able to capture. But their bloodthirsty natures appeared to be too strong to lay them open to this influence, for the reward was never claimed.

No attempt had been made by our cavalry to obtain any absolute information of the Russian movements. Reports came in that a small infantry force had moved up to Kovatza, and that their position at Posapina had also been strengthened. The Circassians came to us daily with pretended news of the Russian movements, but it was impossible to trust to their reports.

For the last day or two frosty weather had set in, and it was determined to make a recon-naissance in order more accurately to determine

what Russian force was now in front of us at Sarnasufflar.

Since our retreat, two squadrons of cavalry had remained at Popkeui, and they had never been disturbed in its occupation. It was considered important to move forward with such a force as would induce the Russians to strengthen their outposts, and thus to develop the strength and nature of the troops that occupied the ground between Posapina and Kovatza.

It was agreed that three squadrons of cavalry and a battalion of infantry should move from Karahassankeui, by Polomarka, in the direction of Kovatza. At the same time I was to take six squadrons of cavalry, three battalions of infantry, and three mountain guns, and to move through Popkeui, in the same direction. If the Russians did not strengthen their outposts, I intended to drive them in, and compel them, if possible, to show the force which they had in hand.

The troops had been ordered the previous evening to assemble at Haidarkeui at daybreak. There was a dense fog in the morning when I rode down to that village, but towards ten o'clock it cleared away. We moved up to Popkeui, and there, halting in rear of the wood, we waited till there should be some

indication of the advance of the little column from Karahassankeui.

Detaching two squadrons to move to the left, in the direction of Balsa Yourmakeui, I left a battalion and a mountain gun to hold the left of the Popkeui position, and moved on with the remainder to the right of the Popkeui wood.

We had not proceeded far when the Karahassankeui cavalry on our right were plainly discerned, and some Cossack picquets were retiring before them. The fields were covered for a considerable extent with uncut maize.

I moved a little to the right, so as to form a junction with the force from Karahassankeui. We could see that, drawn up in front of that column, in a strong position (A b, Map I.), where, in the olden days, entrenchments had been thrown up by the 13th Russian Corps, there stood a cavalry regiment and a Russian battery. The latter opened fire upon the Karahassankeui force.

I pushed forward my remaining four squadrons of cavalry. This had the effect of bringing up another Russian battery of horse artillery, and another cavalry regiment, and, as my troops made their way through the maize-fields, the Russians opened a heavy fire upon us of shell and shrapnel, at a distance of only about 1800 yards.

Pushing on some infantry skirmishers, I seized one of the old Russian entrenchments, and manœuvred so as to give the impression of being about to make an attack. Major Sartorius, who, although only present as an amateur, was always in the front, went forward with these skirmishers. But it was nearly an hour before I was able so to threaten the advanced position which the enemy had occupied as to draw out the Russian troops which had been hidden in reserve by the wood above Kovatza, and which at length came onward to their support.

We now saw that they had placed in position a whole brigade of eight battalions of infantry, three regiments of cavalry, and three batteries of artillery. Having thus with difficulty accomplished the object of the reconnaissance, we fell slowly back towards Popkeui.

Although the Russians had fired upwards of 120 shells, and principally shrapnel, at the short range that has been mentioned, and burst them beautifully all around, by good fortune they had only succeeded in wounding two horses. It is singular to remark how little real effect artillery fire very constantly produces. The Turkish infantry were well protected by the high maize; but not so the cavalry and Staff. Yet a charm

seemed to surround us as the shrapnel whistled about us for nearly an hour without touching a man. Yet soldiers will commit a fatal error if they ever believe that artillery fire is useless. True that its moral is out of all proportion to its real effect; but moral effect is all important in war, and you will never get troops to believe that those ugly-sounding shells are comparatively harmless.

Halting the troops for two or three hours at Popkeui, so as not to leave the impression upon their minds that they were forced to retire, or that anything but a reconnaissance was intended, we fell back in the evening to our old position at Sarnasufflar.

When military reconnaissances are attempted, it should, in my opinion, be always explained to the officers and men that the object is simply to reconnoitre, and not to attack the enemy's position. Otherwise, as reconnaissances must invariably end in a retreat, they are liable to have a bad effect upon the *morale* of the men, who often do not see why they should retire from what, in some cases, may even be a smaller force of the enemy.

In this reconnaissance beyond Popkeui I did not allow any return to be made to the enemy's

fire, in order thus to strengthen the impression in the men's minds of the actual object of the forward movement. A few weeks before, the army had been in such a high state of *morale* that it was unnecessary to think about these details. Although no unsuccessful military operations had taken place which could lead us to believe that the *morale* of the troops had deteriorated, still there were certain signs, which could not be mistaken, that the disorderly and unnecessary retreat from the Baniska Lom had not been without a demoralizing effect.

Before that retreat the health of the army had been excellent, but we lost more men from sickness and discouragement in the week that followed it than would have carried the Turkish forces successfully to Biela. Mehemet Ali had laughed at me when I had, amongst other reasons, urged the loss of *morale* that a retreat would entail. Now, alas ! it was only too evident in the thinned ranks of the battalions, and the absence of that feeling of confidence in themselves which had before pervaded the soldiers of this army.

It was evident that the Russian troops occupying Kovatza were merely watching the Turkish force which held the Sarnasufflar heights, and, as there seemed no prospect of the new Commander-

in-Chief attempting to carry out a decided plan of campaign at this season of the year, I determined to start for Osman Bazaar and the camp at Yaïla. From thence I intended to make a reconnaissance towards Kesarova in order thoroughly to acquaint myself with the topography of that district, which I considered very important for future operations. I was also anxious to correct, if possible, the many errors which we so constantly found to exist in the Austrian Staff map, which was in general use throughout the Turkish army.

We had captured, on different occasions, the Russian map of this part of Bulgaria. In some respects it was superior to the Austrian, but it also contained many errors. It appeared as if the Austrian officers engaged in the survey had bestowed especial attention upon the roads, but had neglected accuracy in the delineation of rivers and mountains, and also very constantly in the positions of villages. The Russian map was far more accurate as regarded the course of the rivers, and, consequently, of the mountains and undulations of ground. The inaccuracy relative to villages was almost as apparent as in the map of the Austrian Staff.

CHAPTER XVI.

Start for Osman Bazaar—Mahomedans and Bulgarians—A true friend—Rich villages—Said Pacha—Saving of treasure—Cheap military supply—A visit from the Mutessarif—Life of a Turkish Pacha—The camp at Yaila—A gap in the line—Useful Bashi-Bazouk—A grateful comrade—An intelligent Staff-officer—A reconnaissance skirmish—View of Kesarova—Neglected advantages—Chance still open—Large force available—Raouf and Suleiman—General character of the former.

THE weather had now changed, and it had become fine and frosty.

Taking with me a small cavalry escort, I started on the 20th for Osman Bazaar, accompanied by my Staff and by Major Sartorius, who had hitherto followed my fortunes throughout the campaign. We moved away through Kizilar and Kabdar by a road just practicable for arabas, and leading through a mountainous and wooded district.

This part of the country had been little touched by the war. The villages, which were numerous and apparently very prosperous, were inhabited

principally by a mixed population of Bulgarians and Mahomedans.

I endeavoured to learn on what terms they remained whilst in such near vicinity to the Russian army. All seemed to go on most peacefully and quietly, and there was none of that antagonism to be discerned which had been so prominently painted by a section of the English press. I learnt from the chiefs of the villages that in districts where religious strife had not been stirred up by outer influences, the people, in this part of the province, were living in perfect amity.

We had come across a singular instance of the existence of strong friendship between Mahomedan and Bulgarian after the occupation of Karahassankeui. Some weeks after that village had been in our possession, some Mahomedans reported that a Mussulman proprietor of no great means was in possession of 400 head of cattle, which his fellow-villagers declared did not belong to him. The man was brought up to headquarters and an inquiry instituted. Finding that further concealment was useless, he frankly explained that a Bulgarian friend belonging to Karahassankeui had left that place and thrown in his fortunes with the Russians. The Bulgarian had owned a large stock of cattle, and on leaving

he placed them all in charge of this Mussulman friend. He had religiously guarded them with considerable difficulty and expense until, the war being at an end, he might hope to restore them to their rightful owner.

Near the village of Kairbashi we looked down the deep valley which leads towards Eski-Djumaa, and could plainly distinguish that town at about twelve miles' distance.

As we neared Osman Bazaar the villages became more frequent. The country was rich and fertile. The villages appeared in a well-to-do condition, which would compare most favourably with either Ireland or Scotland. We were struck by the enormous number of geese that wandered in the outskirts, and which might be purchased for the low sum of about one shilling or its equivalent.

Passing through a large wood of splendid young oak-trees, which would be worth a fortune in England, Osman Bazaar lay on the other side of the valley before us. It stands on the slope of a hill, but the town was rather smaller in extent than that of Eski-Djumaa.

I had previously heard that Said Pacha, whom I had met as Mutessarif of Varna when on a visit to that place some time previous to the war,

was now Mutessarif of the district of Osman Bazaar.

On our arrival I went straight to the Konak, or official residence, and was warmly received by my old acquaintance. Said Pacha is a man of very superior attainments. He speaks French perfectly, and had previously been Governor of Cyprus, where he explained to me that he had been able to introduce considerable improvements, which had a most beneficial effect on the condition and revenues of that island. He had also been most successful in his endeavours to destroy the pest of locusts, which formed a great drawback to agriculture. He invited us to dine with him, but as our retinue was a large one, we had ordered them to take rooms for us at a small hotel which was kept by a Bulgarian in the town.

Said Pacha had been at Tirnova when the Russians approached that place; and he gave a melancholy account of the way in which the town had been deserted by the Turkish forces who might have made a good stand, and probably have prevented a Russian occupation.

He himself had only just been able to save the Government treasury-chest in the hasty flight which was at last compulsory; and, in his endea-

vours to effect this useful work, he had been compelled to leave behind the whole of his personal effects.

He told me that with the money thus rescued he had been able to supply the whole division encamped in front of Osman Bazaar for a period of many weeks. The supply of food to a Turkish battalion in the field is not so costly as that of a British regiment. The Mutessarif assured us that seventy Turkish pounds per month had proved sufficient for the purchase of food for each battalion of the Turkish forces which formed the column at Yaïla. These battalions I found averaged from 600 to 700 men.

"I shall never get any thanks," said Said Pacha, "for having saved the Government money. No one would have known if I had appropriated the whole sum, and doubtless many of my friends will consider me a fool for not having done so. I might then have made a rich present to some person in high authority, and should have been certain of advancement from my present position."¹

The next morning the Mutessarif paid me a visit at the hotel.

He confided to me that he expected to be sent

¹ Said Pacha still remains unrewarded.

shortly as Turkish Minister to Teheran, and being well acquainted with that place, and with Persian politics in general, I was able to impart to him some interesting information.

A Turkish Pacha who has long held official positions ought certainly to be a thorough man of the world.

As he usually holds office for an average period of about three months, and is generally sent from one far portion of the kingdom to another on the occasion of each change, he has the opportunity of gaining a varied experience of the different provinces which form the Turkish Empire. These changes are, however, often followed by periods of disgrace. The official retires to the privacy of his home with the utmost resignation. He has a confident belief that in the course of a very short time he will be again called upon to resume his duties, though, perhaps, in a minor position.

It would be curious to study the ups and downs of life which have been experienced in the course of their career, by many of those who now hold the highest positions in the Turkish Empire.

We started on October 22nd for the camp at Yaïla, which was commanded by Kerim Pacha, whom I had met on the day of Karahassankeui,

and whom we had left in command of the cavalry on our recent visit to Kadikeui.

The camp lay *à cheval* of the *chaussée* which led from Osman Bazaar to Tirnova. Left of the road, and about five miles distant, rose up the first high ridges of the Balkan range, thus giving a protection to the Turkish left. The position itself was well chosen, and had been carefully entrenched; but the right, which looked down upon the valley of the Yantra, appeared to be rather *en l'air*, more especially now that the Russians held the advanced position of Posapina.

There was a great gap between the Turkish division at Yaïla and our force at Sarnasufflar, and this gap was in no way watched as it might have been by a few cavalry detachments. It gave the enemy an opportunity of making a direct march upon Osman Bazaar, and thus cutting the communications between Kerim's and Salih's divisions.

Notwithstanding the immense superiority of the Russians in cavalry, and that these positions had been respectively occupied for many weeks past, the enemy, with that want of enterprise which distinguished their cavalry throughout the whole war, had never made the slightest attempt to penetrate at this point.

We found Kerim Pacha installed in an excellent hut which had been erected by his predecessor, Mehemet Salim. Since our experience at Pisanza I had a righteous horror of sleeping in Bulgarian villages; but as Kerim declared that no tents were available, we selected a Mussulman cottage in the small village of Yaïla as our temporary residence. Although the rooms which we occupied had a dirty and unprepossessing appearance, we were able to rest in peace undisturbed by nightly visitants.

I had attached to me as camp-commandant one of the remainder of the small Polish company which had suffered so severely in the first Russian attack on Sarnasufflar. Captain Petrovsky had once been in the Russian service as an officer of cavalry. During our interview with Kerim Pacha a mounted Bashi-Bazouk arrived, who, with a small party of his comrades, had, it appeared, been doing good service with the Turkish outposts. He brought with him the swords and caps of two Russian dragoons who had fallen in a skirmish which had taken place that morning. Captain Petrovsky recognized the caps as belonging to men of his ancient corps, and declared that the swords of this regiment had an especial value, being made by a maker of considerable

mark at a much earlier date. The stamp of this maker he described, and we found it upon the swords in question. Colonel Allix purchased one from the Bashi-Bazouk, but had to pay a rather exorbitant price. Captain Petrovsky was most anxious to come into collision with his old comrades.

I determined next morning to push forward a reconnaissance as far as possible in the direction of Kesarova.

Kerim Pacha had an intelligent young Chief of Staff who spoke French. This officer advised me, instead of following the main road towards Kesarova, to push on by a country road which led in the direction of Kadikeui. By moving to the left, about three miles from Kadikeui, I should be able to reach some heights from which the Russian position could be plainly seen, and in this manner it would be feasible to advance much further than by following the main *chaussée*.

Taking with me a strong squadron, I followed his directions, and he accompanied us in order to be able to give all the necessary information.

About a mile from Yaïla we passed through the advanced works of the Turkish position. The whole line was very extensive, and the force

which held it would not have been sufficient had a serious attack been attempted by the Russians.

We moved through a beautiful, rich, undulating country, interspersed with groves of oak-trees, and, turning to the left just where the road began to descend into the valley towards Kadikeui, we advanced in the direction of the heights above Revis.

A detachment of cavalry was sent down into the Kadikeui valley, in order to take care that no movement was made from that place for the purpose of cutting us off from Yaila whilst engaged in our reconnaissance.

The Russians still occupied Kadikeui, though not in great force. Their outposts were pushed forward in front of Kesarova, on the main *chaussée*, and they held the village of Revis with cavalry outposts.

On reaching the height which rises above Revis, a magnificent view lay before us. We had been obliged to feel our way with great care during the latter part of the road, and on seeing our advance the Russian cavalry strengthened their outposts, and a slight skirmish began between the vedettes that we had pushed onward to cover our reconnaissance and the Russian vedettes in front.

I was surprised to find how very favourable the

country would have proved for an advance against the Russians from this side. The heights which lay between Kadikeui and Kesarova formed a far better and much shorter position than that occupied by the Turkish troops around Yaila. It would have been perfectly hopeless for the Russians to have attempted to hold Kesarova had it been threatened. It lay in a valley completely commanded by the heights on the Turkish side, whilst it was impossible to imagine a finer position than that which might have been taken up by occupying the hills on the bend of the river near Revis.

Looking away towards Tirnova, the ground appeared in the distance almost like a level plain. We could follow the course of this branch of the Yantra right away till it made its sharp bend to the right, near Draganova. On the other side of the river, to our right front, the country was very hilly and much wooded. An advance upon Tirnova offered every advantage, for as the force pushed forward it would have opened up the Elena-Haim-Boghaz road, and compelled the Russians to retreat from the former place. This would have immediately let through the force under Shukri Pacha, which, belonging to Suleiman's Shipka army, held the Haim-Boghaz Pass.

A further advance must have compelled the retreat of the Russians in front of Shipka, in order to prevent themselves from being cut off by the occupation of the Tirnova-Schistova road. Although these advantages were now so evident, and the idea of this movement had been so much canvassed and so strongly supported by Salih Pacha and myself during the unhappy days on the Tcherkovna heights, no staff report pointing out the nature of the country had ever been received from the Yaila division. Nor, when we had moved forward to the Baniska Lom, had that division advanced to the position above Kesarova, as it might have done without the slightest difficulty, and with the greatest advantage to the general operations.

It appeared to me that, provided the weather remained fine, there was still an opportunity of making a forward movement in this direction. The Russian reinforcements had begun to arrive, but, as far as we could learn, with the exception of one division, they were all being thrown towards the side of Plevna.

The line of the Lom, by dint of fortifying important points, had now become immensely strong. It was true that at this time Suleiman appeared to have given up all thought of pushing

the campaign seriously at so late a season of the year. The divisions of Fuad and Nedjib had been moved back to the old camp at Rasgrad. Azaf, with part of the Rustchuk garrison, held Kadikeui, whilst Sabit still remained in position at Solenik.

The Russians were making no demonstrations from the side of Biela. It seemed perfectly feasible to push the divisions of Fuad and Nedjib towards Osman Bazaar, and to advance from there with the three divisions in the direction of Elena and Tirnova. Moreover, it was evident that a very large additional force might be withdrawn from the many scattered lower-range garrisons in rear of the Lom line, such as Silistria, Shumla, Varna, and Bazardjik. They might thus be used to strengthen these divisions.

Suleiman Pacha had been succeeded in the command at Shipka by Raouf Pacha. A strong personal antagonism existed between these two Marshals; but Raouf Pacha, a high-spirited and generous-minded man, was not likely to thwart a movement of this kind, from personal considerations, had it been projected.

CHAPTER XVII.

Plevna—Loftcha—Advantages of the latter—The Trojan Pass—Retreat of Osman—Mehemet Ali and Osman—Bonfire signals—Russians towards Tirnova—A good squadron—Ishiklar—Unwatched road—An alerte of Cossacks—A practical joke—Arablar—A Russian reconnaissance—The old Circassian Chief—A charmed life—Domestic arrangements—Reilly and the Turkish servants—Unintelligible conversations—Major Sartorius—Karahassankeui heights—Movements on Lower Lom—Flaming despatches—Stupid Staff—An old fort—A village militia—A changed scene—Circassian stories—A good purchase—Russian movements.

THE position of Plevna was now beginning to excite the most serious apprehensions. Mehemet Ali, when Commander-in-Chief, had always been of opinion that Plevna had done its duty, and that the army of Osman Pacha ought to fall back in the direction of Orkhanié if Loftcha could not be re-occupied.

The occupation of Loftcha would have given immense strategical advantages. As a military position it was far superior in every respect to Plevna. It lay close in front of the Trojan Pass,

and, if held in force, it most seriously threatened the Russian advance at the Shipka Pass. The Trojan Pass was also within easy distance from the Shipka army, and nothing would have been simpler than to have strengthened the force of Osman, had it been placed at Loftcha, by troops withdrawn from the Shipka army whenever it might be considered necessary.

When Plevna had first been occupied, and when the first Russian attacks had been repelled with such serious loss, Loftcha had been held by a detachment from the Plevna army. It is difficult to understand why more serious attention was not given to the Loftcha position, and why it was not made the point of importance for the occupation of the main army of Osman Pacha.

Had this been done, the subsequent disasters could never have happened.

Mehemet Ali, as has been mentioned, had, whilst on the Baniska Lom, sent a letter urging the retreat of Osman Pacha in the direction of Orkhaníé, but in the minds of the authorities at Constantinople a sort of halo hung round the name of Plevna. Although the place now really offered no important strategical advantages, and was so evidently a source of serious military danger, this proposal met with considerable resistance.

One would have imagined that when communication had once been cut off with Plevna, as had been the case in the previous month, this alone would have served as a warning for the future. A retreat of Osman's army towards Orkhanié would have drawn the Russian forces further away from their line of communications, and separated them more completely from the Yantra army under the Czarewitch.

This protracted clinging to Plevna was inexplicable. Whether Suleiman encouraged it or not I am unable to say, but I know that Mehemet Ali, whilst Commander-in-Chief, was most strongly averse to it, and that Osman Pacha in no way supported the retention of that position. It was quite evident that if Osman were only retained there long enough, the place must be regularly invested by the Russians, and he and his army lost.

After remaining about two hours on the height above Revis, we moved to a village to the right, and examined all the ground looking down into the Kadikeui valley.

The Russians had evidently noticed our reconnaissance. They had established at that time a system of signals by means of bonfires. The smoke of these by day, and the fire by night, gave the necessary warning of any Turkish movement,

and we could now trace these bonfires far away in the direction of Tirnova. On the plains near Djoulin we could distinguish two Russian battalions. It was said that a brigade lay in the direction of Bebrova, but it was quite evident that the line between Kesarova and Tirnova was only very lightly held.

As we reached the road leading down to Kadi-keui, we found our cavalry detachment on the watch, and, picking them up, we fell quietly back to the camp at Yaïla.

I had been very much struck during the day with the admirable manner in which the cavalry squadron had covered our reconnaissance. In these, the minor movements of war, the Turkish cavalry are by no means inefficient. Under good management I believe that the men are quite capable of rising again to the excellence of the cavalry of the early days of the Turkish empire, but cavalry officers are, as a rule, not much looked up to in the Turkish army, and they are generally utterly deficient in all those qualities which tend towards the excellence of this branch of the service.

I had determined on the following day to make my way direct from the camp at Yaïla back to Sarnasufflar, without returning to Osman Bazar.

There was a road reported practicable for arabas, which ran through Ishiklar and Konakkeui, by Arablar to Sarnasufflar. We started in the morning, taking a squadron of cavalry as escort. We crossed the branch of the Yantra, just below Ishiklar, by a stone bridge. The river at this point was deep and sluggish, and about fifteen yards wide. Ishiklar was an important and well-to-do-looking village.

On reaching Konakkeui, I found that I had been right in my conjecture that a very serious gap had been left in this part of our line. A road ran from Mehmetkeui to Konakkeui, and from there direct to Osman Baazar; yet, as has before been mentioned, this road had been for weeks lying open to the Russians unwatched, and yet no advantage had been taken of this oversight. The want of energy shown by the Russian cavalry throughout the war was unpardonable. It was evidently important that we should occupy the commanding hill near Arablar, and keep at least a cavalry detachment in front of Konakkeui. I had called the attention of Salih Pacha to this shortly before, and patrols of cavalry were now sent occasionally to Mehmetkeui and the surrounding country.

Shortly after leaving Konakkeui, small parties

of cavalry were seen to our left front, and the *alerte* was immediately given of the approach of Cossacks. My glasses soon enabled me to detect that they were Turkish cavalry, probably one of the patrols sent in the direction of Mehmetkeui. I could see that this patrol had also mistaken us for a Russian force, for they pushed forward a few men with the greatest caution, and eventually halted, and then began slowly to retire.

Our men were well aware now that they were dealing with friends, but on seeing this movement they carried out the semblance of being a Russian force, and eventually dashed forward towards the vedettes of the opposite party. These immediately turned and galloped away; but after a short time they discovered the joke that was being played upon them. It was, as I supposed, a patrol which had been sent out from Arablar, and, with the two forces united, we now moved on to that large village.

Arablar is a place of considerable importance, and lies at the foot of a remarkable rocky crag. This point offered a very strong defensive position. In fact, in front it was perfectly impregnable by nature, and it could only be approached in rear by a few small paths, which led through a thick wood. Soon after our first arrival at

Sarnasufflar I had proposed to occupy it with a detachment, but Ali Riza, who had been sent there on reconnaissance, had reported unfavourably of the position.

Taking the road through the valley which leads from Arablar towards Kizilar, we reached Sarnasufflar in the evening.

Whilst we had been making the reconnaissance in the direction of Kadikeui we had heard the fire of several guns in the direction of Sarnasufflar; but I found, on my return to the camp at Yaila, that Kerim Pacha had received no despatch from Salih on the subject. It was evidently, therefore, nothing of very serious importance; but on our return to our old quarters we learnt that the Russians had pushed forward with a brigade of infantry, two regiments of cavalry, and three batteries, and had made a reconnaissance of our position.

Salih had made no movement in return until the Russians had reached Haidarkeui, and came under the fire of our guns on the heights. Then a heavy fire had been opened upon them, and they had immediately retreated. He mentioned to me a singular incident of the reconnaissance.

It appeared that, when the Russians retired, a single Circassian, who proved to be our old friend

the chief who had distinguished himself by his single combat with the Cossacks, in front of the village of Orsikova, rode forward across the Lom at Haidarkeui. Entirely by himself he followed the retreating Russian column, firing, as of old, at long range at the rear-guard of cavalry which covered the retreat. Quite alone, he thus pursued the whole Russian force for a distance of four miles. The Cossacks returned his fire, but he seemed to bear a charmed life, and was never hit; and at length the Russians grew so angry that they put some guns in position, and opened a fire with shells upon him. The old man then quietly fell back, and arrived safely at Haidarkeui.

We now reverted to our old quiet life at Sarnasufflar. My cottage was not a palatial residence; it was built of wattle and daub, but boasted two rooms and a verandah. I occupied one; Reilly and the servants the other. There were windows in my room, but no glass in them. They were covered with paper, however, which kept out the wind and rain. I could just stand up in my apartment, but seldom did, for it was such a very near question as to whether my head would hit the beams. The only thing that was pretentious about my chamber was the fire-place. The chimney was very large, and it projected into

the room, like those in an old-fashioned English inn. We burned wood, of course, and there was no fire-grate.

The little yard in which the cottage stood was enclosed all round with a very high wattled fence, so that there was no view. This yard was usually deep in mud. Two buffaloes wandered about it in a disconsolate sort of way. There was a little hand flour-mill under a shed in this yard, and the old women of the adjacent cottage, ground away at it incessantly, beginning long before dawn, and ending only late at night, if they ever did end, on which point I was doubtful.

In the early morning I used to be amused by conversations between my English servant, Reilly, and the Turkish soldier-servants; they did not speak a word of English; Reilly about three words of Turkish. Yet the latter never would believe that they did not understand him. I have seen him sit down by a Circassian, and talk to him for half an hour without stopping.

The usual conversation with the servants would run somewhat as follows:—"Now, I say, you Omar, just you run down to the spring and bring up a can of fresh "su" (water) for the General's bath. Clear water, I mean; none of your nasty, muddy stuff, as you did yesterday. Now, then,

don't you hear what I am telling you?" Omar, not understanding a word, would smile blandly.

"Come, now, it's no laughing matter; and you had better be off at once and get some, if you don't want to get into trouble." Omar, having the can handed to him, would guess what was meant, but would return with water that had been disturbed. Then Reilly would come in to me. "Please, sir, these people ain't any good at all. I would rather be without them altogether. They make light of all I say. Here's this Omar; I told him, as plain as possible, to bring clear water, and look at this stuff he's fetched." "Well, but, Reilly," I would reply, "you forget that they don't understand you." "Not understand, sir! Well, I can't see how that can be, for I spoke to him in his own language." The use of the word "su" had been considered quite sufficient to explain all the rest of the address in English.

Everything seemed to have settled down, and it really began to appear that if no serious impression could be made by the Russians upon Plevna, there was every probability of both armies going into winter quarters, and that a second campaign would be necessary before the war

could be terminated by any great advantage gained on either side.

Major Sartorius had received letters which compelled him to return to England, and he left on the 27th with the intention of riding by Osman Bazaar through the Slimnia Pass, and so gaining the railway at Yamboli, which would take him to Constantinople.

I rode up on that day to the wooded heights above Karahassankeui to see what arrangements had been made for strengthening the position. I found it immensely strong by nature ; in fact, a single man on foot would find it difficult to mount the front of the rocky hill except by the one path which led to the summit. Our glasses showed us from this point that the Russian outposts held a strong entrenched position to our left of Polomarka. It was one of the works which the 13th Corps had thrown up in the days when they occupied the Lom valley. It seemed to be only occupied by a picquet of cavalry.

We now heard daily that movements were being made against the Russians by Azaf's troops upon the Lower Lom. It was quite evident that no serious advance could be made in that direction with the force which was available, and it was difficult to see the object of these attacks unless

they were for the purpose of attracting the attention of the enemy whilst a more important advance was made from a different direction. These movements were principally in the vicinity of Pirgos and Metchka. Flaming telegrams were sent continually by Suleiman to Constantinople with reports of victorious actions in this direction. But Azaf's force gained no ground, and it was quite plain to us that there was at this time no intention of an active offensive elsewhere.

These movements, it was evident, were only carried out in order to quiet the authorities at Constantinople by a show of activity, utterly regardless of the useless waste of life which they occasioned. Rumour reached us that in one of these affairs the Turks had suffered something very like a severe reverse, and had lost 1500 killed and wounded; but Suleiman telegraphed another victory.

On the 28th I rode to the hill above Arablar, and made a careful examination of the position. The staff-officer of Ali Riza's brigade, had been sent several times in this direction, and had brought back what he showed with some pride as a military sketch of the whole country between Arablar and Ayazlar. I now found that this sketch was absolutely incorrect, and that several

bridges of considerable importance existed across the Lom between Ayazlar and Arablar, which were not even shown upon his map. This man was a perfect type of the worst class of Turkish staff-officers, ignorant to a degree in everything that related to his duties, yet bumptious and pretentious. He had been the worthy coadjutor of Ali Riza in his late career.

Upon the top of the cliff which looked down over the valley between Ayazlar and Mehmetkeui, we found the remains of what had evidently been an old stone fort. A curious grove of large trees grew in the rear. There was an excellent spring close at hand which would supply the garrison with good water, and the only access from the village was by a narrow and steep pathway easily defensible. It was evidently a point which should have been occupied, as it completely guarded the road by Mehmetkeui through Arablar, and would lend indirect assistance to our newly prepared post at Konakkeui.

The next day I revisited the place with Salih Pacha, and arrangements were made for its permanent occupation. We afterwards went down into the village, and held a little *levée* of the principal inhabitants. We stopped at the house of an old farmer who constantly paid us visits at

head-quarters at Sarnasufflar. This old man was quite a character, and extremely patriotic. He was reputed as rich, and had previously offered Salih Pacha, in case of provisions running short, to feed at his own expense two companies of soldiers all through the winter.

Arablar was a large Mahomedan village, and the men volunteered to form a sort of militia force which could aid in the defence of the Arablar hill in case of difficulty. A certain number of the villagers were told off for this purpose, with directions to rally upon the troops upon the hill, in case of a Russian advance.

The village of Sarnasufflar, once so pretty, had now become changed indeed. The troops had cut down all the trees with which it was at first surrounded, for the purpose of making huts and for fuel. The Egyptians, as has been mentioned, had even destroyed the fruit-trees.

It had formed the great depôt of the army during the advance to the Baniska Lom, and the immense amount of araba traffic had turned the green fields into seas of mud. The actual cottages had remained untouched and unharmed in any way; but they swarmed with soldiers, and every shed had been turned into a stable. The beautiful hamlet of August had entirely disappeared,

and a dirty, uninteresting, dilapidated village was all that remained in October.

On the 30th the Circassians came in, having, according to their story, made a singular raid in the direction of Kadikeui.

They declared that they had pushed forward by Tillebeler and Masirkeui to Kirlitchlar, and had found no Russians in those villages; that they had then moved on to Kadikeui, where they saw towards evening a Russian battalion, some cavalry, and two guns, encamped. They said that they had halted in the woods until nightfall, when they had crept cautiously right into the Russian camp. They had placed their hands upon the guns, and had even attempted to bring away a box of ammunition as a trophy, but found it too heavy to carry on horseback. They declared that the sentries were all asleep. They had then cut away from the lines three horses, which they brought with them.

They had evidently come across the hospital lines of the cavalry at Kadikeui, for all the horses were in some way lame or injured. One was a remarkably nice, well-bred-looking mare, but frightfully thin, covered with mange, and suffering from an injury to one of her feet. The horses were put up to public auction. Salih Pacha

bought the mare for three liras, and she afterwards turned out an extremely useful and handsome animal.

Making all due allowance for the inaccuracy of Circassian reports, it was evident that the Russians were in no great strength in front of us. It seemed likely that the brigade of the 26th Division from Tchairkeui had advanced to Voditza, Kovatza, and Posapina, and was just watching us from these points. The Russians seemed to be determined to make no movement upon the Lom, whilst they threw their great force upon Plevna, and Suleiman appeared quite content to remain tranquil.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Inactivity—Want of books—A pleasant companion—A miserable Bakal—Telegraph from Suleiman—Russian veracity—Urge an advance by Kesarova—Nedjib and Fuad—A distant cannonade—Turkish camp-dinners—The fighting Tartar—In the front of the battle—Visit of Suleiman—Fingers or forks—Distant sound of guns—A smart brigade—The relief of Plevna—Adieu to Sarnasufflar—Start for Shipka—Mehemet's sword—The Slimnia Pass—Kazan—Bulgarian sufferings—Slimnia—The brother of Dervisch.

Nothing could be more monotonous than our life at Sarnasufflar about this period. There seemed to be no chance of a resumption of active operations.

The Russians were now so distant that there was none of the interest of the late active campaigning. We were living in a state of utter discomfort, and completely shut out from the civilized world. And, in addition, we had been obliged so to cut down our baggage that we were destitute of books and all means of amusement. Our posts, *via* Shumla, arrived very irregularly.

Salih had travelled much; he had been both in England and in France. He was at all times a pleasant and interesting companion, and was ever ready to give useful information relative to Turkish habits, manners, and customs. Our mutual visits were frequent.

The Turkish soldiers camped around the village were so well-conducted that we rarely had cases of complaint. The day after my arrival, however, a most miserable-looking specimen of humanity rushed suddenly into the presence of Salih and myself.

Tearing his hair, and with his face streaming with tears, he prostrated himself upon the mud floor of the cottage. He then rose up, screaming and crying, with his face covered with the dirt from the floor, and immediately told his sad story. He was a bakal, or huckster, following the camp. Some of his stores on their way up from Djumaa had been pillaged by Arabs, and he prayed that search might be made for his lost goods.

It was most amusing to see Mehemet taking charge of, and attempting to pacify the wretched little creature, with an admixture of pity and contempt. It would have been difficult to find two more opposite specimens of the human race than Mehemet and the poor little bakal.

The next afternoon I suddenly received a telegram from Suleiman Pacha at Rasgrad, begging me to come over to that place, as he was anxious to see me immediately.

I started at once, trusting that at last some movement was projected, and, by riding quickly, arrived there just before dusk. I found that the Russian Government had made a complaint to the Porte that officers, non-commissioned officers, and private soldiers, then belonging to the English army, had been serving in the ranks of the Ottoman forces upon the Lom during the campaign. A detailed list was given of their names, and Suleiman was anxious that I should inform him as to the correctness of the statement. There were something like fourteen or fifteen names upon the register. The relative ranks were given in this nominal roll. I need scarcely say there was not a shadow of a foundation for the communication, and I was able absolutely to deny it, even although Serjeant Smith and Private Jones appeared freely amongst the number.

Suleiman informed me that he had news of the advance of a Russian brigade in the direction of Kesarova, and that he was most anxious that new reconnaissances should be made from Sarnasufflar in order again to verify the strength of the

Russian force which lay in front of our line at that point.

He also told me that he was about to start in the direction of Osman Bazaar on the following day for a personal inspection. I pointed out to him the great natural advantages which that country lent to an advance from our side in the direction of Kesarova, and urged that, if any movement were in contemplation, that should be the point which should be selected for the concentration and action of the Turkish troops.

Before leaving on the following morning I saw both Nedjib and Fuad Pachas. Both their divisions were settling down in the Rasgrad lines, and they were busy housing them, as they imagined, for the winter. They seemed to have no idea of the resumption of hostilities, and had selected houses for their own residences, and were talking of bringing up their respective families from Constantinople. The troops were suffering much from sickness caused by the long and useless exposure in the camp at Kadikeui. I returned to Sarnasufflar in the afternoon by way of Kizil Murad and Spahilar.

On the following day, November 3rd, we heard a distant cannonade, but were unable to detect from which direction the sound came.

The dull life at Sarnasufflar was resumed. I used often to dine with Salih, and was surprised at the excellent dinners that his Turkish cook would send up. The dinner usually consisted of a number of stews of meat or vegetables, or both combined, some of them remarkably well prepared. It was always followed by the invariable pilaf, and ended with sweets or pastry that showed high art in their production. Salih, like most of the higher class of Turkish pachas, had long ago discarded the old system of eating with the fingers instead of with forks. He had with him an old serjeant who had followed his fortunes through many campaigns, and who managed his household in excellent style.

The weather had again become very wet, and from Suleiman's inactivity we had all come to the conclusion that active operations for the year on this side had ended, and that the troops would soon go into winter quarters.

Amongst the men of the battalions now quartered around us, there was one who had excited our attention at the time we were upon the Baniska Lom.

One day a peasant had come up to our camp, and asked to see the general.

He stated that he was a Tartar from the

Dobrudja, and that he had ridden all the way from that part of the country with the intention of seeing active service. On his arrival with the army of the Lom he had attached himself to the Circassians; but he had not been with them a day before his horse was stolen from him.

The man was a most amusing character. He was carrying on his arm an old saddle, but, as he very justly said, "What is the use of a saddle without a horse? I have come here to fight, and I cannot fight with a saddle and without a horse!"

Salih Pacha told him that it was impossible to provide him with the latter, and that it would be better for him to return home.

The man was indignant.

"How do you suppose," he replied, "that I can possibly go back to my family without having fought? I came here to fight, and fight I must!"

Salih explained to him that the only way of carrying out his wishes would be to join an infantry battalion, and serve with them on foot.

To our surprise he jumped eagerly at the proposal, but requested that he might be put in the very front of the battle whenever an opportunity occurred.

By some mischance the man's battalion had

never since been engaged, and he now came to complain that, although he had done everything that he was told to do, he still had never been allowed to fight.

We endeavoured to pacify him by assuring him that in all probability he would have plenty of opportunities in the future, and explained that it was quite impossible at present that we could get up a battle on purpose for him.

On November 6th, Suleiman arrived in our encampment on a visit, as he had not before seen the Turkish position at Sarnasufflar. He and all the generals dined together at Salih Pacha's quarters, and I was again much struck by his utter want of manners, unpleasant habits, and very dirty appearance.

One mixed so much with the Turkish generals that, when roughing it, we had become quite accustomed to the Turkish customs prevalent amongst the majority, of eating without knives, forks, or plates. But I never could stand the habit of all eating soup at the same time out of the same bowl with the aid of wooden spoons.

The next day we rode all round our position, and then on to Karahassankeui.

Whilst we were on the road the distant cannonade, which had been now heard for two or

three days at intervals, again became distinctly audible. We had sent telegraphic despatches to Rustchuk, and also to Osman Bazaar, asking at which place the guns were engaged. From both came back the reply that they also had heard the sound in the distance, but that no firing had taken place in their vicinity. From Rasgrad came a telegram, asking us whether we were engaged. It was evidently not along the line of the Lom, yet it had been heard everywhere. Suleiman now telegraphed to Shipka, as, although far distant, it seemed the only point from which the sound could come, but eventually Shipka also replied that they had heard the cannonade for some days, and thought that it was in the direction of Plevna.

This forms a singular instance of the distance at which the fire of guns may sometimes be heard, for Plevna lay upwards of one hundred miles from most of the places where the sound had been distinctly audible.

Sadetin had been replaced in his command of the brigade which was stationed at Karahassan-keui by Reshid Pacha. A great improvement had taken place in the smartness of the men, but the battalions looked terribly weak, compared with what they had been only a few weeks before when

upon the Baniska Lom. They also had suffered from much sickness lately, and were in want of medical attendance.

The position of Osman Pacha at Plevna was now giving rise to the most serious anxiety.

No communication had been received from him for a considerable time, and it was known that he was thoroughly invested. Operations upon the Lom appeared to have come to a standstill, but it was manifest that an advance must be made from one direction or another in order to bring relief to the beleaguered army.

Report said that a force was to be assembled at Sofia, under Mehemet Ali, which was to advance by Orkhanié.

The apathetic way in which Osman's army seemed likely to be left to perish for want of effective aid was distressing to me.

Under these circumstances I determined to obtain leave to go to Constantinople, and to try and take a part in the forward movement with the hope of bringing succour to the gallant army which had so long held its position on the heights at Plevna under Osman Pacha.

I had urged upon Suleiman that a great diversion in favour of the Plevna army might be made

by an advance in force from Yaila upon Tirnova, but he did not seem to be prepared to enter upon a fresh campaign at this season. At the same time he did not oppose my wish to return to Constantinople.

I had determined to make my way by Osman Bazaar through the Slimnia Pass. Then by moving along the south of the Balkans to Shipka I intended carefully to examine that position, which had proved so disastrous to the general plan of campaign, and also the intermediate passes. I should afterwards journey south to Eski-zajhra and Yeni-zajhra, and take the railway at the latter place, which led by Adrianople to Constantinople.

Whilst at Karahassankeui, Suleiman suddenly determined upon making a reconnaissance from there through Polomarka towards Kovatza on the following day. As there was a possible chance that it would lead to something, I put off my departure until it had been carried out.

Three battalions and four squadrons moved forward on November 10th in the direction of Kovatza. A few arabas were captured, and an unfortunate Cossack killed in the village of Polomarka. A strong squadron of Russian cavalry came up to the support of their picquets, and the

Turkish column then fell back upon Karahassankeui.

To my surprise, on my arrival at Constantinople, I saw in the Turkish papers a flaming account of this affair, which had been sent in a telegraphic despatch by Suleiman, giving it the importance of a really serious military operation. I was unable to recognize any of the facts which were stated in the despatch.

On November 11th I set out upon my journey southward, and bid a hearty farewell to Salih Pacha. I had been intimately associated with him, sometimes under difficult circumstances, since the middle of August, and our intercourse had been marked by nothing but pleasant recollections.

Starting early in the morning, I had decided to pass through Osman Bazaar, and hoped to reach Kazan in the Slimnia Pass before night.

Mehemet, the aide-de-camp, would not hear of my going without his escort as far as Osman Bazaar. I had on many occasions witnessed the extraordinary gallantry of this fine young soldier, and I promised him that I would send home to Wilkinson's and get the best and largest sword which England could produce, and would present it to him as a memento of our past services

together. Mehemet was anxious to accompany me as aide-de-camp, which I felt as a compliment, as he had just previously refused an appointment on the personal staff of Mehemet Ali Pacha.

Much as I should have liked to attach this excellent young officer to my service, I felt it would be unjust towards Salih Pacha to do so, and was thus compelled to refuse.

I paid a short visit to Said Pacha at Osman Bazaar, who had heard nothing more relative to his mission to Teheran, and then pushed on towards Kazan.

The road from Osman Bazaar leading up to the Slimnia Pass was excellent. As we reached the vicinity of the mountains the scenery became extremely pretty and even grand.

It was quite dark before we reached the small line of forts which guarded the pass just above the town of Kazan. It was held by a detachment of Kerim's division. Here we had a long delay, as the posts had orders to allow no one to pass through at night.

I had to send for the officer commanding the battalion, who immediately sent me on with an escort of men to show the way.

From the end of this pass a mountain-road runs down to the west through Mariana in the direc-

tion of the country occupied by the Russian 11th Corps. This road was guarded near Mariana by another detachment of Kerim's division. It was evidently most important, as it led towards Bebrova and Elena, and might come in most usefully in case of an advance of the Turkish troops towards Tirnova.

Said had telegraphed to Kazan to give notice of our arrival, and we were received by the Caimakam of that place, who told me that a Bulgarian house had been prepared for our reception. It belonged to a well-to-do shopkeeper of the town. Its interior was really most striking. The rooms into which we were ushered were lined with carved and panelled oak. The ceiling was a work of art, and we were altogether well and hospitably entertained.

As my servant exclaimed, "Talk of Bulgarian sufferings, sir! Why, there ain't an old baronial inn in England could equal this place!"

I was doubtful in the morning whether I could even offer to pay for our entertainment, but the proprietor soon solved my doubts by bringing me an exorbitant bill, which, after the civility with which we had been received, one felt it impossible to criticize.

Kazan was a rather important mountain town.

Several Bulgarians came to visit me. It appeared that they formed the bulk of the population. They told me that they got on very well with their Mahomedan neighbours and had nothing to complain of, and only trusted that their town would not be visited by the Russians and made the theatre of war and discord.

There are two roads leading from Kazan to Slimnia. One had been recently improved, and was now perfectly adapted for the passage of carriages or cannon. The other and shorter one led right over the mountains, and was only practicable for cavalry and infantry or pack-horses. We selected the latter, and, after a long and rather tedious ride over the mountains, reached Slimnia late in the afternoon.

I had been much struck in crossing the Balkans with the practicable nature of these mountains. Village paths appeared to lead in all directions, and, although there are but few passes properly so-called, you can scarcely move along the base of the range in any part for more than ten miles without finding some pathway which will lead, perhaps by a circuitous route, to the other side of the mountain chain.

At Slimnia I was warmly received by the Mutesarif, who turned out to be a brother of Dervisch

Pacha. We were most hospitably entertained at his konak, and served with the best Turkish wine which I ever tasted in the East. Slimnia had evidently been a thriving and prosperous place before the war. A large Government cloth manufactory lay on the outskirts of the town.

CHAPTER XIX.

A salmon river—Lovely scenery—Haim-Boghaz—Shukri Pacha—Bulgarian orphans—A veteran nurse—Shukri's position—Cossack horrors—Consul Blunt—The story of Eski-zaghra—A cruel desertion—False despatches—A generous determination—The position of Shipka—Fort St. Nicholas—Useless sacrifice of life—Suleiman's influence—Guns and mortars—Captain James—Major Campbell—A misplaced fortified camp—Start for Eski-zaghra—Kezanlyk—Cossack cruelties—Suleiman's conduct—A ruined town—Djemil Pacha—The fortifications of Adrianople—Constantinople.

ON the following morning, accompanied by an escort of Zaptiés which the Mutessarif had prepared for me, our little party started, intending to reach Haim-Boghaz before night.

We passed through a broad, rich, and fertile valley, lying between the Great and Little Balkans. The sides of the mountains were covered with vineyards, which produced the famous wine which we had drunk the night before.

We soon came upon the river Tundja—a broad

and rapid stream which winds through the valley and adds considerably to the beauty of the scenery. We halted for breakfast on its banks, near the village of Binkos, amidst the prettiest landscape which I had yet seen in European Turkey. The aspect of the Balkan range from this point is very striking. Although not very high, the mountains rise straight up out of the plains, and are seen from base to summit. The Tundja looks like a salmon river, and was decidedly suggestive of good fishing, but I was told that no trout were to be caught there. Salmon do not exist in the rivers of European Turkey.

After passing Binkos the scenery became less interesting. The country appeared to be deserted, and the villages had evidently suffered by the ravages of war.

It was just dusk before we reached the little ruined village of Haim. The officer commanding a small detachment of troops stationed there acquainted me that Shukri Pacha's camp lay about two miles distant off the main road, and up a valley which led towards the Pass of Haim-Boghaz.

We took an orderly to show us the road, and were warmly received by the General in a well-

made wooden hut, which had been constructed for him by the men. Dinner was soon made ready for us, and our beds prepared.

A rather touching incident occurred at the conclusion of our repast. Shukri Pacha called for the veteran sergeant, who acted as domestic servant, and soon afterwards the old soldier appeared, leading in three little children of the ages of about four, five, and six. They were warmly clad, and evidently well-cared for. It appeared that they were the orphans of a Bulgarian who had left his home and joined the Russians during the war. The mother had been killed by some Bashi-Bazouks at the destruction of Eski-zajhra on the arrival of Suleiman's army, and the kind-hearted general had adopted the little orphans as his own. As no opportunity had yet occurred for forwarding them to Constantinople, they were sharing with the old sergeant a small adjoining room in the hut. During the night the children woke up and began to cry, and it was pleasant to witness the gentle exertions of the veteran Turkish soldier to nurse and pacify them.

We started at daybreak with an escort of Zeibek cavalry, having first reconnoitred the line of fortifications which Shukri Pacha had constructed, and which made the crest of the Pass

impregnable. Shukri had ten battalions under his command, but only seven were present at Haim. The remaining three were watching the Feridjé Pass some few miles distant.

Shukri Pacha informed me that, for a considerable time after his arrival, the road through the Pass to Elena was completely open, and that another road led to Trowna, which, if followed, would have threatened the Russian communications with Shipka, and compelled them to abandon that Pass. No obstacle whatever existed to the detachment of part of Suleiman's army to this point during our operations on the Lom. The Russians had brought their guns through this Pass, so that they had evidently made it practicable for artillery. It was perfectly evident that, had this assistance been lent to Mehemet Ali, it would have completely changed the issue of the campaign, and nothing, in all human probability, could have saved the Russian army from being driven into the Danube or taken prisoners.

Whilst at Haim-Boghaz we heard that on our road to Shipka we should pass by some villages where fearful atrocities had been committed by the Bulgarians and Cossacks upon a large number of Mussulman women and children who had taken refuge there during the advance of Gourko's

army through the Balkans. Their bones, to the number of 120 persons, were said to be still lying unburied.

On my arrival near the spot indicated, I found that the villages still lay so far to our right, and up the mountains, that it was impossible to spare the time to pay them a visit. We were thus unable personally to verify this rumour; but, from evidence which was furnished to me afterwards at Kezanlik, I could have no doubt of the correctness of the report.

On reaching Kezanlik I heard that my friend Consul Blunt from Salonica was staying at that place; but, on paying a visit to the house which was pointed out to me as his residence, I learnt that he had gone on to Shipka, to have an interview with Raouf Pacha.

The road from Kezanlik across the plain, which led to the camp at Shipka, was in a wretched condition, and the number of pack-horses and arabas struggling through the mud, laden with military stores, which we met upon the way, showed that we were in the vicinity of a considerable military camp. After marching for about four miles, we entered the large wood of Senova, and, emerging from it, the camp of the Shipka army lay before us.

We were most warmly welcomed by Raouf Pacha, and a hut was told off for our accommodation.

At this time very strong antagonism existed between Raouf and Suleiman Pacha. It had its origin in the want of support afforded to Raouf by the latter on the occasion of the severe action which had been fought in the vicinity of Eski-zajhra. I give the story of this occurrence as it was related to me by Raouf Pacha.

It appears that after Gourko's advance through the Balkans towards Adrianople had been checked by the arrival of forty-five battalions from Montenegro, under Suleiman, in the vicinity of Kara-bunar, Raouf Pacha lay at Yeni-zajhra with eleven battalions.

These had been pushed forward some little time before from Constantinople in the hope of arresting the march of Gourko upon Adrianople, and were composed, for the most part, of raw levies. Raouf and this small force had already fought several minor engagements with the Russians with varying success.

On the arrival of Suleiman's army, communications had been established between Kara-bunar and Yeni-zajhra, and a joint arrangement had been come to between the two commanders for a

combined advance upon Gourko's force, which held a position in front of Eski-zajhra.

Raouf moved forward from Yeni-zajhra to carry out his part of this operation, and Suleiman, at the same time, advanced with forty-five battalions from Kara-bunar. The Russian force under Gourko only consisted of sixteen battalions and some Bulgarians.

On arriving within about four miles of Eski-zajhra, Raouf found himself in contact with the enemy, and, sending aides-de-camp to the left, discovered that Suleiman was also already in his position at about three or four miles distant.

Pushing steadily forward, Raouf's forces now became most seriously engaged. He waited anxiously for the support which he momentarily expected to be forthcoming on his left, but Suleiman never moved to aid him. As the day wore on, the enemy, throwing the whole of their force upon him, pressed him heavily. His raw troops were unable long to bear so great a stress, and the action became critical. Gradually he was forced back, and compelled to retire in considerable disorder upon Yeni-zajhra, followed in his retreat by the mass of the Russian forces. Only three battalions of Bulgarian infantry, with two

regiments of Russian cavalry and a battery, remained behind to guard the position.

After Raouf had thus been completely defeated, Suleiman pushed on, and, having the superiority of forty-five battalions of veteran infantry to only three of Bulgarians, he drove them easily from their position. Not only did he make no attempt to succour Raouf, but the mass of the Russian forces that had followed the latter, actually escaped through the Haim-Boghaz Pass unmolested. Suleiman then wrote a flaming despatch to Constantinople, concealing all the main facts, and making out that, after a desperate battle, he had succeeded in routing the whole force of the enemy. It was this supposed great victory which had given him his prestige at the capital, and enabled him to thwart the subsequent plans of Mehemet Ali Pacha. Based upon this occurrence, a strong enmity sprang up between the two commanders.

Raouf Pacha told me that he felt that this animosity was so strong that he could not serve under the command of Suleiman, and, as he was anxious that his personal feelings should not have an adverse influence upon the progress of military operations, he had already sent in his resignation to Constantinople.

We had a serious conversation as to the possible means of relieving Osman's invested army from what now appeared to be a most critical condition. Raouf had already detached nine battalions in the direction of Orkhanié. Only forty now remained with him at Shipka. One more was at Yeni-zajhra, and ten were with Shukri Pacha. It appeared that a mass of Mustafiz battalions, which had garrisoned Adrianople not long before, had already been sent on towards Sofia to strengthen the force which was now forming under Mehemet Ali for the purpose of moving to the relief of Plevna.

I urged upon Raouf Pacha the advisability of detaching a much larger portion of the Shipka forces to aid in the operations of Mehemet Ali Pacha. Raouf assured me that he would gladly do all in his power to assist Mehemet Ali, but he complained of the great proportions which the operations at Shipka had assumed under Suleiman, and of the difficulty which now existed of hastily abandoning them.

He described to me, and I verified his description by a personal visit the next day, the general military situation of Shipka as follows :—

The Russians still occupied Fort St. Nicholas, which lay at the mouth of the Pass. The ascent

to the Pass was by a zigzag road, leading up the steep face of the mountain, and so near did Fort St. Nicholas lie to the point on the height where this road entered the Pass, that the Russians could actually throw their shells from the fort into the camp where we were then sitting. Their position was impregnable, and it was in dashing his men against these stony heights that Suleiman, soon after his arrival, had been compelled to recoil with a loss of upwards of 12,000 killed and wounded. When Suleiman found that it was impossible to force the Pass, and that, at the same time, he could plead no excuse for remaining at Shipka, and not following his instructions to join Mehemet Ali either by Haim-Boghaz or Slimnia, he determined to make a road up the mountains on either flank, and thus, as it were, to turn the Fort St. Nicholas position. By dint of great labour this was accomplished, and batteries were established both on his right and left attack; but the Russians immediately met this movement by constructing further batteries on either flank of the Pass, which so held in check the turning movement of the Turkish leader that everything for very many weeks past had been at a standstill.

As the Haim-Boghaz Pass, through which

Gourko's army had originally advanced, and which had been made practicable for artillery, lay for a long time perfectly open on his right, nothing can more plainly show that the object of the Turkish commander was simply to gain time and to avoid lending aid to his chief. Yet Suleiman's influence was sufficiently strong to lend enormous importance to his operations in the view of the military authorities at Constantinople. This is the more extraordinary, as it will be remembered that all Europe had then realized the situation, and the military writers of every country were strongly criticizing the folly of the Turkish commander in not making the simple flank movement which was open to him.

Large numbers of heavy guns and a considerable number of mortars, ranging up to a calibre of even fifteen inches, had been dragged up to the heights, and, in fact, a regular siege had been commenced of an impregnable position. To withdraw all this matériel would now be a matter of some difficulty, and thus the army under Raouf's command stood committed to an operation of which he himself entirely disapproved. He told me that he had determined not to sacrifice the lives of his men by further and useless attacks. When I had seen the

position, I most thoroughly coincided with this view.

I met at dinner our Consul, Blunt, Captain James, of the Scots Greys, who was endeavouring during his leave to study as much as possible the details of the campaign, and Major Campbell, who was acting on the staff of the Turkish army under Raouf, and who had behaved with extreme gallantry in the unsuccessful attack upon Fort St. Nicholas.

Major Campbell, who had superintended the construction of the roads which led to the right and left attack, came with me on the following day, and, as far as a misty morning would allow, pointed out all the most important positions.

We advanced along the Turkish trenches till within about 200 yards of the Russian position in front of Fort St. Nicholas to a small look-out place where Liman Pacha, Chief of Artillery, a most distinguished Hungarian officer in the Turkish service, had been killed three days before by shrapnel fire. His loss appeared to be much regretted by Raouf and by all who had served with him.

Major Campbell explained to me that the Turkish batteries on the left attack actually commanded the Gabrova road, which led to Fort

St. Nicholas. But the Russians, it appeared, brought up all their supplies during the night, and this command had given the Turks no really practical advantage.

I talked over with Raouf Pacha my views relative to the plan of campaign which should be adopted in order to lead to the relief of Plevna. He was anxious to lend it every assistance, and he urged me to push on immediately to Constantinople, and to endeavour there to induce the authorities to take such measures as would tend to a successful result. I therefore determined to start on the following day.

I observed that around the Turkish camp near Shipka a most extraordinary system of fortifications had been adopted, and I pointed out to the commander what appeared to me the extreme folly of the arrangement. He informed me that the plan had been carried out during the command of Suleiman. The Turkish camp lay close to the village of Shipka, and right under the mountains it had been encircled by a series of redoubts. The result would naturally be that, if the Pass were taken by the enemy, it would give them an already prepared fortified position, covering the mouth of the Pass. To the Turks it could be of no use, for the fortified camp was

completely commanded by the heights above. Should an enemy ever pass the Balkans, it would evidently be madness for a Turkish force to attempt to hold this intrenched camp instead of retreating southward.

We started on the following day for Eski-zajhra, accompanied part of the way by Osman Bey, Chief of the Marshal's Staff, and a considerable escort of cavalry. I halted for a short time at Kezanlik, in order to pay a visit to Mr. Blunt. We sent on the pack-horses and a part of the escort, and he afterwards drove me in his carriage for about seven miles on the road to Eski-zajhra. He gave me a most painful account of the sufferings which he had witnessed amongst the Mussulman population, and the cruelties which had been inflicted upon them by both Bulgarians and Cossacks. It must be admitted that these accounts rarely or never implicated the troops of the Russian line; but it must not be forgotten that Cossacks do not come under the proper head of irregular troops. They are officered by Russian officers, and form a distinct part as regiments of the regular army.

A little before reaching Eski-zajhra, we ascended the Pass which leads through the Little Balkans. The town itself lay near the foot of the plains, on emerging from the Pass. It was now almost

entirely destroyed. Very few houses in any part of it were left standing.

I had noticed that the village of Shipka had been wrecked in a similar manner, and this during the presence of a large regular army under Suleiman Pacha. No one has ever pretended to accuse the Turkish regular soldiers of having been implicated in the terrible scenes which occurred on the occupation of Eski-zajhra, and the subsequent advance to the village of Shipka; but it is impossible to absolve the commander of that army from the terrible responsibility which must fall upon him for having allowed such wholesale atrocities to be committed by the Circassians and Bashi-Bazouks in the presence of a large force of regular troops, which might easily have repressed these excesses.

We were lodged for the night in the Konak, which was one of the few buildings still left standing in the town, and we started again on the following morning by the excellent road which leads across the plains in the direction of Yeni-zajhra.

We passed to our right the battle-field which had been described to me by Raouf Pacha. The action appeared to have been fought in the vast and wooded plain which lies in front of Eski-

zajhra; and, after seeing the ground, the want of support afforded by Suleiman certainly appeared most extraordinary.

We reached Yeni-zajhra in the afternoon, and as it would evidently not be worth the expense to carry on our pack-horses by train to Constantinople, we held a public auction, and disposed of them for about one-eighth of the sum which they had cost us.

On the following morning we took the train to Adrianople, and reached that town shortly before dark. I paid a visit to Djemil Pacha, who was the military commandant, and whom I had previously known at Constantinople.

He informed me that the fortifications of Adrianople, which had been projected so long before, were still in an unfinished state, and only partially armed. The severe fright which had been occasioned by the advance of Gourko had not had any lengthened effect, and the Turkish military authorities were still, as usual, putting off the completion of the works until it would be too late.

We slept that night at Adrianople, and, again taking the train the following morning, reached Constantinople in the evening.

CHAPTER XX.

The Grand Vizier—Edhem Pacha—Inefficiency of Mehemet Ali's army—The Mustaphiz—A diversion from the Lom—Doctors, Engineers, and Soldiers—Offer of a division—Dispersion—A profound secret—Suleiman at Shipka—His career—Literary ability—Montenegro—Old battalions—A rapid transit—Intense jealousy—Successful intrigues—The Czar at Plevna—A bloody fête—An Emperor's failure—Influence of Mahomedanism—The Turkish soldier—Official changes—Spirit of intrigue—The line of reform.

ON my arrival at Constantinople I lost no time in seeing the then Grand Vizier, Edhem Pacha, and some of the other principal Ministers, relative to the measures which would be most effective towards rendering quick and efficient aid to the hard-pressed garrison of Plevna.

There appeared to be an immense difference of opinion as to the amount of stores that had been sent into Plevna, and, consequently, as to the time which it might be expected still to hold out.

I very soon gathered that the army assembling

under Mehemet Ali Pacha would be quite inadequate for the work before it. A kind of spell seemed to hang over the military authorities at Constantinople at this time, which induced them to completely ignore common-sense views. They had scrambled together all the newly-raised Mustaphiz battalions that could be collected, and they were rapidly assembling at Sophia. Mehemet Ali would command, I was assured, eighty-seven battalions; with those the relief of Plevna ought to be easy. It was in vain that I pointed out that good troops would be requisite, and that guns, cavalry, and an effective administrative department of supply would be necessary to feed an army that had to advance for so considerable a distance. No one could tell me what force Mehemet Ali would have available. At Constantinople a battalion was a battalion; no matter that it might be quite undrilled and without officers, and numbering perhaps two or three hundred strong. These were questions that met with no consideration.

At this time there still remained upwards of sixty fine, old battalions watching Thessaly, Montenegro, and Bosnia. I urged that everything should give way to the relief of Osman; and that, at all hazards, the mass of these battalions should be withdrawn and placed under Mehemet Ali,

instead of the useless Mustaphiz that I could plainly see would form the bulk of his army. I pointed out that, as time pressed, the action of Mehemet Ali's force alone could not be depended on, and dwelt on the importance and necessity of Suleiman at once making a strong forward movement upon Tirnova. If all the available scattered Turkish forces on the Lom were united for this object, nothing would create a more useful diversion. It was evident that a strong forward movement in this direction must raise what had now become the siege of Plevna.

Edhem Pacha was always most kind and courteous, but he could not realize all my doubts in relation to the nature of the force under the command of Mehemet Ali.

"There are three classes of men," he said to me, laughing, "that are most difficult to deal with; doctors and engineers are the two first, you soldiers are the last and worst. A doctor tells you that a man will die, and, whether the man dies or not, he still persists that he ought to and must die. An engineer declares that a certain bridge will fall: although the bridge stands, he still maintains that it must and will fall. You soldiers are just the same: unless an army is just what you wish, it cannot succeed, and when this army suc-

ceeds in relieving Plevna, I have no doubt," he said to me, smiling, "you will be able to prove conclusively that it ought not to have succeeded."

An interview with the Seraskier (Minister of War) and with Mahmoud Damad, the Grand Master of Artillery, only confirmed me the more in my views as to the inefficiency of Mehemet Ali's army.

A few good battalions had been ordered to join it from Bosnia and the Servian frontier, but the mass were raw Mustaphiz. The authorities at Constantinople were already beginning to grumble against Mehemet Ali for his constant messages demanding horses, pack-saddles, or other absolutely necessary supplies. It was quite evident that the not uncommon error was being committed of supposing that a number of hastily collected battalions constituted an effective army.

Soon after my arrival at Constantinople, I had received a message from Mehemet Ali Pacha, requesting me to come to him, and promising me the command of a division of the relieving army. But, as usual in Turkey, there were many formalities to be gone through, and it seemed probable that at least a week would elapse before I could be on my way. This delay was most irritating,

but again and again I urged the forward action of Suleiman.

I found that the same fault of dispersion of force, which so strongly characterized the dispositions of all the Turkish generals, was just as apparent amongst the Turkish officials. When I urged that good battalions should be withdrawn from in front of Montenegro, I was met by the reply, "But the Montenegrins might burn the frontier villages."

"If you lose Plevna," I replied, "you may lose the whole Empire. Which is the more important, it or a frontier village?" But all my arguments were thrown away. They had but one idea, to be strong everywhere, and to guard everything. As a natural consequence, the Turkish army was scattered and weak at every objective point.

A few days before my departure, it was communicated to me confidentially that the forward movement in the direction of Tirnova had been decided upon, and that Suleiman had received orders to prepare for it without delay. It was of course important to keep this movement a profound secret.

Suleiman had lately been fighting some very serious but perfectly objectless actions near Rustchuk. In one of these, near Metchka, he had lost

upwards of 2000 men, and had discovered that he could not advance from that side in the direction of Biela, in the face of the immense superiority of the Russians in cavalry and artillery. The Turkish troops had, as usual, behaved admirably, and had carried one Russian position, when they found themselves completely outflanked by the enemy's cavalry and guns, and had to make a rather disorderly retreat.

Suleiman's sole idea throughout the campaign appeared to consist in urging on the best troops of the Turkish army to certain destruction, and this without any apparent aim or object, except to enable him to write despatches which might gain him credit for activity and energy. He had already expended the flower of the Turkish army in those useless attacks against the rocks of Shipka.

Russian officers have since told me that, enemies as they were, the aimless expenditure of the Turkish troops at Shipka excited their indignation against the Turkish commander. They could not find words to express their admiration for the gallantry of those splendid Ottoman soldiers, who sacrificed themselves so readily to gratify the apparent thirst for slaughter of their chief.

If Suleiman had himself shared the perils of his troops, his conduct might, perhaps, have been judged more leniently; but, whilst these brave men were recklessly expending their lives by his orders against the rocks of Fort St. Nicholas, he would be sitting in his hut on the plains below, where no view even of the operations could be obtained, drinking his coffee and urging them on to fresh carnage by means of the telegraph.

Perhaps the most extraordinary incident of the war lies in the fact of this general arriving at the position which he did, and holding it to the end, notwithstanding the blunders that attended nearly all his plans and movements.

The career of Suleiman was singular. He had never been distinguished as a soldier. The chiefs under whom he had served spoke with contempt of his military qualities. But as a writer he had shown very great capacity. Literary men are so rare in Turkey that they usually acquire inordinate power. Suleiman had been educated for the priesthood, but joined the army, and was eventually employed as a secretary by military commanders both in Crete and Yemen. He had written a work which had attracted considerable attention, and which had made him a marked man

for the future as a writer. Gifted with great shrewdness and cunning, he turned this ability to account, and soon gained rapid military advancement. He was appointed head of the military school, and, although young, had gained the rank of Lieut.-General before the war with Russia. Employed in the Servian campaign, he had not distinguished himself; but, nevertheless, at the commencement of the Russian war, when it was determined by the Porte to crush Montenegro, if possible, before any indirect Russian aid could be afforded, he was selected as Commander-in-Chief. Mehemet Ali was then serving under him. He had under his orders a very large and admirable force, and by dint of pushing on fresh troops continually, irrespective of losses, he succeeded in reaching Nicsiks after forcing the Duga Pass.

The Montenegrins would have been at the mercy of the Turks, but Europe intervened and saved them, just as had been done in the case of Servia. The consequence was that Turkey, as the war with Russia progressed, found herself burdened with an enemy which, but for Europe, she might have rendered harmless, whilst Servia was making open preparations against her, notwithstanding the moral guarantee

which Europe had given that she should remain tranquil.

All the best troops of the Ottoman army, which had been employed during the Servian or Montenegrin wars, had remained behind to watch these two countries; but when the Russians crossed the Danube, and Gourko soon afterwards burst through the Balkans and appeared to be in full march on Adrianople, Suleiman received a telegram to move immediately with a part of his fine force to the sea, where transports would be ready for him. Every available Turkish vessel was employed, and in a singularly short time forty-eight Turkish battalions were moved from the Adriatic to Dedeagatch, from which point a branch railway leads to Adrianople. There the whole rolling stock of the Adrianople railway had been concentrated, and they were rapidly carried to the front.

Raouf Pacha, as has been mentioned, had been sent up from Constantinople with some raw levies and troops withdrawn from the north of the Balkans, and had, at least, succeeded in delaying Gourko's advance until Suleiman arrived at Karabunar at the head of these veteran troops.

The rapid way in which this transfer of the

army had been accomplished attracted considerable attention, and added to the credit which had attached to Suleiman through his successes in Montenegro. Up to this time, nothing but inefficiency had characterized the action of the Turkish commanders in Europe.

When, after the contemptible little affair at Eski-zajhra, and the escape of Gourko, Suleiman wrote the glowing despatch proclaiming his hard-fought victory, the Constantinople public at last thought that they had found the coming man, and the prestige of Suleiman rose to its zenith.

But, in the meantime, Mehemet Ali had been appointed Commander-in-Chief of all the Turkish armies acting against the Russians on the Danube, and the repulse of the Muscovite attack on Plevna had already thrown a halo round the name of Osman Pacha.

To a man like Suleiman, eaten up with jealousy and ambition, this was gall and wormwood. His whole and sole thought seems now to have been concentrated on the destruction of his rivals. His literary *clientèle* gave him considerable influence at Constantinople, and his talent for writing despatches enabled him to paint the military situation as he pleased. Although his army was most considerable, he would not tolerate

with it a single general of division. Generals of brigade were not likely to have sufficient influence to show up the hollowness of his supposed successes, or to paint the folly of his delay at Shipka. Every kind of intrigue was set on foot at the capital which could aid his designs. It has been shown how, by affording no aid to the left of the Lom army, he allowed the opportunity of crushing all the Russian forces to escape. But he was successful by this means in displacing his rival, Mehemet Ali, and in succeeding him in his command.

For his subsequent conduct on the Lom it is difficult to account, except on the ground of incapacity. It is too impossible to believe that he could have been actuated by the infamous design of quietly waiting until Plevna must certainly fall, and that thus his only remaining rival would be removed from his path. Yet his conduct whilst on the Lom is inexplicable. The weather for the greater part of the autumn had been so bad that he might conscientiously have thought that the campaign on that side would not be renewed, and that, in fact, this army would go into winter-quarters. But, if so, why not render all the aid in his power towards the relief of Osman ?

We then knew full well that the great mass of the Russian reinforcements had been thrown towards Plevna. Recruits had come in to swell the weakened ranks of the battalions of the Czarewitch, and, as we supposed, at least one fresh division lay in the neighbourhood of Biela. But the Russians seemed to show as little desire as the Turks to promote an active campaign on the Lom at this period of the war. All their thoughts were concentrated on Plevna

Russian pride has ever had an undue influence on Russian campaigns. But the obstinacy with which an object once seriously undertaken is pursued to the bitter end is at least admirable, although it may lead to strategical mistakes.

Plevna had repulsed with heavy loss the attacks made upon it before September. It had inflicted a blow upon Russian pride, and that blow must be avenged and surmounted.

The Czar in person was present on the scene of war.

His fête-day was on the 11th of September, so that day must be selected as a great occasion of victory and of triumph, to show to their supreme lord the devotion of his troops. The preparations were complete, and the Emperor in person was to witness from a distant height the

power of his army to surmount all obstacles. And then the attack was made.

Moved by the failure of previous attempts, the Russian leaders thought that they had devised a system for the assault of works, and of those innocent-looking shelter trenches that, held by Turkish troops, had played so conspicuous and dangerous a part during the present campaign. In thin succeeding lines the patient Russian infantry were hurled in continuous streams upon all the objective points of the Plevna position. But as successive waves roll back all broken and dispersed, when beating with stormy force upon a rocky shore, so, hour after hour, shattered and disarrayed, fell back the remnant of the legions of the Czar. And when night fell, and darkness threw its mantle around and stayed the scene of carnage, 21,000 Muscovite troops lay dead or wounded or dying in front of their Imperial master.

From that day the taking of Plevna became the one pervading idea of the Russian commanders, and to this object it was evident that everything would be sacrificed.

It was a splendid opportunity for Turkish action elsewhere, had the Ottoman leader been equal to the occasion.

But not only was he wanting in capacity, but his whole thoughts were turned to his own personal ends and intrigues.

Why is it that, in modern military history, Turkish campaigns have ever presented so many instances of jealousy, incapacity, corruption, or treachery?

Of course, by the unthinking, this will be laid to the charge of the debasing influence of the Mahomedan religion. But look at the Turkish private. Where will you find a grander specimen of a man? He unites in his person every military virtue. Brave, patient, and enduring, sober and temperate; ready to fight and die upon a crust of bread and a draught of water; a first-rate marcher, and innately possessing that grand instinct of military intelligence and battle power which, well organized and employed, so surely leads to victory. He is the very type of an ideal soldier. Why do we so often find the reverse of the picture in his commander?

There can be but little doubt that it results from the deteriorating influences of the usual routine of Turkish official life amongst the better classes.

A most intelligent Turkish officer, holding a

high official position, accounted to me for the evil as follows :—

“ In Turkey there exists no aristocracy, properly so called, which may show an example of honour and honesty to those immediately below them. For this, to a considerable extent, the social system is to be blamed.

“ But we must seek further than this want of an aristocracy amongst the better classes for that general system of corruption which is the bane of official life, and of all prosperity. This kills the patriotic feeling which alone can long sustain the existence of a nation in times of trial, and utterly debases the whole fabric of social organization.

“ For the origin of the evil we must look to the constant system of change in official positions which seems to have become almost inherent in Turkish Government, and to the system of protection which will so constantly raise people of low and often menial positions to the highest offices of the state.

“ The result is that men who have no fortunes of their own, and whose tenure of office is likely to be limited, seek to make the most of their opportunities by rapid and wholesale robbery. From

this springs a system of bribery, extortion, and general corruption. Every man is trying to jostle his neighbour out of some post in order that he may secure it either for himself or for a friend who may be useful. The state is a bad paymaster, yet rapid fortunes must be made. This once accomplished, and the power to bribe being available, the official may rest pretty well assured that, even if reverses come upon him, he will not long be left out in the cold. The result is intense jealousy, distrust, and intrigue."

No one unacquainted with Turkish life can believe the extent to which this jealousy is prevalent, nor how the desire to oust some rival from his position seems to be the all-absorbing idea of nine out of ten Turkish officials.

The canker extends to the army, more especially in the higher ranks, and it is to this that we must trace the conduct of Suleiman in the late campaign, as well as most of the disasters that have befallen the Turkish arms in previous wars.

To root out the evil and restore a system of purity and patriotism must be the work of Turkish reformers, and it will demand their strongest efforts. But it seems hard, indeed, that a nation

which can boast the finest and most moral rural population in the world should fall into decay, and run the risk of absolute effacement, merely through the corruption and debasement of the majority of the governing class of Turkish officials.

CHAPTER XXI.

Movement on Tirnova—Resources of Suleiman—Turkish and Russian strength—Turkish state in October—Superiority in infantry—Effect of the advance on Plevna—Constantinople denuded—The campaign in Asia Minor—Mukhtar Pacha—False movement on Soukoum—Batoum—Depopulation of Circassia—Mingrelian swamps—A disastrous defeat—Advance of Gourko—Occupation of Plevna—Osman at Loftcha—Despised Roumanians save the Russians—Shefket Pacha—Farewell visits—Strong everywhere.

IN considering the projected forward movement upon Tirnova, it is necessary to take into calculation the means which were at this time at the disposal of Suleiman Pacha, together with the nature and condition of the Russian force which was lying immediately in front of him.

As far as we could learn at that time, the Russian 12th and 13th Corps, reinforced by a new division, held the line from Biela to the Danube, near Rustchuk. The 11th Corps occupied all the country from Biela to the Balkans. Zimmerman

in the Dobrudscha had so suffered from sickness that his Corps had long, of necessity, been perfectly inactive. It was reported that only one division was in a forward position near Medjedii, and garrisoning Kustendje, the other remaining in rear, holding Tultcha, Matchin, &c., and it was evident that this division could not advance without first laying siege to Silistria, and for this it was quite inadequate.

It must be remembered that one division of the 11th Corps was keeping in check the ten battalions of Shukri Pacha in the Feridji and Haim-Boghaz passes; but, even reckoning this, and calculating each Russian division at about 10,000 men, it only gave the Russian force on this side 80,000 men, besides cavalry and artillery.

Suleiman had the immense advantage of holding the strong fortresses of Silistria, Rustchuk, Shumla, and Varna, besides the now strongly-fortified line of the Lom, and intrenched camp of Rasgrad.

I am fortunately able to give the state of the Turkish army of the Lom in the month of October, which will show the force which was then at his disposal.

This stood as follows:—

	Battalions.	Infantry.	Cavalry.	Field Guns.	Artillerymen.
Varna	9	7446	269	36	2243 including fortress.
Hadji Oglou Bazar- djik	13½	8637	1591	22	522
Silistria	18½	10776	389	12	2022 including fortress.
Rustchuk	20	12630	60	12	1767 do. do.
Kadikœi	18	10730	1585	26	2347
Rasgrad Camp	25	13552		65	
„ Town	1	463			
Solenik	13	7429		18	
Near Djelin Yene- keui	3	1973	1369		
Djuma & Karahas- sankeui	20	11196		30	628
Yaila	13	7757		22	539
Slimnia & Kasun . . .	10	7832			
Shumla	8	4817	284	18	1411 including fortress.
	172	105,238	5755	261	11,479
TOTAL, 122,905					

The foregoing statement will give some idea of the scattered positions occupied by this, if united, formidable Turkish army.

It will be seen that at this time Suleiman was superior in infantry to the Russian forces opposed to him by at least 25,000 men. In making a forward movement upon the Russian 11th Corps, he might, with the aid of the fortresses, well afford to risk leaving a force equal to only two-thirds of the strength of the remaining Russian divisions, in order to guard his defensive line on the Lower Lom, at Silistria, and at Bazardjik. This would give him 65,000 infantry available to drive in the 11th Corps, and to open out the Balkan passes to a



Printed by the War Office, London, W.C.

junction with the forces at Haim-Boghaz and Shipka. The junction of those armies would give an addition of 40,000 men. Thus 115,000 men might have pushed into the gap which the Russians had so long left insufficiently guarded between Tirnova and Biela.

It is evident that such a movement would inevitably have raised the siege of Plevna.

The Czarewitch, on the Lom, had no force at his command which could make head against it; the forward movement of Gourko towards Orkhanié would be immediately arrested; Mehemet Ali's newly-created army might advance and form a junction with Osman; Plevna would certainly be relieved, even if more important and serious consequences to the Russian army did not follow. In any case the Turkish forces would be enabled to occupy Tirnova, and probably Loftcha, and to escape from the false position which Suleiman had created at Shipka. The Russian army would be compelled to pass the winter in the low plains of the Danube, with all the consequent loss and demoralization that must inevitably ensue.

This movement was now being urged upon Suleiman by the authorities at Constantinople. It, of course, remained with him to employ such force as he considered requisite or available, and

it will be seen hereafter how insufficient and abortive were the preparations which he made for it.

No fresh troops could, at this time, be expected from Constantinople.

It must be remembered that the reverses in Asia Minor had commenced. At the beginning of the campaign in Asia, it had seemed as if the Russians would have an easy task. Ardahan fell; Kars was invested; the Russians had reached Bayazid, and were marching towards Erzeroum, when Ahmed Mukhtar, reversing the ordinary Turkish tactics, concentrated his available troops on one point, and struck hard at the centre of the scattered and isolated advancing Russian columns, inflicting upon them a severe defeat.

The effect was immediate. It averted the whole forward movement. Then, dealing blow after blow before a sufficient concentration of the Russian troops could be effected, in a few weeks the whole Muscovite force, defeated and disorganized, was flying back over the Russian frontier.

Had the Constantinople authorities then strengthened Mukhtar Pacha, instead of making a childish movement upon Soukoum Kalé, it is

probable that the Turkish commander might have pushed on rapidly and occupied Tiflis. But, as usual, the opportunity was lost. It is probable that the occupation of Tiflis at this time would have brought about a general rising of the Mahomedan population of the Caucasus, and compelled the Russians to retire north of the great Caucasian mountain-chain which runs from the Black Sea to the Caspian.

The position north of Batoum had been resolutely held by the Osmanlis from the first beginning of the campaign, and every Russian attack had been repulsed with loss. The whole of the 6th, or Turkish Bagdad Corps, comprising sixty-six strong battalions and an admirable force of cavalry and artillery, lay as yet untouched, idly guarding the unthreatened plains of Mesopotamia. Fifteen thousand men were available at Constantinople, which might be forwarded *viâ* Trebizond to the assistance of Mukhtar.

The unsuccessful effort made during the Crimean war, by the forces under Omar Pacha and Sir Lintorn Simmons, to advance upon Tiflis from Soukoum Kalé, had proved how impossible it was for an army to overcome the natural obstacles presented by the rivers and swampy forests of the Mingrelian lowlands. Since that time Circassia

Proper had been entirely depopulated by a merciless Russian ukase.

But these facts were lost upon the military authorities at Constantinople. They had become impressed with a hobby, and no reasoning could shake them from it.

A movement from Soukoum was to raise the Circassians in insurrection against the Russians.

It was in vain that, before my departure for the Lom, I had urged the folly of the step, and pointed out, from personal experience of the country in question, the non-existence of the Circassians, and the many difficulties which supervened. The fifteen thousand men were hurried off to sicken and die in the swamps of Mingrelia, and the 6th Corps still remained inactive, held in check by some bugbear of a Persian advance upon Bagdad.

Mukhtar's movement was arrested on the frontier, and then the Ottoman commander committed the usual Turkish error of scattering his force.

Months of inactivity followed, whilst the Russians slowly reorganized their discomfited army, and hurried down reinforcements from the north. And then, when a large numerical superiority enabled them to act with vigour, they struck

with fatal effect at one point of the long line occupied by the Turks.

The defeat was disastrous and complete. Even at Kars the flying Turkish forces could not be rallied, and the Russians seemed to be marching almost unopposed to the very gates of Erzeroum. In a very short time Kars, with every appearance of treachery, was yielded up; the strong Devi Boyun position, which covered the Armenian capital, was abandoned almost without a struggle; and soon the once victorious Turkish commander was clinging with what seemed hopeless tenacity to the very walls and works of Erzeroum. Then, and not till then, a part of the 6th Corps was put in movement, but it was evident that the campaign must be decided before the termination of the long and trying march which lay before it.

This is what had happened in the extreme east of the Turkish empire.

We have already followed the movements of Mehemet Ali on the Lom, and of Suleiman at Shipka. Let us take a cursory view of what had happened at Plevna, in the west.

When the Russians had first crossed the Danube, and, instead of covering their position, had begun Gourko's wild advance through the Balkans upon Adrianople, the corps of Osman

Pacha, which had been long lying idle on the Servian frontier, was very properly hurried up, so as to threaten the right flank of the Russian army.

Osman reached Plevna just about the same time as a Russian force which had been sent forward to stay his advance, and, after a successful encounter, he occupied the position as well as that of Loftcha. Unfortunately, making the latter his real *point d'appui*, the Turkish commander retained the mass of his force at Plevna, and only held Loftcha with a detachment.

It is scarcely necessary to trace how Krudener, in the middle of July, made his desperate attack upon the entrenched position of Osman, and recoiled with his army utterly shattered and destroyed—of the wild flight towards Schistova, whilst the Turks, who had sustained a comparatively slight loss, remained passively at Plevna, ignorant of the extent of the disaster they had inflicted.

Loftcha was lost by the Turks to Scobeleff on the 22nd of August, after a brilliant defence by Rifaat Pacha. Osman moved out from Plevna on the following day with twenty battalions, as if to attempt to succour it, but, after coming in front of that all-important position and finding

it occupied, retired again after only a slight skirmish.

The despised Roumanian army had come up to the assistance of the Russians, and there can be but little doubt that its arrival saved the Muscovite forces from a disastrous issue to the whole Danube campaign.

In September the Russians had succeeded in cutting off the Turkish communications with Orkhanié, but no actual investment of the place had been attempted. Shefket Pacha, who had been entrusted with a considerable Turkish force, acting from Orkhanié, had been able early in October to throw into Plevna a large reinforcement, together with military stores and supplies. He had accomplished this without any serious opposition on the part of the Russians, but he wrote flaming despatches, describing imaginary victories, and thus acquired such influence at Constantinople that he succeeded in preventing the retreat of Osman from Plevna.

This was the general state of affairs at the time when my short stay at Constantinople was drawing to a close.

I paid a visit to the Grand Vizier, to bid him adieu prior to my departure. He was very low in his mind, for a despatch had come in, bringing the

unwelcome news that Gourko's force had succeeded in occupying Etropol. This positive and unsatisfactory intelligence was not balanced by a vague report which had come in through some Circassians to Mehemet Ali that Osman, after a desperate struggle, had succeeded in breaking out of Plevna and retreating towards Widin. The latter rumour came with such contradictory details that it bore the stamp of untruth.

Mahmoud Damad and Phosphor Mustapha, the Seraskier, were present. I made a last appeal in the endeavour to get more good battalions and batteries for Mehemet Ali from the Montenegrin and Servian frontiers, and from Thessaly and Epirus, but was met by the stereotyped answer that every part of the Empire must be watched and guarded.

END OF VOL. I.

GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, PRINTERS, ST. JOHN'S SQUARE, LONDON.

Bayerische
Staatsbibliothek
München



