

# WAR IN BULGARIA.

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# 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. II.

WITH PLANS AND MAPS.

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*Harriet Lund.*

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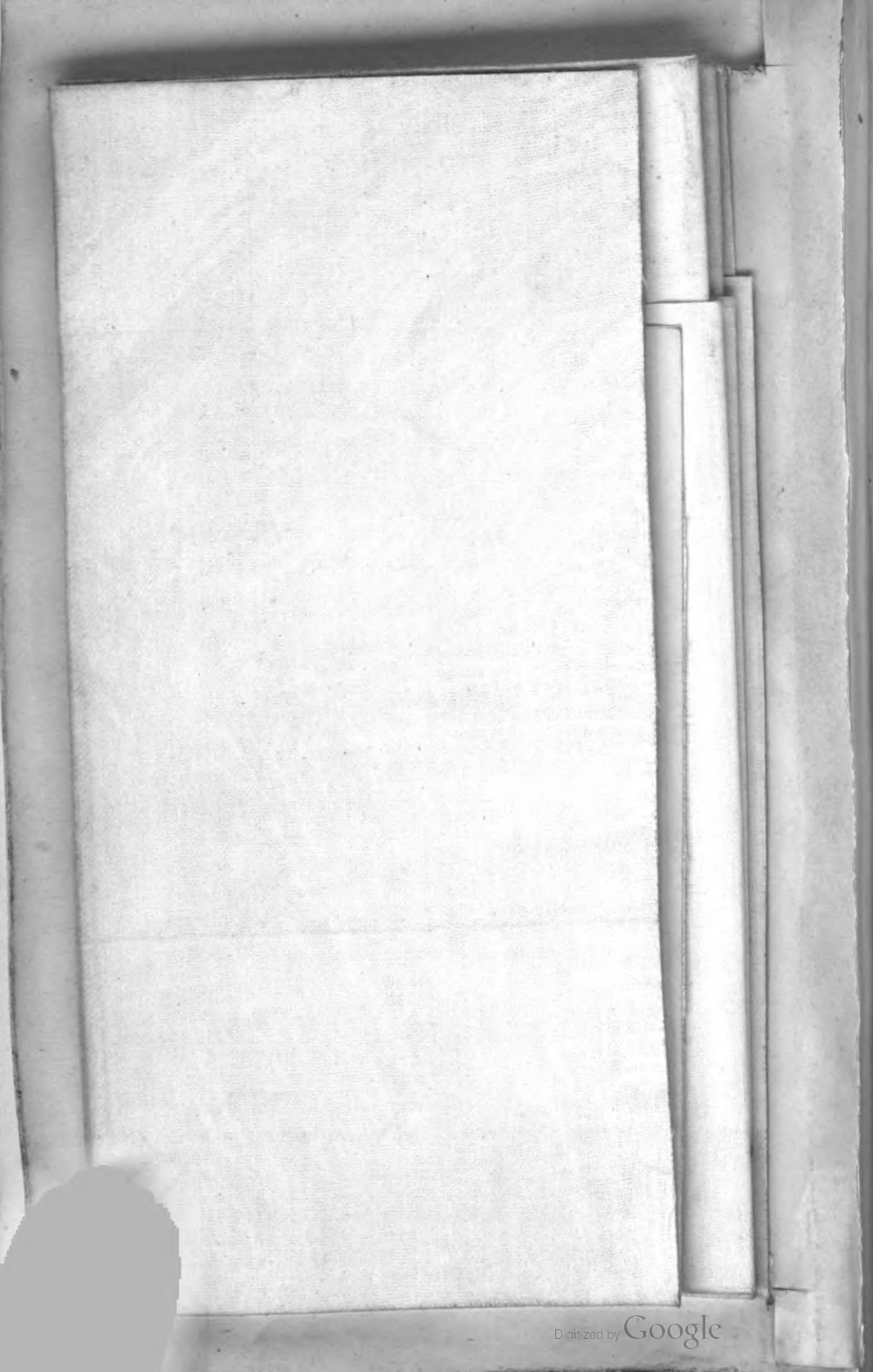
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Start for Sofia—Volunteers for the war—Adrianople—Captain Fred Burnaby—An arduous project—In and out of Plevna—Dangers ahead—Tatar Bazardjik—A Turkish mail—Pack-horses and Arabas—Campaigning baggage—Portable effects—Chairs and tables—Turkish Compassionate Fund—Alarming rumours—Horse-dealing—"Imaum"—Domestic arrangements—Pass of Ichtiman—News from the front—Flying Circassians—A sinking ship—General exodus—Thirst for plunder—Defence of Ichtiman—The Sofia plain—The town and garrison—Correspondents—Lady Strangford.

ON the morning of the 27th of November all my preparations were completed, and I again found myself at the railway station at Sirkedji-Iskelessi, from which the trains depart for Adrianople.

The staff which I took with me comprised Colonel Allix, who had been attached to me throughout the whole of the campaign on the

Lom, and Colonel Charles Baker, V.C., another officer of the Imperial Ottoman Gendarmerie. Several officers of the Gendarmerie had volunteered their services in the front to the Turkish Government, but arrangements for their employment had not yet been completed with Mehemet Ali Pacha, and they remained at Constantinople, intending to shortly follow in our steps.

We slept that night at the American hotel at Adrianople, and again proceeded by train on the following morning, with the idea of remaining for the night at Tatar-Bazardjik.

At the Adrianople railway station I found my old friend, Captain Fred Burnaby, with his familiar attendant, Radford—a stout soldier of the Household Cavalry, who had followed his master's fortunes through many of those interesting journeys which the pen of the latter has so ably recorded.

Captain Burnaby intended to go first to Philipopolis, and then to follow us on to Sofia, in order to see Mehemet Ali. He was bent upon the most arduous project—nothing less than making his way across the Balkans, and passing through the Russian lines to Plevna. A few weeks before, this operation might perhaps have been feasible.

When Plevna had been only lightly invested, before its relief by the army sent forward under Sheffket, Mr. Gay, the correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, succeeded in escaping with a small escort from the partially-beleaguered position; but since that time the Russian lines, under the superintendence of Todleben, had been drawn closely round the great entrenched camp of Osman. The attempt seemed to me so utterly impossible that I strongly endeavoured to dissuade my friend from his projected journey. The chances were that, even if he succeeded in crossing the Balkans, he would be sure to fall in with some parties of Russian cavalry, and, if captured under such equivocal circumstances, he might expect hard treatment, if not serious danger of life, from the Russian commanders; besides which, the position would be very humiliating.

If he were fortunate enough to escape these dangers, and to arrive in the vicinity of Plevna, it seemed perfectly impossible that he could succeed in passing through the closely-drawn Russian lines which watched the position on every side.

Even if, by a miracle, he were successful in penetrating them, he would, in all probability, be shot on his advance towards those of the Turks.

Captain Burnaby would not as yet abandon the contemplated enterprise, but he agreed that he would lay the matter fully before Mehemet Ali, and be guided to a great extent by his opinion.

Before leaving Constantinople, we had heard that a sort of mail-coach left Bazardjik every morning, which, passing by way of Ichtiman, reached Sofia in the afternoon; but on arriving at Bazardjik we found that these journeys were only intermittent. We also learnt that the post-horses employed were so fully engaged that we should have to remain there for one clear day before a carriage could be obtained. This day was spent in arranging our baggage, and in an attempt to purchase horses, which were much required.

Until the latter part of the campaign on the Lom, we had been accustomed to employ araba transport for the carriage of our baggage and household effects; but this system had proved so uncertain that I had eventually abandoned it, and trusted entirely to pack animals.

Pack animals on a campaign have immense advantages. They can follow you over any country, and, if the horses are good and the loads are light, they will travel almost as fast as the ordinary riding pace of a journey; but much depends upon the care with which they have been

selected, and the attention which has been paid to the pack-saddles, the boxes which are slung on them, and the numerous little details of equipment. The Turkish pack animal is expected to carry a load of about 240 lbs., but with this weight it is impossible to expect quick travelling.

From the nomadic habits of Turkish officers and officials, they have succeeded in inventing leathern cases something between a box and a portmanteau, very well suited for pack-travelling; but I had brought out with me from England boxes constructed upon a system which was even superior. They consisted of tin cases, which sank into wicker covers. These covers prevented the tin case from being damaged. The boxes themselves were perfectly water-tight and light, and, when taken out of the covers at the end of the journey, the latter inverted formed excellent seats. They formed the perfection of boxes for travelling on pack animals.

Pack-horses on a campaign have a further advantage over all transport on wheels. While carts constantly get blocked on the roads by advancing or retiring military trains, the pack animal, if thus getting into the line, can be led out into the fields, and still make his way to the front. Although the winter had now thoroughly

set in, and consequently a considerable quantity of rugs, wrappers, and warm clothing was necessary, I reduced my baggage to a lower limit than that which had followed me during the past campaign. Two pack animals carried all my effects, but by dint of experience and careful arrangement I had all that was necessary for the furnishing of the small bell-tent which, in the future, was all that we could hope to obtain.

I possessed even the luxuries of a bedstead, a table, and a chair. The former I strongly advise all travellers in wild countries to take with them. The advantage to health of sleeping a little way off the ground is so considerable that the small additional weight which the carriage entails should not be seriously considered.

White of Aldershot had supplied me with a most admirable folding-chair, upon what he called the French pattern. In appearance it was really fit for a place in any drawing-room, it folded into small compass quickly and readily, and was so durable that I sit in it as I write these lines, after its passing through two arduous campaigns. We carried with us a certain number of those stores which were most likely to be useful, and made arrangements that fresh supplies should be forwarded regularly to Sofia.



At Bazardjik we put up at an hotel kept by a civil Frenchman, and managed by a bustling Frenchwoman, who did her best to make us all as comfortable as possible. We met here Colonel Blunt, of the Imperial Ottoman Gendarmerie, busily engaged in the charitable work, under the Turkish Compassionate Society, of aiding the numberless refugees that had been disturbed in their homes north of the Balkans, and who were now pouring down to the south with perfectly vague ideas as to where in the future they would find a refuge. ✓

Alarming rumours were being spread as to the recent advance of the Russians north of the Balkans, and it was even declared that they had penetrated the mountains only thirty miles from Bazardjik. These were, of course, merely vague reports, but they sufficed to startle and alarm the peasantry of the district, and to swell the train of fugitives which was so rapidly pouring southwards.

I succeeded in purchasing a little pony which would act as pack-horse, from Colonel Blunt, but although we had heard that Bazardjik was swarming with pack animals, which could be purchased at very low prices, we found that our advent had immediately raised their value. As I was anxious

to push on to Sofia quickly, and the latest arrivals from that town reported that the purchase of horses could there be more easily effected, we determined to wait.

We started the next morning before daybreak in two carriages, which, by constant applications to the Caimakam, I had at last succeeded in securing. Mr. Masters, who was also working in aid of the refugees, shared one of the carriages with Colonel Baker, as he was anxious, in pursuance of his duties, to arrive as soon as possible at Sofia.

I had with me my old Turkoman horse "Imaum." Having followed my fortunes in wilder districts, he had since carried me constantly throughout the campaign on the Lom. I also owned a pony which I had secured at Sarnasufflar, and which had proved so useful that I had been loth to part with him at our general sale of horses at Yenizaghra. These two had come on by train with us to Bazardjik, and my servant Reilly rode the one, whilst a cook of nondescript nationality, whom I had brought from Constantinople, mounted the pony.

We learnt that from the want of post-horses, we should not be able to proceed farther than Ichtiman before night, and that long stage could

easily be accomplished by the horses and the servants.

The road from Bazardjik to Sofia is a fairly good *chaussée*. About ten miles from Bazardjik the ascent of the pass commences. The road then runs through the mountains for a considerable distance before descending into a vast plain. The small town of Ichtiman lies in that plain at about five miles from the foot of the hills. We found the road through the pass in a very dilapidated condition, but villagers were working at it, although the repairs that they were making were evidently of a very temporary nature.

Our news from the front up to this time was of a desultory and contradictory character. It was hopeless to expect to form any opinion as to the condition of affairs prior to our arrival at Sofia; but during this day's journey I was struck by scenes of very ominous import. At every few miles we met long trains of arabas containing the wives and families of Circassians, and escorted by large numbers of able-bodied horsemen of this nationality.

Much has been said and written about the bravery of the Circassians, and during our experience on the Lom we had certainly come across many very extraordinary instances of individual

courage amongst them. As rats are always supposed to desert a sinking ship, so I had always remarked, that when the fortunes of the day looked critical, the Circassians were invariably to be found making their way towards the rear. I calculated that between Tatar-Bazardjik and Ichtiman, we must have passed at least 1000 Circassian horsemen, nearly all armed with the Government Winchester rifles, and all capable of taking part in the campaign against the Russians. I judged from this exodus that they at least began to think that the campaign was turning adversely to the Turkish arms.

The desertion of these men in such large numbers had a most prejudicial effect upon the country generally. Not only did they give the alarm to all the villages that they passed through, but to gratify the thirst for plunder, which seems to be inherent in their natures, they purposely endeavoured to produce a panic in order to induce the villagers to desert their homes, and thus to give an opportunity of robbing the household effects which were left behind in the flight.

I carefully examined the defensive capabilities of the Ichtiman Pass. The best point for defence was that which looked down over the Ichtiman

plain, but this spur of the Balkans is so low, and so constantly penetrated by village paths, that, like the rest of the higher chain, it forms a very delusive line for the defence of the frontier.

On our arrival at Ichtinan we found the place crowded with refugees and Circassians. For hours the line of arabas passed our little hotel without a moment's cessation. Small military parties conducting wounded to the rear, proved that hostilities were then going on in parts of the Balkan range which were not very remote from this spot.

We started again on the following morning on our way to Sofia. After running for a short distance through the plain, the *chaussée* passes through some low mountains and then descends into the broad rich Sofia valley. Across this valley, which is about twenty miles in width, and to the north, lies the range of the Balkans, whilst south of Sofia a mountain of even greater height rises up above the town. Away to the south, as far as the eye could reach, great blocks of snowy peaks were visible. The road lay under the mountains to the left of this Sofia plain. The valley seemed rich, and there was considerable cultivation and many villages.

On reaching the vicinity of Sofia it was evident that no large force was there assembled. On the little ridge just outside the town lay the tents of seven battalions and a regiment of cavalry. With the town itself I was sadly disappointed. From its population and important position, we expected to find something like Adrianople upon a smaller scale, but the houses as a rule were bad; and the streets, crowded with that nondescript throng which is generally to be found in the rear of a considerable army, were in a dreadful condition of dirt and slush.

On going to the hotel, we found it thronged with correspondents, doctors, and amateurs, who had been attracted by the chance of following the interesting operations which had been projected for the relief of Plevna. We were unable to obtain accommodation at the main hotel, but got some small rooms in one which lay immediately opposite, and at once set to work to procure the horses, which would make us independent in our movements in the future.

I heard that Lady Strangford had established a hospital in the town, which was working with excellent effect, and, on paying her a visit, we found her surrounded by a large staff of doctors and nurses; but she was looking wearied

and tired from the fatigue of the arduous task she had so charitably undertaken. Her hospital was in excellent order, and she informed me that the Turkish hospital in the town was also very well conducted.

## CHAPTER II.

Major Campbell—Dismal prospects—An insufficient army—  
The relief of Plevna—Shefket Pacha—Abandonment of  
Plevna—Advice of Shefket—Arrival of the Russian  
Guards—Plevna invested—The advance of Gourko—  
Collapse of Shefket—Gorni Dubnik—Mehemet Ali's  
army—The Orkhanié Pass—Turkish redoubts—The  
Russian advance—Kamarli—A cowardly Pacha—A fatal  
error—The heights above Etropol—Lotikova and Retza—  
A dangerous retreat—Extraordinary desertions—Valuable  
matériel—Attack of Gourko—Precarious position—Scat-  
tered forces—New battalions—No dépôts—The last  
levies—Untrained troops.

WE now learnt the latest state of affairs in the front. I again met at Sofia Major Campbell, whom I had left at Shipka, and who was going down to Constantinople with some English officers of Horse Artillery who had just returned from the camp of Mehemet Ali. Major Campbell gave a very unsatisfactory account of the prospects of the Turkish army. It appeared that, as I had anticipated in Constantinople, the force which had been so hastily collected for the relief of Plevna



under Mehemet Ali was quite incommensurate with the task which it was called upon to perform.

Many weeks before, Plevna, as has been recorded, had been relieved by a force of about 25,000 men, which had advanced from Orkhanié under Shefket Pacha, and very large quantities of stores and supplies had been sent forward to the aid of the army of Osman.

To the advance of Shefket no serious opposition of any kind had been offered by the Russians; but that chief had sent to Constantinople flaming despatches relative to the feats which he had accomplished. After this relief had been afforded to the Plevna garrison, the main forces of Shefket fell back, and were écheloned along the road which led from Orkhanié to Plevna, occupying, amongst others, the positions of Tellisch and Gorni Dubnik.

As has been mentioned, Mehemet Ali, whilst Commander-in-Chief on the Lom, had always been most anxious that Osman should retire from Plevna, and take up and fortify a position very much nearer to the Orkhanié Pass if Lovtcha could not be retaken. Communication with Osman Pacha had already been once cut off. One would have imagined that this might have served as a warning for the future, more espe-

cially now that the Russian reinforcements had arrived, and were being mainly pushed towards the west with the evident determination of securing the stronghold which had so long resisted their attacks, and which had cost them the flower of the Russian army. But Shefket strongly resisted this idea, and he reported so decidedly upon his capability of keeping open the line of communication that, notwithstanding the urgent expression of opinion by Mehemet Ali, and the desire of Osman Pacha himself, the authorities of Constantinople opposed the retreat of the Plevna force when it was feasible. On the arrival of the Russian Guard Corps, and other reinforcements that were now pouring across the Danube, the Russians succeeded in completely investing the long-contested Turkish position. They had also detached a large force under Gourko, comprising considerable bodies of cavalry, with the intention of driving back the Turkish troops under Shefket, which still lay écheloned in their positions along the road to Orkhanié.

Shefket's army was composed principally of Mustafiz—those raw levies which had been so hastily organized at Constantinople, and which were destined to have such a disastrous effect upon the future military operations of the war.

Both Gorni Dubnik, and Tellisch had soon fallen to the advancing Russian army under Gourko. The former had made a most gallant resistance, and had nearly succeeded in repulsing, with terrific loss, the attack made upon it by the picked troops of the Russian Guard.

On finding that all the assurances of Shefket had been falsified by events, that commander fell into disgrace, and Shakir Pacha, who had served with Suleiman at Shipka, was sent to replace him.

When Mehemet Ali had reached Sofia, in the attempt to carry out the sanguine hopes of the authorities of Constantinople for the relief of Plevna, he had found nothing ready to his hand but the demoralized battalions of Mustafiz, which were falling back before the advance of Gourko. Other battalions were hastily being sent from different parts of European Turkey, but they were ill-provided with all those requisites of war which make an army fit for campaigning in the open field. The task which he was called upon to perform in organizing these troops was Herculean. It was true that some of the fine battalions which had been serving in Bosnia on the Montenegrin frontier, and which, if called to the active scene of operations in the months of August or September,

would inevitably have turned the tide of war against the Russians, were coming in and swelling the army which was so hastily being assembled in the vicinity of Sofia.

In the Pass of the Balkans, through which runs the main *chaussée* which leads from Sofia by Orkhanié in the direction of Plevna, a line of redoubts had been constructed by a Turkish engineer officer near Kamarli.

A small force, composed of about eight battalions of Mustafiz with a battery of guns, lay in a strong advanced position, which covered the approaches to Etropol, whilst Shakir Pacha, with the rest of the army of Shefket which remained to him, held an entrenched position near Retza at the mouth of the Orkhanié Pass. At this place an immense supply of ammunition, clothing, military stores, and supplies had been assembled for the relief of Plevna.

There were two roads by which the Russians might advance on Kamarli; one by following the main *chaussée*, and forcing, if possible, the strong position held by Shakir Pacha at the mouth of the Pass; the other more to their left, which branched off towards Etropol, and which led from that village over the mountains close in front of the line of redoubts which had been constructed on the

crest of the pass near Kamarli. If they could succeed in brushing away the small force of Mustafiz which held the strong position in advance covering Etropol, and could penetrate to that place, and occupy the mountain range above it, they would compel, if they did not cut, the retreat of Shakir Pacha's force by the main *chaussée* leading from Orkhanié towards Kamarli.

As Shakir Pacha's position was almost unattackable, Gourko, with three divisions of Russian infantry (composed principally of the Guard) which were moving forward, naturally selected the easier task. On their approach Mustafa Pacha, who commanded the advanced Turkish troops upon that side, and who might certainly have held his position until he could have been reinforced, abandoned his entrenchments and left his guns without making even a show of resistance, and fell back with his disorganized mob of Mustafiz upon the main Kamarli position.

In the construction of the line of redoubts which blocked the pass above Kamarli, by a singular oversight the pathway leading up to the mountain ridge from Etropol had been entirely neglected.

Following closely on the heels of the retiring

Turks, Gourko succeeded in occupying the village of Etropol, which lies in a valley below the mountains. Bulgarian guides had quickly made him aware of the pathway leading up the mountains in the direction of the Kamarli position.

Mehemet Ali was hastily collecting his troops upon the Kamarli heights when this disaster fell upon him, and almost before any force that could be trusted for offensive operations could be assembled, the Russians had already seized the heights which lay above the village of Etropol. From these heights they looked right down upon the main *chaussée* which formed the line of retreat for the force of Shakir Pacha at the mouth of the Orkhanié Pass upon Kamarli, and they thus cut the line of communication of the Turkish troops under Shakir. It is true that from the left of Shakir's position there ran a mountain-path by Lotikova, which, crossing the Balkan range, descended into the Sofia plains. This path was practicable for infantry and pack-horses, but not for guns.

The position was extremely critical, and some decision must evidently be immediately arrived at. To leave Shakir's forces in the position near Retza, dependent entirely for its supplies upon the

Lotikova Pass seemed unadvisable to Mehemet Ali Pacha, and, moreover, he wanted additional troops in order to defend the Kamarli position. He therefore determined to save the guns and troops of Shakir Pacha by a hasty retreat along the *chaussée* leading to Kamarli, if indeed that retreat could yet be accomplished.

The Russians being already in possession of the heights, it was evident that even a few battalions could bar the progress of Shakir; but it was decided that the attempt should be made. In order to accomplish it, the immense mass of ammunition and stores lying at Retza, intended for the supply of an army of 50,000 men for two months, must all be abandoned or destroyed. It was imagined that their destruction by fire would indicate to the Russians that a retreat was contemplated. By an astounding and fatal oversight the commanders failed to see how easy it would be to leave a small force behind to carry out their destruction when the retreat had been accomplished, which small force might afterwards have joined the Turkish troops at Lotikova.

Completely abandoning all these stores, Shakir Pacha fell back upon Kamarli during the night, and so ill had the Russian arrangements been made that the retreat was accomplished without

the slightest interruption. But this enormous mass of stores, which would supply the Russian army for upwards of two months, and thus solve the great difficulty which they would have experienced in maintaining their line of supply with Schistova in the depth of winter, fell into the hands of the enemy.

Trusting to the demoralization of the raw levies which, with the exception of Gorni Dubnik, had, up to this time, failed seriously to oppose his advance, Gourko determined without delay to push forward and to make an attempt upon the line of redoubts which guarded the Kamarli position.

He at once urged on his troops to the attack of the redoubt on the right which formed the key of the whole position; but in the meantime a very few of the fine old Bosnian battalions had reached the scene of action, and the assault had been repelled. This had happened only two days before our arrival at Sofia.

Major Campbell considered that the then existing position of the Turkish army was most precarious, on account of the number of bad troops which composed the force acting under Mehemet Ali. The Russians had, it appeared, entrenched the commanding position in front of the Kamarli



lines, which had been left unguarded by the Turkish engineers. They were now engaged in establishing batteries which would command, to a certain extent, the lower Turkish redoubts which guarded the Orkhanié *chaussée* at the point where it passed the ridge.

I found, as I had expected, that the Turkish forces under Mehemet Ali were not numerically one-third of the strength which had been indicated to me at Constantinople as available for the relief of Plevna.

As usual, the forces which had come under the command of the Marshal were scattered about in many different directions. So far from any possibility existing for the relief of Osman Pacha, it seemed to be quite a question how long Mehemet Ali would be able to retain his position at Kamarli, and whether he might not at any moment be rolled down into the Sofia plains by the excellent and numerically far superior force with which Gourko was advancing. Such a retreat would probably cost him all his guns and *matériel*. If quickly followed, it would leave the Pass of Ichtiman, for the defence of which no preparations had been made, at the mercy of the Russians.

The authorities at Constantinople had been

relying, as usual, upon that bugbear which had been the cause of so many of the disasters of the war. Their calculations as to the number of Turkish troops which could be opposed to the Russians in the field were based upon a constant but much-cherished fallacy. Every successive Minister of War appeared to have the same mania for incessantly raising fresh battalions, without ever considering the strength of those which were acting in front of the enemy. Every battalion was assumed to contain about 1000 men. If a commander had sixty battalions under his command, he was roughly estimated to have a force of 60,000 men.

Had the Mustafiz, which had been so hastily collected, and sent into the field commanded by officers entirely destitute of military instruction, been used as depôts to draft men slowly into the ranks of those fine old battalions which were now reduced to mere *cadres*, it is probable that the men would soon have adapted themselves to the discipline and aptitude for war which characterized those corps which were composed of trained Turkish soldiers.

At this period of the war the last levy of the Mustafiz had been drawn upon. It was composed, for the most part, of men who had never

served previously, and who had left their wives and families, in many instances, without any support in the far regions of the Turkish Empire, from which they had so hastily been gathered. With not even a knowledge of the proper use of the weapon which was placed in their hands, commanded by officers who knew even less than themselves, and inspired them with no confidence, what could be hoped for from such troops?

Yet, apparently, in the minds of the military authorities at Constantinople, Turkish battalions were all alike, and no allowance was made for the commander on account of the quality of the troops which composed the army which he commanded.

### CHAPTER III.

A good purchase—Heavy weights—Dr. Sirell—Cossack raid—  
An early start—Circassian patrols—Colonel Maitland,  
R.A.—A distant gun—Pressing onward—Want of condi-  
tion—Musketry fire—A wounded Pacha—Pushing to the  
front—Araba Konak—General action—Critical position  
—Captain James—A scene of slaughter—A welcome meet-  
ing—The military situation—The wooded crest—Ill-  
directed fire—Dangerous Mustaphiz—Courage of  
Mehemet Ali—A narrow escape—Critical moments—  
Friends worse than enemies—The gallant English doctor  
—Position in the wood—Hasty entrenchments—Circas-  
sians wounded—Disobedience of orders—The Marshal's  
quarters—A hot night—Demoralized domestics—Charles,  
the French artilleryman.

THESE were the reports which I gathered at Sofia on the day subsequent to my arrival, and during which we were busily employed in making the necessary purchase of horses.

Captain Fred Burnaby arrived soon after me, and he also was in the market for the purchase of animals which would be able to carry the not very light weights of himself and his servant

Radford. The prices of horses rose rapidly, but I succeeded in securing a very nice-looking grey for my own personal use, the only disadvantage about him being that he was immensely fat, and had evidently done no work for some considerable time. By the evening we had been successful in making all the purchases we required.

Captain Burnaby, who found some difficulty in buying horses up to his weight, determined to remain behind at Sofia for a day or two, and then to follow us up to the camp at Kamarli.

Dr. Sarell, who was in charge of the Red Crescent ambulances which had been formed at the village of Tashkessen, rode in before we left Sofia. He informed me that no fighting had taken place since the repulse of the Russians on their attack on the Yildiz Tabia; but he brought the rather alarming report that small parties of Cossacks had succeeded in crossing the Balkans some miles to the west of Kamarli, and were supposed to be lurking in the Bulgarian villages at the foot of the mountains, from which they might threaten the main road leading from Sofia to Tashkessen and the army of Mehemet Ali.

As I was anxious to reach Kamarli at as early an hour as possible on the following day, we left

Sofia at three o'clock on the next morning, escorted by a small body of zaptiehs.

The road ran diagonally across the great Sofia plain. It had been good, but the constant traffic for the supply of the army, and some recent rains, had left in many places large, deep holes, and, as usual, no arrangement had been made for its very necessary repairs. By the time that daylight dawned, we were well advanced upon our way. A few shots had just been heard a short distance in front, and, on reaching the spot from which they had proceeded, we found that a force of about 300 Circassians had been sent to patrol the road and villages on our left, in order to verify the report of the presence of Cossacks in that direction. No Cossacks had been discovered, but the men were amusing themselves by galloping about and discharging their fire-arms, to the alarm of the refugees, who were still making their way hastily to the rear.

I was riding my new purchase, with which I was much pleased; but, on account of his want of condition, I told my servant to follow closely behind on my well-tried old Turkoman.

We made a short halt soon after daybreak, and were interviewed by the Circassian chiefs, who afterwards escorted us for some little distance on

the road towards Kamarli. We had not proceeded far upon our way when we met Colonel Maitland, Royal Artillery, who had been sent out to make a careful inquiry relative to the working of the Krupp field-guns in the Turkish service. He had left Tashkessen that morning, and told me that nothing of importance appeared to be going on, and that the Russians had made no active movement since their unsuccessful attack upon the Yildiz Tabia.

We had not long been parted from him, and were within about five or six miles of Tashkessen, when suddenly the sound of a gun in the distance, from the heights of Kamarli, awoke our attention. It was followed by another and another.

Pushing our horses into a trot, we pressed quickly on; but there was shortly a lull in the firing, and it seemed as if it might be nothing of any importance. My servant had lagged behind, and I was still riding the fat little grey which I had bought at Sofia, and which already began to show some signs of distress. The Circassians had not followed us.

We jogged rapidly on, and, before we had proceeded two miles, again the sound of distant firing reached our ears.

We could now see the wreaths of white smoke

curling up from the Kamarli heights, which lay at some distance to our left front. We urged forward our horses, but the little grey showed painful signs of distress. As we advanced, the firing grew heavier and heavier, and as we came in sight of the village the sound of distant musketry fell clearly upon our ears.

The village of Tashkessen lay on the left of the road, at the foot of a small range of heights. The road wound through these heights, and passed over a rocky ridge at an elevation of about a thousand feet, and then descended rapidly into the plain of Kamarli.

On reaching the village, I found all the doctors and their assistants on the alert. A Turkish Pacha had already come in wounded, and it turned out to be my friend, Shukri Pacha, from Haim Boghaz. My little horse was now dead beat, but no other seemed to be forthcoming at the village, and I had to press him up the ascent of the pass, occasionally dismounting and leading him for a while.

On reaching the crest of the ridge, I found two batteries of artillery encamped, and, calling for the officer, I ordered a fresh horse to be brought, whilst I left my beaten animal in his charge.

We now pushed rapidly forward down the



steep declivity, and galloped over the plain, which led to a considerable building, called the Araba Konak, which lay at the foot of the zigzag road which ascended the Kamarli heights. By this time the horses of Colonel Baker and Colonel Allix were so distressed that they could not go out of a trot, but my artilleryman was in good condition, and carried me quickly up the heights. We could see that a serious action had commenced. Already upwards of two hundred wounded had passed us, moving to the rear. The guns were in action all along the line of the position.

On the left of the point, where the road commenced its ascent of the heights, there lay a deep, wooded valley. Heavy musketry firing was going on at the further crest of the valley, and a large number of Turkish troops could be seen falling back in confusion into the wooded dell.

The whole position of affairs looked extremely serious. If the Russians forced their way down this valley, they would cut the road near Araba Konak, and completely sever the whole right of the line from any means of retreat.

On reaching the crest of the ridge I burst out suddenly upon the two Turkish redoubts which

guarded these points, and which were heavily engaged. The Russian shells were falling on the main road which led up from Araba Konak, and creating sad havoc amongst the artillery ammunition horses, which were being pushed up with reserve ammunition.

I moved into the fort on the left, where I had hoped to find Mehemet Ali Pacha. Here I met Captain James, of the Scotch Greys, who had remained at the Kamarli camp after his journey from Shipka. The Turkish redoubt was very ill-planned, and was completely commanded by a long line of Russian batteries which were firing upon it from the heights above Etropol. No traverses had been thrown up, and the guns were entirely taken in enfilade. The artillerymen in the redoubts had suffered terribly. Fourteen of them were lying dead around, and two of their guns had been dismounted. The infantry holding the work had been so much exposed that it was a perfect slaughter-house.

Captain James, whose coolness and intelligence gave me a most favourable impression of his soldierly qualities, informed me that Mehemet Ali was in No. 6 redoubt, a few hundred yards to our right. This work was one of more importance, with a cavalier in the centre, but like the other it

was terribly commanded by the Russian fire from the heights above.

Sitting on the top of the cavalier I found the little chief whom I had last parted with on the day of his dismissal at the village of Pisanza. He welcomed me warmly, declared that I always brought him luck, and that we should now certainly repel this very serious attack. He shortly explained the position of affairs.

The Turkish engineers had thrown a line of redoubts along the extreme crest of the Orkhanié Pass. The highest of these redoubts on the right—Yildiz Tabia—lay at an elevation of 6200 feet above the sea; whilst the seventh redoubt, which lay just on the left of the Orkhanié road, was the one into which I had first entered. To the left front of this work there was a wooded crest which should evidently have been occupied, as it looked down upon the Orkhanié road below. Two days before Mehemet Ali had recognized this error, and had sent instructions that it should be held. This order had not been executed until the previous evening, when the troops pushing forward for the purpose, found that the Russians were already in possession. It was covered with a rather dense wood and a quantity of dry underwood. The crest itself was not more than

400 yards distant from the head of the deep, dark valley where I had seen the firing on my road up the hill. It appeared that the Russians had during the night brought a battery of guns to this crest, and were now making a desperate attack, in order to force their way down the valley and cut the Kamarli road.

The guns from no less than four of the redoubts would range as far as the crest in question, but, as was so common with Turkish artillery, instead of directing their fire upon the wood, they were all engaged in their accustomed duel with the Russian batteries on the ridge above Etropol, and were suffering from the effect of very superior fire. Fortunately the Russian batteries could not be directed upon the objective point of the Russian attack, as the slope of the wood screened this point from their view. It appeared that the dangerous position was occupied mainly by Mustafiz battalions, and the Marshal was rapidly drawing every available reserve from the redoubts on the ridge to our right in order to strengthen it.

He briefly explained to me that he was in command of troops which, for the most part, could not be trusted under fire.

Colonel Allix and Colonel Baker shortly after-

wards arrived. A heavy shell fire was falling in and about the works, and the troops were suffering rather severely.

Mehemet Ali, in the hope of encouraging his troops, was exposing himself immensely, with that perfect coolness which he always showed under a heavy fire. Sitting down by the corner of the parapet, he shortly recapitulated and confirmed the story of the recent operations which had been related to me by Major Campbell at Sofia. Our conversation was disagreeably interrupted by a shell bursting in the corner of the parapet at our backs, and burying us in the earth which it threw forward.

As the firing on the left grew heavier again, the Marshal determined to ride to the wood where Shakir Pacha was personally in command.

On our arrival we found how critical at one moment had been the position of affairs. When the Russians had for some time continued their attacks and been repulsed by a small Turkish entrenchment which had fortunately been thrown up in the night, just guarding the head of the valley, two or three of the good battalions which were in hand had been pushed forward in pursuit, and they would in all probability have reached the crest of the ridge and have retaken it from the

enemy, but they had not advanced many yards into the brushwood when they were heavily fired upon by the Mustafiz in their rear. One fine old battalion had already lost one hundred men from the fire of the Mustafiz, who were in a wild state of confusion, and under no command.

Just in rear of the entrenchments, busily engaged in attending the wounded, I came upon a doctor who bore so strongly the English type, that it was impossible to doubt his nationality, and a short conversation told me that I was right in my conjecture.

The Russians not being pursued after their repulse, again and again returned to the attack, and at times they almost arrived at the head of the valley. The few good battalions of Turkish troops which were present alone held them in check, and, after a very critical struggle, they were eventually repulsed.

The position of the Turks in the wood was most unfavourable. They lay on the lower ground below the crest, and extended for about a mile to the left of No. 7 redoubt, guarding the head of the all-important valley. Still it was evident that the position must be held at all hazards, or the whole Kamarli line be abandoned.

We moved right along the front, and pointed

out to the different commanders the positions where entrenchments should be thrown up. The men were immediately set to work to construct them, and the wood in front of these entrenchments was ordered to be cut down in such a way as to form entanglements to a Russian advance, whilst the enemy could not approach close to the works without being perceived.

Riding back towards the No. 7 redoubt, we pushed forward on to a little open spot in the wood from which we could plainly see the Russian position, and arrived within about 700 yards of considerable masses of the enemy's troops, but they did not fire at us, although when two Circassians of the escort passed there a few minutes afterwards they were both wounded.

The crest occupied by the Russians appeared to me to be so important that I strongly urged the Marshal to bring up during the night the two batteries which I had passed on the heights above Tashkessen, and to concentrate at dawn the fire of the whole of his guns upon this crest, which was considerably exposed. Then, having selected eight or nine of his best battalions, to endeavour to drive the Russians from the spot. We could see with our glasses that they had already withdrawn their guns, and it was probable that more

or less demoralized by the repulse that they had received, we should be successful in our endeavour to reoccupy this important point. The order was given, but like many other Turkish orders was never executed.

When it grew dusk, we returned to the Marshal's camp.

This had been established in the most careless and exposed position. It was, in fact, close to the left of the No. 6 redoubt, and perfectly open to the fire from the enemy's batteries, which had created such havoc in the redoubt itself during the day. The Marshal himself was living in a small hut, but there were a large number of tents around which were occupied by his staff and escort. It appeared that the Russians until that day had not opened fire upon this point, but it was evidently unsuitable for a Head-quarter camp.

I dined that night with the Marshal, who had told off a bell tent which lay at the left of his hut for our accommodation. The horses had come up with a part of the baggage, but some of the servants, disliking the fire which during the day had fallen across the road, had remained below in the valley near Araba Konak.

At about half-past nine we turned into our



tent, and all seemed still for the night ; but about an hour later the Russians suddenly commenced a heavy fire upon the camp, which was repeated at intervals. One of the Marshal's horses was killed and another wounded as they stood at their pickets, and the horses of the staff and escort were suffering heavily. One shell burst in the telegraph tent, which was next to us, destroying the whole of the apparatus and wounding the telegraph clerk ; whilst another fell into a box containing the effects of Shakir Pacha, and completely destroyed all his worldly goods.

On leaving Constantinople, Colonel Baker had engaged a Greek servant named Spiro, while Colonel Allix had retained the services of an old Frenchman named Charles, who had seen better days, and who had served as a horse artilleryman with the French army in the Crimea. Charles had appeared to be so stupid on the journey up that he was in general disfavour. Towards four o'clock in the morning the Russian fire grew heavier. Our servants had been up all night, and were becoming rapidly demoralized. We told them to place the packs carrying the boxes which were not required in the tents, upon the pack-horses, and to be ready to move down at daybreak to a position where the horses would be more under

cover; but before this was thoroughly accomplished a few more shells fell dangerously near, and, unable to stand it any longer, with the exception of Charles, they bolted down the hill in the direction of Araba Konak. Charles showed the most perfect sang-froid, and made himself very useful when morning dawned, and from that moment established himself in a position which he never afterwards lost.

## CHAPTER IV.

A safer camp—Improved position—A masked battery—Sudden attack—The Marshal seeks death—Exposed position—Heavy artillery fire—A charmed life—British cheerfulness—Sweep the ridge—A novel plan—Use of petroleum—Too late—A storm of rain—A last opportunity—Turkish delays—A Russian reconnoitring party—Dense fogs—Redjib Pacha—Reorganization—Wasted force—A chance for Plevna—Servian treachery—Sham battalions—Turkish cavalry—Irrregulars—A dangerous pathway—Desertion—Severe measures—Fourteen men shot.

THE next morning the Head-quarter camp was moved to a small ravine about 1500 yards distant higher up on the ridge towards Yildiz, and again a heavy artillery fire commenced between the Russian batteries and the redoubts. The order given the night before had only been so far attended to that the two batteries had moved up to near Araba Konak. The redoubts did not concentrate their fire upon the Russian hill, and no attempt to retake it was made. On the other hand, the Russians showed no desire to advance.

I visited the whole left of the line with the Marshal in the afternoon. The amount of work which the troops had done during the night in order to protect their position in the wood was quite surprising; but we projected further additions which might strengthen the position, so as to give a continuous line of entrenchments extending from the extreme left to a point within a few hundred yards of the No. 7 redoubt. As the sentries were pushed forward a short distance into the wood, the men were able to work without being exposed to any danger of a sudden attack. The trees were so high that, although the Russian crest stood quite near and at a considerable elevation, the clearing and entrenchments were entirely hidden.

I had discovered a point very near the head-quarter camp, close to the No. 5 redoubt, where it appeared to me that two batteries could be placed in such a position as to be entirely masked from the enemy's fire on the main ridge, and from whence we could play with shrapnel upon the wooded crest; and I got permission from the Marshal to bring up the two batteries from Araba Konak, and to place them in this position. It struck me that as the Russians had as yet thrown up no earthworks or entrenchments on the crest,

they might, if the place were constantly and heavily swept with artillery fire, retire from it, and thus leave it for our occupation.

Accordingly, the order was given, but it took some hours and the aid of several battalions to drag the guns up to the height.

About mid-day, I was standing with the Marshal upon the site of our projected battery, when a sharp infantry fire burst out in the woods on the extreme left. Mehemet Ali immediately ordered his horse determined to ride to the spot. At this time he was in a very low frame of mind relative to his prospects. He confided to me the hopeless view which he took of ever being able to relieve Plevna, or even long expecting to retain his present position. He said that the Turkish Government at Constantinople always placed him in false positions; that he knew that the present situation could only lead to his discredit, and that he was most anxious that he might either be killed or wounded, and thus relieved from his great anxiety. He certainly did his best at this time to accomplish the wish. Actuated, no doubt, partly by a very proper desire to encourage his bad troops by exposing himself personally to danger, he sought every opportunity of placing himself in the most ex-

posed situations. It was in vain that I urged that it was not his place, as commander-in-chief, to thrust himself into every little attack of infantry: he was determined to ride to the left and personally supervise the defence of the position from what he at that time imagined to be a serious Russian attack.

I accompanied him, and we took with us a considerable escort. Passing between Nos. 6 and 7 redoubts, the road ran over an exposed crest which was under fire of the whole of the Russian batteries. The gunners had evidently detected, from the large cavalry escort, that the Commander-in-Chief was following this path, for they suddenly turned every battery upon us, bursting their shells so close around that it appeared almost impossible that we should escape untouched. But the Marshal seemed to bear a charmed life, and neither shells nor bullets appeared to have any effect upon him.

On reaching the entrenchment in the wood, the fire had ceased. We heard that the Russians had pushed forward a reconnaissance in force, in order to find out whether the Turkish position had been secured. The affair had not been serious. Again I found the English doctor, whom I had remarked previously; he was busily

engaged in attending to the wounded, and the Turkish superior officers were loud in their praise to the Marshal of the gallant way in which he always exposed himself under fire in the cause of humanity, and of his cheerfulness under the hardships which the troops at this time had to undergo.

After visiting the whole of the left of the line, and again correcting the weakest points, we rode back towards the Head-quarter camp. The guns had been brought up and placed in position, and we immediately opened a heavy fire upon the wooded crest. At the same time, word was sent to redoubts 4 and 5 to turn their guns upon the same point. Watching with our telescopes, we could see that this artillery fire was having the desired effect. Gradually the Russians retired from the crest, apparently leaving nothing but their sentries. After the fire had been maintained for about an hour, quite unanswered by the Russians, as we found that our new battery was completely masked, I urged the Marshal to select some of the best battalions and to push forward and occupy the crest, but he expressed himself as too afraid of the quality of the troops to risk a defeat at this our weak point.

Two days before Mehemet Ali had formed a

plan which, though it seemed rather wild, was still apparently feasible. The thick wood which lay between the Russians on the crest and our entrenchments was very dry. The undergrowth of this wood was a mass of dried fern and dead branches. At that time a strong gale of wind blew from the Turkish lines in the direction of the Russians. The Marshal had formed the idea that by setting fire to the wood on our side in many places, it would, under the influence of the wind, burn fiercely, and that the flames would be carried so rapidly towards the Russian position that the enemy would be compelled to abandon the height, probably in the greatest disorder. But to carry out this plan, Mehemet Ali was determined to employ petroleum; and the petroleum had to be brought from Sofia. It must take at least two days.

It was in vain that I pointed out to him that a series of bonfires would probably have the same result in starting the fire, and that it was just possible that the wind might not last in its present direction and with its present force for forty-eight hours longer. The Marshal was bent on his petroleum, and the attempt was consequently delayed.

On the evening in question I dined in the tent



of Mehemet Ali, and during dinner the report came that the petroleum had at length arrived.

The Marshal was most sanguine of success. Up to that evening the wind had continued to blow with considerable force and in the same direction, but during dinner it subsided into fitful gusts. The Marshal told me that all the arrangements had been made, and that at about ten o'clock the fires would be lighted. A few of the better battalions would be held in readiness to push forward in rear of the flames, and thus to occupy the Russian position when the enemy should have been compelled by fire or smoke to have abandoned it.

During dinner the wind fell ominously, and at about nine o'clock two or three heavy drops of rain fell audibly upon the tent. I looked at the Marshal; his face wore a comical expression of disappointment. The usual system of Turkish delay had brought its usual fruit. In another five minutes a heavy storm of rain burst over the camp, and from that time forth no opportunity again occurred of putting Mehemet Ali's plan into execution.

On the following morning, at an early hour, I walked up to the crest of the hill just above the Head-quarter camp, where our batteries had been

placed, and, taking with me Mr. Ashbury's telescope, I long and carefully examined the Russian crest in the wood. The trees were so open at the highest point of this peak that one could judge with tolerable accuracy as to the number of troops by which it was occupied, but I sought in vain for either troops or sentinels. Impressed by the heavy fire which had swept the position on the previous afternoon, they had evidently withdrawn from the key of the ridge.

Having perfectly satisfied myself that this was the case, I went down to Mehemet Ali and reported the circumstance, begging him at the same time to immediately order our troops in the wood to push forward a reconnaissance in force, and to occupy and fortify the, to us, dangerous position which the Russians had now quitted. With usual Turkish procrastination this was postponed for a period of two hours, at the end of which time the Marshal himself came to the battery in order to make a personal examination of the Russian position in the wood.

Whilst we were looking with our glasses, I saw a Russian officer and a party of six men come stealing cautiously back to see whether the Turks had occupied the position. Finding that no advantage had been taken of their absence, we

could see them send to the rear, and in a short time a company was brought up and renewed the former line of Russian sentinels.

An hour afterwards a dense fog set in and made all military movements impossible.

Up to this time we could see plainly with our glasses that the Russians had made no attempt to throw up works or entrenchments upon the wooded hill; but warned now by the fire of our batteries which had not been succeeded by any infantry attack, and with the advantage of the cover which the fog gave them, how long would the crest still remain in its present weak state?

During the two following days a dense foggy mist enveloped the whole of the positions.

With the Marshal's consent I had drawn up a system of organization for the forty-one battalions which were under his command at Kamarli, and which up to this time had not been acting in properly constituted brigades or divisions.

Redjib Pacha, who had recently been made a General of Division, was daily expected from Shipka. It was therefore determined that the force should be divided into three divisions, to be commanded respectively by Shakir Pacha, Redjib Pacha, and myself. As more battalions were expected to arrive it was determined that the

divisions of Shakir and Redjib should each consist of seventeen battalions, each divided into two brigades of seven battalions, with a regiment of reserve. Shakir Pacha's line was to extend from the Yildiz Tabia, on the extreme right, to the battery below No. 5, in front of the Head-quarter camp. Redjib Pacha's division was to occupy the wood upon the left. The remaining battalions, with the whole of the cavalry and reserve artillery, were placed under my command.

I had the task of holding the much-punished Nos. 6 and 7 redoubts, together with maintaining a certain force in reserve that might be directed towards any threatened point.

I found on going over the returns of the whole of the army which was under the command of the Marshal, that the usual Turkish fault of dispersion was terribly apparent, and, in fact, it seemed to me that but for the bad quality of the troops which composed that force, an advance to the relief of Plevna might still be extremely feasible.

Away to our right at Isladi, guarding a pass which led over very high snowy mountains in the direction of Etropol, lay Iskender Pacha with ten battalions. At Sofia there still remained five battalions of Mustafiz. The same number of the same class of troops were holding the advanced

position of Lotikova, which had never been seriously disturbed by the Russians. At Berkovtcha an additional force of six battalions of Mustafiz guarded the pass. All these were troops which came under the command of Mehemet Ali Pacha; but in addition no less than six good battalions were still remaining at Nisch, whilst twenty battalions of fine old troops lay in and around the fortress of Widdin.

Desperate diseases require desperate remedies.

Servia had for sometime past been assuming a threatening attitude, and it was quite evident that the small number of Turkish troops now écheloned along the Servian frontier were quite inadequate to repel any serious attack in the event of Servia declaring war against Turkey.

It seemed almost certain that the fall of Plevna and the consequent probability of subsequent Russian successes would be seized upon by Servia as an opportunity for taking decisive action against Turkey. And this, notwithstanding the humiliating position from which she had been saved by the intervention of the Powers only a few months before, and the promises for the future by which she had bound herself in her relations with the Porte.

It therefore appeared advisable to risk any

danger that might arise from withdrawing the inadequate force which guarded the Servian frontier, in order to throw the whole of the available Turkish troops upon Gourko's army. By driving it back from its present forward position we might bring about the relief of Plevna, and thus prevent the hostile action of Servia.

I found on going over the state of the Turkish army that battalions represented nothing but a name. In many cases the miserable Mustafiz regiments had dwindled down to mere *cadres*. Some of these battalions could not bring more than from 150 to 200 men into the field, but the few Bosnian and Albanian battalions which had joined the army were tolerably strong, and composed of admirable material.

My cavalry force was terribly scattered. It comprised a regiment of six squadrons, which was then at Isladi; six more squadrons of regular cavalry which lay on the plains below at Acha-Kamarli and Strigli; and about 1000 Circassians or irregular cavalry—a very unmanageable and disorderly body, who were principally employed in watching the Sofia road and the little mountain path, which ran from the direction of Orkhanié by Tchuriak and Potop into the Sofia plains.

From my first reaching Kamarli, this pathway,

which we knew to have been traversed by the small party of Cossacks which had given the alarm the day previous to my arrival, had caused me the greatest anxiety. I had urged upon Mehemet Ali that a small force of infantry should be sent to guard the mountain crest over which it ran; but the Marshal was so uneasy about his position at Kamarli, that he feared to detach any portion of that army to so great a distance.

The returns at this time showed that the whole force under Mehemet Ali's command at Kamarli and the neighbourhood did not exceed 20,000 men. The wretched Mustafiz were deserting in such numbers that the army was now diminishing at the rate of 1000 men a day. It was evident that this state of things could not continue, and the question of a retreat to Ichtiman was being seriously considered.

The Marshal determined to adopt most stringent measures. The troops were warned that in future deserters captured would be shot. Courts-martial were established, and, as the threat appeared to produce no effect, fourteen men belonging to the different battalions in camp were tried and shot in one day; but still the desertion continued, although this example had produced a sensible effect in diminishing the daily number of absentees.

## CHAPTER V.

A veracious despatch—Probable consequences—A renowned battalion—Islan Bey—High elevation—Arabs—Protection for the men—A picked force—Disgrace of the Marshal—Shakir Pacha—Called to the telegraph—A change of commanders—Clear weather—Russian earth-works—Approach to Yildiz Tabia—A commanded position—A dead-lock—Try to aid Osman—A last hope—Intense cold—Extreme suffering—Frozen to death—Russian deserters—Colonels Allix and Baker—"Thanks to God and the Padishah"—The Tchuriak Pass—My great anxiety—Fresh vigilance—Captain Burnaby's plan—Wise counsel—Stafford House—Inactivity—Strigli—A dismal scene.

MEHEMET ALI had written a forcible letter to Constantinople pointing out the precarious nature of his present position and the bad quality of the force which he commanded, openly declaring the little probability that existed of his being able to afford any useful assistance for the relief of Osman Pacha at Plevna. The Marshal read me this despatch, at the same time saying, "I consider that it is my bounden duty not to conceal



from Constantinople the true position of affairs ; at the same time, you will see that the very fact of my doing so will probably lead to my disgrace and recall."

I found on inquiry that only one more good Albanian battalion was expected to arrive at Kamarli. This belonged to the redif regiment of Prizrend, which had a great renown throughout the army for its fighting qualities.

I had discovered, on carefully inspecting the infantry battalions which came under my command, that there were only two on which I could place implicit confidence—namely, a Bosnian battalion from Touzla, and an Albanian battalion from Uskub. As the work in the redoubts was very trying, and the ordinary duties led to a very serious loss of men, I determined to keep these two battalions in reserve, and to make them as comfortable as circumstances would permit in order that they might be available should any trying occasion arise. The Prizrend battalion, on its arrival, would be united with these, and would thus form a regiment which I placed under the command of Islan Bey, a fine old Turkish lieutenant-colonel, who, by his energy and decision, had already won my confidence.

The weather at this time was intensely cold.

The highest fort of Yildiz stood 6200 feet above the sea, and the whole fortified ridge lay deep in snow. The sufferings of the troops were intense.

I had under my command some Arab battalions from Tripoli and the southern provinces of the Turkish Empire, and these poor men utterly collapsed from the severity of the weather. I had paid special attention to providing the men under my command with a proper supply of meat, which would enable them to withstand the low temperature better than the usual diet of biscuit and rice, which too often formed the sole rations of the Turkish soldier in the field. But all my efforts seemed thrown away upon these Arab troops. Their whole *morale* and *physique* were so utterly destroyed by the intense cold that they would not even take the trouble to cook the food which was issued to them. They would lie down crying, and only praying to die.

The two redoubts, No. 6 and 7, which were guarded by my troops, were those which blocked the Orkhanié road, and which suffered most from the fire of the Russian batteries. They lay far lower than the latter, and, as has been already mentioned, the guns in them were exposed to an enfilade fire, which proved terribly fatal to the artillerymen who occupied them. I set to work to throw up

traverses, and to erect sheds on the reverse side of those traverses in which the men might sleep with some little safety, and thus avoid the moral strain of remaining night and day ever exposed to the enemy's fire.

I had placed the Uskubs and Touzla battalions in a little ravine which lay about 400 yards to the left of the No. 7 redoubt, and had pitched my own camp about 300 yards to the left of the work and about 700 yards from the hill occupied by the Russians, but entirely concealed by the high wood which intervened. The fog still continued, and we remained in perfect ignorance as to Russian movements.

I had ridden, as usual, one afternoon to the Head-quarter camp to pay a visit to the Marshal. On my arrival there, I could see at once that some extraordinary event had occurred. The Marshal's tent was empty. His staff and servants were all absent. Shakir Pacha, although nominally commanding the division on the right, was acting as a sort of chief of the staff to Mehemet Ali. Redjib Pacha had arrived, and was living at the Head-quarter camp.

Shakir Pacha spoke French very tolerably. He was an excellent scribe, and a man of great intelligence. Although his previous career had

been spent in official positions of a civil rather than of a military nature, he struck me as a man of very considerable military acquirements. Redjib was an active little man, of only about thirty-four years of age, of very pleasant and genial manners. He had only been recently promoted to the rank of ferik for services which he had rendered when holding the right attack on the Shipka Pass. Finding that the whole personal staff of the Marshal had disappeared, I sought the tent of Shakir, and asked for an explanation. "The Marshal has gone," he said, "and we are summoned to the telegraph-office."

We immediately repaired to the telegraph tent, and were shortly joined by Redjib.

Communication with Constantinople had just been established. We sat around as a message from the Seraskierat began to pass through the wires.

Shakir held in his hand a sheet of paper, and wrote down in succession each word as it arrived. As senior officer present, he naturally assumed the command of the troops ; but, word by word, the message arrived to the following effect :—"The command of the troops at Kamarli, consequent upon the recall of Mehemet Ali Pacha, will de-

volve upon Redjib Pacha." Without moving a muscle, or showing the slightest sign of surprise, Shakir quietly handed over the completed message to Redjib, and assumed his position as second in command.

On the following morning the fog suddenly lifted. The whole range of snowy mountains lay bright and clear before us. Walking up to No. 7 redoubt, I anxiously examined the Russian position on the wooded crest. It was just as I had expected. The whole hill was covered with earthworks, and two guns peeped out of embrasures facing the No. 7 redoubt.

The Russians had followed our example, and had cut down a considerable amount of the wood which lay in front of their works, thus affording a clear space for their fire in case of an attack. This we had already gathered from the constant sound of falling trees which had come to us every day during the duration of the fog.

They had also taken advantage of the misty weather to push forward in the direction of Yildiz Tabia. They had occupied and entrenched a knoll which lay about 1100 yards from the redoubt, and, moving up by a pathway which led through the wood in the direction of Etropol past the Yildiz Tabia, they had established a battery

at a distance of only about 800 yards from that work, and lying immediately below it to its right. This battery appeared to be so completely commanded by Yildiz that the Russian position seemed to be absurdly chosen; but in the artillery duel which, for many days afterwards ensued, the fort firing down and the battery firing up, the Russians seemed to suffer far less than the Turks.

The enemy had pushed forward shelter-trenches about 200 yards in advance of the battery, and, as our shelter-trenches were also about 200 yards in front of Yildiz Tabia, the men on either side occupying these entrenchments were within easy rifle-range of each other, and a constant musketry fire went on if Turk or Russian showed his head above the earthworks.

The whole position of affairs at Kamarli now appeared to have come to a dead-lock. On my visiting the Head-quarter camp on the following day, I found that Redjib had telegraphed to Constantinople, relinquishing his command, and requesting that it might be handed over to Shakir Pacha.

I had a long and serious conversation with Shakir relative to the future. A still considerable force of Turkish troops, as has been mentioned,

remained available, by drawing heavily upon the garrisons of Widdin and Nisch, and uniting the scattered detachments which lay at Sofia and guarding the mountain passes. It seemed cruel that, under these circumstances, the beleaguered army of Osman Pacha, now probably reduced to almost the last ration of food, should remain without that aid which it yet appeared possible to afford.

I accordingly wrote out a paper for Shakir Pacha, pointing out the possibility of concentrating twenty-five fair battalions at Berkovtcha, and advancing from that point so as to open up communication with the five battalions of Turkish troops at Lotikova, and thus to threaten the mouth of the Orkhanié Pass. This must certainly lead to the retreat of Gourko from the advanced position which he held in front of the Kamarli works.

A junction of the proposed force with the Turkish army at Kamarli under Shakir might still give some hope of assistance to the brave troops, now in such dire extremity, who had so long gallantly held the invested position at Plevna.

Shakir Pacha thoroughly approved of the plan, and urged that I myself should take the command

of that force, if Suleiman Pacha would approve of the movement. The paper was sent on to Suleiman, but without result.

The cold on the Kamarli heights became more and more intense. A gale of wind had set in, which added immensely to its severity.

It is impossible to paint the sufferings of the men under these trying circumstances. We were in such close contact with the Russians in front of us that unceasing vigilance was absolutely necessary, yet it was with the greatest pain and difficulty that sentries could remain at their posts. Although we made a point of changing them as often as every quarter of an hour, as many as forty men per night along the whole line would be found frozen to death at their stations.

The troops, who, on account of the proximity of the Russians, were compelled night and day to lie in the entrenchments in front of Yildiz Tabia, suffered terribly.

We knew that the enemy must be experiencing similar, if not greater, losses. Deserters came in from their camp, who painted their hardships as so unendurable that they had sought shelter in the Turkish lines as their only hope of escape. But the Russians had an almost unlimited number



of men with which to fill up their diminished ranks, whilst the little army of Shakir Pacha melted quickly away under the terrible stress which was imposed upon it.

This intense cold had such a demoralizing effect, that it was only by constantly visiting the sentries both by night and by day that we could be certain that the outpost duties were correctly performed. In this painful and trying work Colonel Allix and Colonel Baker were unremitting in their exertions. The latter, to our distress, soon became so ill that it was necessary to remove him to the care of the English doctors at the village of Strigli.

The battalion of Prizrend had arrived—a splendid body of men, nearly 700 strong.

I may mention an anecdote connected with them, which proves the patience and endurance of the Turkish soldier. I had heard on their arrival that for eight days the men had received nothing but biscuit as rations. I inspected the battalion and visited their tents, inquiring from the men as to what deficiencies had occurred in the issue of their rations. The reply was, “Oh, thanks to God and the Padishah, we always have plenty to eat!” and it was only by pushing my inquiries further that I discovered that this

"plenty" had consisted for many days past of nothing but biscuit and water.

Before the departure of Mehemet Ali, and frequently since, I had expressed my anxious fears relative to the pathway over the mountain leading by Tchuriak to Potop. It was impossible to trust to the Circassians, who were supposed to guard the foot of the mountains on the Sofia plains; but these men had long ago reported that a party of Russian cavalry occupied the village of Tchuriak. I had begged Mehemet Ali to allow me to start some day with three battalions, and to clear the whole of this pass from Russian occupation. The distance from the Kamarli position by the only practicable roads was about twelve miles. But as the demand upon our strength, in order to hold the extended line of the Kamarli works, was so great, the Marshal feared to allow the absence of good battalions, which formed the only real reserve of the army, for even a period of two days.

Shakir Pacha took the same view. I repeatedly urged that the Russians would take advantage of this pathway to make a road over the mountains, which might, if completed, cut our communications with Sofia. Shakir, however, considered that we had not force enough at our command to detach

with any safety a considerable body of infantry for the purpose in question.

Circassian reports were so vague that it was impossible to attach credit to all their communications; but, as our commanders would not spare any infantry, I took the opportunity of sending four squadrons of regular cavalry, which had recently arrived, to the villages of Elesnika and Potop, which watched the mouth of the pass leading down over the Balkans by Tchuriak.

Captain Burnaby had arrived at our camp before the departure of Mehemet Ali, and had mentioned to the Marshal his idea of passing through the Russian lines, in order to enter Plevna, demanding his permission and advice.

Mehemet Ali took a very sensible view of the matter.

He said, "You are an English officer, full of energy and courage, and I should be the last man to dissuade you from any enterprise in which you might usefully show those qualities; but there are plans which are so hazardous that it becomes folly to attempt them. If any reasonable chance existed that you would be able to accomplish the idea which you have formed, I would give you

every assistance, and would say, 'Go, and welcome;' but the chances are more than a hundred to one against you, and I feel so strongly that you would be simply throwing away your life for no useful purpose, that I most urgently advise you to give up all thought of proceeding farther with your enterprise."

Captain Burnaby very wisely accepted this advice. Although acting in a purely civil capacity, as an agent of the Stafford-House Committee, he was anxious to see something of the active operations of the war.

We had not long before heard the unexpected intelligence of Raouf Pacha's resignation having been accepted, and his having been replaced in his command at Shipka by Ahmed Eyoub. Raouf had now been named Minister of War.

Captain Burnaby, dissatisfied with the deadlock which seemed to have fallen on the operations at Kamarli, was anxious to start for Shipka, where he imagined more active work might be progressing. Although I urged that, under the command of Ahmed Eyoub, extreme activity in that direction was not very probable, he made his arrangements to leave for that point within a few days, should affairs at Kamarli still remain in the quiescent state which the constant

fogs and severity of the weather seemed to render probable.

Colonel Maitland, of the Royal Artillery, and Captain Fife, Assistant Military Attaché, were also established at Strigli—a small village, lying on the plains, at about a mile distant from Araba Konak.

The cold was now so intense that one could not ride along the different positions without having one's face completely muffled up. Although half a gale of wind was constantly blowing, a frosty mist shrouded the enemy's positions, and prevented all military action.

The whole scene around Nos. 6 and 7 redoubts was desolate and dreary in the extreme. The slopes of the hills were covered with the dead carcasses of animals which had been killed during the recent heavy shell-fire which had been brought to bear upon this point by the Russian batteries. Troops of half-wild dogs, which had fed ravenously upon the remains of those animals, hung around the carcasses and disputed their possession.

The telegraph wires were encrusted with thick masses of the frozen mist. Every now and then a vulture would swoop down through the fog, and wait quietly until the time should arrive when, the dogs being completely gorged, he also might

claim a share of the frozen food that lay so plentifully around. The hill-side was dotted with the rough graves of the men who had formed the garrison of the redoubt, and who had been killed during the recent action.

## CHAPTER VI.

The fall of Plevna—Necessary movements in consequence—Concentration on Adrianople—Weakness of the Balkan line—Proposed retreat—Advance of Suleiman—Arrival of new battalions—Camp exposed—A voluntary truce—Shakir Bey—Dr. Gill—Trying duties—Danger looms towards Tchuriak—Watch but cannot guard the pass—Russian preparations—Suleiman at Sofia—A diminished army—Russians and Roumanians from Plevna.

I USUALLY rode up to the Head-quarter camp every afternoon, but one morning I received a hurried note in French, from Shakir Pacha, to the following effect :—

“News has just reached us that Plevna has fallen. Osman Pacha and all the garrison are prisoners. Be good enough to mention this to no one, as it is important to maintain as much as possible the *morale* of the troops.”

That afternoon there was evidently a considerable parade in the Russian lines, and loud cheers were reported to have been given by the enemy, and to have been heard by the garrison at Yildiz

Tabia. Still the fall of Plevna remained a profound secret. It was not until two days afterwards that Colonel Maitland received a despatch from the British Embassy at Constantinople, giving him an inkling of the important news. It was soon afterwards generally confirmed, and spread rapidly through the camp.

On hearing of the fall of Plevna I rode up to Shakir Pacha's camp and had a long and serious conversation with him relative to the movements which would be necessary in consequence of this event.

We were perfectly agreed that nothing remained but to withdraw the whole of the Turkish troops that lay at Kamarli, Widdin, and the Servian frontier, and to form a large concentration of the Ottoman army around Adrianople before the immense force which the Russians would have available should be able to commence an offensive movement.

As has been previously remarked, the Balkan range gave a very weak line of defence. The inequality between the two armies acting in Northern Turkey would now be so great that it was impossible to expect that the Turkish forces could any longer dream of maintaining the Balkans as their line of operations. To add to



the difficulties which seemed to be accumulating over Turkey, the news shortly afterwards arrived that Servia had declared war, and that a considerable army was assembled on the frontier, and ready to commence a forward movement upon Sofia. This movement would completely turn the Turkish position extending from Widdin by Berkovtcha and Lotikova to Kamarli.

So evident was it that the whole plan of campaign must be immediately changed if the Turkish forces were to be saved from sharing the fate of the garrison of Plevna, that I drew up a paper proposing an immediate retreat of the whole western Turkish armies upon Adrianople. Those troops which lay too much to the west were to fall back by Metrovitza upon Salonica, and to be conveyed thence for the fortification and garrisoning of the partially prepared lines of Tchekmedje-Derkos. They would thus effectually cover the capital.

This paper Shakir Pacha forwarded to Suleiman with a strong recommendation that it should be immediately adopted, but we were surprised to learn that Suleiman had now withdrawn a considerable part of the Lom army to Constantinople. This force was moving *viâ* Bazardjik and Ichtiman upon Sofia, and he still had the wild

idea of maintaining the whole of the Balkan line, and at the same time resisting the certain attack of the Servian army upon the position to the west of Sofia.

We heard that some of the battalions from the Lom had actually reached Bazardjik, and that four had already advanced into the Ichtiman Pass. Suleiman shortly afterwards himself telegraphed to us from Sofia, stating that his troops were rapidly arriving, and that his head-quarters would be at Sofia until further orders.

The weather had now completely changed, and although bitterly cold it was clear and fine.

During the fog a great alteration had taken place in our position in the wood. The cold weather had created a large consumption of fuel on the part of the troops. The soldiers climbed up into the trees and lopped off all the branches. The Russians on their side had pursued the same course. The consequence was that I found that my tent and little Head-quarter camp, which had hitherto been so completely sheltered, were now entirely opened out to the enemy's view, and this within 700 yards of the Russian sentries and a battery which we could see had been constructed on the crest of the wooded height. But the fire of the Russian batteries which had been so

incessant soon after our arrival at Kamarli, had now completely ceased. The Russians had no object to gain by this desultory cannonade, and were evidently waiting until the arrival of the reinforcements from Plevna should enable them to commence offensive operations on a grand and effective scale.

Consequently the two armies stood looking at each other in this close proximity, almost without a shot being exchanged. The respective sentries in the wood now only stood twenty yards from each other.

A truce to offensive operations appeared to reign right along the line. It was quite evident to me that the moment that this peaceful state of things came to an end I should have to shift my Head-quarter camp, but I was anxious not to do so until it was absolutely necessary. By remaining where we were we might instil confidence into the minds of the men.

Shakir Bey, a most intelligent officer of the Turkish Staff, who had formerly been military attaché at Paris and afterwards held the command of the five Turkish battalions stationed at Lotikova, had joined me as Chief of the Staff.

The sanitary arrangements of the Turkish camp demanded much increased attention. My

thoughts had immediately turned to the gallant English doctor whom I had so often noticed busily and cheerfully engaged in attending to the wounded in the entrenchments which lay in the wood to the left of our line. I sought him out, and found that he was a Dr. Gill, who, having left a considerable practice in Shropshire, had come out to the scene of war, and been for some time actively engaged in the humane duties of his office.

Lady Strangford at Sofia, hearing that I was endeavouring to bring some order into the medical arrangements of my division, lent me every assistance in her power, and forwarded a supply of medical and other necessities, which proved invaluable.

I was enabled to attach two other English doctors, Heath and Crook, to Dr. Gill, and he, possessing an excellent head for method and order, soon brought our medical arrangements into thorough working condition. The way in which these officers performed their duties under the trying circumstances which surrounded us was perfectly admirable, and they soon gained an immense influence over the men of the Turkish battalions.

We had noticed latterly that the Russians were extending their right very considerably towards

the high wooded peak of the Balkans, which lay in the direction of the pathway which led from Orkhanié to Tchuriak. Upon this point they were throwing up very considerable entrenchments, and it all confirmed me more than ever in the belief that a serious movement was projected in the direction of Tchuriak. Again and again I urged Shakir Pacha to risk the temporary absence of a few battalions, and to let me move away with my Bosnian and Albanian regiment in order to clear Tchuriak of the Russians and to secure this pass.

Fresh reports had come in from the cavalry squadron at Elesnika, stating that, in a recent reconnaissance towards Tchuriak, they had been fired upon by infantry as well as by cavalry. Shakir Pacha was still averse to my absenting myself, but eventually agreed to my proposition that I should go personally to Elesnika and make a cavalry reconnaissance of Tchuriak, on my promising to return on the same evening. I had persuaded him also to allow me to send one of the weak Mustafiz battalions to the little village of Potop, which watched the mouth of the Tchuriak Pass and the path which led through the Balkans towards the Sofia road.

A force of three Turkish battalions had been detached from our left to a point about a mile and

a half distant, in order to watch the newly created Russian entrenchments. These were placed under the command of a young lieutenant-colonel of the name of Ahmet Bey. The Russians occasionally threw a few shells from these entrenchments into the left of our position. These shells did no damage; but by what road had the guns been placed in the batteries? We could trace no way which was practicable for cannon which led from the Orkhanié *chaussée* to this high point of the Balkans. It seemed certain to me that the Russians had so enlarged the little mountain pathway which led from near Orkhanié to Tchuriak, that they had already been able to bring up their guns by this road and to place them in the newly constructed batteries. If so, the descent of the pass would be a comparatively easy task, and on the arrival of very large reinforcements, which we felt certain were on their road from Plevna, it was quite evident that the main body of the Russian army would cross the mountains by the Tchuriak road. They would by this means sever the communications of the Kamarli force with Sofia and the troops which lay more to the north-west, and thus form a junction with the Servian army, which was advancing from that direction.

The news which we received from Suleiman at

Sofia was vague in the extreme. We were led to believe that so large a portion of the Lom army had been transferred *via* Constantinople towards Bazardjik and Sofia, that a reasonable possibility of resistance still remained. We did not in any way share these views.

Shakir Pacha had written to Suleiman giving him a correct idea of the then existing position of affairs at Kamarli. The force of 20,000 men which had existed when Mehemet Ali gave up his command, had now dwindled down to a little less than 13,000. We knew that we had three Russian divisions immediately in front, two of which were of the Guard; and, notwithstanding their losses, these three divisions could not be reckoned at much less than 30,000 men.

By the fall of Plevna something like 120,000 Russian and Roumanian troops would become available for offensive action, and it was impossible for the wildest military imagination to conceive that the thin, scattered Turkish line could long offer any effective resistance to the rapid accumulation of force which would soon be brought to bear against it.

## CHAPTER VII.

Yildiz Tabia—Reconnaissance of Tchuriak—Potop—Vague reports—Arab cavalry—Cossack vedette—The Russians on the alert—A skirmish—A new road—Daily patrols—Russians south of the Balkans—A Circassian village—Want of guides—Appeal to Suleiman—Reconnoitre the left—Ominous movements—The coming storm—Christmas on the Balkans—Frozen to death—Circassian bad faith—A diminished army—Warning from Lotikova—Watch and ward.

THE position of the Russians in the batteries and entrenchments which they had thrown up on the heights above Etropol still remained the same. With great difficulty we had dragged up four guns to the Yildiz Tabia. Two of these had been dismounted by the fire of the Russian battery which lay so immediately below. The Russians were making no further attempt to advance, and were evidently waiting till the time came for energetic offensive action.

It seemed to me that on the high peak which stood at the extreme Russian right, where the new



battery had been thrown up, more and more troops accumulated daily.

Shakir Pacha at length consented to my starting, on the morning of the 24th, to make the long-contemplated reconnaissance in the direction of Tchuriak. Taking with me a squadron, I pushed down through Tashkessen, and followed the Sofia road for about five miles beyond that village. I then turned sharply to the right over the plains in the direction of the Balkans till I reached the village of Elesnika.

I could see the four squadrons of Arab cavalry that watched the pass, drawn up on the lower slopes of the mountain, and an officer who had just come down from the hill informed me that the enemy had that morning made a reconnaissance from the village of Tchuriak. I directed the Arab cavalry to move forward to some heights which lay on the right of Potop, whilst, with the squadron which had accompanied me, I followed the regular pathway leading to that village.

I was surprised to find that the position of this village as marked on the Austrian map gave no idea as to its actual locality.

From Elesnika to Potop the road wound through a narrow valley, and on my arrival at the latter village I found the colaghassy who commanded

the little Mustafiz battalion which had been sent to occupy this position. He informed me that the road through the valley continued for some distance before ascending the Balkan range, and that Tchuriak itself lay, not, as was believed at head-quarters, near the top of the mountains, but actually only about two miles and a half distant at the foot of the Balkan chain on the side of the Sofia plains.

The reports which I received from the commander of the Arab cavalry relative to his previous reconnaissances were so vague and contradictory that I determined to push close up to the village of Tchuriak itself, and to compel the Russians to develop the force which was now known to hold that village.

About a mile to the right of the road between Potop and Tchuriak, a hilly spur jotted out toward the Balkans, and commanded the road (A, Map V.). I ordered two companies of infantry to push forward and occupy this spur, whilst the Arab cavalry were to move away to the right and to descend by a mountain pathway which led down towards the village of Tchuriak.

From the hilly spur which was now occupied by the infantry, the village was plainly visible lying in a valley at the foot of the mountains.

We could trace the roadway from the Balkans which led from the direction of Orkhanié. About half a mile on the Potop side of Tchuriak the road passed by a small mill, and near this mill stood a Cossack vedette, whilst some horses which were tethered in the rear seemed to show that a supporting picquet was at hand.

I had brought excellent glasses with me, and could perfectly detect every Russian movement. A few Russian soldiers were loitering about in front of the village, but as yet there were no indications of any considerable force. I had sent Colonel Allix forward with the cavalry, with instructions to push towards the village, and by opening a desultory fire, and skirmishing about on the neighbouring mountain slopes, to endeavour to develop the Russian force which held the village. If, on his advance, he found the position occupied by the enemy's infantry, he was not to attempt to advance, but by menacing movements was to endeavour to induce them to strengthen their posts.

The Russians were evidently now aware that a demonstration was contemplated. Some Cossacks turned out from behind the mill, and, mounting their horses, moved forward to support their vedettes that stood upon the road. At the same

time an infantry post of about a dozen men fell in close to the mill.

A whole squadron of Cossacks appeared in the streets of the village, and advanced at a trot in the direction of the mill.

The Arab cavalry had descended the mountain path, and had come within long rifle range of the mill. A desultory skirmish was going on. After this had lasted for about a quarter of an hour there was an evident stir in the village. Two companies of Russian infantry formed up on the road in front of it, and one was shortly afterwards pushed on to the support of their comrades in the mill.

I could see with my glasses that there were still more troops left in the village, both cavalry and infantry, and shortly afterwards I could discern a squadron of Cossacks moving down by the mountain pathway which seemed to lead over some wooded heights in the direction of Daoud-keui and Tashkessen. There was thus evidently another road leading in that direction which was not marked upon the maps.

Having drawn out the enemy's forces as far as possible, our cavalry, with the loss of only a horse, fell slowly back in the direction of Potop. The Russians retained their position at the mill,

and made no further movement. From the observations which I had made I was convinced that the village was held by a battalion of infantry and a regiment of Cossack cavalry. The Cossack cavalry were evidently in the habit of patrolling in the direction of the Sofia plains until they fell in with superior bodies of our own cavalry which were watching the mountains. I found that the Mustafiz battalion at Potop had only 120 men available for duty, but I ordered the officer to throw up some entrenchments upon the advanced spur which we had occupied during the reconnaissance, whilst I directed the commander of the Arab squadron to patrol daily in the direction of Tchuriak, and to report if there was any appearance of further reinforcements descending the Balkans to the aid of the troops which held the village.

As I had promised Shakir Pacha to be back at my post at Kamarli that night, we returned by another pathway which led past the small village of Tcherkesskeui in the direction of Tashkessen.

The information which I had gained appeared to me to be most important, and it was evident that a small Russian infantry and cavalry force was thoroughly established south of the Balkan chain. We had already seen guns on the moun-

tain crest near the new Russian battery. It was, therefore, plain that a road had been constructed from the mouth of the Orkhanié Pass to the summit of the chain, and the descent to Tchuriak from that point could not be difficult.

It was quite plain that we had no sufficient force at Kamarli to block this roadway in such a manner as to resist the Russian reinforcements which we now daily expected to arrive from Plevna.

I found that most of the villages which lay south of the Balkan range were purely Bulgarian; but in Tcherkesskeui there were a few Circassians who belonged to this part of the country, and I endeavoured by bribes and every means in my power, to induce some of them to come back with me to the camp, in order to serve as guides. The Turkish army was never properly provided with guides, and in the intricate country in which we were acting, this was a point of considerable importance. By dint of pecuniary influences I got two Circassians to promise to come up to my camp on the following day.

It was dark before I reached the village of Tashkessen, and on my arrival at Kamarli I lost no time in communicating the result of my reconnaissance to Shakir Pasha. He pointed out the utter impossibility of his so weakening the Kamarli

force as to be able to detach a sufficient number of battalions to drive out the Russians and guard the position at Tchuriak. I strongly urged upon him the critical state of the situation and he made a fresh appeal to Suleiman as to the necessity of detaching battalions from Sofia for the purpose of watching the Tchuriak Pass. He also urged the danger of leaving it, as at present, merely watched by a small detachment of Turkish infantry and cavalry. To this Suleiman replied that he had no troops available for the purpose, and that if Shakir Pacha wished to carry out this movement, he must effect it with the resources which remained at his command.

On the following morning (Christmas Day) Shakir Pacha, Redjib Pacha, and myself, rode to our extreme left, the position occupied by the regiment under Ahmet Bey, in order to make a close examination of the increasing Russian camp in the vicinity of their new battery. We could see that a large force of artillery was now assembled in the wood near the battery, and the camp itself had very much increased. On the road leading down from the mountains towards Tchuriak there was considerable movement going on, far more than would be occasioned by the occupation of that village by only a battalion of infantry and a regi-

ment of Cossacks. I could detect with my glass, staff, or general officers, who were both ascending and descending the mountain road.

We came to the conclusion that directly the reinforcements from Plevna arrived a storm would burst upon us in the direction of Tchuriak, and so long a time had elapsed since the fall of Plevna, that the arrival of these reinforcements could not be far distant.

It being Christmas Day, I had arranged to dine at the village of Strigli with Captain Burnaby and a small party of Englishmen whom he had collected for the festive meal.

Radford, under considerable difficulties, had concocted a plum pudding, and the inevitable turkey had been sought for and found in Sofia.

I rode back after dinner to my camp on the mountains. Whilst ascending the pass, we had a singular instance of how easily life might be lost in the desperately cold weather which had been prevalent since our arrival. About half way up the pass we came across a man who appeared to be sleeping by the side of the road. Aware of the danger that he ran, with the aid of my servant Reilly and a Turkish orderly, we tried to wake him up, but found that all his senses were already so benumbed with cold that he was perfectly help-



less and insensible. As our efforts to get him on to a horse proved unavailing, we wrapped him up in a great coat, and the orderly remained behind with orders to keep him as much as possible in movement, whilst I sent down a party from the guard above to bring him up to the camp; but the man died shortly after his arrival.

On the 26th the Circassian guides, as usual with Circassian promises, had failed to put in an appearance.

I rode up to the Head-quarter camp to again urge Shakir Pacha to endeavour to impress upon Suleiman the absolute necessity of taking some steps with regard to the Tchuriak Pass. Shakir Pacha showed me that by the returns which had lately come in, the force under his command was now reduced to 12,500 men. We had at least 30,000 picked Russian troops immediately in our front, and he had sent to Suleiman to point out the absolute impossibility of his still further weakening the Kamarli force, which, at present, barely sufficed to watch the whole of our extended line of entrenchments.

That afternoon some ominous intelligence arrived. A despatch from Lotikova, forwarded through Sofia, mentioned that three Russian divisions coming from the direction of Plevna had

been seen to enter the mouth of the Orkhanié Pass. The storm was evidently about to burst upon us.

As I had six squadrons of cavalry still lying in the plain near Acha Kamarli, I proposed to strengthen the force that was watching Tchuriak with these troops, in order that we might, at least, have certain intelligence when the enemy commenced the passage of the mountains in force, and that there might thus be a sufficient strength of this arm to hamper their advance. The officer commanding the cavalry was anxious, for some regimental reason, that I should delay their departure for a day, but the matter appeared to me to be so important that I gave him positive orders to march in the morning to occupy the village of Negoshevo and to keep a careful watch over the whole country which lay between Tashkessen and Tchuriak.

Early on the morning of the 27th these squadrons started for their destination.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Dark clouds—The Russian advance—Cavalry skirmish—Bad battalions—My Bosnians and Albanians—The gathering column—A slippery road—An advanced guard—Cowardly fugitives—Authentic intelligence—Repulse of the Cossacks—Omar Bey—News from Tashkessen—An important Khan—Icy slope—Russians and the Geneva Convention—Anxiety of the doctors—Russian camp-fires—Severed communications—Expected attack—Midnight arrangements—A ride in an ambulance—The snowy mountain-path—Necessity of immediate action—Telegraphic communication—A painful descent—On the verge of the precipice—A narrow escape.

In the afternoon I rode up to the Head-quarter camp.

I found Shakir Pacha in as great a state of excitement as his usually quiet temperament would permit.

The news had just come in that the Russians had crossed the Balkans in force at Tchuriak, and telegraphic communication with Suleiman at Sophia had already been cut. This proved that the Cossack cavalry at least had already reached

the main Sofia *chaussée*. If their infantry could only succeed in gaining the Tashkessen Pass before it was properly defended, the whole of our army was lost.

The situation had been long expected, but Suleiman's infatuation had nevertheless placed the whole Turkish army of the west in this dangerous position.

Whilst Shakir was explaining to me the reports which he had received, the sound of distant firing reached our ears. We moved up to the hill above the Head-quarter camp, from which a view of the Sofia plains could be obtained. There, sure enough, we could see bodies of Russian cavalry and infantry dotting all the slopes leading down from the Balkans. The cavalry which I had left to watch the pass, and the reinforcements sent out that morning were seriously engaged with them, but were, of course, unable to do more than hamper the advance of the large mixed force which was attacking.

The firing seemed to be approaching Tashkessen.

Shakir entreated me to go to that place, and to do my best to save it. He told me that he had already ordered six battalions to assemble at Araba Konak, and he begged me to move off with

them as soon as possible, and to try and save the army from its perilous position. I immediately inquired what battalions had been selected for what would evidently be a most arduous task. To my surprise I found that the staff had selected all the weakest and worst Mustafiz battalions in the army.

This is a common occurrence with the Turkish commanders. A general is told to send a brigade of say, seven battalions, to a certain, and perhaps, all-important point. Instead of sending a brigade as it stands, he will make one up from all his worst battalions. Many of the disasters of the war may be traced to this cause.

Shakir's staff had only followed the usual system. They must have known that unless Tashkessen could be saved, they, and the whole Kamarli army were lost; but the temptation of getting rid of bad troops was too great, and battalions had been selected that it was certain would break up and bolt the moment that any serious stress came upon them.

I pointed out to Shakir the folly of this arrangement, and declined to be responsible for any disaster that might accrue from it. Instead of these six, I offered to take my three Bosnian and Albanian reserve battalions, and guaranteed that

at least if the pass were not already lost, we would hold it to the last extremity.

Shakir coincided in my view, and begged me to make my own arrangements. He informed me that two mountain guns had already been ordered down to Araba Konak. There were, I knew, two guns belonging to a field battery not far from that spot, and I arranged that I should also take these with me. I sent a note down to Strigli, to warn Captain Burnaby and Captain Fife of the position of affairs, and the former determined to accompany my little column.

On returning to our camp the order was immediately given for the battalions of Prizrend, Uskubs, and Touzla, under Islan Bey, to assemble at once at Araba Konak. It had been determined to leave the tents all standing, in order to deceive the Russians as to this point of the line having been so weakened. It was quite dark before the battalions moved off, unseen by the Russian sentinels on the hill.

Hastily making my own arrangements, I rode down with my staff, Shakir Bey, Colonel Allix, and Dr. Gill to the plains below. As we reached the open ground, near Araba Konak, a dark mass of men stood formed up, and Islan Bey reported

his force as ready to move. But I found that no counter-order had been sent from head-quarters to the Edirné battalion, and it had assembled with the others. As this battalion of Mustafiz had a very bad fighting reputation, I was not anxious to have it with me, and therefore gave instructions for it to remain behind. Two field guns, which lay near Araba Konak, and two mountain guns, had received orders to be in readiness, and they now moved off with the column.

The night was intensely cold, and very dark.

The road, which ran for about three miles over the plain, was a sheet of ice. Several times, where it was not level, the guns slipped off it bodily, and it required some time, and the assistance of infantry parties, in order to right them. I had sent on an advance-guard of infantry and cavalry, with orders to push rapidly forward to Tashkessen, and to report immediately the state of affairs.

We kept meeting on the road both officers and men connected with the administrative, or medical services, flying from that village. They brought the most alarming reports. The Russians, they declared, had occupied Tashkessen just before

dark, and they begged me not to go on. Rating them soundly for their cowardice, we pushed forward rapidly with the column. Even if their information were correct, it might be possible to gain the crest of the pass before daybreak, and to hold it afterwards. It was a case of life and death for the whole army as to whether that crest were lost.

We had not marched more than about three miles when we met Captain Thackeray, who had been staying with the English doctors at Tashkessen. He gave me the first authentic intelligence that I had received. It was most important and satisfactory.

The Russians had not occupied the village.

I had sent down to that point, a few days before, sixty men, all that remained of a little battalion of Mustafiz. It appeared that just before dark two squadrons of Cossacks had moved upon the village, but had been driven off by Major Mehemet, who commanded the small party of infantry. The doctors of the large Field Ambulance, established at Tashkessen, had remained at their posts, but there had been a panic amongst their followers.

Captain Thackeray's news was, however, in one way rather puzzling, for he stated that beyond



this small Turkish detachment of infantry, there were no troops at Tashkessen.

What had become of Omar Bey and his six squadrons of cavalry?

They had moved forward to Negoschevo that morning, and had evidently been engaged with the Russians, and should, of course, have fallen back on Tashkessen. Yet after the Cossacks had appeared before the village there were no tidings of his force.

I was always anxious about Omar Bey. An intelligent and well-meaning officer, he had acted as a kiatib, or clerk, nearly all his life, when, by one of those Turkish freaks which are not uncommon, he had, during the war, found himself suddenly placed in the command of a cavalry regiment. He had often bewailed to me his own incompetence.

He had evidently, on this occasion, been guilty of some folly. For, had any very serious mishap occurred to his force, some of his men at least would have found their way back to Tashkessen.

Soon afterwards a despatch from my advanced parties arrived, corroborating Captain Thackeray's intelligence, and stating that they were in the village, and that all was quiet.

On reaching the head of the pass with the

column, we came upon a large khan, or guard-house, which stood at this point. It was a considerable, strongly-built stone building, of two stories, with many windows, and well adapted for defence.

As besides the main road to Tashkessen, a branch country road struck off here to the right, in the direction of Daoudkoi, I left the Touzla battalion at this spot, as it was evidently very important.

The main road descending from the head of the pass to the village was so slippery that it was impossible to ride down it. My little grey horse "Punch," that I had bought at Sofia, was extremely sure-footed, and I seldom dismounted from him on account of bad ground; but it was now compulsory. Even on foot we could not keep on our legs, and the infantry were slipping and falling in numbers.

On reaching the village we were received with open arms by the English and other doctors assembled there. They could not, of course, leave their sick and wounded, and were waiting in a hopeless state, knowing that the Russians would return in force at daybreak, and that they and all their ambulance would fall into Muscovite hands. As the Russians usually read the Geneva

Convention just as it suited them, and had already made a prisoner of, and shamefully treated, Colonel Coope, of the Gendarmerie, who was working with an ambulance, and in no other capacity, the doctors at Tashkessen very naturally looked forward to their coming fate with no little anxiety.

But now, as the column of Turkish infantry came tramping down the hill, their spirits were cheered, and hopes of escape again rose high.

By dint of a general cross-examination I soon gathered a clear account of the state of affairs.

In coming over the crest of the pass I had seen the Russian camp-fires extending for miles on the lower hills north of the Sofia *chaussée*. I could not estimate the force they represented at less than 20,000 men. It was evident that their passage, near Tchuriak, so long foreseen, and reported to Suleiman, was a *fait accompli*.

Suleiman had no force at Sofia that could oppose them successfully, now that they had once passed. Our communication with him was severed. They had only to seize the Tashkessen Pass, and move into the plains below it, and the whole army of Shakir, on the heights of Kamarli, was cut off from its only line of retreat by Acha Kamarli. Nor was this the only disaster that

would happen. The loss of Shakir's army would throw open the Acha Kamarli road, which led by Petric to Tatar Bazardjik and Philippopolis, and a rapid march in that direction would probably cut off all the forces of Suleiman that were in advance, holding the Ichtiman Pass or retiring from Sofia.

It was evident that the Tashkessen Pass must be held to the last. But what was my position?

I had only three battalions. The hills through which the pass runs are not high, and it would be easy for the Russians to turn the flank of my little force, as they were evidently in such superior numbers. It seemed certain that they must recognize the situation, and that they would give no time for the retreat of Shakir, but would attack at daybreak.

I felt sure that if I wrote to head-quarters, explaining the situation, no action would be taken, and that it was only by a personal interview that I could hope to impress the gravity of the occasion, and arrange some possible means for the escape of Shakir's force from its perilous position. This force now only consisted of 12,000 men, all told. It had long been holding the Kamarli heights with 30,000 Russian troops in its front,

and now here was evidently the whole Russian army of Plevna, which was moving upon its rear, and cutting the only line of retreat.

It was midnight before I had completed all my arrangements at Tashkessen; but I felt so strongly the importance of the military situation, that I determined to see Shakir at once. The head-quarter camp lay eight miles away, 4000 feet up the mountain side. The night was very dark, and the wretched mountain path which led to Shakir's camp, would be a sheet of ice. I must be back at Tashkessen an hour before day-break, to be in readiness for the Russian attack. The prospect of the night journey was not cheering, yet, so urgent did I consider the importance of a personal interview, that I determined to accomplish it.

The doctors offered to send me in an ambulance as far as Araba Konak, where the mountain road commenced. So, whilst making my arrangements, I sent back a horse and some orderlies to that point. My staff would probably have a heavy day on the morrow, and it was useless to weary them unnecessarily, so I started alone, with two orderlies.

I had hoped to get a little sleep in the ambulance, but it bumped about to such an extent

on the hard and icy road, that all idea of repose was hopeless.

On reaching Araba Konak my horse was awaiting me, and, with one orderly, I commenced the ascent of the mountain. The little pathway used in the daytime by the pack-horses which supplied the troops on the right of the Kamarli position was so ill-defined that it proved difficult to follow in the darkness. The whole steep mountain-side was a mass of frozen snow and ice. Our horses slipped at every step, constantly sliding off the pathway, and rolling over with us. Battered and bruised, it seemed as if we should never reach the head-quarters, yet time was all important, and we pressed on.

At length, after a trying two hours' journey through the snow and darkness, the well-known head-quarter camp lay before us. Shakir and Redjib Pachas were occupying the same tent. I woke them up and briefly explained the situation, and the absolute necessity of immediate action, if the army were to be saved.

Shakir said that to all his urgent appeals for a retreat of the whole force upon Adrianople, Suleiman had only replied by an order to remain where he was, and that, therefore, he did not like to retreat, although he quite admitted that

nothing but a retreat could save the whole army from capture.

I pointed out to him that now all the circumstances had changed. He was cut off from communication with Suleiman, and, therefore, the responsibility of action rested with him. The loss of this army would imperil the safety of all the others, and it was his bounden duty to save it whilst time still remained, if, indeed, time did remain.

I urged the importance of reinforcing me at Tashkessen, with a few good battalions and a few more guns. It was little likely that the enemy would lose men uselessly by a front attack upon the Kamarli works, now that they were in rear of our whole position. The withdrawal of men and guns to aid me would lessen the difficulties of the subsequent retreat. In fact, Tashkessen was now of vital, Kamarli of only secondary importance.

He promised me that if no orders came from Suleiman on the subsequent day, he would agree to retreat, and also said that he would strengthen me in the morning.

I made arrangements for re-establishing telegraphic communications with head-quarters. The telegraph staff had bolted from Tashkessen the evening before, during the panic. Then, accom-

panied by my orderly, I commenced the descent of the mountain.

We found, that going down, it was impossible for the horses to stand, if mounted, so, constantly sliding and rolling over, we led them. Our descent was more rapid but still more painful than the ascent. It was with a feeling of intense relief that I at length saw Araba Konak lying before me after one of the most disagreeable rides that I have ever had in my life. The ambulance was waiting, and, jumping in, I hurried off, leaving the horse to follow with the orderlies.

Although the road was very slippery, we got on very well until we reached the head of the pass and began to descend. The ambulance had two horses; one in the shafts, and a man was riding the other as leader. This leader was found to make the descent more difficult, so he was taken off. The passage of so many troops had added to the slipperiness of the road. About half way down a precipice lay on the left of the *chaussée*.

We had just reached this point, when suddenly the shaft horse began to slide, and the man who was leading him immediately fell. The sensible beast, finding that he could not check the carriage, threw himself down, but the impetus that the ambulance had gained was so great that this did



not stop it, and with the fallen horse it slid down the hill, gradually nearing the precipice. It was in vain that I tried to get out behind, the whole rear of the ambulance was fastened up, and to get out in front of the carriage as it slid was impossible. At long intervals some large stones had been sunk into this side of the road. We were on the edge of the precipice, and in another yard must be over, when we reached one of these stones. The horse seemed to know his danger, for, throwing out his fore-feet, he managed to plant them against the stone, and although crushed by the weight of the descending carriage, just stopped it, when only three inches from the precipitous side of the road.

I was quickly on *terra firma*, and we had some difficulty in extricating the poor horse, who was not very seriously injured. On my arrival at Tashkessen, I found that it just wanted an hour to daybreak. My staff were up and waiting. Giving them strict orders that I was to be called in half an hour, I gave directions that the troops were to be placed under arms, and then slept soundly until they woke me up.

## CHAPTER IX.

A difficult situation—The Tashkessen position—Dawn of day—A doubtful reinforcement—The rocky hill—Cavalry posts—Advance of the Russian column—A ruse—Long shots—A day gained—Sick and wounded—Mountain guns—An awkward hill—Rocky defences—A Bulgarian village—Anxious watch—Lost cavalry—Distant musketry—Threatening Cossacks—Meat for the soldiers—A welcome reinforcement—A Russian battery—A good Albanian battalion—Close quarters.

THE situation was difficult.

Twice I had come along the Sofia road through Tashkessen, and I had a fair general idea of the position which lay in rear of the village. But I did not know it sufficiently well to be able to occupy it in the night, even if the troops could have found their way in such broken ground in the darkness. I had, therefore, merely occupied the village with the two battalions; throwing out advanced posts to the front and flanks, and placing the Touzla battalion on the Daoudkoi road by the Khan, as has been mentioned.

Still it was evident that the position, with a Russian attack imminent, must be occupied with the first gleam of daylight. The three squadrons of cavalry were in readiness to push forward directly day dawned. The grand old Prizrend battalion stood under arms in the open square in the centre of the village nearly six hundred strong. A splendid body of men. They knew full well the critical service on which they had come, but they looked as cool and determined as one could wish. With what satisfaction I now looked back to the way in which I had nursed them for the day of trial!

The bivouac fires lighted up the scene and added to its picturesque effect.

The Uskubs battalion was in advance and giving the outposts. The doctors and the ambulance staff stood around, anxiously looking for daybreak. The artillery were waiting ready to take up their positions directly they could be seen and indicated.

Gradually the camp fires seemed to pale, and then the outline of the rocky hill in rear of the village could be dimly traced.

Just then I found that a new but doubtful reinforcement had arrived. The Edirné battalion, though a useless body of men, had an excellent

commander. Getting no counter-orders during the night, he had pushed on, and now reported his arrival.

With the first gleam of day I was able to judge and decide upon the occupation of the position.

As has been already described, the main Sofia and Orkhanié *chaussée* runs through the plains south of the Balkans, for about twenty-two miles after leaving the former town. It crosses the Balkans at Kamarli; but about five miles before commencing that ascent it runs over a small chain of mountains, which juts out south from the Balkan range by a pass about 1000 feet high, then it descends into a triangular plain, each side of which is about three miles long.

The village of Tashkessen lies on the left of the main road immediately before ascending this smaller chain of hills. In rear of the village there stands, if you face Sofia, a rocky hill with three stony crests (B, C, D, Map V.), one on the right, one in the centre, and one on the left. From the rear of this rocky hill a neck or spur (E, Map V.) connects it with the chain quite close to the head of the pass.

Standing on the *chaussée* by the Khan, and facing Sofia (F, Map V.), the Daoudkoi road runs down a ravine to the right of this stony hill,

the main *chaussée* to the left. The crest of the chain in rear is marked by a rocky ridge with numerous small peaks (G, H, Map V.). The main road runs over this chain between two of these peaks.

This is a very strong position, but the stony hill stands so immediately in front of it, that no extended view of the plains below can be obtained from it. The stony hill (B, C, D) gave a good position for a small force. It commanded a splendid view of all the country in front, and the troops holding it could always retire to the main position (G, H) in case of necessity, by the connecting neck (E, Map V.) already described.

This is what the first dawn of daylight revealed to me, and I immediately decided to occupy the stony hill, and to fall back upon the main position if seriously attacked. Orders were given for the Touzla battalion to advance from the Khan along the neck, and to occupy the peak to the right. The Uskubs moved to the centre peak, and the Prizrend to the left. The Edirné were placed in reserve in rear of the centre. The two mountain guns were with the Touzla on the right; the two field guns on a little hill on the left near the *chaussée*, by which they could retire to the main position if necessary.

About a mile in front of the stony hill and upon the plain there stretched a little range of low hills (I, Map V.), an admirable position for cavalry posts, immediately covering the Tashkessen position. At dawn of day the cavalry dashed off to this ridge, and established their vedettes upon it in a quick and intelligent way which pleased me much. The infantry and guns had moved quietly and rapidly into their positions, and by the time daylight had thoroughly broken all was ready.

But the Russians were, as usual, not very early in their movements, and I had time to visit my whole line and thoroughly examine all the ground in front with my glasses and telescope, before any sign of an attack became apparent.

After the decision which Shakir Pacha had come to, it was of the greatest importance to gain time. If the attack could only be delayed, that delay might save the whole army.

Looking away to our right front, I could see all the hills (J, Map V.) dotted with Russian troops, where the watch-fires had been visible the night before. In the valley beyond Daoudkoi (K, Map V.), dark masses of the enemy could be seen. Small parties of Cossacks had been pushed to the front.

About an hour after daybreak the enemy began

to get under arms, and a movement commenced.

It was impossible to imagine a more beautiful scene of war. From the stony crest we looked down on a most extensive panorama. The whole country was covered with a white sheet of snow. On the distant hills the black masses of the enemy were gathering fast. Below us, on the little ridge, our cavalry vedettes stood quietly at their posts. In rear, and hidden from the enemy, the supporting squadrons were mounted and ready. Amongst the rocks on the crest the brave Albanian and Bosnian battalions lay calmly waiting. Every man's post had been defined.

The ground was too stony to be worked except on the left, where stood the Prizrend, and they were already busy with spade and pickaxe throwing up entrenchments. The artillerymen were at their guns, calculating the distance of the advanced Cossack parties that were hovering around.

Then from the black squares of the enemy that stood out so distinctly on the snowy background a long snake-like column began to pour down into the valley below (K).

I calculated that a Russian division of sixteen battalions lay immediately to our right front. The telescope told us that by the round flat caps of

the men it was a division of the Russian Guard. The distance was evidently greater than it looked, for some time elapsed ere the head of the column emerged from the defile and came on along the road leading towards Daoudkoi.

It seemed just possible that if the Russians thought that the Tashkessen position were strongly occupied, they might be disinclined to attack, and a day might be gained whilst they were concentrating a stronger force. I therefore sent word to the field guns to open fire on the head of the column at extreme range, and I showed the troops as much as possible in their positions.

This ruse had the desired effect. As the first shell fell near, the whole column halted. Some minutes passed in apparent hesitation, and our fire continued. I had ordered the mountain guns also to open fire from our right on the Cossack parties that had now arrived near Daoudkoi. Then the head of the long Russian column changed its direction to the right, and began to ascend a range of hills which lay opposite to us at a distance of about 6000 yards (J, Map V.) and north of the Sofia *chaussée*. Here they took up their positions, and, about an hour later, they began to entrench themselves. This did not look like attacking.



Two regiments of cavalry that had moved forward with the Russian column now made for the Sofia road, but, to my surprise, did not cross that road, but took the direction of Sofia.

I could trace no sign of Russian cavalry south of the Sofia road, thus the cross-country path which led by the village of Kokantia towards Ichtiman was still open. I therefore determined immediately to get away all the sick and wounded that could be moved by this route whilst it was still open. It was evident that a very serious action must take place at Tashkessen ere long, and the position of the poor wounded men in the village just between the contending armies would be precarious. Most of the doctors would leave with them, but a few still remained with those that could not bear the journey.

Towards mid-day the long train of arabas started. I covered their movement by a squadron of cavalry, and we had the satisfaction of seeing them many miles on their road quite undisturbed, and they reached their destination in safety.

It was found quite impossible to strengthen the right of our position by field-works on account of the rocky nature of the soil, but the men built up walls of the loose stones, which would give some

cover from bullets, although they would be rather dangerous under artillery fire.

We had found that our little mountain guns had no effective range beyond Daoudkoi, and I was anxious to try the feasibility of getting up a field gun. The hill was very steep and covered with big boulders of stones and deep in snow, but the gunners thought they could do it, and, with the aid of two companies of infantry, they succeeded.

I was most anxious about the village of Daoudkoi until this was accomplished, for it would give an excellent position for the enemy to concentrate in at night previous to an attack. Moreover, to our right there was an awkward hill (L, Map V.) that would completely enfilade our advanced position if once in the possession of the enemy, but we had not force enough to occupy it. Even as it was, my line was very extended, and I had made up my mind to retire to the main position (G, H) if seriously attacked.

But the greatest cause for anxiety lay south of the Sofia road. Just in rear of the village of Kokantia there lay a range of heights (M, Map V.) which the Russians should immediately have occupied. This they had as yet failed to do. From Kokantia a road ran to Makatch, and from there through a mountain gorge to Acha Kamarli.

This road was marked on the map, and as the occupation of Acha Kamarli would cut our only line of retreat, it seemed certain that this would be the objective of the Russian movement. Moreover, Kokantia was a Bulgarian village, and once there, they would be able to get any local information from the villagers.

I sent a despatch to Shakir Pacha, pointing out the urgency of this danger, and again urging him to a quick decision.

We never left the hill (B, C, D), from whence we could detect the slightest movement on the part of the enemy, but the day wore on and all seemed quiet. The Russians were still busy entrenching, but we could see fresh battalions continually pouring down from the heights above Tchuriak.

There was still no news of Omar Bey and his cavalry, but a Circassian who had been with him in the skirmish of the day before declared that he had retired south of the Sofia road in the direction of Ichtiman. This was extreme folly. I sent a very small cavalry reconnaissance in that direction with orders, if they could find him, to move at once to Tashkessen. If not, they would be able to discover whether the Russians had penetrated in that direction.

Late in the afternoon we could clearly detect a fairly sustained musketry fire in the direction of Sofia, but there was no sound of guns.

What could it be? Had Suleiman a larger force than we expected, and was he trying to open up his communications with us? It died away, however, shortly, and came no nearer, from which we judged that the attempt, whatever it might be, had proved unsuccessful.

As the Cossacks still kept moving in small parties into Daoudkoi, I sent down a company of infantry to drive them out. The position was too far distant to keep as a post, but the movement had the desired effect, for they had not seen the infantry when they retired again, and now would not come within rifle-shot of the houses. The village was deserted, but some cattle had been left roaming about the streets. These I distributed amongst the men, so they had a plentiful supply of meat. They had no tents, and would have to bivouac in the snow, and a supply of animal food would be good for them.

We could make out that the Russians had placed a battery in position on the heights opposite (J). Late in the afternoon we could see the Russian cavalry returning up the Sofia *chaussée*, but they made no movement south of the Sofia

road. This was most extraordinary and unaccountable neglect on their part.

That evening two battalions and three field guns came to me as a reinforcement. One was the El Bassan redifs, a weak but good Albanian battalion; the other the Eski Cheir, a miserable little Mustafiz battalion that could not be trusted, and which only numbered about 220 effectives. I placed the El Bassan in the village, making them loop-hole all the outer walls of the houses. The Eski Cheir I placed on a little hill south of the Sofia road (M, Map V.) and commanding it. The guns joined the one gun which now remained on our left.

My staff had found me a small house in the village close to our artillery. There was only one small room which we could occupy, and, with Shakir Bey, Colonel Allix, Captain Burnaby, and myself, it was close packing. Reilly, Radford, and the other servants lay in the entrance.

## CHAPTER X.

Heavy snow-storms—An aged Mahomedan—A hopeless position—Colonel Baker—Dangerous delay—Circassian cavalry—A false oath—A sinking ship—The Arab horsemen—Russian errors—Crossing the Balkans—Threatened attack—Advance of the Russian cavalry—A hasty retreat—Wonderful stupidity—Danger at last—Bulgarian treachery—Preparations for retreat—Overwhelming forces—The Servian advance—A dangerous staff-officer—A night reconnoissance—An important report—A warning for Shakir.

At night a heavy snow-storm commenced, and in the morning it continued violently. It was impossible to see three hundred yards to the front, and it was very unlikely that the Russians would attack in such weather; but we kept a vigilant look-out. I made sure, however, that they would seize the opportunity for occupying the hills south of the Sofia road.

I searched everywhere for some villagers who knew all the country roads, but could only find one aged Mahomedan. He was not very clear in

his descriptions, but by dint of cross-examination I succeeded in getting some information from him.

Captain Fife, British Assistant Military Attaché, and Mr. Francis, the correspondent of the *Times*, had paid us a visit the day before. The latter remained, but the former considered the general position of the Kamarli and Tashkessen forces so hopeless that, as he had orders from the Government to avoid being surrounded, he determined to retire to Tatar Bazardjik by Petric whilst the road was still open.

We were very anxious about Colonel Baker, and wrote urging that he should immediately move to the rear by the same road. The doctors at Strigli said that they were preparing an ambulance for him, as he was not able to ride, and, in fact, not really fit to be moved. I had left Dr. Crook with the troops at Kamarli. Dr. Gill and Dr. Heath had accompanied the Tashkessen force.

The working of the military telegraph had been re-established, and I could now telegraph directly to head-quarters, which was a great advantage. I again sent a despatch, urging the certainty that the Russians would cross the Sofia road, occupy the hills to the south, and make for Acha Kamarli whilst they held me in front by attacking with a

superior force; but the day crept on, and no decision had been arrived at.

It snowed incessantly, and it seemed probable that the Russians would be delayed in passing the Balkans. Finding me in a strong position, and doubtless misjudging the force at my command, they had evidently determined not to attack until they could do so in overwhelming force. This snow would probably hinder their arrangements, and give Shakir another chance of escaping with his army. Would he take advantage of it, or would Turkish love of delay induce him to hang on until it was too late?

Shakir telegraphed that he had sent me another battalion, the Tchenguéri. It was an indifferent one, and I placed it overlooking the Daoudkoi road, on the right, and close to the main position.

On my arrival at Tashkessen three hundred Circassians were supposed to be quartered at the village of Makatch, under the command of a chief bearing the rank of colonel. I had sent for them on the first day, as we much wanted cavalry in order to reconnoitre to the south. But with the exception of about a dozen that came with their chief, these men were not forthcoming. I had sent again for the chief, and he appeared on this day. My small cavalry reconnaissance sent to find Omar



Bey, had returned. They had not seen him, but had heard that he had fallen back with his six squadrons to the Sofia Ichtiman road.

The Circassian colonel now made his appearance, and I explained to him that I wanted a reconnaissance made to the south, in order to open up communications with Omar Bey, and at the same time to make sure that the Russians were not working round by the mountain paths which lay between Tashkessen and Ichtiman, and which, according to my information, although very difficult, led to Petric. The Circassian chief swore absolute devotion, and declared that he would lose his head if he did not accomplish his mission. There was a look about the man that I did not like, and I said as he left me, "That man will never return." He knew we were in a critical position, and he only wanted to escape. We never saw him or his men again.

The Circassians were not to be trusted; directly difficulties arose they were away to the rear immediately. That they would make admirable cavalry if well disciplined, there can be no doubt, but as at present constituted they were worse than useless. There had been 3000 of these cavalry attached to Mehemet Ali's army originally,

and now they had all melted away and none were left.

My three little squadrons of Arab regular cavalry had very hard work, for, as the enemy's main force was only 6000 yards distant, constant vigilance was required, and the whole of our cavalry were perpetually at work. They did their duties in a very satisfactory manner, and I felt quite assured that if the Russians did advance even in the night, I should have timely notice.

Late in the evening the snow-storm subsided, and I was at my post on the hill before daybreak, anxiously waiting to see what changes in the enemy's position had been carried out during the storm. I made certain that I should find the height above Kokantia south of the Sofia road occupied. But as daylight dawned these fears were dissipated. There was no change, and all seemed quiet in the Russian lines. We could still see fresh battalions pouring down over the Balkans, but soon lost sight of them behind the distant hills.

The division of the Guard lay immediately in front of us in exactly the same position as before. But about two hours after daybreak an ominous movement commenced. One brigade on their left got under arms, and first moving up towards

the Balkans, began to descend the ravine which led towards Daoudkoi. But only one regiment reappeared at the mouth of the defile. These four battalions at first took a formation of attack, and it appeared as if they intended to move along the lower spur of the Balkans to the left of Daoudkoi, and so to try and turn our right. But just before they came within range they halted, and then out came the inevitable picks and shovels, and they began entrenching. Then I felt that we should probably have another day's delay before being attacked.

At the commencement of the war the Russians rarely entrenched themselves except in actual positions that it was intended to defend, but they had suffered so much from the admirable Turkish system of always entrenching the ground that they halt on, that they were at the latter part of the war quite as careful on this point as the Turks.

But of what use were the three days' delay which we had thus so unexpectedly gained, unless Shakir would take advantage of it to retreat? Again, I sent a despatch pointing out the number of battalions that we had seen constantly passing the Balkans, and urging immediate action.

At about eleven o'clock a most singular incident occurred.

A very strong column of Russian cavalry, comprising several regiments, was seen moving in column up the Sofia road. They had a small line of cavalry skirmishers thrown out about 200 yards in front of the column. To our surprise, instead of halting when they reached the right flank of their infantry, they still pushed forward. They came quietly marching on, as if they thought that they would be allowed to move straight into Tashkessen.

I sent word to the four guns that commanded the *chaussée*, not to open fire until the head of the column arrived within 1800 yards, and then to fire rapidly down the road. Our little cavalry force mounted, and unperceived, on account of the low ridge, moved close up to our vedettes. I never saw anything more grossly stupid than the action of the Russian cavalry. They came blindly on, and their skirmishers were within 300 yards of the vedettes, and exchanging shots, when suddenly our four guns opened right down the road by which the dense mass was advancing.

The effect was instantaneous. The whole forepart of the long Russian column first halted, and then, after a moment's hesitation, broke up, and

galloped off to the rear *en débandade*. The two little Arab squadrons that were behind the hill cheered vigorously and dashed forward in pursuit. It was a very pretty sight, and, with a bright sun and the clear white glistening snow as a background, from our height above the movements of every man were clearly visible.

It immensely amused the infantry around us on the hill. To see the dense masses of their hated enemy flying in disorder before a handful of our own cavalry, raised their spirits and gave them confidence in themselves.

In the far distance we could see considerable bodies of Russian cavalry now moving south of the Sofia *chaussée*, in the direction of the road leading from Sofia to Ichtiman, but as yet no movement had been made towards the Kokantia heights. It was wonderful stupidity, but it could not last for ever, and early in the afternoon a regiment that had evidently been reconnoitring in the direction of Ichtiman, suddenly on its way back appeared on the hill immediately above Kokantia. An advanced party rode down into the village. Then a superior officer and two squadrons pushed forward. With my telescope I could detect every movement. I saw the Bulgarian villagers turn out to meet the Russian officer,

and bowing down and prostrating themselves before him. Then I could see that he was making inquiries and pointing in the direction of Makatch, and that dangerous and all-important road which led to Acha Kamarli. The villagers were pointing in the same direction, and evidently giving all the information that would be required.

If this cavalry officer were moderately intelligent, he would push on a party to explore this road through the hills.

I sent word to four companies of the Prizrend to move down from the heights and to advance over the plain upon Kokantia.

Just as I suspected, two squadrons of Russian cavalry now began to push forward towards Makatch, but on seeing the advance of the Prizrend, they fell hastily back and the whole regiment, leaving Kokantia, retired towards the main Russian position. But the mischief was done, and it seemed impossible that a Russian movement in that direction could much longer be delayed. I again sent a report to Shakir.

Later in the afternoon Omar Bey, a staff officer from head-quarters, came down to me with a message from Shakir. He had determined at last to retreat with the whole force by Petric on Otlukoi, and he sent to ask my opinion as to

whether the movement could be carried out on that night.

This evidently depended upon whether any previous preparations had been made. The withdrawal of the guns from the icy heights of Yeldiz and the upper batteries would be a work of considerable time, and an immense mass of military stores had to be removed, that were absolutely necessary for the army.

I telegraphed to ask if any preparations had already been made, and the answer came in the negative. I then sent a report urging that it would be fatal to the army if it were caught on the retreat encumbered with a mass of baggage and stores, and with the mountain road, by which alone the retreat could be made, blocked by arabas. This is what would inevitably happen. I therefore urged that all stores and every gun that could be spared, should be got away that night, and that all the guns should be withdrawn from the upper heights. Then the army would remain the next day quite unencumbered, and in fighting order, and might, without so much danger, be withdrawn on the following night.

This retreat from Kamarli was by no means an easy operation. It must be remembered that the Turkish and Russian sentries in the wood on

the left were actually within twenty yards of each other, whilst the shelter trenches near Yeldiz were only about 400 yards apart. To withdraw the army encumbered by baggage horses from this close contact would be impossible, and, even unencumbered, would require the most delicate and careful arrangement.

Shakir agreed to my proposal, the stores, &c., were to be sent away that night, and it was determined that on the following night, directly it became dark, the retreat should be commenced. Mehemet's Brigade was to retire first, and then to be formed up on the heights of Acha Kamarli, in order to cover the passage of the main force through the village and defile beyond. I was to fall back simultaneously from Tashkessen and to join the main column at Acha Kamarli.

I again strongly impressed on Omar Bey the necessity of at once guarding the defile which led from Makatch to Acha Kamarli. I pointed out that the constant passage of battalions over the Balkans, which we had remarked almost without intermission, proved that a force, which I estimated at over 50,000 men, had already passed the mountain chain. Although there had been an inexplicable delay in their attacking my small force, it seemed certain that this must be their first



important objective combined with a turning movement by Makatch and Acha Kamarli, that would cut our only existing line of retreat. The firing which we had heard in the direction of Sofia proved that Suleiman had no force at his command that could open up communication with us even on the first day after the Russian passage of the mountains; how impossible it was to believe that he could do so now. Moreover, we knew that 30,000 Servian troops were ready to march down and take Sofia in reverse. That town lay on a plain under the mountains, and was not fortified. It seemed therefore certain that the troops at Sofia, and all that Suleiman could get away from the west, would be now retiring either by Samakof upon Bazardjik, or moving south in the direction of Salonica, roads which still remained open to them.

I requested Omar Bey to urge Shakir Pacha to immediate action. It appeared afterwards that this supercilious young officer declared to Shakir that my views as to the troops in front of me were incorrect. I had scarcely left my post of observation on the hill for an instant, whilst movements were visible, during the days we had been at Tashkessen, and therefore spoke from my actual personal knowledge of all that

had occurred, yet this thorough type of the most dangerous class of Turkish staff-officer, who had been on the hill for an hour, endeavoured to make his chief believe that there was no prospect of any immediate Russian attack, and that the force in front of me did not exceed ten battalions.

Fortunately I was on the best terms with Shakir, and he had implicit confidence in my statements.

I felt certain that although the Russian cavalry had retired from Kokantia, it would, in consequence of their reports, be impossible for the Russian generals to remain much longer without taking action in that direction. So seriously did this conviction impress me that I determined to adopt the unusual measure of a night reconnaissance of that village. Accordingly, a party of thirty cavalry, with an intelligent officer, proceeded at eleven o'clock towards Kokantia.

Their report was of the utmost importance.

They had been unable to enter the village, which was occupied by the Russians, and they also brought the news that a great movement of Russian troops was going on in all directions. I immediately telegraphed to Shakir to send some battalions to the Acha-Kamarli-Makatch defile, without a moment's delay, if he would save his

army. This last despatch had the desired effect, and I received a reply that orders had been given for the immediate march of two of Mehemet's battalions to that point.

That evening a very weak but efficient little battalion, the 1st Chasseurs, had joined my force.

I determined to start at daybreak for a personal reconnaissance towards Makatch, and ordered a squadron of cavalry, and this battalion of infantry to be under arms at that hour to accompany me. Then, with a firm conviction that the morrow would be a busy day, but that nothing was left unprepared, I lay down, and snatched a few hours' sound sleep.

## CHAPTER XI.

Break of day—Report from the outposts—Line of battle—A grand scene—Outflanked and overwhelmed by numbers—Dispositions to meet the coming storm—Change of position—Strength of Turkish force—Cautious Russian left—Send for reinforcements—A tempting gap—Twelve to one—A demonstration on the Kamarli heights—Infantry engaged—A gleam of hope—Shout for the Czar—Appeal to Allah—Russian mistakes—A timorous commander—Retreat of the Eski Cheir—Hadji Mehemet—Occupy the main position—Russian repulse on the right—Artillery at the Khan—A serious *contretemps*—Skulkers—A moment of disorder—Different ammunition—Short of cartridges—A slight lull—Fresh appeal for reinforcements—A central position for command—A welcome haze—Cavalry on the plains—A trying despatch—A profound secret—Incessant fighting—Visit the left—Terrible losses—Islan Bey—Dr. Gill, as usual, in front—Anxiety for Colonel Baker—Bosnia and Albania—The last attack—The Turkish cry of victory.

I WAS up an hour before daybreak. Colonel Allix went out to see that all was ready, and came back and reported that the battalion and squadron were waiting under arms, and that our horses stood saddled at the door.

I looked out: the morning was dull, but clear, and day was beginning to dawn. Reilly and Radford had just brought the inevitable cups of cocoatina, without which they never suffered their masters to depart for a long day's work and precarious meals.

Suddenly a cavalry soldier galloped up. He gave a written report to Shakir Bey from the outposts.

Shakir read it to me.

"The Russians are in movement on all sides, in great force, and are advancing to attack."

We mounted at once, and rode up the hill in rear of the village (C.)

That the enemy were advancing was very evident, for, before we had sufficiently risen the hill to get a good view, a shell burst on the pathway about eighty yards in front. On reaching the crest of the hill the whole scene lay before us.

It was a magnificent sight.

As far as the eye could reach, the great plain below seemed covered with Russian troops. They were in order of attack right along the line, and were moving on within cannon range.

Opposite to our right and Daoudkoi was evidently the division of the Guard that had been in front of us for three days. They had pushed

on before daybreak, and had occupied the low range of hills where our cavalry outposts had been placed. A dark mass still stood at the entrance to the defile (K), and I could detect with my glasses that three battalions were making their way down the Balkans in rear of Daoudkoi (O), evidently with the hope of occupying the hill which I had considered too far away to hold as part of my line.

To our left of the Sofia *chaussée*, a whole additional Russian division, sixteen battalions, was in movement. They came on in two lines, their left resting on the main road, and I could see from their round caps that it was another division of the Guard. In their rear, near Kokantia, a large body of cavalry, some 3000 strong, was moving off in the direction of Makatch.

I could only, at this time, detect three batteries of artillery. They were in action against us, firing on the rocky hill on which we stood.

Just as the Russian right division came within easy cannon range, it suddenly—and with admirable precision—took ground to its right, and moved away towards Makatch. Then it appeared as if all my forebodings would be realized. They seemed evidently marching towards Acha Ka-

maili, whilst the other division held me by a front and flank attack.

I had already made the following dispositions to meet the coming storm:—

On the rocky hill to my right (B) were the Touzla and Uskub battalions, with one field and two mountain guns. On the high, central rocky hill (C), where I stood with my staff, and from which an admirable view of the whole battle-field lay before us, I had placed the Edirné: the El Bassan battalion held the village in front, into which the cavalry had retired. On the hill to our left (D) four companies of the Prizrend were entrenched, and four field guns were on their left, near the *chaussée*. The Eski Cheir entrenched held the small hill (R) to our left of the *chaussée*. I had detached the other four companies of the Prizrend, and the new little Chasseur battalion, which was only 250 strong, to the left of the Eski Cheir (P).

The force to the left of the road was placed under Hadji Mehemet, the commander of the Chasseurs. The troops to the right under Islan Bey.

It was immediately evident that it would be impossible to hold the advanced position in face of the overwhelming numbers that threatened us.

But it might prove very useful before retiring to the main crest. Still, it was important immediately to begin taking up that position, and I placed the Tchenguéri battalion on the rocky ridge to the left of the head of the pass (H).

These troops were now all in their places. Their strength was as follows :—

|                     |       |   |   |   |   |                         |
|---------------------|-------|---|---|---|---|-------------------------|
| Prizrend            | about | . | . | . | . | 580                     |
| Touzla              | .     | „ | . | . | . | 450                     |
| Uskubs              | .     | „ | . | . | . | 350                     |
| El Bassan           | .     | „ | . | . | . | 320                     |
| Chasseurs           | .     | „ | . | . | . | 250                     |
| Tchenguéri          | .     | „ | . | . | . | 320                     |
| Edirné              | .     | „ | . | . | . | 300                     |
| Eski Cheir          | .     | „ | . | . | . | 220                     |
|                     |       |   |   |   |   | <hr/> 2790              |
| 3 Squadrons Cavalry | .     | . | . | . | . | 180                     |
|                     |       |   |   |   |   | <hr/> 2970 <sup>1</sup> |
| 5 Field Guns.       |       |   |   |   |   |                         |
| 2 Mountain do.      |       |   |   |   |   |                         |

It was now about half-past seven o'clock.

The artillery were in action on both sides, our guns playing with good effect upon the Russian right division. The Russian left division seemed very slow in its preparations for attack, perhaps it was waiting for the descent of the three battalions that were making the turning move-

<sup>1</sup> The Russian accounts acknowledge the presence at this battle of forty-five battalions of the Guard and forty-eight guns.



ment from the mountain. But when, as has been described, the whole Russian right division moved to its right, and seemed to be marching upon Acha Kamarli, everything certainly looked very hopeless.

It would be impossible for Mehemet Pacha's two battalions sent down during the night to resist effectively.

Directly I had seen the formidable nature of the enemy's force arrayed against us I had sent off a telegraphic despatch to Shakir; but the messenger came back saying that the telegraph clerk had bolted. As before explained, the telegraph clerks with the Turkish army are civilians. I therefore sent a mounted orderly with a despatch, and requesting reinforcements. I calculated that the Russian troops which I had already seen numbered 25,000 men.

As the Russian right division (Q) continued its movement to Makatch, a considerable gap was left between it and the attacking division on the Russian left (R). This gap at last became so great that it seemed as if I might push out with all my little force, and escape in the direction of Kokantia and Ichtiman. But, hopeless as the position looked, it was impossible to think of this, for it would have left open the Tashkessen

Pass, and have been equivalent to the desertion of Shakir. And even this gap did not long remain open, for now in the distance, marching up in columns, à cheval of the Sofia road, came a third division of Russians (S). They moved straight on towards the village, but halted out of cannon range.

The odds indeed seemed desperate.

The enemy outnumbered us by more than twelve to one. But I was delighted with the behaviour of the Turkish troops. Every man could see the grave nature of the position, for the whole Russian force lay plainly visible. We were now under rather a heavy shell fire, yet every face looked cool, calm, and determined. Even the Edirné lying down amongst the stones were steady enough.

The Russian left division was creeping on very slowly, and their infantry were not yet engaged. There seemed to be no intention of making an attack upon the village. The newly arrived division still lay in column, and motionless, on either side of the main road.

I again sent a despatch to Shakir, explaining the situation; and also, in case of necessity, I requested that a reserve of artillery ammunition might be sent, and also an additional reserve for

the infantry, although I had present an average of 200 rounds per man.

We could now hear that the Russian guns in front of Shakir's position were opening fire; doubtless a demonstration was being made in front to hold him in check, whilst his position was taken in rear by Tashkessen. I sadly feared that this might prevent the despatch of troops to reinforce my position, or, what seemed at this moment even more important, the defile of Acha Kamarli.

As the Russian right division continued its march to Makatch, Hadji Mehemet extended the Prizrend left wing and Chasseur battalion in that direction, occupying point after point of the many peaks which looked down on to the plain. But there was a limit to this extension, and the little force now resolved itself into a number of detached companies, holding successive hill-tops.

Still the Russian division marched steadily on towards Makatch.

As the head of the nearest brigade approached that village it came closer to the mountains, and some of the Chasseurs who were on our left opened fire.

Suddenly the whole division halted and fronted.

A gleam of hope shot through my breast—was

it possible that they were going to attack us instead of marching on Acha Kamarli?

In moving towards Makatch, the Russian columns had altered their original direction, and when they now fronted their right was thrown quite forward. I saw at a glance the immense advantage that this might prove for us, if, indeed, by good luck, they were going to attack.

We were not left long in doubt, for, in a few seconds, the leading brigade broke into loose order, and then a great roar burst out from all the Russian host that covered the plain, as they pressed forward to storm the heights we occupied. I was determined that the challenge should not remain unanswered, and, calling up my bugler, bade him to sound the Turkish cry of "Allah" in reply.

Springing to their feet, the gallant Prizrend shouted their appeal to the God of battles. Battalion after battalion took it up, and it echoed back from the distant mountain peaks. It was a glorious sight to see the confidence of the scanty little band of Turkish troops, as the great Muscovite wave rolled up against our position.

And now all along the left there broke out a tremendous musketry fire.

Hadji Mehemet had orders to fall slowly back to the main position.

Our centre was not even threatened.

The Russians had already made two fatal mistakes, which, great as were the odds against us, gave me much hope. Firstly, instead of marching against Acha Kamarli, they were simply outflanking us both right and left. Secondly, these outflanking movements were being made against my false and not against my real position. It seemed likely, therefore, that instead of benefiting by their immensely superior numbers to penetrate the mountain range on either flank, both divisions would close in upon our first position after we had abandoned it, and would then find themselves massed and disordered in front of the main crest.

I therefore made immediate dispositions for strongly occupying that crest. I withdrew the Touzla battalion from the right and placed it on the left of the Tchenguéri (H, 2). The El Bassan moved up the hill from the village, and replaced the Touzla.

Just at this moment three squadrons of cavalry arrived by chance from Isladi. They belonged to and completed the regiment already with me, and I ordered them to move down in front of the

village of Tashkessen, whilst I withdrew my centre to the main position. The commander of these three squadrons hesitated to face the artillery fire, and I had to send Colonel Allix to lead them on. Captain Thackeray, who had brought me such useful information the night of our arrival at Tashkessen, rode down also.

The movement was admirably executed. The cavalry pushed through the village, and dashed out on to the plain beyond.

Captain Burnaby, calm and cheery as ever, was standing by my side.

Just then two of those little *désagrémens* which are so common in war occurred. The Eski Cheir battalion maintained its reputation by quitting its position without being very seriously engaged, and came streaming up the main road in disorder. At the same time the commander of the artillery was killed by a shell, and the four field guns on the left which might have done good service for some time yet, limbered up and retired, and I had to send and make them re-occupy their former position.

Hadji Mehemet was fighting gloriously, holding every inch of ground, and only abandoning each successive peak when it was impossible to hold it

longer. I sent to thank the troops, and promoted him on the spot.

In the meantime the left Russian division had been halting and hesitating. The three Russian battalions from the mountains had descended and occupied the hill in rear of Daoudkoi. At the same time a Russian gun, which had been dragged into an impossible position in the mountains almost in our right rear, opened fire. As they dropped their shells well over our troops and amongst their own people it was a welcome assistance.

The hill held by the Uskub and El Bassan battalions was very strong, but a brigade of the left Russian division now moved up the sloping spur (T) which led to it, and made a front attack. The result was as I expected. They were driven back into the plains by the gallant Uskubs and El Bassans with heavy loss.

I then withdrew the guns from this hill on the right. The retirement of the field gun caused me much anxiety, as the ground was so broken that it was a difficult task. I also ordered back the Edirné into the main position, and then in succession the El Bassan, the cavalry, the Uskubs, and the wing of the Prizrend.

After its repulse the left Russian division did

not press forward eagerly, and it thus gave time for the retirement of our centre and right into the real position.

The rocky crest to the left of the Khan was now well occupied by the Touzla and Tchengueri. The Chasseurs and Prizrend wing when they fell back to this point, would thus find it securely held. I rallied the Eski Cheir as they came up the *chaussée*, and placed them in the rocks on the crest to the right of the Khan (G). The cavalry came trotting up the road, and I sent them down on to the plains in rear, giving them instructions to patrol towards Acha Kamarli, and to report immediately if any parties of Russians succeeded in passing the mountain to our extreme left.

The guns had all safely reached the Khan, and I placed them in action there. The El Bassan were formed up to the right of the road with the Eski Cheir. The Edirné I intended to place in the Khan, the windows of which commanded both the main and Daoudkoi roads, and they had just arrived. The Uskubs and Prizrend right wing were coming in, and forming up in reserve on the narrow crest of the hill.

And now a most serious *contretemps* occurred, which threatened, for a few minutes, a complete



reverse, and which proves the danger of mixing up raw or bad battalions with an active field army.

The Russians had reached a high, round-topped hill (U), which lay to the left of the main road, about 700 yards distant from the Khan. The Berdan rifles of the Guard brought a rather heavy fire to bear upon the neighbourhood of the Khan, and I could not get the Edirné battalion to enter the building. It was in vain that Islan Bey and my friend Captain Burnaby used their sticks on the backs of the skulkers. The wretched battalion hesitated, whilst only about a dozen more adventurous spirits crept forward to the corner of the building, but would not enter. The Russians, finding the windows of the Khan unoccupied, grew bolder, and gradually pushed down towards it, and shots came amongst us from only two hundred yards distance. Then the Edirné broke up bodily and bolted down the main road in utter disorder. The Uskubs were just forming up, but the Edirné burst through their ranks, and many a good regiment might have been carried away in a panic. We called out to the Uskubs to stand their ground, and hurled opprobrious Turkish epithets after the retreating Edirné. But general confusion ensued for a few minutes.

I had got the guns in position on the road, and ordered them to fire with shrapnel on the hill which the Russians now occupied. Of course they suffered heavily from the rifle fire, but in return they were producing an admirable effect. But, when they saw the Edirné bolting in a state of panic and the Russian skirmishers in the brush-wood within two hundred yards, they dragged their guns back over the crest, and began to limber up and retire. It was only by our personally bringing them back that they could be induced to remain.

I now sent four companies of the Uskubs into the Khan. The effect was immediate. They swept the whole approaches with their fire from the windows. One face of the building looked down the main road and one down that leading to Daoudkoi. The Russian columns, trying to move up, suffered so heavily that they recoiled, and their skirmishers retired.

The danger had passed and the position was saved.

It was about half-past twelve o'clock. My troops were all safely established in the main line, but the losses had already been very heavy. It was evident that I could not trust to the Mustaphiz, but, once settled amongst

the rocks, they served to make a show of force.

As the gallant Prizrend left wing and Chasseurs were falling back, an accident had occurred which caused me some anxiety. The battalions under my command suffered from the serious disadvantage of being armed with different rifles. The good battalions of Prizrend, Uskubs, and Touzla still retained the old Schneider, whilst all the others had the Henry-Martini or rather Peabody-Martini, which was the new arm of the Turkish service, and infinitely superior.

I had spoken, whilst at Kamarli, as to the advisability of these fine battalions changing arms with some of the bad Mustaphiz troops, but it was considered that the men at least knew their weapons, whereas there might not be time to instruct them in the new arm before some emergency would arise, and the idea had been abandoned.

The ground over which the Chasseur battalion on the extreme left was moving was so hilly and broken that their pack-horses with the reserve ammunition could not follow, and a message came down to me saying, "We could hold our ground longer, but are short of ammunition." They could not borrow from the Prizrend which

lay next to them, for the Chasseurs had the Peabody-Martini rifles.

It has been mentioned that some two weeks before a little skeleton battalion of Nisch Mustaphiz had been sent down to guard Tashkessen. The sixty remaining soldiers of this battalion had done good service the day of our arrival by repulsing the Cossacks. Since then, what with escort and other duties, these men were all away, but the pack-horses with ammunition still remained, and were fortunately now in hand. They were sent up in hot haste to the position held by the Chasseurs, and the brave little battalion replenished its supply and again clung tenaciously to every available vantage-ground.

The troops of the Russian Guard opposed to us were all armed with the Berdan rifle, which, though rather inferior to the Peabody-Martini was far better than the Schneider.

Although our left still remained heavily engaged, there was a lull of a few minutes on the centre and right. A despatch arrived from Shakir. It heaped blessings on my head for the resistance that we had offered, and begged me to hold on as long as possible, but it said nothing about reinforcements. He could not estimate the importance of resisting to the last more highly than I

did myself. The men of the five good battalions were fighting so splendidly that I had absolute confidence that they would die at their posts. But the odds were so overwhelming, the fighting so incessant, and our consequent losses so great, that it seemed highly probable that we might all die, and what would then happen to the Kamarli army ?

I again wrote, pointing out how hardly we were pressed, and urging that a few battalions of good troops should be sent to me.

The lull in the battle was not of long duration. The left division of the Russian Guard had evidently reached the advanced spur which we had abandoned after having repulsed them, and were trying to make their way along the neck of hill (E) which led to our main ridge. Although they were within rifle-shot I still kept our guns in position, for their shrapnel fire produced an excellent effect. On our right of the road, by the Khan, a central point for directing operations, which I had selected as my post of observation, there was a little low building in ruins. Behind this I hid the two mountain guns. I generally had a contempt for these guns, but they certainly did most useful service on this occasion, and were remarkably well fought.

As the Russian pressure against our centre and right was renewed I had to strengthen the El Bassan with the four companies of the Prizrend which I had in hand, for I knew that the Eski Cheir were valueless. This only left me four companies of the Uskubs as a last reserve. And now the musketry fire broke out again all along the line, and for an hour, without any intermission, the battle raged furiously.

Our left made me very anxious. It seemed impossible to believe that the immensely superior Russian force would not succeed in outflanking it. My little band was dissolving away so rapidly under the terrific strain, that I sent Colonel Allix to Shakir Pacha, to urge upon him personally the absolute necessity of reinforcing us.

No musketry fire could be heard from the Kamarli position, and it was evident that only an artillery demonstration was being made by the Russians in that direction, in order to engage the attention of Shakir, whilst the Pass of Tashkessen was carried by the overwhelming force which was attacking us under the command of Gourko.

It was nearly two o'clock, and as yet not an inch of the main position had been lost.

Taking advantage of the large round-topped mountain that lay within long rifle-shot of the

left centre of our line, the Russians pushed on continual attacks from that point, which were bravely met by the battalion of Touzla.

The morning had been clear, but now a haze hung over the battle-field. Was it a prelude to one of the heavy fogs that had lately been so prevalent? Would a mist descend and save my gallant troops from the almost certain destruction that appeared to await them?

I looked at my watch from time to time; the hands seemed to stand still.

We had been engaged for seven hours. In three hours and a half more, night would fall. Could we but hold out until then all would be saved.

I was most anxious to know personally the exact position of affairs on the left, but was afraid of the effect upon the men if I quitted my post near the Khan whilst the heavy stress on this point continued. Captain Thackeray was standing near, and kindly volunteered to bring me a report. I sent him down the reverse side of our position along the rear, with directions to examine carefully if there were any signs of the Russians breaking through into the valley beyond our left. He returned with the information that none of the enemy had broken through, but that they

seemed to occupy some hills that rather out-flanked us, and that a heavy Russian fire came over the hill and fell in the plains. The cavalry below, it appeared, had been suffering from this fire.

It was half-past two.

We had beaten back the attack all along the line, but fresh Russian troops poured up, and the fire, though it slackened, never ceased. Just then an event occurred which made my situation tenfold more anxious than before.

A cavalry soldier rode up the hill from the rear. He was one of the orderlies I had sent with Colonel Allix, and he brought a short note from him. It was couched in words expressing the greatest indignation, and stated that the Kamarli force, which we had been striving so hard to save, had played me false, and was in full retreat, and that the only possible way of saving a remnant of my own troops was by an immediate retreat upon Acha Kamarli.

I turned my glasses to the rear, and scanned the plain.

There, sure enough, could be seen dark masses of men all moving from Araba Konak upon Acha Kamarli.

I had distinctly arranged with Shakir that the



retreat was not to be commenced until after nightfall, and the stores and the guns not required were to have been sent away on the previous evening. The movement across the plain confirmed Allix's report. If true, the Russians following from Kamarli would take my Tashkessen force completely in the rear whilst engaged in front, and we should be annihilated to a man.

But, correct as the report appeared, still, supposing that there were any mistake, and I retired, Shakir's force would all be lost, and what would be my feelings then?

The situation was painfully trying.

It seemed so hard to sacrifice the lives of the brave men under my command who had behaved so magnificently. We had been fighting for hours to save this Kamarli army. They had sent no reinforcements, and now they seemed to be quietly sacrificing us in order to save themselves by an unnecessary and treacherous retreat before the time agreed upon.

I balanced carefully in my mind the course which the circumstances called upon me to pursue. It seemed to me that if Shakir had failed in his word, it was still my duty to adhere to mine, and I determined to remain and hold on to the last.

I kept this message a profound secret. If

known, it would evidently have had a fatal effect upon both officers and men.

There was a fresh lull on our front and right centre, but the fighting on the left and left centre burst out again and again with renewed violence. Half an hour passed away, when another note arrived from Allix. It confirmed the first, and implored me to retreat at once. He was still searching for Shakir, but had been unable to find him. But my resolve had been made, and I determined to adhere to it.

I sent down an order to the cavalry to despatch an intelligent officer to Araba Konak, who would bring me back word what brigade was now moving down from the heights. This, without creating alarm, would enlighten me as to Shakir's retreat.

The afternoon was very hazy, but the much-longed-for fog refused to aid us. Looking with my glasses over the plains in rear, it was difficult to see clearly, but it appeared to me that the retreating masses were composed mainly of baggage horses. Possibly, Shakir had found it impossible to get away all his baggage and guns on the previous night, and was doing so now. But even if this were so, it would have one great disadvantage. The Russians attacking our left would clearly see that their prey was escaping before their eyes,

and they would make still more strenuous efforts to break through. And this seemed to be the case, for soon a new attack burst upon us that exceeded the others in violence.

The field guns had suffered so heavily and had so little ammunition left that I determined to send them down to the plains below, and to place them there in such a position that they could bring their fire to bear on the mountain tops to the left, should the Russians, as I feared, eventually turn us there.

The error made by the Russian right and left divisions, which I had noticed in the morning, had done us excellent service. They had endeavoured to turn both flanks of our false or advanced position, and now found themselves jammed in front of our real line, with the power of outflanking nearly lost, and, as yet, the impossibility of forcing it by front attacks. But two hours and a half of daylight still remained to them in which to correct the error.

It seemed as if the day would never end.

At about half-past three it appeared as if the Russian left division had given up all hope of forcing our line to the right of the Khan. The firing here became desultory, and I now determined to visit the left, leaving Islan Bey in my

place, with orders not to move until my return. Riding down the hill and along the rear of the position, I could see that some small detached parties of Russians were quite on our left flank. I therefore placed two companies of my last reserve, the Uskubs, upon a semi-detached hill (V), which, rather thrown back, guarded this flank.

Although my cavalry on the plains below were a considerable distance from our infantry on the ridge, some of them were lying dead on the road, killed by stray bullets from the long-range Berdan rifle of the Russian Guard.

My troops on the left had not lost a foot of ground. But their numbers had dwindled away sadly. On returning to the Khan I found that all had gone quietly and steadily during my absence.

Islan Bey had behaved admirably all through the day, and the conduct of Shakir Bey was beyond all praise. He stuck to me like a shadow, and wrote every order which I gave with such clearness that everything worked perfectly. The troops had carried out the somewhat difficult manœuvres that had to be executed with the precision of parade, and, excepting the bad conduct of the Mustaphiz, not a hitch of any kind had occurred in the movements of the battalions.

We kept the reserve ammunition column upon

the main road, on the reverse side of the hill, where it was not exposed, but from which point the pack-horses could be easily despatched to the right or left. We had sent up an extraordinary amount of ammunition during the day ; fortunately we were amply provided with all, except that for the field guns.

Dr. Gill was working away as usual, carefully tending the wounded, often under a heavy fire and Dr. Heath was assisting to the utmost.

We had been very anxious about Colonel Baker. Two days before I had requested that an ambulance should be sent to Strigli to take him to the rear whilst there was yet time. He had been so unwell that day that the doctors had not sanctioned his removal, and I begged young Doctor Leslie, who had ridden up to the pass, to go at once to Strigli, and to warn him that even if the battle went well for us, a general retreat had been arranged for that night.

The behaviour of my five good battalions had been simply grand ; for the action had not been a mere defence of a strong position, but a battle involving difficult movements against a force more than twelve times more numerous, and composed of the picked troops of Russia. Bosnia and Albania had a right to be proud of the way

in which their sons had conducted themselves throughout that trying day. But already I knew that the losses were terrible, and the gallant little band of heroes seemed melting away where they stood.

Could human strength resist for the short period that still remained? An hour more, and darkness would come to our aid. But the Russians seemed to feel that they had but little time to spare, for their fire grew heavier and heavier.

I could see that the two companies in rear of our extreme left were sharply engaged, and this augured badly, but I strengthened the point with my very last reserve.

Slowly the minutes passed away, but the long, long day was drawing to its close.

The shades of evening were falling fast around, but our trials were not yet destined to be over. Night was so near that the flash of every rifle could be distinctly seen. Then the Russians drew themselves together for a last and desperate effort. Bringing up fresh troops, they came tramping on over the blood-stained snow, determined now to storm the hotly-contested hill. Despite the withering fire from the rocks, they still pushed up, and nearly reached the crest.

But, with a shout to Allah, the mountaineers of Bosnia sprang to their feet. Dashing forward with the bayonet, they closed in deadly conflict with the stalwart giants of the Russian Guard, and drove them headlong down the height.

In a few moments the fire all along the line died out. The tired Turkish soldiers knew that the day was won. Pale, and exhausted with the long-continued fight, they climbed upon the rocks, their faces fierce with the light of battle; blood-stained and wounded as many of them were, they waved aloft their weapons in the air, and hurled out defiance at the retiring foe. And many a dying man raised himself up with an expiring effort, and spent his last breath in that loud shout of victory.

There are moments in the past of many a man's career that stand out clear and defined after the lapse of even many years: life-pictures, the very memory of which brings back a glorious thrill of pride and pleasure. This is the feeling which vibrates through me still, when I recall that last and closing scene which crowned the hard-fought fight of Tashkessen.

## CHAPTER XII.

A complete Russian repulse—A painful muster—Extraordinary losses—Expenditure of ammunition—An unmolested retreat—Night march after the battle—No chance of halting—Anxious moments for the Kamarli army—Dummy sentinels—A singular incident—The Russian Parlementaire with appeal to surrender—Successful retreat—Arrival at Petric—Lady Strangford's refuge—A sad impediment—Petric—Difficulties with the guns—Dr. Gill to the front—First appearance of the Russians—Colonel Allix's report—An evening skirmish—A message to the Russian Guard—A difficult night march—Turkish wounded—Singular bivouac—Sustenance for the men—Turkish inconsistency.

THE battle was fought and won ; but there could be no rest for the gallant troops after their hard day's work.

So complete had been the Russian repulse, that, as far as we could detect, and, as circumstances afterwards proved, no picquets even were left to watch our movements. Thus all the preparations for the retreat could be made undisturbed. First the many wounded had to be



got away to the rear, and the troops were brought in from all the outlying hills. Then, by degrees, I drew the whole force down to the Acha Kamarli road, and mustered the battalions.

Two companies of the Uskubs were reported to me as absent. They were the two companies that I had placed on the hill to the extreme left, and they had done good service. For, late in the evening, scattered bodies of Russians had made their way round the left of our line, and were only stopped from descending into the plain by this small force. Orders had been sent to them to rejoin their battalion, but they were so loath to quit the ground that they had so bravely held that I had to send to them a second time.

The little column stood in the darkness on the white, snowy road. My heart bled as I inspected their sadly diminished ranks. They were but the wrecks of those fine battalions that had stood on the hill-side when the morning light had broken. But they were brave wrecks still. They had sacrificed themselves, but they had saved an army.

The whole brunt of the fight had fallen upon the five good battalions. The loss of the Mustaphiz was almost nil. But out of less than 2000 men that composed these five, 800 men had

fallen. The left wing of the Prizrend and the Touzla had lost more than half their strength. And yet, shattered as they were, they had beaten back the last fierce attack of the Russian Guards. It is a generally received military axiom that a loss of one-third of their numbers will break the resisting power of even the best troops. Yet here were soldiers that stood as firmly in the last as in the first hour of the fight, after a loss of more than half their strength, and having been engaged, without intermission, for ten consecutive hours.

The amount of ammunition expended by the Prizrend wing, Touzla, and Chasseurs, is, I believe, unprecedented in any action. It amounted respectively to 292, 275, and 263 rounds per man.

The time had now arrived for the little brigade to march and take its place in the general column, and we moved off to Acha Kamarli.

It was evident that Shakir Pacha had been unable to get away all his guns and baggage on the previous night, and that he had been doing so in open day, and within sight of the enemy. How with this warning the Russians allowed us afterwards to retreat unmolested they alone can explain.

Shakir should certainly have informed me of this movement. His not doing so might have had disastrous results.

It afterwards transpired that Colonel Allix had come across Mehemet Pacha's Brigade, which had actually descended to the plains early in the afternoon. The officers of this brigade had told him that the whole force was retiring, and, in a very natural fit of indignation, he had written the notes that had caused me so much anxiety through the latter part of the day.

On reaching the main road by which the retreat was being effected through Acha Kamarli, we found it much blocked by guns and arabas. Many of the latter had broken down, and they caused great delay and embarrassment to the troops. I had sent on my guns soon after dark, but the cavalry became much hampered.

I met Mehemet Pacha at Acha Kamarli. He informed me that he had been told off to act as rear-guard until our arrival at Petric. This would be a great relief to my poor tired troops. Mehemet thanked me warmly, and told me that the Russian cavalry that I had seen moving to our left had tried to make their way to Acha Kamarli; but, finding the defile occupied by his two battalions which I had telegraphed to

be sent there during the night, they had fallen back.

As we marched on there was so little open or level ground near the side of the road that it was impossible to give my small and tired force even a short rest without stopping the whole column.

It was perfectly wonderful to see how the men marched after all the fatigues of the day. We had gone ten miles before I found some open ground where I could form them up without impeding the column. The snow here was more than two feet deep; there was a little wood, but it was so wet that we could only get miserable fires to burn. Wearied out, we sat down in the snow, keeping close to each other, to avoid being frost-bitten, and were soon sound asleep.

I had allowed a halt of two hours, but was awakened before the expiration of that time by the arrival of Shakir Pacha and his staff. He was profuse in expressions of gratitude, and declared that the anxiety of the day had decreased his bulky form by three inches.

The Russians had made a demonstration against Kamarli, but had not attacked. It appeared that all through the day the officers and men on the heights had watched the fight at Tashkessen with

frantic anxiety. They knew, of course, that their safety depended entirely upon the result, and when the numbers of the attacking Russian force were known, they had given up all hope. Their feelings when the Edirné broke and came streaming down into the Kamarli plain may be imagined.

Shakir gave me the welcome news that the retreat had entirely succeeded. With the exception of some guns with damaged carriages on the upper heights, all had been got away, and the troops had been withdrawn without the slightest interruption on the part of the Russians. The retirement from the wood on our left was, of course, extremely difficult, as the Turkish and Russian sentries were only twenty yards apart. Dummy sentries had been dressed up, and had succeeded admirably.

We thought, with some amusement, of the feelings of the Russians in the morning, and pictured the scene exactly as it really happened. First, the force in front of Kamarli, finding everything unnaturally quiet in the morning, would begin to feel forward. The dummy sentries, would, perhaps, be fired at, and, although riddled, would refuse to fall. Then the ruse would be discovered and reported, and troops would immediately be sent up to occupy the whole position.

Probably, about the same time, Gourko's force would begin to reconnoitre to the front, and would find no enemy. They would push on into the plain and look eagerly towards the heights. They would see them fully occupied, and in a state of delight, would imagine that their great turning movement had succeeded, and that all Shakir Pacha's army were their prisoners. Then they would advance with military precautions, and would meet . . . their own troops.

All this, as we afterwards learnt, came to pass. But an amusing incident really happened, that our imaginations had not conceived.

When the telegraph clerk had bolted in a panic from the telegraph office on the morning of the battle, he had left behind him some of my telegrams. These were found by the Russians on their occupying the village. They imagined, it appears, that I commanded the whole Kamarli army. Whether in the night or early morning, Gourko sent troops to occupy Acha Kamarli I have never been able to ascertain. But in the morning he sent a *Parlementaire* to me, stating that I and the Kamarli army were completely surrounded, that all chance of escape was hopeless, and requesting me to surrender.

The *Parlementaire* advanced; he sought the

outposts, he sought me, he sought the Kamarli army, but he returned disconsolate. The army so completely surrounded was snugly ensconced at Petric, safe from all pursuit. For forty hours after leaving the Pass of Tashkessen neither we nor the Kamarli army even saw a Cossack.<sup>1</sup>

The management of the retreat from the Kamarli heights reflected the greatest credit upon Shakir Pacha. It was a most delicate military operation and conducted with unhoped-for success. Had preparations for it been commenced earlier, even the damaged guns might have been brought away.

A little before daybreak we started again from our snowy couches and moved on towards Petric. After leaving Mirkovo we turned to the right and quitted the main Isladi road, passing by a moderately good track which crossed several frozen streams. The road ran between high mountains, and the valley was narrow. As day dawned I was surprised to find that many of my ill-clad troops were clothed in the great coats of the Russian Guard, which they had taken in the fight. After marching about four miles from Mirkovo, we came to the strong position of

<sup>1</sup> This story was afterwards told to Colonel Allix by General Gourko himself.

Petric. A high, precipitous rock seems to block the valley, and the village of Petric lies just below this rock. There are, however, two roads which pass Petric, one which turns to the right, following for part of the way the bed of the river, which runs through the valley, and which, though bad, is practicable for guns; the other which leads over the mountains by Matchka to Otlukoi.

On our arrival at Petric we saw in the distance an imposing-looking building so far superior to the rest of the village, that we immediately made for it. It turned out to be a house built by Lady Strangford for the Bulgarians; it contained several rooms and was fairly clean. Here Shakir Pacha and his Staff, and I and my Staff established ourselves.

It was nearly evening before all the train of arabas had arrived, but the Russians made no attempt at pursuit.

We had already begun to suffer from a difficulty, which, at a later period, became overwhelming. The Mahomedan villagers of the country through which the army was passing began to fall back with it. The consequence was that every road was blocked with country arabas. When the army moved, they moved; when it halted, they halted. They clung round it like an



octopus, and strangled all its freedom of action. And the evil was on far too large a scale to be under any management or direction.

On our arrival at Petric it became immediately necessary to consider what should be our subsequent movements. It appeared to me that there was only one course to pursue, viz. to withdraw the main army of the west immediately upon Adrianople, and the extreme western troops by Salonica on the capital. But it was evident that the retreat from the respective strategical points must be made simultaneously. It would not do for us to fall back upon Bazardjik, and thus leave open the passes, until we received some communications from Suleiman relative to the movements of the other armies. At the same time, it was advisable to retire as near to Bazardjik as a good defensible position could be found.

Petric was extremely strong, but it seemed possible to turn it by some mountain paths which did not appear on the map, but which were well known to the villagers. Iskender Pacha with his ten battalions from Isladi had fallen back on Avratalan. The best position for Shakir Pacha's force appeared to be one near Otlukoi. We had been joined by another brigade under Mustapha Pacha, part of the force which had come up with Sulei-

man. It had reached Mirkovo, and now retired with us.

Early in the afternoon the whole force was assembled at Petric. A brigade was formed up about two miles distant, which gave the outposts, three battalions being told off to watch the paths through the mountains. It became a question how the guns should be withdrawn, as the road leading to Otlukoi was reported as very indifferent. It was very important that they should fall back on Otlukoi at once, but, as usual the Staff omitted to give the order.

Not a Russian had been seen even by the stragglers who arrived late in the evening. That night, after all our fatigues and anxieties, we got a good, sound, and undisturbed sleep.

Early the next morning I discovered that the guns had not left, and immediately got Shakir Pacha to despatch them. The road out of Petric was blocked with arabas, but it was said that by following the bed of the river the guns could travel equally well. The water was about two feet deep and the banks very steep, and it seemed unwise to trust them to this route until we were certain they could get out again. Dr. Gill immediately volunteered to do staff officer, and shortly brought back word that there was a

means of exit. Escorted by a battalion from each brigade to help them out of difficulties, the guns commenced their march.

There was a road which led directly from Petric to Bazardjik, but which was reported impracticable for artillery. It was necessary to guard this road, and the new brigade of Mustapha was ordered to follow it, and, selecting a good defensible spot, to bar its passage to the enemy.

It was about twelve o'clock in the day, January 2nd, when the outposts reported that the Russians were advancing. I immediately sent up Colonel Allix with a good glass, to the mountain top, on the left, which commanded a view of the valley, with directions to bring me a careful report of the number of the enemy. He came down after a time, and reported that two regiments of cavalry, two batteries, and eight battalions of infantry were advancing. He was quite certain that there were no more. We strengthened the brigade in advance, but it was not until late in the afternoon that a desultory skirmish began with our advanced brigade. It was not an affair of any importance, and cost us only a few killed and wounded, but, strangely enough, we learned afterwards that two Russian Generals who had

come forward to reconnoitre were both killed. Such are the chances of war!

Redjib had been out on a reconnaissance, and he estimated the advancing Russians at a strength of forty battalions. I trusted much more to Colonel Allix's reports, but it was decided at a Council that night, that it would be wiser to at once fall back to the position of Otlukoi. Shakir was very anxious about a road which was reported to exist from Isladi to Matchka—a small Bulgarian village standing quite alone on the mountains between Petric and Otlukoi. It was decided that I should fall back during the night by the mountain pass, and occupy Matchka, whilst the brigades of Shukri Pacha, Mehemet Pacha, and Nazeff Bey were to move by the road to our left, which the guns had taken.

On our arrival at Petric we had learned that the doctors at Strigli had objected to the removal of Colonel Baker. They themselves also remained behind to attend upon the sick and wounded, who could not be removed. Of course, being taken in hospital, he would be entitled to his release under the Geneva Convention, but we knew too well how that Convention was carried out by the Russians. We determined to appeal to the good feeling of the officers of the Russian Guard, who

are generally of a far higher and more gentlemanly class than the rest of the officers of the Russian army. We accordingly wrote in large letters on the wall, wishing them the compliments of the season, and requesting their kind attention to our comrade left grievously sick at Strigli.

I marched off by the mountain path at about eleven o'clock at night. The road was very narrow and very slippery; it was in fact a sheet of ice. The path ascended the mountains to a great height, and the cold was intense. Marching was most difficult, the men slipped and fell at every hundred paces. Captain Burnaby had bought a young grey horse at Sofia, that carried his great weight in a wonderful way. My little Sofia grey was also marvellously sure-footed. We neither of us dismounted during the whole night, and yet escaped with only a few falls. High up on the mountain we came upon a splendid specimen of a Turkish soldier lying dead by the roadside; he had been wounded in the skirmish of the afternoon, and had tried to make his way to the rear, but had lain down and died, apparently whilst asleep.

Although the distance from Petric to Matchka was little more than seven miles, such were the difficulties of the road, that we only reached the

latter village about an hour before daybreak. It was a good-sized village, and from the lights in many of the courtyards, some stragglers had evidently already made their way to it. Going up to one of these fires, we found two soldiers asleep. On inquiring their battalion, we found that they had been wounded in the skirmish of the day before, and had come on here. The patience of these men is something extraordinary. Of course, their wounds had never been dressed, but Dr. Gill was at hand with all that was necessary.

It is the custom in the Turkish army to get the wounded far away to the rear as soon as possible. The men go off of their own accord. Those who can walk, do so; those who cannot, ride on the regimental pack-horses or are put into arabas and sent to the rear directly. The system has one advantage, viz. that the army is never encumbered with wounded; but, unfortunately, the hospital arrangements are generally very inefficient. Moreover, from the utter want of organization, many men who are slightly wounded go away altogether, and are no more seen.

This was not a common occurrence with the good troops. I remember whilst we were on the Lom a complaint being made to Salih Pacha by the doctors at Eski Djumaa that the slightly

wounded men ran away from the hospital. On inquiry, we found that it was quite true, but they ran away to rejoin their battalions in the front that were engaged with the enemy. Towards the end of the war, however, the Mustaphiz seized every occasion for deserting.

We sat round the fire with the wounded soldiers, and snatched an hour's sleep. I had already told off two battalions to watch the roads. My men had now been out in the snow for a week. Their manner of bivouacking was singular. Every man would try and collect as much wood as possible. With this they would make a fire and sit round it in the snow in a circle. About ten men formed each circle, and they sat quite close together with the hoods of their great-coats drawn over their heads. They seemed to me to talk incessantly, and I never could make out when they slept. Their food was easily prepared, for it usually consisted only of biscuit. The Turkish soldier's biscuit is large, thick, and very good, but generally so hard that the strongest teeth cannot masticate it. The men soak it in water, when it swells to the size of a small loaf. They then place it on the embers and toast it, and it is by no means unpalatable. I seized every opportunity of getting meat for my men, as it was most

useful in enabling them to stand this severe cold, but it was rarely that we had any, although the Bulgarian villages, through which we were now moving, teemed with sheep, bullocks, fowls, and supplies of every description. A strict order had been given that nothing should be taken from the Bulgarians, and the poor half-starved Turkish soldiers passed through this land of plenty occupied by their quasi enemies without touching anything.

The Turkish Government is singularly inconsistent. When the insurrection in Bulgaria had occurred, there can be no doubt that in many instances these people had been very hardly treated, and the Government had refused to punish many of the guilty parties, as in the case of Shefket. But now, when it would have been perfectly legitimate to consume all these supplies, paying by bonds on the Government, instead of leaving them to aid the advance of the Russians, nothing was taken.



## CHAPTER XIII.

Village of Matchka—An ancient ruin—Disorderly marches—A good position—Otlukoi—Waste of precious moments—A state of doubt—Proposed attack—Its advantages—Reconnaissance instead—Preparations—Difficulties—The situation at daybreak—Awkward position—Feeling for the enemy—A firm resistance—No support—A turning movement—Russian reinforcements—Curious incident—Extreme range—Danger of close formations—Heavy casualties—Russians outflanked—Fall back in disorder—Covering the retreat—Destruction of the village—A delay—The village in flames—Untrustworthy Mustaphiz—Anxiety for Colonel Allix—Success of the reconnaissance.

Soon after morning dawned, an officer rode up to the village, coming from our artillery.

The guns had stuck in a bad part of the road, and they wanted as many villagers as possible sent down with their shovels to so improve the road that they might be extricated. We sent down all that were available. It appeared that, although we had hoped that the artillery would reach Otlukoi the same day that they left Petric,

they had not as yet got more than six miles on the road.

I could not move to Otlukoi until all the other troops had retired and the guns were safe, so we set to work to entrench the position near the village. I found, however, that it was most dangerously situated, and that it would be impossible to hold it after the other troops had retired, as the enemy could then cut us off in rear by the road which the guns had followed, and which joined the Matchka-Otlukoi road about a mile on the Otlukoi side of Matchka. I reported this to Shakir, at the same time telling him that I would not retire until all the guns were safely to the rear.

That afternoon Shakir sent to me to say that all was going well, and that he expected that the guns would reach Otlukoi that night. The Russians had made no attempt to follow or disturb him during all these troublesome hindrances and delays, although they were only a few miles in rear.

In the afternoon we explored the village of Matchka.

The houses were, for the most part, mere sheds with thatched roofs; but we put up in one of the better ones. We paid a visit to the church; it

was built by the side of the ruins of another church, well preserved, and evidently of great antiquity. Some paintings on the wall were clear and distinct. They apparently represented a variety of excruciating tortures inflicted on women in punishment for excessive flirtations. Dreadful-looking demons were the executioners. This did not appear to have had any beneficial influence upon the villagers, for an old woman of sixty, belonging to our house, seemed to have fallen desperately in love with Colonel Allix, and loaded him with excessive attentions.

I found towards night that all the guns had not passed forward, and therefore determined to remain at Matchka until the next day.

In the morning, it was reported that all the guns had passed, and we actually commenced our march; but, on reaching the cross road, I discovered that another battery was still in the rear, and we waited all day in the snow for its appearance. At last it arrived, then Shukri Pacha's brigade appeared, and Shukri himself came and joined me.

It was painful to see the disorder of most of the retiring brigades. The usual Turkish system was adopted. Generals of brigade would ride on, thinking only of their own personal arrangements;

colonels would follow their example ; the battalion commanders took no trouble to keep their battalions together ; company officers lost their companies, and every man marched as he liked. Shukri's brigade arrived in better order than in general. I had been very particular with my own troops on the march, and they had begun to move in very fair order. We now marched off towards Otlukoi, whilst Shukri relieved me as rear-guard. But, although two days had passed since we left Petric, only seven miles distant, where a skirmish with the Russians had taken place, we had not since that time seen a trace of the enemy.

About two miles from Matchka we passed a defile which seemed to be very defensible. I mentioned this to Shakir on my arrival at Otlukoi. The same thing had struck him, and he sent word to Shukri to halt there during the night.

Otlukoi was a large and thriving Bulgarian town, situated in a plain surrounded by mountains ; a strong position lay to the south of the town, and through this position ran the road to Bazardjik.

I found Shakir Pacha established in a large and fairly comfortable house ; Redjib was with him. Communication with Suleiman had been re-established ; but it appeared that Suleiman, directly

all the troubles had fallen upon the army, had left it and gone off to Adrianople. Everything relative to the general direction of the whole of the dispersed forces, which required such careful management, seemed to be in utter confusion; but we learned that we were to remain at Otlukoi for the present. All this valuable time, when the armies should have been falling back on Adrianople, was being wasted.

A small house had been told off for me, which, after the rough work that one had gone through lately, appeared a palace.

On going to see Shakir Pacha the next morning, he told me that he had determined to keep a brigade at the little pass about four miles from Otlukoi, relieving it daily. The brigade of Nazeff Bey had been sent to relieve that of Shukri Pacha.

It was very important to gain absolute information as to the number of the Russian forces which had followed us in the retreat to Otlukoi.

My own impression, confirmed by Colonel Allix's report, led me to believe that only one brigade of the Guard had followed upon our tracks as far as Petric; but the reports of Redjib and some of his officers estimated their numbers at a much higher figure. It was quite evident that

the Russians had moved forward to Petric, and occupied the village of Matchka.

As we now had, including a new brigade under Bekir Pacha, a considerable force at our disposal, I proposed to Shakir that we should make an attack upon the Russians who had moved through the mountain pass from Petric, and were now occupying the position at Matchka. The force at Matchka could not be very considerable. A general attack, made upon that position by three brigades, would probably have the effect of driving back the Russians upon Petric. The very fact of making this offensive operation would have a good effect upon the *morale* of the troops. It would also impress the Russians, and if the movement were crowned with success, which seemed probable, it must have the effect of delaying the action of the other forces under Gourko, which were probably now acting against Sofia, Samakoff, and the Ichtiman Pass.

Shakir Pacha was under the impression that the mountain road which led from Matchka to Bekir Pacha's position at Banja was unknown to the Russians, and he was unwilling to make use of this brigade, for fear of giving them information which might be afterwards turned against us.

I had proposed that an attack should be made by Bekir Pacha's brigade on the left, by Mehemet Pacha's brigade in the centre, and the old 5th, or Tashkessen, brigade on the extreme right. It seemed probable that, if this attempt were made just before daybreak, we might drive back the Russian Matchka force upon Petric, and probably take a considerable number of prisoners, as we knew by experience the difficult nature of the mountain-path by which the Russian retreat must necessarily be made.

Shakir objected to this arrangement, and determined to carry out a simple reconnaissance in force; but as the village of Matchka gave the only available cover to the enemy's troops, which must necessarily suffer much, if compelled to bivouac in the snow upon these high altitudes—he determined that the reconnaissance, if possible, should at the same time take and burn the village. For this duty he detailed the shattered, but excellent remnant of the Tashkessen brigade.

It was arranged that this brigade should move forward from Otlukoi, so as to arrive at the advanced position at dawn, and that the brigade of Nazeff Bey, which would, in the ordinary course, have been relieved by it, should remain holding the entrenchments until the reconnaissance had been

effected. Attached to Nazeff Bey's brigade in the front was one mountain gun, but Shakir did not consider it necessary to support the reconnaissance by the fire of the field artillery, which, nevertheless, was largely available.

Accordingly an hour and a half before dawn the little force moved away from Otlukoi and arrived at our entrenched position just before day-break.

On our side the advanced battalions held entrenchments across a ravine, which separated them from those in support. The village of Matchka lay in a little valley. Just to the right of the Russians who held it, and about one-third of a mile in advance of the village there stood a prominent hill; whilst to the left rear of the village a rocky mountain peak rose up, affording a strong position, which trended gradually down to the ravine which separated our advanced and rear entrenchments.

On reconnoitring the Russian position at day-break we could only discover a Cossack picquet, on the top of the rocky peak, and some small infantry posts, which had been placed at about half a mile in front of the village. We could see, however, that several entrenchments had been thrown up along this line, but it was impossible to guess



what force lay concealed in the village behind them.

The reconnaissance with so small a body of troops, combined with the decision to burn, if possible, the village of Matchka, gave rather a difficult task. If an advance were made upon the village, and it were then found that the two hills which rose on either side of it were strongly occupied with an entrenched position uniting them, our troops would probably have to fall back with a considerable loss, and without effecting the object of taking the village. I therefore at first sent forward only the little remnant of the chasseur battalion to make a cautious movement upon Matchka and to see to what extent the Russians would strengthen their posts. This had the effect of bringing up three companies of Russian infantry which lined the trenches, whilst an additional company took up its position on the rocky hill to their left. I then strengthened the chasseurs with the weak El Bassan battalion. Upon this the Russians moved forward three squadrons of cavalry. These, however, on the chasseurs firing at them at long range, fell back hurriedly. I waited for a considerable time for the arrival of Shakir Pacha, who was anxious to be present at the reconnaissance, but as we could

detect that fresh troops were moving up over the mountains from the direction of Petric, I determined to delay no longer, and made preparations for a forward movement with the El Bassan, Chasseurs, Touzla, and Uskubs, keeping the Prizrend in reserve as a support. As the advanced skirmishers gradually opened fire all along the line, the enemy again strengthened the force in their entrenchments. Our poor men were so weary with the hard work and exposure which they had recently experienced, no doubt also affected by the terribly trying day which they had gone through so manfully less than a week before, that they had lost the dash and élan which had then characterized these good battalions. On arriving within about 500 yards of the Russian entrenchments I noticed that there was a check all along the line, and the forward movement which I had ordered soon came to a standstill, while the advanced skirmishers, lying down in the snow, replied to the fire of the Russians. This state of things continued for about a quarter of an hour. Having no support on my left, from the want of co-operation which had been decreed relative to Bekir Pacha, I had to feel down the road which led in that direction towards Petric with a small troop of cavalry, which alone of this arm was available. By

this road our guns had originally retired. Without being certain that the enemy was not present at that point, we should only have run into a trap if able to take the village of Matchka, and might have been cut off in rear by the Russians advancing from that direction.

After some delay the cavalry returned and reported that they had moved down the mountain path for some distance, and found no signs of the enemy. Riding down to the Touzla, which was the left battalion of the engaged line, I determined to attempt to turn the Russian right, and detached for this purpose four companies of the Touzla, and the little force of cavalry. They moved forward concealed by an undulation in the ground. The Russians were offering a very determined resistance, and were gradually reinforced from the rear to such an extent that I came to the conclusion that their whole position was occupied by a regiment, or four battalions of the Guard, whilst it was also evident that fresh troops were arriving from the direction of Petric.

The Russians established on the rocky peak and slopes of the mountain looked right down upon the plain over which we necessarily had to advance, and the fire of their Berdan rifles told at very extreme range.

An incident occurred during the reconnaissance, which proves very conclusively how utterly impossible it is for infantry to act against modern fire-arms in the close formations, or even in the much-loved British lines of olden days.

Four companies of the Prizrend were in support on the right. In front of them was the attacking force, consisting of a first and second line of skirmishers. Between these lines there was a distance of at least 300 yards. The Prizrend support was advancing in line 500 yards in the rear of the second line of skirmishers. The leading skirmishers were certainly from 400 to 500 yards distant from the enemy. This gave a distance of upwards of 1200 yards between the Prizrend wing and the Russians established on the rocks.

When the leading skirmishers were checked by the Russian fire and halted, the supports halted also. The commander of the four companies of the Prizrend kept his men in line and standing up. I noticed, however, that the men of this wing began falling to the rear in very considerable numbers. Feeling sure that the men of this fine battalion would never leave their ranks without some decided reason, I rode there to inquire the cause, and found on my arrival that they were

under a very considerable fire. I censured the commander for not making the men lie down, and discovered that in less than ten minutes at this extreme range he had lost twenty-five men killed and wounded out of four weak companies. This had occurred principally from the carelessness of the commander in not seizing the opportunity of concealing his men by some slight undulation of the ground, and not making them lie down whilst halted.

Our casualties generally were becoming more serious than the reconnaissance almost warranted. Still, it was of the greatest importance to carry out the object which was desired by Shakir Pacha. On riding again to the left, where the turning movement was now in operation, I was distressed to find that Islan Bey, the brave commander of the brigade, was wounded, and being taken to the rear.

The turning movement made by the cavalry and the wing of the Touzla had the desired effect. The men in the entrenchments on the Russian right of the line, finding themselves outflanked, hastily abandoned their works, and fell back along the road towards Petric. Gradually driving in upon this flank, we soon had the satisfaction of seeing the Russians retiring in confusion. Sound-

ing a general advance, we pushed them back out of the village and on to the crest of the rocky hill on its left rear. It was not my intention to attempt to take this hill, as it would only have occasioned a useless and objectless sacrifice of life; but it was necessary to hold the Russians in check by occupying one of its ridges, whilst the village, which was still under a distant Russian fire, could be destroyed.

In order to effect this, and as the Russians were continually receiving reinforcements from the direction of Petric, I sent back to Shakir Pacha, asking him to send forward two battalions of infantry which might cover the retiring movement of our force when the village had been destroyed and the object of the reconnaissance effected. I also requested him to send forward a mountain gun, which might be used with good results against the Russians on the mountain top, and might tend to prevent a counter-attack on their part, if they received their reinforcements before the destruction of the village had been accomplished. I sent a company of the Prizrend into the village, which had, of course, been completely abandoned by the inhabitants, in order to accomplish its destruction as commanded.

The Russians, who had originally occupied the

entrenched positions, had fallen back all along the line in utter disorder, but the reinforcements arriving from Petric kept gradually strengthening the position on the rocky mountain. The Turkish troops, although on lower ground, were fairly concealed by a ridge of rocks, but a rather heavy fire was kept up on both sides, and the casualties were becoming serious.

I waited, anxiously expecting that each moment we should see the village burst out in flames, but nearly an hour passed without any sign of the order having been executed. I then sent Colonel Allix down into Matchka with two mounted orderlies to discover the cause of the delay. We saw him move into the village, and shortly afterwards smoke and flames burst out in all directions. Fanned by a gentle breeze, the fire quickly extended.

We could see the two battalions sent by Shakir as reinforcements moving up the road, preceded by a mountain gun. The latter had just come into position and opened fire upon the rocky crest, and the two battalions were forming in line at some distance in the rear as a reserve.

I was only awaiting the arrival of Colonel Allix in order to give the signal to our troops to retire from the rocky ridge which they occupied on the

mountain side, whilst keeping the Russians in check.

I heard that Shakir had sent up two battalions of Mustafiz, and this fact was soon developed in a most unpleasant manner. Although nearly a mile distant from the enemy, a few Russian bullets fell near or amongst them; upon which they immediately commenced a wild and disorderly fire upon our own troops in front. The latter thereupon fell back hurriedly from the mountain sooner than I had intended, and, as the Russians then immediately began to advance, I was left for a short time in great anxiety relative to the position of Colonel Allix in the village. We were pleased, however, soon afterwards to see him come galloping towards us with the orderlies.

He reported that, on entering Matchka, he had found no Turkish troops; but, determined to carry out the object of the reconnaissance, assisted only by his orderlies, he had himself most gallantly remained and fired the village in all directions. It afterwards transpired that the officer in command of the company which I had sent to effect this object had been wounded just before entering Matchka, and the soldiers, finding themselves without a commander, had taken up a position in a small hollow, and had never



carried out the order. We now fell back with the mountain gun and a company which had been told off to escort it, but the wretched Mustafiz, firing wildly in all directions, immediately broke up and retired to our entrenchments.

The Russians, taking heart at this, began pushing forward down the slope, and we lost several men of the company attached to the gun before reaching our lines. This rearward movement, carried out sooner than I had intended, had however effected the object of developing the whole Russian force.

The village was burning furiously, and I calculated that the Russian position was occupied by a brigade of the Guards. This verified exactly the report of Colonel Allix made from his observation from the mountain top near Petric.

The Russians made no attempt at an advance upon our entrenchments. The object of the reconnaissance had been completely accomplished, but from the Russian dead that we had passed on our advance and the number of our own wounded that had been going to the rear, the casualties on both sides were almost heavier than an ordinary reconnaissance warranted. Valuable intelligence had, however, been gained.

## CHAPTER XIV.

The Russians entrench—Sufferings of the soldiers—Thanks of the Sultan—Arrival of Suleiman—Dearth in plenty—Religious prejudices—Loss of the Shipka force—Orders for retreat—Military stores—Usual confusion—The night march—The armistice—Change of plans—Regain former position—Russian carelessness—Surprise of Bulgarians.

THE Russians immediately set to work to entrench their whole line, and it thus seemed certain that our Otlukoi force had not been followed by the *gros* of the Russian army under Gourko, which had evidently been directed towards either Ichti-man or Samakoff.

On arriving at our entrenched position, I was pleased to find from the report of the doctors that the wound of Islan Bey, although painful, would not be likely to keep him long from his military duties.

I had arranged with Shakir Pacha that the brigade of Nazeff Bey, together with the old fifth or Tashkessen brigade, should remain in the ad-

vanced position for the night, until relieved by that of Mehemet in the morning.

The weather was bitterly cold, and the poor soldiers were suffering terribly from the constant hard work and exposure which they had to endure so unremittingly.

No orders for the retreat of the whole force upon Adrianople had arrived from Suleiman, but we learnt, to our surprise, by a despatch from that chief, that we might shortly expect his personal appearance at Otlukoi.

On the following morning, the brigade of Mehemet arrived; and, in company with Redjib Pacha, I carefully examined the position in the little pass which was nearer to Otlukoi, and which would save these relieving brigades from the constant tedious marching and counter-marching which the unnecessary distance of the advanced entrenchments from Otlukoi now necessitated. The brigade of Shukri had been occupied for the last few days in throwing up entrenchments along the main position in rear of Otlukoi, and had accomplished a vast amount of labour under their chief, whose speciality, I had already noticed, consisted in successfully carrying out work of this nature.

Whilst bivouacking on the hill-side on the ad-

vanced position, I received a telegram from the Sultan, expressing his thanks for the result of the battle of Tashkessen, and notifying my promotion to the rank of ferik, or Lieutenant-General.

On the following day Suleiman arrived at Otlukoi. He seemed to be in a most undecided and unsettled state of mind, and rumours were current that he had been or was about to be displaced from the chief command. We rode out with him on the following morning, to make an examination of the main position, but he soon returned without going over the whole line.

Although Otlukoi was evidently a most prosperous and thriving town, teeming with supplies of every kind, we found it most difficult to obtain even the ordinary necessities of life by purchase from the Bulgarians. The town itself was, of course, completely at the mercy of the large body of troops that occupied it, but the strictest order prevailed, whilst the Bulgarians did a thriving trade at almost prohibitive prices. The troops themselves were not even placed in the houses, but occupied the courtyards or any positions where a little shelter could be obtained.

As a proof of the regard which was paid at this time by at least the better class of Turkish generals to the religious prejudices of the inha-

bitants, it was only after asking my opinion that Shakir would consent to the occupation of a large unfinished building intended as a church, and which would comfortably shelter at least five hundred men.

During these few days passed at Otlukoi we enjoyed comparative comfort, and had the opportunity of obtaining a little repose after the trying nature of the weeks which had preceded our arrival.

On the morning of January 10th, I learnt, to my surprise, from Shakir, that Suleiman had gone off hurriedly to Bazardjik. A despatch of the greatest moment had arrived. Shakir told me in confidence that news had reached the Commander-in-Chief that the Shipka position had been surrounded by the Russians, who had passed the Balkans and taken prisoners the whole army of Vesil Pacha, who commanded at that point, and whose force had been considerably strengthened since the date of my visit to it.

That afternoon a telegraphic despatch reached us from Bazardjik, ordering an immediate retreat of the whole Otlukoi army.

As the instructions from Suleiman had induced Shakir to believe that our stay at Otlukoi might be considerably prolonged, it had not been thought

advisable to send to the rear the large quantity of military stores which had fallen back with us from the position at Kamarli; the consequence was, that the retreat would be much impeded by the long train of arabas which had to be despatched with all these stores towards Bazardjik.

It had been determined to continue to hold the advanced position towards Matchka, which was then occupied by Shukri Pacha, together with the position to the north of the town, which was held by the brigade of Ibrahim, until all the other troops were well upon their road. Shukri would then fall back from in front of the Russians upon Otlukoi, and Ibrahim's brigade, which was to be drawn in and to occupy a position in rear of the town, was detailed as a rear-guard.

We waited with Shakir at Otlukoi until all these arrangements had been carried out. On getting on to the main road, we found the usual confusion which attends the night retreat of a Turkish army. I remained behind to see that the rear brigades fell back in proper order, and then moved on with the column.

We had not quite reached the crest of the high position which lies south of Otlukoi, when a cavalry orderly came pushing through the crowd. He spoke to the troops as he passed, and brought

me a despatch from Shakir, and the cry soon broke out all along the line, "The war is over!"

The despatch was singular.

It stated that news had just arrived that an armistice had been concluded between the Turkish and Russian forces.

I heard that Shakir, with his staff, had stopped only a short distance in advance, and, on reaching the spot, he confirmed the note which he had despatched to me, although his information had been accompanied by no details.

After a short consultation, it was determined that it would be advisable immediately to retrace our steps, and to take up the former advanced position, if it had not been already occupied by the Russians. There would be probably a military commission to define the boundaries determined upon by the armistice, and it might be of importance, should this armistice fall through, to occupy the strong pass which lay in advance of Otlukoi.

Pushing down the hill with Redjib, accompanied by a squadron of cavalry, we sent them rapidly on towards the line of entrenchments near Matchka, which lay some five miles from the town, but before we reached Otlukoi daylight had completely broken. In rear of the cavalry we

despatched a regiment of infantry, and, although the troops did not arrive in the advanced position for more than an hour after daybreak, the Russians apparently had not even discovered their departure.

The Bulgarian inhabitants of Otlukoi, who had made up their minds that they had seen the last of us, and were making preparations to welcome the arrival of the Russians, were disagreeably surprised when we returned to reoccupy our former quarters.



## CHAPTER XV.

Communication with the Russians—Matchka destroyed—An agreement—Proof of Russian designs—Hostility to England—Russians repudiate the armistice—Preparations for retreat—Want of experience—No orders—Arrival of despatch—A cold and slippery night—Dr. Atwood missing—A halt—Tatar-Bazardjik—Fuad's division—Suleiman's house—Golden moments—Probability of a march through the Rhodope mountains—Advance of Skobelev and Radetzky—Lines of retreat—Iskender at Philippopolis.

It was evidently necessary to communicate at once with the Russian general who occupied the position at Matchka. My chief of the staff, Shakir Bey, was detailed for this duty, and, accompanied by a trumpeter and the usual white flag of truce, he rode forward from our advanced position towards the Russian lines.

He returned in the course of about two hours. On his arrival at the Russian outposts, he had been detained until an officer was sent for, and then, after some delay, he had been blindfolded and conducted toward the village. He was there

introduced to the general of brigade who commanded at that spot. As he found the general in a miserable little hut, it confirmed our previous impression that the destruction of the village had been tolerably complete. The Russian officers received him very civilly, and, although they stated that they had received no information from their superiors as to the conclusion of the armistice, the general in command suggested that if Shakir Bey, as the representative of Shakir Pacha, would pledge his word of honour that no attack would be made by the Turks, he, the Russian general, would pledge himself that no forward military movement should be made by the Russian troops under his command, pending instructions from his superiors in the rear.

To these terms Shakir Bey agreed.

He had a long and amusing conversation with the officers of the Guard who were in the position at Matchka.

They told him that they were utterly sick of the war, and mentioned a fact of some political significance. Shakir told them that the Turkish army had been enduring the fatigues of the campaign for longer than they, the officers of the Guard, and had more reason to be fatigued by the war; but the Russians stated that for more than

a year prior to the campaign every preparation for it had been made, and that they themselves had been hard at work at a course of preliminary instruction.

The Russians threw the whole blame of the war upon England, and spoke with a strong feeling of hostility towards the British nation.

They told Shakir Bey that they had seen our writing on the wall at Petric, and would do their best to assist our comrade, Colonel Baker.

I now returned with Shakir Bey to Otlukoi, and reported this arrangement to Shakir Pacha.

Early on the following morning a mounted orderly rode in from the outposts, stating that a Russian staff-officer had arrived, and was anxious to deliver a letter. On riding forward to the advanced entrenchments, I found that he had left the missive with the officer of the outposts, and had returned to his lines at Matchka. It was a curt note from the Russian general in command at that place, written in French, stating that he had communicated with his superiors in the rear, but they, having received no intelligence whatever of the reported armistice, he should hold himself free to resume military operations after twelve o'clock on that day.

It seemed so evident to me that, if this were

the case, the retreat of the Otlukoi army upon Bazardjik must be again resumed, that on passing the artillery lines I ordered the whole of the batteries to be in readiness to march, and, on reaching head-quarters, I endeavoured to persuade Shakir Pacha to send the guns and a portion of the troops immediately to the rear, in order to avoid the confusion which had existed on the former occasion.

It was curiously remarkable, during the whole war, how little practice and experience the Turkish generals had acquired in the arrangement of the marches of any considerable bodies of troops. They and their staffs seemed to be quite unaware of the length of time which it takes to move a considerable body of men, more especially when encumbered with transport, along one line of narrow and often very indifferent road.

I urged Shakir to send the artillery away to Bazardjik. The guns on these ill-made country roads were always a source of considerable embarrassment and delay. I also proposed that he should move a brigade to the position on the heights about four miles from Otlukoi, in the direction of Bazardjik. That another brigade should also be placed on the road, at about a mile from the town. In this manner the march

of the whole body of troops might be commenced at the same moment, and could be carried out without the usual disorder and confusion.

Shakir was at first inclined to resist this proposal, stating that he had no orders from Suleiman on the subject; but I pointed out to him that, should even the order to remain at Otlukoi be received, it would be easy to call in the troops from these near points, whilst if, as seemed inevitable, the order for the retreat should arrive, all the preliminary dispositions would have been made.

Accordingly, the guns were sent on at about three o'clock in the afternoon, with directions to march for about eight miles; to halt there for a time, and to be ready to push forward or to return, according to the orders which might be received. The other brigades were placed in the positions which had been indicated.

As had been anticipated, at about six o'clock in the afternoon the order arrived from Suleiman, who was at Tatar-Bazardjik, to commence the retreat that night, and to fall back with the whole of the Otlukoi force upon Bazardjik. It was only necessary to despatch cavalry orderlies to the guns and to the two brigades, which were already on the road, to put them in motion. The brigade

of Bekir Pacha, which came in from the village of Banja, on the left, joined the column at about six miles distance from Otlukoi.

The road, as had been so often the case on many of our night marches, was a mass of ice, rendered more than usually slippery by the movement of the troops. The night was excessively dark. The head-quarter staff halted at the junction of the roads leading towards Banja for about two hours. We found the usual difficulty in making a fire from the green wood, which was all that was available, and we sat round in the snow waiting till the rear brigades should have arrived.

An incident had arisen just before our departure from Otlukoi, which gave us some uneasiness relative to the safety of one of the three English doctors who had reached Otlukoi from Bazardjik only a few hours before our departure. Dr. Atwood had arrived at Otlukoi on the afternoon of our departure. It was, of course, impossible to divulge all the probable movements of the troops long beforehand; but I had done my utmost to acquaint the doctors belonging to the different societies who had arrived at Otlukoi that a movement to Tatar-Bazardjik would be carried out on the evening in question.

Dr. Gill, who was always indefatigable in making known these arrangements, had spent a considerable time in preparing every one for the move; but, whilst *en route*, the rumour ran that Dr. Atwood was missing, and supposed to be left behind at Otlukoi.

When the rear brigade appeared on the road, the head-quarter staff again commenced its march. Few people escaped during that night without three or four falls. At length, about two hours before dawn, we arrived at the little village of Cirne.

It was already occupied by soldiers who had passed on in advance; but a small house in the village was cleared for us, some hay brought in, and a fire lighted, and the whole of the head-quarter and my own staff, consisting of ten people, lay down in one room to rest till morning broke.

Soon after daylight we again commenced our march towards Bazardjik, which lay in the plains below, at a distance of only about seven miles. When four miles from Bazardjik we came upon the trace of a new road towards Otlukoi, a work which had been commenced with the intention of completing a regular *chaussée* between Bazardjik and Otlukoi.

On reaching the environs of Bazardjik we

found that Fuad Pacha's division was lying north of the town.

An officer had been sent on to receive the instructions of Suleiman relative to the position to be occupied by the Otlukoi force, and the orders now arrived that we were to pass through the town to the south of the Maritza, and to take up a position in the different villages which watched the road leading from Samakoff to Bazardjik.

Having given the necessary directions to the troops, Shakir Pacha, Redjib, and myself proceeded to the residence of Suleiman in the town of Bazardjik. The division of Sabit had just before arrived, falling back through the Ichtiman Pass. We here came across Fuad Pacha, who had been occupying Bazardjik for many days before. We found at once that all the generals of division were in perfect accord, that golden moments had been lost, and that the safety of the army depended upon an immediate retreat upon Adrianople; but great doubts were expressed as to whether this movement could now be accomplished.

Even before leaving Otlukoi, directly we had heard of the fate that had befallen the whole of the Shipka army, I had felt convinced that the army of Suleiman would eventually be compelled



to fall back south, through the mountains of the Rhodope, and to gain the sea at points between Kawala and Lagos, and I had carefully marked out all the routes upon the Austrian map, and upon that of Kiepert, which led through the little-known mountain district towards the Egean sea.

Before our interview with Suleiman we heard that although Shipka had surrendered on the 9th of January, no interruption had as yet taken place in the railway communication between Adrianople and Constantinople; but there was an extraordinary dearth of rolling stock at the railway station at Bazardjik. It seemed evident that the safety of Suleiman's army, if time yet remained to enable it to retreat upon Adrianople, must depend upon a certain force being quickly concentrated in the position of Tirnova-Yamboli, which might afford such an impediment to the advance of the forces under Radetsky and Skobelev as to give time for the passage of the *gros* of the army through Hasskoi and Hermanli to Adrianople.

Captain Burnaby had left Otlukoi the day previous to our departure, and on his arrival at Bazardjik had an interview with Suleiman. I gathered from his account of the interview that Suleiman had no fixed plans whatever. He

seemed to be pursued by the idea that every one doubted his personal courage, and, as he himself expressed it, he was determined to deliver *une bataille acharnée* in the plains of Philippopolis, where terrible slaughter would be seen.

A previous study of the map had seemed to show that if the armies of Radetsky and Skobeleff used ordinary diligence, they must inevitably reach the strategical point of Hermanli before it was possible for the army of Suleiman to pass that point on its way towards Adrianople.

The staff of the Marshal were in utter ignorance as to the roads of retreat which were still open ; but one thing was evident, namely, that the force under Osman Noury Pacha, which had guarded the Samakoff pass, the force of Sabit falling back through Ichtiman, that of Shakir moving from Otlukoi, and that of Iskender, which, through the arrangement of Shakir, irrespective of any orders from head-quarters, had fallen back direct from Avratalan upon Philippopolis, would all very shortly be concentrated upon the line of the Maritza.

On seeing Suleiman, we found him in a state of wild confusion relative to the respective movements of the army. He evidently heard with a feeling of relief, that, in all probability, the

ten battalions under Iskender were by that time safely in position in Philippopolis. He informed us that Osman Noury, with twenty-two battalions from Samakoff, would probably arrive at Bazardjik that night, and that then the whole of the troops which had retreated in this direction would be concentrated at Bazardjik or Philippopolis.

It appeared that Azaf, with twenty-six battalions, composed of troops hastily collected from the detached points to the west, had fallen back by the road leading through Kustendil towards Salonica.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Sabit's division—Movements of other armies—Suleiman's loss of influence—Danger looming—Distrust of Suleiman—The wounded officer—The bridge of Bazardjik—A good administrator—Fighting units—Recruits and old soldiers—Fresh delays—Order of retreat—Osman retires first—Proper order of march.

AFTER our interview at Suleiman's house, I had some conversation with Fuad. He was in distress at the general state of mismanagement that was apparent everywhere, and evidently thought that Suleiman was a traitor, and endeavouring to lose army after army by arrangement with the Russians.

We also met Sabit, whose division was just marching in from Ichtiman. They seemed rather a fine body of men, and the battalions were far stronger than those of the rest of the army which had been engaged in the front.

Fuad's division held the approaches to the road from Ichtiman and Otlukoi, and Sabit joined

him in this duty. Shakir's troops had crossed the Maritza, and occupied the villages which watched the Samakoff road.

We now gathered generally an idea of the past military situation.

It appeared that the Russians, after passing the Balkans at Tchuriak, had advanced on Sofia. An engagement had taken place, and the Turks, finding that they would soon be unable to make head against the very superior force of the enemy which was gathering, called in all their detachments, and were fortunate enough to save the forces from Lotikova and Berkofitcha. They then fell back by Samakoff, and held that pass, followed by the Russians. Azaf, with the troops still farther west, on the Servian frontier, was retiring by Kustendil. Suleiman had left Sofia the moment the storm burst upon us, and had retired with his staff to Adrianople. Either still unable to see the danger that loomed in all directions, or with a spirit of perverse obstinacy, he would not even now make arrangements for the concentration of all the available armies around Adrianople. This plainly necessary movement would have given the Turks some breathing time, and would certainly have stayed the Russian advance.

The army now concentrating around Bazardjik, numbered about 40,000 men.

The lost Shipka force had numbered about 40,000.

The garrison of Adrianople and detachments which were falling back would have raised these two armies, if united at Adrianople, to over 100,000 men. The fortifications were well advanced and partially armed. The Russian army would take some time before it could move forward with its guns and *matériel* over the Balkans, and be ready to undertake a great siege in the depth of winter, so far from its line of communication. Adrianople was in direct railway communication with Constantinople, which would much facilitate the supply of the Turkish army. The necessity of the step was self-evident, yet Suleiman still opposed it. But the events of the preceding week had destroyed his influence at Constantinople, and he was superseded, and ordered to take command of the forces of Bazardjik and Otlukoi alone. This had been the state of affairs when he reached Otlukoi. Then Shipka had fallen, and such was the infatuation at Constantinople that Suleiman had again been appointed as Commander-in-Chief. But the Porte was also treating for peace, and commissioners had been sent from Con-

stantinople to the Russian head-quarters. Accepting all the Russian terms, they had telegraphed to notify the armistice to the Porte, and the Porte had forwarded the information to the commanders of the respective armies. The Russians treacherously, seeing the advantage that might be gained, and how completely the Turks appeared to be at their mercy, now laid down fresh conditions, and ordered their troops to push on with all speed. Thus for two days, whilst the Turkish commanders were under the impression that the armistice existed, the Russians were taking advantage by a system of deception, to push forward their forces and to seize strategical points.

Shipka had fallen upon the 9th, and a glance at the map will show how important it then was for Suleiman Pacha to move rapidly towards Adrianople with all his forces, and more especially to occupy and hold the strong strategical point at the railway junction of Tirnova, where the road from Shipka crosses the river by a bridge. To accomplish this was easy. Fuad's force lay at Bazardjik, and this division, together with the troops at Adrianople, might have been concentrated by railway at Tirnova. Then, if the position of Tirnova had been held and strengthened, the Russians under Radetsky and Skobeleff might certainly have

been checked until the forces coming from the west had reached Hasskeui or Hermanli, where the united armies might have fallen back upon Adrianople. But this self-evident strategy was beyond the scope of Suleiman. Fuad was kept idly at Bazardjik. No concentration of rolling stock was made at that railway station, and no precautions were taken to guard Tirnova. The possibility of retiring upon Adrianople was evidently a question of hours. Yet, to our surprise, no order was given for a rearward movement. The railway trains were still running, and the telegraph still working, but no steps were taken to render the line available for military purposes.

It is not to be wondered at that this, coupled with what had gone before, had created a profound feeling of distrust amongst the superior officers of the army. In fact, the general impression prevailed that we had been "bought and sold," and the existence of this idea produced a most demoralizing effect. It may be imagined how this was heightened, when the next morning arrived<sup>1</sup> without any movement being made towards Adrianople by even a part of the large force assembled round Bazardjik.

Osman's troops had not arrived the evening

<sup>1</sup> 12th January.



before, but they now came streaming in with usual Turkish disorder. They formed up south of the Maritza, near the railway station.

That station was a most painful sight. It was crowded with thousands of refugee families waiting for a passage to the capital. Some empty trucks were standing at the station. These they had taken possession of, and even the roofs of the carriages were occupied by them. They were in a fearful state. The Turkish Compassionate Fund had erected a soup-kitchen, but all their efforts were as a drop in the ocean amidst such a torrent of distress.

At the station I met some wounded officers and soldiers who were going to the rear. Amongst them was the officer of the Prizrend, who, with his company, had been sent down to burn the village on the day of the reconnaissance at Matchka. He seemed a fine fellow, and was seriously hurt. He was most anxious to assure me that it was no neglect on his part, but only his being wounded that had prevented the order from being carried out by him.

Shakir's force was established in three villages on the plain. The brigades of Mustapha Pacha and Bekir Pacha had been taken from him, and added to Fuad's force. Shukri Pacha occupied

one village to the left, the brigades of Mehemet and Ibrahim one near the Samakoff road, the old fifth brigade the village of Beykoi, about half a mile to the south of the station.

About twelve o'clock on the day after our arrival a little excitement was created by the news that the Russians had shown themselves. The heads of their columns had appeared, both on the Otlukoi and also on the Ichtiman roads, the divisions of Fuad and Sabit had formed in line of battle, but no serious collision occurred, nor did the Russians attempt to interfere with the march of Osman's column, which was moving in on the southern bank of the Maritza. Preparations were being made to destroy the bridge on the Ichtiman road. It was also evident that the bridge crossing the Maritza south of Bazardjik must be destroyed; this would be serious work, and all my inquiries at head-quarters only elicited the answer, "Oh, it is built of wood, and can be burnt, or it will be blown up."

True, it was built of wood, but on stone buttresses, and the way was covered with two feet of concrete. With any other army its destruction would have been simple, but I knew the Turkish army too well by this time to trust to staff preparations for such an eventuality.

No orders for our movement arrived during that day, but it was busily employed in introducing order and uniformity into our transport arrangements. Shakir was an excellent administrator. The pack-horses were properly distributed amongst the battalions according to their strength.

It had been determined that we should carry biscuits with the army for ten days, thus, if compelled to fall back through the mountains, we hoped to have enough to enable us to reach the sea. Provided that Turkish troops have biscuit, they will march without complaint for many, many days.

The army was now encumbered with battalions that had entirely disappeared as fighting units. Amongst these I reckoned my Arab Koudooz battalion, already mentioned as occupying one of the redoubts at Kamarli. Whenever there was any hard work or fighting to be done, it was always reported as reduced to nothing, and practically non-existent. But whenever we halted for a day or two, and rations were distributed, the Koudooz re-appeared with sixty or seventy effectives.

My brave little battalion of Chasseurs was reduced to about 120 men, for it had suffered at Matchka as well as Tashkessen ; but it was always

ready for work. Whilst at Bazardjik about seventy recruits came up for the army, active-looking young peasant lads, but utterly undrilled. I attached them to the Chasseurs, and the next morning they appeared all armed, and in uniform, and they did no disgrace to the battalion in the trying marches that followed. All the events of the war tended to show how rapidly recruits become good soldiers if drafted into really good battalions that have a prestige to maintain, and how, on the contrary, trained soldiers rapidly deteriorate if placed in newly organized or imperfectly disciplined battalions. It also proved how soon weak battalions become demoralized, as a rule, unless their *cadres* are extraordinarily good, whilst strong battalions retain their cohesion and efficiency. Providence did indeed seem to cling to the "*gros bataillons*."

The evening of the day after our arrival was approaching, and still no orders of movement reached us. Suleiman spoke as if 40,000 men, with an unusual amount of transport, could be moved off like a corporal's guard. I began to make careful inquiries about the different roads by which the force could retreat, and I found three; viz. first, the main *chaussée* north of the Maritza. This was a very good road. It was not

threatened, and, moreover, five regiments of Turkish cavalry lay on that side of the river to cover the retreat. It passed through Philippopolis, now occupied by Iskender, and, crossing the Maritza there, afterwards ran south of that river by Papasli, Hasskeui, and Hermanli, to Adrianople. This road might be followed by the divisions of Fuad and Sabit.

Secondly, there was the railway running south of the Maritza. One or two bridges at starting were open between the rails; this would make them impassable for baggage horses, and would delay infantry. There were enormous piles of thick planks near the station. I suggested that these should be sent on in trucks which were available, and the open spaces between the rails filled in.

The third road was a small country path, which frequently crossed the railway, but two columns, by following alternately one and the other, might march without clashing. But all such ideas were lost upon Suleiman.

Night fell, and not a man had yet marched. Every one knew the tremendous importance of each hour, yet here we were wasting our time and paving the way to the destruction of the army.

Colonel Allix had to go to Constantinople on business of importance. The line was still reported open, and he started on this day, with the faithful Charles.

No orders for our departure arrived that night, but it was rumoured that Osman and Sabit's divisions would march on the morrow. Some idea of the utter incompetency of Suleiman may be formed from the fact that with a large army concentrating at Bazardjik, which it was all important to get away quickly to Adrianople, and with three roads open to him, the last-arrived division marched the first, and all were eventually directed to move by one road, and that the worst. It was not until late on the next morning that Osman commenced his march, together with Sabit, who was to move to Philippopolis, and there join Iskender. The whole day passed away, and no further order came for the movement of the troops. It was only late in the afternoon that we heard that we were to march that night. Every one was now more than ever convinced that treachery was at work.

Let us consider how this march might have been carried out. Firstly, all the disposable rolling stock of the railway should have been concentrated at Bazardjik. Fuad's division, as

before mentioned, should have been conveyed rapidly to Tirnova before our arrival at Bazardjik. All Shakir's force might have moved off by the roads south of the Maritza the morning after our arrival. Osman moving south, and Sabit north of the river, might have followed that night. Thus on this afternoon when all three divisions were beginning to struggle off by one country road, the position of the army would have been as follows:—Fuad would have been at Tirnova, Shakir's force at Papasli, Sabit at Philippopolis, and Osman at Kadikoi. The trains on the railway might then have again kept taking troops to the rear.

If this common-sense arrangement had been carried out, Suleiman's force would have reached Adrianople without the slightest difficulty.

## CHAPTER XVII.

Arrival of Suleiman at Beykeui—Sudden alarm—Fuad at Bazardjik—A necessary precaution—Arrangements for the march—The bridge of Bazardjik—Bulgarian murder—Prompt justice—A difficult task—The retreat of Fuad's division—Fires in the town—Spread of the fire—Dangerous preparations—Riding through the flames—The retreat of the cavalry cut off—Burning of the bridge—Perilous position of the stragglers—Cavalry rear-guard.

I WENT to Shakir's house to try and get arrangements made for providing guides to be attached to each brigade. Suleiman was with him in a state of some excitement. He told me that Fuad had been seriously attacked at Bazardjik, and that he wanted me to cross the Maritza bridge, and move to his support.

The fifth brigade and the brigades of Ibrahim and Mehemet had at that moment received orders to get under arms.

I immediately mounted and started with the fifth brigade, but could hear no firing in the direction of Bazardjik.



On reaching the bridge, not a sound that would indicate that an engagement was going on, could be heard.

I knew the general orders of march for that night. Fuad's division was to cross by the bridge and to take the road leading south of the river towards Philippopolis. He was to be followed by the brigades of Shukri, Mehemet, and Ibrahim, the old fifth brigade coming last as rear-guard.

The bridge was to be destroyed after Fuad had passed. Now, the passage of the bridge by Fuad's twenty-two battalions with all their transport, artillery, and *matériel* would take some time. What would it be if I sent twenty-two more battalions unnecessarily across the river? I therefore gave orders to the leading brigade to halt when it reached the bridge, whilst I pushed on to find Fuad, and to see how I could best assist him.

Crossing over into Bazardjik I learnt that Fuad was living in a house on the other side of the town. On reaching his residence I found that he was at home and quietly seated at dinner. He was astonished when I told him that I had been sent to his aid, and assured me that he had never been attacked. I immediately despatched

orders to the brigades to remain south of the Maritza.

Fuad informed me that he had five regiments of cavalry covering his front close in advance of Bazardjik. This would evidently add increased difficulties to the retreat of his force during the night. He also told me that the Russians were in close contact with his outposts; evidently the brigade of the Guards which had followed us from Otlukeui. The Russian column which had moved through the Ichtiman Pass had also shown itself; but neither had, as yet, made any offensive movement against his division.

I consulted with him relative to the measures to be taken to effect the retreat during the night, with as little disorder as possible. We agreed that his division should commence its march at about nine o'clock, whilst I remained with the fifth brigade formed up just south of the bridge. After the whole of his division had retired and crossed the river, the three brigades would follow, the old fifth brigade, as usual, forming the rear-guard.

I inquired from Fuad as to what steps had been taken in order to carry out the destruction of the bridge. A casual examination in passing had shown me that this could only be accomplished

with certainty by blowing it up. Fuad informed me that he had applied to Suleiman, but that no gunpowder was available, nor had he any one with him who understood how to mine it properly. He was sanguine that we might be able to burn it, and assured me that he had laid in a large supply of petroleum and tar for this purpose. He also said that all the houses adjoining the bridge, and commanding the narrow street through which the enemy must pass in order to hamper his retreat, had been filled with inflammable materials. Thus, by firing the houses any immediate pursuit on the part of the enemy would be checked.

I agreed to return to the bridge to examine the feasibility of its destruction by fire. He was to rejoin me there when his division commenced its march.

Just before taking my departure a painful incident occurred.

A report was brought in that a soldier had been treacherously shot by a young Bulgarian in the streets of Bazardjik. The culprit was arrested by the man himself and some of his comrades who were near, and the soldier, at first, appeared to be but slightly wounded.

The Bulgarian was taken red-handed with the

gun which he had just discharged, and a number of cartridges in his pocket, and was brought to Fuad's house. Just as the wounded man reached it, he suddenly fell dead.

The Bulgarian was brought in and examined. He did not attempt to deny his guilt, but urged that he had been incited to the act by the counsels of a Bulgarian priest of the town.

The evidence was perfectly clear and incontrovertible. His sentence was quickly pronounced by Fuad, and in less than a minute afterwards he had paid the penalty of death for the crime which he had committed.

On reaching the bridge I found that its destruction would be a matter of serious difficulty. The strong woodwork rested on stone piles and over this woodwork a layer of concrete some two feet in thickness had been placed. Unless this concrete could be removed it was evident that the bridge would not burn, whereas if I were able to take away the hard matter I should materially hamper the retreat of Fuad's artillery. It seemed moreover, highly improbable that the bridge would burn with certainty by simply laying inflammable materials upon the top. I therefore selected the two spans adjoining either bank of the stream,

and made immense piles of wood underneath these spans.

A great store of pine planks had been abandoned at the station close by, and these were now made available for the purpose of destroying the bridge.

The clearing away of the concrete proved a serious task, but we kept constant relays of men at work.

At about ten o'clock Fuad joined me, and soon the head of his column appeared. The division was accompanied as usual by a large mass of transport animals, and it took nearly two hours for it to accomplish the passage.

There were a number of Arab battalions with Fuad's division.

The poor soldiers at this time were suffering so severely from the intense cold that they seized every opportunity for laying in stores of firewood. They would avail themselves of every occasion when upon the line of march to collect wood which might be useful to them to make their bivouac fires when sitting in the snow at the termination of the day's march. The immense store of pine planks lying about in the vicinity of the station was a great temptation to these Arab troops, and every man immediately commenced to

load himself with the largest plank that he could carry.

As the small country road was somewhat blocked by transport animals, Fuad's division formed up and halted after accomplishing the passage of the bridge

When the road became clear, and they again moved off, I found that almost every soldier had burdened himself in the manner which has been described. We knew that forced marches would now be imperatively necessary, and it became important to prevent the soldiers from carrying this increased load. The planks had evidently been intended for the construction of huts or barracks, for they were sawn through in a peculiar manner, probably for the purposes of ventilation. It took us some time to see that the order for the relinquishment of their planks was strictly carried out, and, notwithstanding all our efforts, some of these planks were discovered on the following day, which had actually been carried by the men for a distance of fifteen miles before they had been abandoned.

Even when, at last, the division of Fuad commenced its march, the progress of the column was very slow.

The small country road, which turned to the

left immediately after passing the river, soon became blocked, and gave rise to many checks and delays.

Fuad had arranged that we should send word to the cavalry regiments who were still watching the front of the town, when the whole of my division had followed his own, and that then these regiments should fall rapidly back and pass the bridge, afterwards acting as a rear-guard.

During that evening several fires had broken out in the town of Bazardjik, and some houses were burning not very far distant from the head of the bridge. All this part of the town had been completely abandoned by the inhabitants.

It was past two o'clock in the morning before the brigades of Mehemet and Ibrahim commenced their march, and when, at last, nothing but the fifth brigade remained, instructions were sent to the cavalry to retire.

All the preparations for firing the bridge had been completed, and we waited anxiously for the arrival of the cavalry, but a long delay ensued, and again messengers were sent to repeat the order.

A cause for considerable anxiety had now arisen.

The flames of the burning houses not far from

the bridge were gradually extending in the direction of the narrow street through which the cavalry would have to pass. The houses in that vicinity, as has been already mentioned, were full of inflammable materials, and if the arrival of the cavalry were much longer delayed, it seemed possible that the flames might extend to the street, and that their retreat might be thus cut off.

It was in vain that messenger after messenger was despatched to hurry the arrival of the cavalry regiments. Fanned by a fresh breeze the flames gradually extended towards the only line of retreat.

At length, to our dismay, one of the houses prepared for burning burst forth into flames, and in a few minutes the fire had extended to the other side of the street.

Just at this moment we could see through the fire and smoke the head of the cavalry regiment arriving at the trot. As the leading horsemen neared the burning houses they halted and faltered, but we urged them forward, and soon one or two of the bolder spirits dashed at a gallop between the burning houses. Then, with a rush, the whole regiment followed in their track, but after their passage a serious delay occurred.



And now both sides of the street were burning furiously, and the flames had extended right up to the houses adjoining the bridge within a few yards from the point at which we stood.

We looked anxiously through the flames for the four missing regiments.

The houses were falling in, and the burning rafters lay across the roadway. At length, some dim figures of horsemen could be seen beyond the fire, but they hesitated to make the desperate attempt.

We moved forward towards the burning mass, and anxiously shouted to them to come on.

After some hesitation one man attempted the passage, and came at a gallop successfully through the flames. The movement once given, the long string of horsemen came galloping through the fire.

The whole scene was magnificently grand.

The part of the town adjoining the bridge was burning furiously, and lighting up the river right away to the opposite bank. The fifth brigade had just commenced its march.

At length, when the last horseman had passed through the fiery ordeal, the order was given for the destruction of the bridge. The timber plank-ing and the bridge itself had been thickly covered

with tar and petroleum, and it blazed up furiously although the part of the concrete roadway which had not been destroyed seemed likely to resist the effect of the fire.

We were just about to retire and follow the retreating infantry when we saw to our horror a party of about a dozen Turkish stragglers emerge from a house which the flames had not yet reached, and make their way towards the bridge, the Bazardjik end of which was now one mass of fire.

It was in vain that we urged them still to attempt to cross and make their way through the flames. They dreaded that the concrete pathway might fall beneath their feet, and stood irresolute on the other side of the span not twenty yards from where we were. It was only, at last, after rushing across ourselves that we could give them sufficient confidence. Then burnt and singed, we all retraced our steps and got safely back.

But this detachment was followed by another and another, and daylight was just beginning to break when the last straggler had crossed in safety. Then we all fell back to the other side of the Maritza, and the span of the bridge on that side was also ignited.

Round the camp-fires which had been lighted

by the infantry of my division stood the five cavalry regiments but little the worse for the scorching that they had received in their passage through the burning street.

Directions were given to them to remain until the infantry were well upon their march, when they were to fall slowly back, covering the rear of the army with every military precaution. Then we fell back and joined the retiring infantry.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

The march from Bazardjik—Cavalry engagement—Transport trains—The road to Philippopolis—Dread of water—Serious delays—An alarm—The enemy's cavalry—A change of plans—A fatal halt—False tactics—Suspicion of treachery—Last armies—Serious suspicions—Dearth of food—An outlet for escape—A mountain route—Intense depression.

As morning completely broke, we looked over a vast plain in the direction of Philippopolis.

As far as the eye could reach, a dense column of men and transport animals stretched away in the distance.

The village road which had been indicated for the army to follow was a mere track, leading occasionally over cultivated fields, but the railway, which ran near, afforded an excellent route for marching. The country was so flat and devoid of natural obstacles that the troops did not actually follow the pathway.

The brigades for the most part marched in battalion columns. Considerable delay arose from

the fact of the railway and the road constantly crossing each other. No Staff arrangements existed in the Turkish army, by which one column could always be maintained on the road or railway which lay to the left, whilst another followed the line to the right. The consequence was, that at each of these crossings the troops who were following the respective routes got jammed.

The cavalry had remained behind, near the bridge, and the rear brigade had not moved more than about four miles, when we heard them rather heavily engaged with the Russians.

The action of both the Turkish and the Russian cavalry during the war consisted in throwing out long lines of skirmishers, and maintaining a constant and rapid fire at considerable distances. Neither one side nor the other usually attempted to close.

The Russian cavalry had moved down on the right bank of the Maritza, and this accounted for the little engagement which was going on in the distance.

The river Maritza ran parallel with the march of the column. The whole plain appeared rich and well cultivated, and villages lay about in all directions. The troops were marching well, and

there were fewer stragglers and less disorder than I have ever seen in the march of a Turkish army. This resulted, for the most part, from the fact of the ground permitting that a regiment could be maintained in battalion columns, instead of column of route. The force which was now moving to the rear under Suleiman Pacha comprised about 40,000 men, including those employed for transport and commissariat purposes; but the army was accompanied by such an immense number of pack-horses that it gave the idea of very far larger numbers.

At mid-day the troops were still marching well. The men showed no signs of fatigue, and it seemed probable that the whole force would reach the vicinity of Philippopolis before night. After moving for about six miles, we had been surprised to find one of the brigades of Osman drawn up in a defensive position, which had been selected to cover the road. We carefully scanned the ground on the other side of the Maritza, along which we could distinctly trace the main *chaussée* which led from Bazardjik to Philippopolis; but there were no signs of the enemy moving forward by this road, and it was evident that the army of Suleiman had got a good start over the forces under Gourko.

It seemed probable that the safety of the army

would now depend upon its marching power. On reaching Philippopolis, all difficulties relative to roads would disappear. The main *chaussée*, which runs north of the Maritza river from Bazardjik to Philippopolis, crosses by a bridge in the latter town, and then runs parallel with the railway in the direction of Hermanli. There was a third country road, which led by Stanimaka and Ketenlik towards Hasskeui. This would give three fair routes by which the troops could march, and thus from this point the retreat would be much facilitated.

Many little streams ran down from the Balkans towards the Maritza. The passage of these streams by the troops occasioned great delay. The Turkish soldiers were not shod like the soldiers of other armies. Their boots had been long since worn out, and they had adopted the usual *chaussure* of the peasant class. A long strip of thin felt was wound round the foot and up the calf of the leg; a piece of raw hide was then sewn over the foot like a slipper. The men appeared to prefer these "Tchariks" to the regular military boots. They seemed to answer admirably for marching upon dry ground, but the soldier had the greatest objection to wetting his feet. The consequence was, that at each of

these streams the troops would halt, take off their Tchariks, and walk across barefooted, again resuming them on the opposite bank. It may be imagined what serious delay this constantly occasioned.

The cavalry skirmish in the rear seemed to have died out, and nothing occurred to disturb the march of the army.

It was getting near two o'clock in the afternoon when a high hill, rising out of the plain, became visible. It was covered with troops, and was marked on the Austrian map as close to the village of Kadikeui. On our arrival, we found that the whole of the divisions in advance had halted at this point. As we neared the height, there was evidently some cause for excitement, for the troops got rapidly under arms.

At the top of the hill stood a tumulus, from which a most extensive view of the surrounding country could be obtained. Here we found all the generals of division, with the exception of Osman, assembled. Russian troops had been reported to be moving close to Philippopolis, on the Bazardjik *chaussée*. On making a careful examination with my glasses, we could plainly distinguish that the movement consisted of a large force of Russian cavalry; but, as Philip-



popolis was at this time occupied by twenty-six battalions, under Sabit and Iskender, there was not much cause for alarm on this account.

It was evident, from the action of the enemy's cavalry, that they had been pushed forward in the hope of finding Philippopolis unoccupied, and they were now retreating again towards Bazardjik in one long column. There was no sign of infantry moving up in support.

We now held a small council of war on the tumulus. Each general of division reported that his troops were in good marching order, and not seriously fatigued.

It was evidently of the utmost moment to maintain the start which we had gained over the forces of Gourko. We unanimously came to an agreement that the troops should be rested until the evening, and then that the whole force should resume its route by the three roads already mentioned.

The necessary instructions had already been given, when it was reported that Suleiman had arrived in the village below, and had determined upon a different plan. There was suddenly a fresh alarm that the Russian cavalry were trying to cross the river, and Fuad, eager for the fray, moved down with one of his brigades in that

direction, but the report appeared to have been unfounded.

On our going down to see Suleiman, we heard that the Russians had passed the Maritza, with a very small force, near the village of Adakeui, some four miles back; and, to the profound astonishment of all the generals of division, Suleiman informed us not only that he had determined to halt the whole force on the following day, but that he should actually move back in the direction of Adakeui.

It was in vain that we urged upon him the advantage of maintaining the start we had gained over Gourko. This determination on the part of Suleiman was so extraordinary and inexplicable that it gave us all the idea that he wished to lose the army.

I pointed out to him, as strongly as possible, that the halt must enable the forces of Gourko to come in contact with us on the morrow, and that if once the army, encumbered as it was with a mass of transport, became engaged, it would be impossible afterwards to extricate it. I also urged the folly of moving back to attack a small force of Russians because they had gained a position south of the Maritza, at Adakeui, when we knew that they were moving south of that river

in large force from the direction of Samakoff. The head of the Samakoff column had been engaged with our cavalry, and we knew that it had reached the positions we had left in the morning south of Bazardjik, only two hours after our departure.

I urged upon Suleiman in the strongest way that a halt at this time must probably involve the loss of the whole army, or, at least, of its guns and *matériel*. He replied that there was great reason in my argument, but that he had determined to halt the next day, and to move back upon Adakeui.

This decision destroyed any remaining confidence that was felt by the generals of division in the Commander-in-Chief. The whole course of events, since the appearance of Suleiman with the western armies, had excited the greatest distrust amongst the superior officers.

First, Plevna had been allowed to fall without any serious or feasible movement being made to prevent it.

Then the strong force assembled in and around Widdin had been left to be cut off by the enemy.

The narrow escape of the army at Kamarli seemed only to prove the rule, for had the instruc-

tions of the Commander-in-Chief been literally followed, that army would also have been lost.

We had since heard that the magnificent force which had been assembled at Shipka had been entirely surrounded and taken prisoners by the enemy.

How far Suleiman Pacha was responsible for all of these disasters it was impossible to judge, but they were facts, and caused mistrust.

This halt would so evidently place the sole remaining strong Turkish army south of the Balkans at the mercy of the advancing Russians, and it was so absolutely contrary to all common sense and military principle, that, combined with the foregoing events which have been mentioned, it gave us all a strong impression of treachery.

This feeling was not confined entirely to the highest ranks of the army, and its effect upon the force generally was most discouraging and demoralizing.

Obedience is the first principle of military discipline; but when officers in the higher ranks of an army begin to believe that the chief whom they are bound to obey is a traitor, the results become extremely serious. There is a destruction of all that confidence which alone can tend towards success.

It seemed certain that on the morrow a large Russian force of infantry would move by the Bazardjik road upon Philippopolis, whilst another followed us on the southern bank of the Maritza. For Suleiman to have attempted to fight a great battle under these circumstances would have been extremely foolish. It remained with the Russians to decide when they would engage themselves. They knew that the troops under Radetsky and Skobelev were moving rapidly in the rear of Suleiman's army, in order to cut off its retreat.

The force of Suleiman, on leaving Bazardjik, had only been able to carry with it provisions and biscuit for ten days. The supply of ammunition, especially that for the artillery, was quite insufficient, and had Suleiman at this time taken up a position, and offered battle to the enemy, it is evident that they would not immediately have accepted it, but would have waited until the arrival of Skobelev gave them immensely superior numbers, and closed every outlet of escape.

The only possible safety for the army at this time evidently lay in its being able to reach Hasskeui before the troops of Skobelev and Radetsky. As Shipka had been taken on the 9th of January, whilst we had not left Tatar Bazardjik until the 13th, even this means of

escape seemed rather hopeless; but we knew that the trains were still running without interference past Tirnova-Yamboli, and it seemed probable that something had delayed the advance of the Russians in that direction.

It was evidently advisable to march as rapidly as possible upon Hasskeui, when, even if the enemy had already occupied Tirnova and Hermanli, there might be a line of retreat still open by the roads which led from Hasskeui to Demotika. If that route proved impossible, nothing remained but to move south by the mountain paths in the direction of Kawala, or Gumuldjina. But this recent and extraordinary decision of Suleiman seemed to close all hope of saving the army, and with the fate of Suleiman's army hung the destinies of the Empire. If it were lost upon the plains of the Maritza, no troops would remain to garrison the uncompleted lines of Buyuk-Tchekmedjé-Derkos, which covered the capital, and the Russian forces would have no difficulty in making a triumphant and unopposed march to Constantinople.

A profound feeling of depression and distrust hung over the whole army which was now bivouacking around Kadikeui.

Suleiman himself did not seem to realize the

gravity of the situation, for he ordered all the generals of division to meet him at a Council of War on the following morning, for the purpose of considering minor questions of organization and changes which should be made in the constitution of the different brigades and divisions.

We succeeded in obtaining one room in a small house in the village, and in this room Shakir, Fuad, Redjib, and myself, with our respective chiefs of the Staff, had to pass the night. We lay on the floor in very close proximity. Room had also been made for Captain Burnaby, who, on making his exit during the darkness, found himself walking over the portly form of Shakir Pacha.

## CHAPTER XIX.

Obstinacy of Suleiman—Wasted hours—The main body of the Russians cling to the mountains—The line of Philippopolis—Panic-stricken transport—A difficult passage—Engagement in the distance—A vintner's house—A despatch from Suleiman—Abandonment of Philippopolis—Straggling brigades—Crowds of refugees—Blocked with transport—Absence of orders—The mountains of the Rhodope—Suleiman at Stanimaka—No news from Fuad—Commence entrenching—A heavy cannonade—Suleiman in despair—The Austrian map—Retreat of Osman—A chance for attack—No help for Fuad and Shakir—Cossacks on the road—Driven into the mountains.

WE were all up at daybreak, but it was not till about nine o'clock that the council assembled in the house occupied by Suleiman. The generals of division again impressed upon the Commander-in-Chief their unanimous opinion as to losing no further time in carrying out the retreat; but Suleiman seemed to be obstinately determined to adhere to his decision of the night before.

More than two hours were wasted in the dis-



cussion of minor points of detail, when suddenly the fire of small-arms, at a point only some two or three miles distant, broke upon our ears. The Council was rapidly dissolved, without any instructions being given to the generals of division relative to the further movements of the army.

On scanning the plain to the north with our glasses we could see that, as far as the eye could reach, a dense column of Russian infantry was moving by the Bazardjik *chaussée* upon Philippopolis, whilst reports came in that the Russians marching south of the river had reached the vicinity of Karadermen, and were preparing to turn our left flank, and to cut us off from our only line of retreat by the mountains.

Fuad's division had already moved down towards the river, and he started off to join it. As no orders were given by the Commander-in-Chief, and it appeared of the utmost moment to preserve our connexion with the mountains, Shakir Pacha begged me to move with the brigades of Nazif Bey and the 5th Brigade towards the mountains in the direction of Marcova and Démendéré, in order to prevent any possibility of this turning movement.

It seemed to me to be of the utmost importance to maintain the line between Philippopolis and

the mountains which lay by Komat and Marcova. It appeared certain that within a few hours the army would be so engaged that all hope of retiring by the railway and main *chaussée* must be abandoned; but if the line of Philippopolis-Marcova could be maintained, the whole army might probably retreat in the direction of Stanimaka, and still—although with probably the loss of its guns—be able to retire through the mountains towards the Egean.

There appeared to be a mountain path leading from Marcova to the south, as well as one from Stanimaka, whilst on the Austrian map another road leading from Tatali, east of Stanimaka, also led in the direction of Gumuldjina.

The two brigades moved off in the direction of Démendéré.

The great transport columns of the army, intermingled with the mass of fugitives, were following the line of the railway, but suddenly a panic seemed to seize them, and the head of the column left the track, and made directly for the mountains.

On reaching a small village, through which ran a shallow stream, we found the country roadway completely blocked by this throng. It was with the greatest difficulty that the two brigades could

push their way through the mass and pursue their march.

Considerable delay was occasioned by the passage of the batteries. The extraordinary objection of the Turkish soldiers to wet their feet has already been noticed, and this was singularly evident on the occasion in question.

Although out of all command, and anxious to make their way towards the mountains, the great column of transport and fugitives hung upon the bank of the little stream. As each gun attempted to move through the ford a number of these men would spring upon it in order to pass the little river, which had only a depth of about two feet, without wetting their chaussure. The consequence was that the horses were unable to drag the guns through the ford, and the stick had to be freely used in order to clear the latter from these encumbrances.

At length, however, the passage of the stream was effected, and I again moved off, following a country track which led parallel to the range of mountains, as my intention was to take up a line between Philippopolis and the heights.

I occupied the village of Komat with the 5th Brigade, and directed Nazif Bey to take up a position at Markova, about three miles distant.

I immediately despatched a messenger to the commander of the Turkish troops at Philippopolis, acquainting him with my position. Thus the line from Philippopolis by Komat to the mountains at Markova was now held. It seemed probable that the divisions of Fuad and Osman would shortly fall back upon the same line, and the Russians at least would be prevented from cutting our communications with the mountains.

Later in the afternoon we heard in the distance that either Fuad or Osman was engaged. No instructions whatever arrived from Suleiman, and, as no general plan had been communicated by him to the divisional generals, every one seemed to be acting according to his own idea. The mass of the *mékéré*, or baggage-horses for transport, which had so interfered with our column while on the line of march, had moved to the village of Démendéré, close under the mountains, and had then been following a path which led along the mountain-side, and which ran parallel with the march of our column.

Night fell shortly after we were thoroughly established in the village. We were but about two miles distant from the station of Philippopolis, which lies about a mile and a half south of the town. We found ourselves established in what

was evidently the house of a vintner, in the village of Komat. In an adjoining building there was a gigantic cask, full of some of the best wine that we had yet tasted in Turkey.

At about eight o'clock at night, an aide-de-camp suddenly arrived from Suleiman Pacha. He stated that Suleiman was at a village some two or three miles distant, with his Staff, but that he had no troops or escort with him. He did not know the name of the village, but requested that I would send him some battalions to guard the head-quarters. I consequently despatched Ahmet Bey with a regiment, which thus weakened the force of Nazif Bey at Markova.

About an hour and a half later an aide-de-camp again arrived from Suleiman. He sent me a despatch, stating that Fuad and Shakir, with their troops, would march from Démendéré at an hour after dark, and that the whole army would have to fall back upon Stanimaka.

On my arrival at Komat, I had sent a despatch to Shakir, informing him of the position I had taken up, and during the night a reply arrived from him, saying that he was about to retreat, and asking me not to move to Stanimaka until the arrival of the head of his column at Markova. I had told him that, unless I received orders to

the contrary, I would occupy a position at Pazar-mahallé, an important junction of the road leading from Philippopolis and the west towards Stanimaka.

At about half-past ten, to my surprise, an infantry fire burst out for a few minutes in the direction of Philippopolis station. This was perfectly inexplicable, as I supposed that Sabit, with twenty-six battalions, was still occupying Philippopolis. It was evident madness of Suleiman to abandon Philippopolis, which had never been seriously attacked, until the divisions of Fuad, Osman, and Shakir had fallen back in rear of the line—Philippopolis, Komat, Marcova; but later in the night I heard that Philippopolis had been entirely abandoned, and this without any communication being made to me by Suleiman. We knew from the fire near the railway station that the Russians had passed Philippopolis, and must thus have actually crossed the Maritza. This retirement appeared to be perfectly astounding. It left the 5th Brigade at Komat completely isolated, and certain to be cut off by the Russians following the division of Sabit in its retreat by the high road from Philippopolis to Stanimaka.

The night was very dark. The brigade of

Rashid Pacha, belonging to Osman's division, passed Komat at about one o'clock in the morning. No sufficient number of orderlies had been attached to the different divisions, and in endeavouring to keep up communication during the darkness I had expended all that remained to me. If Suleiman's despatch were acted upon, as Déméndéré lay only three miles from Komat, it seemed probable that Fuad and Shakir must have passed in the darkness. Rashid could give me no information as to their whereabouts. He moved on towards Stanimaka, and I only discovered afterwards that he had left a battery behind with me in the village.

The position of the 5th Brigade was now far from satisfactory. The whole brigade was so reduced by its previous losses that it only numbered some 1500 men, and I now knew that Suleiman had left open the road which led in our rear from Philippopolis. The village and the environs were crowded with the arabas of the refugees, and I found myself saddled with two batteries besides the one belonging to the brigade. Although these batteries were not nominally under my charge, I naturally did the best to look after them.

I determined, shortly after daybreak, to fall

back to a position between Markova and Pazar-mahallé, and thus to cover the retreat of the guns and block the road from Philippopolis to Stanimaka. I intended to remain in this position until the head of Shakir's column arrived.

We were under arms before daybreak. Soon after dawn the long train of mingled troops and transport could be seen moving along the road which ran at the foot of the mountains, and, on nearing Pazar-mahallé, I found the main road to Stanimaka blocked with transport. I therefore halted for about an hour on the high ground in front of Belastitcha until all the guns got clear away. Beyond a few squadrons of cavalry, the Russians did not seem to be threatening us seriously. We halted near Pazar-mahallé until Mehmet's brigade—the leading brigade of Shakir's division—had arrived. I heard that Suleiman had been at Belastitcha during the night, but during the whole of this day I received no orders, nor could I find out in what direction the Commander-in-Chief had departed.

It was now late in the afternoon, and we moved off towards Stanimaka. I found the brigade of Yahia Pacha drawn up near a small village a short distance from Stanimaka. Yahia's brigade belonged to Osman's division, and, as Rashid



Pacha had passed us during the night, Osman had evidently arrived in the neighbourhood of Stanimaka. On reaching Stanimaka, we found the place blocked with troops, belonging principally to Sabit's division. The town lay in a most picturesque position, in a rocky gorge of the mountains. A river ran through the centre out away on to the plains of Philippopolis. As far as I could gather information from the inhabitants, a road ran through this gorge, over the mountains of the Rhodope, away towards Kawala. This road was marked upon the Austrian map. The position in rear of the town and guarding this road seemed to be impregnable; but it appeared to me to be important to watch the road which led away to the east, under the mountains, in the direction of Hasskewi. I therefore moved through the town, and placed the 5th Brigade, together with the regiment of Ahmed Bey, which had now rejoined me, on a spur which jutted out towards the plain, and which, with the river in front, covered this road.

We were able to house the larger part of the troops in the upper part of the town. I heard just before dusk that Suleiman was occupying a house in Stanimaka, and accordingly sent him a despatch, explaining all the movements I had made,

together with their intention and object. I received a long despatch from him in reply, approving entirely of the whole of my dispositions. He told me that Shakir was safe, and that Fuad's division was the only one of which he now had no news.

There seemed in all this to be some extraordinary mismanagement. From Démendéré towards Stanimaka there were three roads—one, which I had followed, leading past Komat, and from there by Belastitcha; another, between Komat and Marcova, leading to the same point; and another, which had been followed by the transport-train, leading under the mountains, by Marcova and Belastitcha, by Kara-aghatch, to Stanimaka. It seemed extraordinary that if Fuad and Shakir, as mentioned in Suleiman's despatch, received at Komat, had left that village at an hour after dark on the night before, they should not by this time have reached Belastitcha.

I rode down on the following morning to pay a visit to Suleiman, and found him evidently much excited at the non-arrival of Fuad. All Shakir Pacha's troops, with the exception of a brigade of Shukri and one regiment of Nazif Bey, which occupied Marcova, had arrived in the neighbourhood of Stanimaka; but Fuad and Shakir themselves were still unaccounted for.

Sabit's division of twenty-six battalions had formed up, with my ten battalions, on the height of the spur to the right of the town. Suleiman now ordered Sabit to recross the bridge and to take up a position *à cheval* of the Philippopolis-Stanimaka road. The brigades of Mehemet and Ibrahim were still posted upon the Philippopolis-Stanimaka road. I commenced entrenching the spur which covered the right of the town. There appeared to be a desire on the part of all the divisional generals to dispossess themselves of their batteries. It was plain to all that the delay of Suleiman at Kadikeui had lost to his army its only chance of retreat by roads which were passable for cannon. That the guns would have to be left behind had become almost a certainty, and every general was anxious to disembarass himself of the batteries which he had clung to so carefully not many days before.

Sabit, on moving forward, left two batteries on the hill to the right of the town; and I found myself in my newly entrenched position with no less than twenty-four guns.

An ominous event now occurred. Far in the distance, still in the direction of Démendéré, the sound of a heavy cannonade came to us. Advancing up the Philippopolis-Stanimaka road, I

could see a considerable force of Russian cavalry and three battalions of infantry, whilst cavalry detachments were sent away to the Russian left, evidently with the intention of feeling round the position which I occupied, and which, as before mentioned, covered the road towards Hasskeui. I gathered from a long conversation with Suleiman in the morning, that he had himself come to the conclusion that it was impossible to reach Hasskeui and Hermanli, which would evidently now be found blocked by the Russian forces of Radetsky and Skobelev.

It was plain that the golden opportunity of retreat had been lost, and that our only chance lay in falling back through the mountains towards the Egean. I had urged upon him the necessity of obtaining good guides who might pilot the army, in case of necessity, through the mountain paths which led to the south. The information which we could gather from the inhabitants of Stanimaka relative to these mountain roads was excessively vague.

The Austrian map showed that by following the Stanimaka-Hasskeui road for a distance of about nine miles, a path led through the mountains by the village of Tahtali. I strongly urged upon Suleiman the necessity of getting the mass of

guns (which almost destitute of ammunition, now merely encumbered our movements at Stanimaka) away to the rear.

He seemed to have determined that Sabit's division alone should fall back through the Stanimaka gorge, but I pointed out that if he intended to retreat during the night, the greatest amount of confusion would arise by trying to move so large a number of battalions, together with the excessive amount of transport animals accompanying them, by one indifferent country path.

Accordingly he determined to send off the division of Osman towards Ketenlik, in order to guard what appeared to be the only other road available to us now—by Tahtali—in case of an advance in that direction to cut our retreat by the Russian forces of Skobeleff and Radetsky.

Osman left about the middle of the day, and was followed by the mass of the guns, and it was soon after his departure that the cannonade broke out in the direction of Démendéré.

Watching the situation from the entrenched spur to the right of the town, it seemed most tantalizing. The Russians were evidently engaged with Fuad and the absent remainder of Shakir's division, somewhere between Markova and Belas-titcha. The brigades of Mehemet and Ibrahim,

and twenty-two battalions of Sabit—for he had detached four to accompany the guns—were lying *à cheval* on the Philippopolis road at no great distance.

The Russian force in front of them was apparently composed mainly of cavalry, and it seemed evident that a forward movement on the part of Sabit and these two brigades, must lend considerable aid to Fuad and Shakir; but no forward movement was made, although the Russians made no attack in this direction.

As the afternoon drew on, the firing grew heavier towards Markova and Belastitcha. Suleiman, as usual, when any stirring events were taking place, was occupying his house in the town. It seemed to me so evident that some support should be rendered to the Turkish troops engaged towards Belastitcha, that I sent down to Suleiman, pointing out the advantage that a forward movement on the part of Sabit, Ibrahim, and Mehemet, must lend to the probably heavily pressed Turkish forces retiring under Fuad and Shakir. I received a reply from Suleiman saying that he fully agreed with me, and that he had sent orders for the advance which I suggested.

We spent all that afternoon in a state of

feverish suspense as to the fate of the two absent generals and their troops.

Whatever orders Suleiman may have sent, no advance was made by Sabit, or the brigades of Ibrahim and Mehemet.

Anxious to discover the position of affairs in that direction, Major Campbell offered to start with two orderlies, and to endeavour to open up communication with Shakir, but he returned a little before dusk, having found the road blocked by Cossacks. The fire to our left had died out some time before dusk, and it seemed painfully probable that Fuad and Shakir had been driven into the mountains. There was, however, as marked on the Austrian map, a mountain road which led from Markova in the direction of Kawala, through the Rhodope mountains.

## CHAPTER XX.

Council by the camp-fire—Plan of retreat—Rear-guard again—  
Left alone—A critical march—Gross negligence—With  
the rear-guard—A tedious night-march—Bivouac fires—  
A sleep in a cottage—A worn-out veteran—A blocked  
road—An uphill battle—Want of energy—Passive re-  
signation—Disorderly march—A distant enemy—A  
disconsolate general—Departure of Suleiman—Last  
orders—A dangerous position—An useful defile—Endless  
difficulties—A last chance—Worn-out with fatigue.

Soon after dusk I received a despatch from Suleiman, asking me to come and see him. I found him with Sabit sitting by a bivouac fire just on the outskirts of the town. He informed me that Shakir had succeeded in sending him a despatch over the mountains, telling him that he, Shakir, had been compelled to fall back with the loss of his guns; and, as far as could be ascertained, the same fate had befallen Fuad. They had both evidently been seriously engaged all the afternoon, and no assistance had been lent to them by the comparatively strong force now assembled at Stanimaka.



Suleiman informed me that he had determined to retreat that night.

The division of Sabit, and brigades of Mehemet and Ibrahim, had been drawn in close to the town, followed by the Russians, and the outposts were now touching each other at only a short distance from the front.

Suleiman explained his wishes as to the order of the retreat. Mehemet and Ibrahim's brigades were to march off at once to Tahtali, and there to take the mountain road which led through the Rhodope range towards Gumurdjini. The guns were supposed by this time to have long ago reached Ketenlik, and Osman was to fall back by the road marked on the Austrian map as leading by Karandjilar, and to carry the guns with him if the road would permit, and to leave them if it proved impossible to withdraw them. Sabit was to retire on or before midnight, and Suleiman requested me to remain with the 5th Brigade for an hour after the departure of all the rest of the troops, and then to fall back upon Tahtali, in order to cover the retreat.

Arrangements were immediately made to this effect, and the brigades of Mehemet and Ibrahim commenced their march. I had arranged with Sabit to send me word when the whole of his

column was *en route*, but midnight arrived without any communication to this effect reaching me. I sent down my *aide-de-camp* to inquire the cause, and he came back reporting that the division of Sabit had long since departed. The little 5th Brigade was, therefore, now left alone and unsupported in the presence of the whole Russian army.

A short time afterwards an orderly arrived from Sabit, bringing me the intelligence that his movement in retreat had been executed. Having waited the prescribed hour, preparations were made for the retirement of the 5th Brigade, but a report came to me that considerably upwards of 1000 transport horses and stragglers still remained behind in the town. It took upwards of an hour to get all these under way, and it was nearly two o'clock in the morning before the 5th Brigade commenced its march.

We were expecting every moment to be pursued by the Russian forces, as the most common vigilance should have told them that all our outposts on the other side of the stream had been long since withdrawn.

I told off the Prizrend battalion to act as the extreme rear-guard; for, shattered as it had been by recent engagements, it still thoroughly retained its fighting efficiency.

The gross negligence which characterized the Russian outposts throughout the campaign again stood us in good stead. From the time of our departure from Kamarli, we had been constantly effecting retreats during the night, when in contact with the enemy, and on no one occasion had they ever discovered our retirement until many hours after the retreat had commenced ; but, standing as we did now at Stanimaka, in presence of a large advancing Russian army, whose commanders must have known that the further retreat of Suleiman, after the disaster which had befallen Fuad and Shakir, had become inevitable, it seemed impossible that the retreat of Sabit and the consequent withdrawal of the outposts that stood in absolute contact with the Russians should have remained for hours unperceived.

Each moment we watched anxiously, expecting to see the fire break out in the darkness in front of the extreme rear-guard. The straggling transport horses which I had succeeded in rescuing from the town, and the number of refugee arabas which immediately took the alarm and fled in their suite, had so blocked the road that I found it necessary to wait for some time longer before the rear-guard could move off ; but

at last, when the way seemed clear, the order was given, and the Prizrend battalion fell carefully and steadily back. We waited for a few minutes after their departure ; still all seemed perfectly quiet in the town, and we fell back with the column.

The progress of the brigade was slow and tedious. Time after time the rear-guard would come up with the mass of the column blocked in the roadway. Still no sign of the enemy appeared in pursuit.

More than three hours had elapsed and not six miles had been accomplished, when, to my profound surprise, we could see in advance of the road that we were following that numerous camp-fires had been established.

This might prove to be a most serious *contre-temps*. It was, of course, necessary to preserve the secrecy of our movements as long as possible. The establishment of these camp-fires—if seen by the enemy—would show at once that the army had commenced its retreat. The last thing before leaving Stanimaka I had ordered fresh wood to be placed on the bivouac fires on the hill ; but if the Russians had established themselves upon the mountains, they would immediately detect the retirement of Suleiman's army by the lighting of camp-fires along the line of route.

Shortly afterwards, Ahmet Bey, who was with the leading regiment of the column, arrived with what might prove to be most serious intelligence. It appeared that the brigade of Ibrahim, which had been the last—except the 5th Brigade—to quit Stanimaka by this route had actually halted in a village only six miles distant from Stanimaka, and were now bivouacking round the fires which they had lighted. I immediately sent for Ibrahim, the commander of the brigade, and was told that he was asleep in a neighbouring cottage.

It wanted less than two hours to daybreak, and this gross carelessness on the part of Ibrahim, who should long before have reached Tahtali, might have most serious consequences.

Waking up Ibrahim, and censuring him in the strongest manner, I ordered the brigade immediately to get under arms and to commence its retreat. Ibrahim was a veteran of seventy years of age, and the poor old man was completely worn out by the fatigues of the retreat. But an instance of far more disastrous neglect was immediately afterwards discovered.

The village surrounded a piece of open ground. The roadway, which ran through it, was very bad and narrow. On reaching this open space, I found, to my intense dismay, that the whole fifty-

four guns and caissons, which had marched for Ketenlik some eighteen hours before, were parked within this space. Thus, only shortly before day-break, and at a time when the appearance of the Russian army in pursuit seemed momentarily inevitable, the 5th Brigade, which was acting as the rear-guard, found itself blocked and the road encumbered by a mass of artillery and waggons that should have been many miles to the rear.

Ibrahim's brigade slipped quickly away in the darkness, but an hour and a half elapsed before the last gun had left the village. The horses for the most part were weak and exhausted, and at every moment a gun would stick and check the movement of the whole long column.

Such intense depression had fallen on the mass of the Turkish army that they seemed to be quite incapable of any further effort. Although Turkish troops would, I am convinced, under good officers, be as remarkable for their military qualities during a retreat as they are in an advance, still Turkish military history has proved how utterly incapable the superior officers of the Turkish army have ever shown themselves in fighting out a beaten game.

The utter collapse of the Turks in 1829, when dealing with a handful of Russians pushed boldly

on from Adrianople in pursuit of the forces which were retiring upon the capital; the whole collapse of Turkish power and its resistance at that period when, if only a bold front had been shown, the destruction of the Russian army was inevitable, proved conclusively the want of energy and power in Turkish commanders ever to retrieve a serious disaster.

The same fate appeared now to be falling rapidly upon all the Turkish forces which still remained in the field. The generals and superior officers belonging to Suleiman's force for the most part seemed to have accepted the loss of the army as certain, and to be incapable of making any effort to prevent it.

This passive resignation and acceptance of defeat was perfectly heart-breaking.

Daylight had completely broken when the column reached the village of Tahtali. Here it was reported to me that a fresh difficulty had arisen which must most seriously affect the order of our retreat. Suleiman had left Stanimaka on the previous evening, after having given the general directions which have been mentioned. But on arrival at Tahtali I found that the road through the mountains which was indicated on the Austrian staff-map was perfectly impassable in the winter.

The brigade of Mehemet which was now the leading brigade of my division, discovering this impossibility on its arrival at the village had wisely pushed on following the road which led in the direction of Karandjilar, the only pass which now remained open for the retreat of the whole of my division as well as that of Osman.

As daylight broke I could see that far in advance, with the usual disorder of Turkish troops upon the line of march, the battalions had, with the exception of the rear brigade, completely broken up; and far as the eye could reach a long snake-like column composed of soldiers and transport animals mingled in perfect confusion was steadily pressing on in the direction of Karandjilar. At every point of rising ground fresh delay would be caused by the artillery column.

When daylight had rendered the whole surrounding country distinctly visible, I carefully scanned the rear with my glasses, but with the exception of some Russian cavalry in movement on the distant plains in the direction of Hasskeui, there was as yet no sign of the enemy.

Hour after hour passed away—long, slow, and tedious. From the intelligence which we had received of the character of the mountain pass which now alone remained open to us, it seemed



impossible to hope that we should be enabled to carry off the mass of guns and tumbrils with which we were encumbered ; but I was determined not to relinquish any of them until the impossibility became a certainty.

Mid-day had arrived and we were still only four miles beyond Tahtali, when I came across Osman, who was waiting for me upon the road. He was in a melancholy and disconsolate frame of mind, and showed me a despatch which he had received from Suleiman.

Suleiman, it appeared, on discovering that the Tahtali road was impassable, had retired directly through the mountains by the Karandjilar pass, taking with him my two brigades of Mehemet and Ibrahim. He had directed Osman to remain with his weak division until the arrival of the guns and the 5th Brigade, and he had given directions that our united force was to move for the night to the village of Karandjilar, which stood right out on the undulating plain about four miles distant from the mountains.

He gave orders that the guns were, if possible, to retire upon the pass, but that if their passage proved impossible, they were to be abandoned.

The division of Osman and the 5th Brigade

were then to follow through the mountains in the direction of Gumurdjini or Kawala.

Osman was in despair, and he told me that he felt sure that Suleiman was thus endeavouring to shirk the responsibility of abandoning the guns, and to throw it on his shoulders.

Osman had occupied Ketenlik on the previous evening with one brigade and Karandjilar with the other; and, on seeing the approach of Mehemet and Ibrahim, he had drawn in the Ketenlik brigade near towards the mountains; but Suleiman had ordered him to push this brigade again to Ketenlik. He was anxious to know my opinion as to the best course which remained for us to pursue.

The orders of Suleiman to occupy the village of Karandjilar for the night were so positive that it was impossible to disobey them. The village lay, as has been mentioned, about four miles away from the mountain pass out on the undulating plains, whilst the road which we had been following from Stanimaka led close under the mountains directly to the pass.

The enemy's cavalry had appeared in sight on the neighbouring hills, and the movement so positively ordered by Suleiman appeared absolute madness, and calculated inevitably to lose the whole

of the force that now remained with Osman and myself.

It would have been easy for our troops to reach the mouth of the pass by night, and for what object we should leave this road to the pass directly open to the enemy, who would cut us off from all retreat, was difficult to conceive.

After some consultation with Osman, we decided upon the following plan.

Osman sent orders to Ketenlik to draw in his outlying brigade to the hill which stood near Karandjilar, and which watched the road towards Hasskeui. Russian cavalry arriving from that direction had shown that we were already in presence of the forces of Skobelev and Radetsky, whilst Gourko, with his whole army, was following on our track.

I therefore determined to leave some battalions under Ahmet Bey in a small village which lay upon the road leading from Stanimaka to the pass, and with the rest of the brigade to carry out, in conjunction with Osman, the order which Suleiman had impressed upon us of occupying Karandjilar for the night. This little village, where I left Ahmed Bey, was about equi-distant with Karandjilar from the mouth of the pass. It watched a small defile through the spur of the

mountains, and the battalions left here might thus check the enemy's cavalry for a time; but it seemed evident to me that unless the whole three brigades which now remained to us could be drawn in to the mouth of the pass before day-break our forces must inevitably be lost.

From the time of our being at Kamarli we had been constantly placed in positions which seemed to court the loss of our forces.

Time after time the situations had appeared to be hopeless, but, by dint of hard work and some fighting, we had escaped from them. If once we succeeded in reaching the mountains, the army—provided it could make its way to the Egean over that bleak, snowy, and barren range—would have but one more fear of interception by the enemy, and even this seemed an improbable one. It was possible that if Skobeleff and Radetsky had reached Hasskeui in good time, they might push up the valley of the Arda, and cut the retreat of our forces by the occupation of Kirdjali; but unless this movement was successfully and rapidly carried out, it seemed probable that when once the Turkish forces had entered the mountains, the obstacles to be overcome would be those of nature, and that the Russian pursuit must become desultory and ineffective.

Yet now, when this haven of refuge lay but four miles distant, we were directed by superior orders, and apparently without any possible object, to move again out into the plains, and to give to the enemy an easy and final opportunity of intercepting our line of retreat.

We made a short halt at the village which has been indicated until all the guns had passed, and the regiment which I determined to leave at this point had been established in its position. Everybody was worn out with fatigue. Poor Radford, Captain Burnaby's stalwart servant from the Blues, had fallen off his horse seven times on that day, completely overcome by exhaustion and want of sleep. The Turkish officers, almost without exception, appeared worn-out and dazed by the never-ending troubles and anxieties which seemed to pursue us more from Suleiman's mismanagement than from the action of the enemy.

Shakir Bey, my energetic Chief of the Staff who had worked with indefatigable will up to this time, at last appeared to have succumbed.

## CHAPTER XXI.

Want of guides—Hopeless depression—Impassable road—  
Abandonment of guns—A trying night—Want of sleep—  
Reach the pass—Inefficient cavalry—A slippery path—  
Safe at last—Mountain paths—Lost baggage—A Maho-  
medan district—Irregular marches—Scanty fare—A  
dangerous delay—A magic bag.

It was quite dark before we reached the village. It seemed to be entirely deserted. It was of the utmost importance to get some guides who could give information relative to the mountain road, and I sent in all directions to endeavour to secure them; but beyond a few Bulgarians, the inhabitants had all quitted the village. These Bulgarians appeared perfectly stolid, and would give no information which could be in any way relied upon.

Osman came to the little cottage in which we had established ourselves in a melancholy state of depression as to the responsibility which had been thrown upon him. I pointed out that we had now carried out the orders which had been im-

posed by Suleiman, and that, provided that we marched in the night so as to reach the mouth of the pass before morning, we might still save the army, unless indeed the battalions which I had left under Ahmed Bey to watch the Stanimaka road were driven in before morning.

I urged him immediately to send directions that his outlying brigade should fall back shortly after midnight, and that we should concentrate before dawn at the mouth of the mountain pass. Directly our troops were in movement I would send word to Ahmet Bey to fall back from the village which guarded the Stanimaka road, and to unite with us at the mouth of the pass.

We had already received reports from the leading guns which had been sent on to the pass, declaring that the road over the mountains was absolutely impassable for cannon. According to the order of Suleiman, the abandonment of the guns thus became a painful necessity. As Osman was intensely anxious lest the responsibility of this abandonment should afterwards be thrown upon his shoulders, I suggested that we should assemble the whole of the superior officers; that the order of Suleiman Pacha relative to the guns should be read to them; and the evidence as to the impossibility of their being withdrawn by the

mountain path be brought before them. Then, if they agreed, a report should be drawn up stating that, in obedience to the directions of Suleiman, and having received the evidence in question, we were unanimously of opinion that it was impossible to withdraw the guns by the mountain path; and that thus, according to the orders of Suleiman, directions would be given for their abandonment.

This report was generally agreed to, and signed by Osman and myself, and all the superior officers still remaining with the army. Directions were then given that every effort should be made for the guns to cross the mountains, and that if those efforts failed, the breech pieces were to be taken out, the guns thrown into the ravines, and that the artillerymen and horses were to move with the column over the mountains.

This night was one of the most trying during the retreat. Every one was utterly exhausted by fatigue and want of sleep, and I felt sure that if I once lay down to rest we should never be awakened before daybreak. It thus became absolutely necessary to resist the intense desire for sleep in order to be certain that the march of the troops was carried out during the night. Captain Burnaby was invaluable in this crisis,



and we watched in turn lest the golden moments should escape, and that we, like the rest, should succumb to fatigue.

At a little after midnight I again sent to Osman to ask if the orders had been given to his division. The answer came that Osman was fast asleep and they could not awake him.

At last we roused him up and discovered that, as yet, no orders had been issued. He now sent a despatch to Rashid Pacha, who was in command of the outlying brigade, and who was in actual contact with the Russian cavalry, ordering him to retreat at once towards the mountains.

The brigade of Yahia Pacha, which occupied the village, and the 5th Brigade were also got under arms; but it was past two o'clock before news came from Rashid to say that he would immediately commence his march. Daylight was dawning ere the 5th Brigade, which was to act as rear-guard, had quitted the village. I sent orders to Ahmet Bey to retire with his regiment towards the mouth of the pass.

The Russians, as usual, did not appear to be on the alert, and the movement towards the mountains was carried out without any serious interruption.

It appeared that the Russian cavalry from Stanimakka had threatened Ahmet Bey during the

night, but finding the road occupied by infantry, had retired a slight distance, and were watching. As the whole of the 5th Brigade fell steadily back towards the pass, we found it blocked with a mass of troops and arabas, which were carrying refugees and their families. As we knew by report that there was no road over the mountains by which the arabas could ascend, their occupants were preparing to abandon them and to follow the troops.

The mouth of the pass gave a very strong position. The Russian cavalry now appeared hovering upon our rear, but without showing the slightest enterprise. A considerable number of stragglers, with some transport horses, had remained in the village after the departure of the troops. As we mounted the heights we could see them retiring over the plain, whilst two regiments of Russian cavalry stood upon the ground above the village without making any effort to intercept them.

The path wound up the spurs of the mountain until about 800 feet from the summit, when it ascended by a sharp zigzag. From the intense cold and the number of troops that had moved by this road, it had become as slippery as glass, and as the pathway sloped towards the valley below

it became impossible to follow it with horses, without their rolling over the sides into the ravine.

The dense mass of men and animals went climbing over the snow up the steep sides of the mountain.

The scene was most picturesque, but painful, and the ascent most arduous.

We had just reached the summit of the pass when the Russian infantry appeared in the distance following our retreat; but unless Skobeleff made an attempt to intercept us at Kirdjali, all serious danger from the enemy had now disappeared.

The army was saved: would it be able to accomplish its march through the mountains with the amount of provisions which still remained to us?

Looking towards the south as far as the eye could reach, continuous ranges of snowy mountains lay before us, and the roadway which we followed soon narrowed to a mere mountain track. In most places the horses, and sometimes even the men, had to follow each other in single file.

We passed the village of Kusilar about four miles from the summit of the mountain, and here I again met Osman, who had become separated from me during the retreat. We anxiously sought for guides, and eventually discovered that we had with the army a small battalion which was drawn

from this district. This battalion had dwindled down to the strength of forty men, but they were told off to conduct the different brigades by the difficult paths which led through the snowy range.

We heard that a few miles farther on there lay a village where three tracks branched away in different directions. One of these led towards Kawala, whilst the other two, following parallel to each other, eventually united some thirty miles north of Gumurdjina. We intended to use both of these tracks, but they proved a source of considerable difficulty and annoyance. Our own baggage, we afterwards discovered, had followed the path which led to the right, and we were thus separated from it for three days. I also now heard a most unwelcome piece of intelligence. It appeared that my servant in ascending the mountain, had not remained with the pack-horses. One of these had lagged behind, and eventually fallen on the slippery road. The soldier leading the animal was unable to get it on to its legs again, and, leaving it prostrate on the road, had run forward in order to get assistance. In the meantime some Arab troops passing that way, and finding an abandoned packhorse, had pillaged the whole of my panniers. Amongst the articles thus

lost was a small black bag, which contained all my valuables and private papers.

We passed several small, straggling villages, lying on the lower ridges of the mountain range. The inhabitants of this part of the country were purely Mahomedan. They were now abandoning their homes, and swelling the long string of fugitives which wound for miles along the mountain side.

I had spoken to Osman, during our halt at Kusilar, with regard to the inconvenience which must necessarily arise in the movement of so considerable a body of men and transport by these small mountain paths unless proper arrangements were made for the respective marches of the several brigades; and, as it was almost impossible to send orders backwards and forwards from one end of the column to the other, on account of the crowded state of the narrow track, I had drawn up a plan by which each brigade should halt for the night at villages some four or five miles apart; then, by all marching in the morning at the same fixed hour, the crowding on the narrow mountain paths would be considerably lessened.

According to this arrangement, I halted for the night with the 5th Brigade, at a little Mussulman farmstead, which lay high up on the mountains.

As Islan Bey had not yet sufficiently recovered from the wound which he had received during the Metchka reconnaissance, the command of the brigade devolved upon Ahmet Bey. His regiment, which had joined me at Stanimaka, now remained attached to the 5th Brigade.

I had sent my Chief of Staff, Shakir Bey, with an order during the day, and he had lost me and did not turn up at the halting-place. All our baggage was absent, and we were left without supplies of any kind. Together with Captain Burnaby, I found shelter, however, in a miserable little room at a farmstead, and an aged Mussulman and his family provided us with some dilapidated yorghans and lit a large fire.

The cold was intense. We had not long settled ourselves down, when the sergeant of the cavalry orderlies reported that one of my horses had arrived, but that the man in charge had become separated from the rest of the baggage. Some strange saddle-bags were attached to the saddle, which we supposed to belong to Colonel Studdy, and they were eagerly ransacked, in the hope of finding some store of provisions, for we were entirely lacking. The search was most unsatisfactory. Captain Burnaby joyfully extracted several tins from the saddle-bags, but on exami-

nation they proved to contain nothing but groats. After a further search we were eventually rewarded by finding a tin of butter.

Utterly wearied, and worn by the incessant fatigue and anxiety of the past few days, we soon lay down to rest.

That night a singular accident occurred. I woke up from a heavy sleep, dreaming of fire, and with a sense of suffocation, and found that the yorghon, which I had rolled up as a pillow, had become a mass of smouldering cinders. A spark must have fallen out from the wood which was burning in the fireplace, and ignited it, and it had burnt gradually away, until at least one half had been consumed before I had been awakened. No water was at hand wherewith to extinguish it, and the rickety wooden tenement in which we were lodged seemed in serious danger. Captain Burnaby rushed out, and soon brought in a large armful of snow, and after considerable trouble the smouldering yorghon was extinguished, and we again lay down to rest.

This time I took care, in making up the remains of my pillow, to keep some distance from the fireplace, and we were soon again fast asleep. As far as I could judge, more than an hour must

have elapsed, when I again awoke with the same sensation, and discovered that the yorghen beneath my head was once more a mass of fire. Some spark must have remained unextinguished, and have smouldered on and reignited the rest. This time the dangerous yorghen was consigned to the snow without.

We had not gone to sleep entirely supperless. Dr. Gill always followed on my staff, and he seemed to carry with him a magic bag, which could produce at any moment all that was required to relieve distress. If a sick soldier fell fainting by the way, Dr. Gill was off his horse in a moment, and the requisite medicines or stimulants were immediately produced from the bag. If, when we were all worn out with fatigue, some very difficult message had to be conveyed, and no staff-officers were at hand, Dr. Gill immediately appeared, declaring that it would be the greatest pleasure possible to him personally to carry out the difficult task; and now, when no provisions were to be obtained, as usual, the good doctor appeared with a tin of sardines which had been discovered in the bag, and some biscuit which had been carefully hoarded for the emergencies of others.



## CHAPTER XXII.

Danger of starvation—A gipsy girl—The river Arda—A false alarm—A useful horse—A day of rest—A hospitable village—Condign punishment—A lost brigade—The last mountain range—First view of the sea—The 5th Brigade—The fate of Fuad—Russians march on Gallipoli—Dearth of news—The lines of Buyuk Tchekmedji—The Danube boundary—Redif Pacha—English foresight—The plan of Blum Pacha—More delays—Undefended capital—The lines of Boulair—A race for the capital—Useful shelter trenches—Our strategical position—The action of England—Overwhelming odds.

AT dawn of day we again resumed our march. The track had now become extremely difficult. We came across one ravine, the side of which was such a mass of ice that it was impossible for the horses even to scramble down it, and we had to throw them, and thus slide them bodily to the bottom.

All this created considerable delay ; but the Cossacks and Russian cavalry had proved most unenterprising, and had not followed the column farther than the summit of the mountain. Never-

theless, the delay caused by the natural obstacles of the country, and the high and snowy altitudes over which we were passing, created considerable anxiety in the minds of the generals. We knew that only a three days' supply of biscuit now remained to us for the troops, and unless the long, straggling column could make its way to Gumardjina before that supply were exhausted, the men must inevitably perish amongst the icy mountains we had to traverse.

It was difficult to maintain anything approaching to order on the line of march, on account of the number of villagers and fugitives who intermingled with the troops on the narrow hillside tracks. The scenes that were constantly witnessed amongst these poor fugitives flying from their homes, were painful in the extreme. Little children, perishing with cold, would be seen packed in the panniers carried by some village buffalo. Many of the wandering gipsy tribe, so commonly found in Roumelia, had attached themselves to the column. One gipsy girl sat by the road-side, beating her breasts, and wailing over her dying husband, who, outstretched upon the snow, was giving his last gasp. Occasionally, the bodies of soldiers were passed, who appeared to have died simply from exhaustion and fatigue.

The whole track was lined with the carcasses of horses, buffaloes, and mules, which had collapsed under the trying marches of the mountains.

We had heard vague rumours from our guides, that a broad and, as some said, deep river lay before us, which it would be difficult to cross. This evidently was the Arda.

That afternoon, on reaching the summit of a lofty mountain, we looked down on a broad rich valley, through which there wound a considerable stream. On the northern side of the river lay a large village which proved to be Kirdjali. We could see in the distance that a considerable number of men were bivouacked on the banks of the stream, and were engaged in effecting a passage. Soon afterwards a crowd of fugitives pouring into Kirdjali from the direction of Hasskeui, gave rise to a report that the Russians were following from that direction, but on reaching the village we found that there was no ground for this alarm.

Here I found Osman Nouri established in a tolerably comfortable house. The brigade of Reshad had marched in not long before. As some Arab troops were attached to this brigade, I made inquiries as to whether any of my pillaged baggage had been discovered, and was pleased to find that all my valuables had been recovered

from an Arab soldier, although my papers, which were of considerable importance to me, had been lost for ever.

Nearly all our horses were lame from the loss of shoes; but we were fortunate in finding a shoeing smith attached to Reshad's brigade, who re-shod the animals of myself and staff. The little grey horse which I bought at Sofia proved a perfect treasure during this trying march. It sometimes happened that the horses remained nearly forty-eight hours almost entirely destitute of food, but he retained his condition surprisingly, was always ready for work, and could make his way with safety over the most dangerous ground.

We halted for the night at the village of Kirdjali, and collected, as far as possible, the stragglers from the different brigades, and brought more order into the general arrangements.

The river Arda did not prove to be a serious obstacle. The stream was rapid, but the water at the ford by which the road crossed, was not more than from two to three feet deep. In order to give the men some little repose, I did not march on the following day until early in the afternoon, the morning being spent in effecting the passage of the stream. The path now became

much easier, and ran through a long irregular and broken valley. We heard that Suleiman and the brigades of Mehemet and Ibrahim had passed thirty-six hours ahead of us, on their way to Gumurdjina. We halted that night at a small Mahomedan village on the mountain side, and were most hospitably entertained by the head man of the place, who refused to receive any payment in return. We did our best to quiet the apprehensions of the villagers, and to induce them to remain in their homes, instead of uselessly swelling the crowd of fugitives which was pouring to the south, and adding to the tide of misery. The straggling Arab soldiers that followed in disorder the march of the column, proved an utter pest. In addition to the general alarm which had spread amongst the population of the districts which we traversed, these men, whilst marching, would fire off their rifles without any cause, and, as it would seem, for the purpose of creating a panic amongst the poor terrified fugitives.

I issued stringent orders to repress this nuisance, and whenever one of the offenders was caught in the act, condign punishment was inflicted. Captain Burnaby had carried with him through the march a long and very strong stick, which served

as the emblem of discipline and justice. By dint of the exercise of stern example, the 5th Brigade had now got into good marching habits, and, notwithstanding the difficulties of the road, always arrived at the end of the day's journey in tolerable order ; but this was quite the exception.

At the termination of the following day's march I met Yahia Pacha, who commanded a brigade of Osman's division. A certain village had been indicated for the halt of this brigade on the night in question, and as the next day's march was one of considerable difficulty, leading over the mountains to Gumurdjina, it became necessary also to bring the 5th Brigade up to this point in order to accomplish the passage of the high mountain pass in one day's march. On my arrival I found Yahia Pacha, but he reported to me that the whole of his brigade was disbanded and lost ; each man making his way independently towards the south.

That night the men expended their last biscuit, and it became absolutely necessary to reach Gumurdjina on the following day. I had sent on a despatch to Suleiman, informing him of the paucity of food which remained, and requesting that rations might be in readiness for the troops on their arrival at Gumurdjina.

We started at dawn on the following morning.

The men were worn and weary with their long and trying marches through the snow, but they now felt that the end of their difficulties was approaching. The pathway through this last high mountain range proved less difficult than we had expected. A bright sun had somewhat melted the snow, but the ascent was steep and severe.

After the summit had been reached the road wound along some irregular spurs of the mountains. Following these spurs for a considerable distance the pathway suddenly ran over a narrow crest. On its summit a number of men had halted in a state of intense excitement, and cries of "The Sea! The Sea!" burst out from them.

We reached the ridge, and the blue waters of the Egean lay before us. Below the mountain range there stretched a plain some fifteen miles in width, and the town of Gumurdjina stood just at the foot of the range.

On the lower slopes of the mountain the 5th Brigade halted for a time, and then after the severe and trying fatigues of retreat and battle, which they had so gallantly endured for one long month, they marched in perfect order into the town of Gumurdjina. During all this long and trying retreat we had suffered much. I had been so constantly occupied that I had no time to think

of personal requirements. But my good friend, Captain F. Burnaby, used to watch me like a child, and was always ready with some sustenance that might prevent my strength from failing.

My faithful servant Reilly reached the coast with us, being thus the only one of our party who had remained constantly with me from the commencement of the campaign on the Lom until we reached the sea.

I found Suleiman established in a house in the town. Gumurdjina was in telegraphic communication with Constantinople.

Directly the march through the mountains had appeared inevitable, a despatch had been sent on to this town, and a telegraphic message had been conveyed to the Government at Constantinople, announcing the necessity of immediately sending transports to Kara-aghatch or Kawala, in order to convey the remains of the army to the capital.

I anxiously inquired from Suleiman what news he had been able to gain of the fate of the divisions of Fuad and Shakir, and was delighted to find that communications had been received from both those generals. They were personally safe, although the division of Fuad had suffered considerably in the severe encounter with the Russians before being driven into the mountains. Some uneasi-



ness existed from the want of any information relative to the division of Sabit.

Fuad and Shakir had made their way to Yenidji, and as it seemed that the port of Kara-aghatch would be more favourable for the embarkation of the whole force than that of Kawala, instructions to this effect were telegraphed to Constantinople. We heard that two transports had already arrived at Kara-aghatch.

Suleiman informed me that he had received information that the Russians had reached Adrianople, and were now in full march upon both Gallipoli and the capital. It therefore became of primary importance that the army of Suleiman should be conveyed as rapidly as possible to these two objective points.

We had now for a long time been destitute of all political news from the outer world, but it seemed to me positive that the danger which so immediately threatened both Constantinople and the Dardanelles, must lead to the immediate action of England. The importance of Gallipoli as giving an opening for that action was so apparent, that I looked to the security of this point with intense anxiety.

As far as I could learn, although the lines of Boulair had been entrenched upon a formidable

scale, they had not as yet been armed, nor had any force capable of defending them been concentrated in this position. Should Gallipoli fall, and the Dardanelles be occupied by the Russians, the action of England must be completely cramped, and Constantinople would fall an easy prey to the invaders.

More than eighteen months before I had urged upon the Porte the necessity of constructing a line of fortifications which should extend from Lake Derkos on the Black Sea to Buyuk-Tchekmedji, on the Sea of Marmora, and which would thus cover the capital.

At that time Redif Pacha was the Minister of War.

His answer to a report which I had made to the Turkish Government, showed the utter ignorance and childish confidence which at that time pervaded the minds of many of the Turkish authorities of this Redif stamp. He told me personally that any fortifications immediately in front of Constantinople were unnecessary and useless.

“We have the Danube,” he said, “as a frontier, and we shall never let the Russians pass that river.”

I urged that in previous wars between Turkey

and Russia, the Danube had always been crossed by the Muscovite armies, and that the same result might happen again.

This Redif pronounced as impossible, but even should such a case arise, he declared that they had the Balkans as a second barrier, and that it would be utterly impossible for a Russian army to pass that range.

"Why, then," he replied, "should we waste time in throwing up fortifications only thirty miles in front of Constantinople?"

It was in vain that I urged that a long line of river and a long chain of mountains gave a very inadequate means of defence, and that in military history such lines had ever proved strategically disastrous to those who had confided in them.

Redif would not listen to the project, and for a time it was shelved.

But so convinced was I of the inevitable importance which must eventually be attached to the magnificent position which runs between the points indicated, that I had spent two months in camp for the purpose of carefully studying the whole of the natural features of the position and its applicability to defensive purposes.

The English Government, warned of the importance which might attach to this line in case

British action in defence of Constantinople became imperative, shortly afterwards sent out a staff of engineer officers for surveying the position in question, and preparing beforehand for its defence in case of certain eventualities. But all hope of moving the Turkish authorities to action appeared to be vain. I had constantly urged the project on repeated Grand Viziers, but Redif still remained in power, and offered a passive opposition.

Eventually the war with Russia had broken out. The disasters which attended the Turkish armies at the outset of the campaign in Asia were followed by the raid of Gourko through the Balkans; then, when it would have been too late to secure the defence of the capital, the plan of fortifications of the Buyuk-Tchekmedji-Derkos lines was hastily entertained.

The execution of this plan was entrusted to civil contractors.

Laid up with typhoid fever in Constantinople, I had been unable to follow its details, but, immediately on my recovery, I rode out to the position, which I knew so well, for the purpose of examining the system which had been adopted.

By the project which had been executed according to the plan of Blum Pacha, the original inten-

tion as conceived by myself, and also adopted by the English engineer officers, had in no way been realized.

The great advantage of the Buyuk-Tchekmedji-Derkos position lies in the fact that a long hilly chain extending from sea to sea slopes down by a succession of spurs to the broad valley of the Karasou, and these spurs which cover more than two-thirds of the extent of the whole position, completely command the broad plain which lies in front of them.

Instead of fortifying this advanced line from sea to sea, Blum Pacha had conceived the idea of establishing two entrenched camps some miles in the rear at the summit of a hilly chain.

In order to carry out this plan a system of circular works had been projected, and their execution had been confided, as before mentioned, to civil contractors. So unsatisfactory did the whole system of defence appear to me, that I immediately made a report to the Turkish authorities upon the subject. But directly Gourko had been compelled to retire north of the Balkans, the new-born energy of the Turkish military heads relative to the protection of the capital had subsided, and even the works themselves which had been com-

menced were left in an unfinished state and unarmed.

On passing through Constantinople in November, I again urged upon the Turkish Government the absolute importance of completing and arming this line, but the danger did not then appear to them to be immediate, and therefore, as usual, no action was taken. Thus, at this extreme crisis, when the fate of the Empire hung in the balance, the works for the defence of the capital, even after so many warnings, still remained incomplete and indefensible, and the whole fate of the Turkish Empire now seemed to depend upon the possibility of the army of Suleiman reaching Gallipoli and Constantinople before the arrival of the Russians.

This had been a military calculation which had occupied my attention and anxiety during the whole retreat, and it seemed to me that provided the necessary amount of transport were quickly forthcoming, it was a strategical problem which must be solved in favour of the Turks.

It was evident that no other adequate force could be concentrated in the lines of Boulair and Buyuk-Tchekmedji-Derkos; but it seemed probable that the many detachments which lay at Adrianople, Haim-Boghaz, and at Kazan, would have fallen back upon Constantinople, and secured

their retreat before the arrival of the Russian armies at Adrianople. These, together with the troops which might be hastily collected, and the garrison of Constantinople, would form an available force of some 35,000 men for the immediate defence of the capital.

As far as we could calculate, nearly 35,000 men had been saved to the army of Suleiman; in fact, as the several divisions began to gather on the shores of the Egean, after the terrible trials of the retreat they had accomplished, the only marvel was that an army which had been so neglected, still retained such cohesion and fighting power.

If these 35,000 men could be distributed between Gallipoli and the Buyuk-Tchekmedji-Derkos lines, the safety of those two positions appeared to be certain. It must take the Russian armies a considerable time before they could assemble in force, and with the quantity of artillery necessary to make any impression upon a Turkish army of 60,000 men occupying the line between Buyuk-Tchekmedji and Derkos, even in its almost unfortified state.

We knew by experience how rapidly shelter-trenches could be thrown up in positions which gave natural advantages, and what a serious obstacle those shelter-trenches afforded against

any advance, provided only that they were secure from turning movements. Thus breathing-time would be given to the capital, and as a very large force might be withdrawn from the line of the Lom, the army in front of Constantinople could be rapidly strengthened until it should be in a position completely to resist any possible attack by the Russian armies during the continuance of the winter.

But at this moment Gallipoli appeared to me to be a point of far greater strategical importance than the capital itself, for even if Constantinople were lost, and the position of Boulair could be saved, the effective action of England in the future would be rendered easy.

It seemed to be certain that England would have already taken action in order to save to herself and to Turkey this important strategical position.

Although the Malta garrison had been strengthened, I knew that not more than about 4000 men could be immediately withdrawn from it for the occupation of the Boulair lines, and this force would be evidently inadequate for holding these entrenchments.

I pictured to myself that warned by all that had gone before, and convinced at last of the



shallowness of Russian promises, England would now be acting promptly and energetically ; that the fleet would have been ordered through the Dardanelles, and that the 4000 men from Malta would already be on their way to Gallipoli.

Suleiman had reported to me that a Russian corps was in full march upon Boulair, and I imagined in my mind's eye, the little English garrison struggling to maintain the position against these overwhelming odds.

I pointed out to Suleiman the absolute necessity of immediately strengthening Gallipoli, and as he gave me *carte-blanche* as to my own personal movements, I requested to be allowed to start immediately for Boulair, and having secured that position, to move on to the capital, and to assist in the defence of the Buyuk-Tchekmedji-Derkos line, with which I was so intimately associated.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

The "Selimia" frigate—Lost telegrams—An archbishop's house—Bulgarian acolytes—Poisoned by arsenic—The bay of Lagos—A transport in the offing—Beating to windward—Lost effects—Golden moments—Crowded ship—Refuge in prayers—The island of Samothrace—Amicable relations—A census by oranges—A gale of wind—Anchoring in the Dardanelles—Telegraphic despatches.

THE "Selimia," one of the largest fifty-gun frigates in the world, had already arrived at Kara-aghatch, together with another transport steamer.

The embarkation of the troops was immediately commenced, but as the backwater which constitutes the small port of Lagos or Kara-aghatch was very shallow and a bar had to be crossed, the transports lay some distance out at sea.

On my first arrival at Gumurdjina I had been most anxious that the political and the military position, which were so much affected by the safe arrival of some 35,000 men on the shores of the Egean, should be thoroughly known both to the British Government and to the British public. I

immediately despatched a telegram to Constantinople; and Mr. Hanly, who had been present with the column during the retreat, and who was acting as *Times* correspondent, was anxious to forward a full telegram explaining the general position of affairs. I applied to Suleiman for permission for this telegram to be forwarded. This permission was granted. The telegram, translated from French into Turkish, having first passed the scrutiny of Suleiman himself, was delivered to the telegraph official, but by some singular omission this telegram never reached its destination.

On reaching Gumurdjina I met Colonel Studdy, who had ridden on in advance, and he informed me that the Greek Archbishop of that district, who occupied a good house in the town, had already made arrangements for my reception, and requested that I would avail myself of his hospitality.

We found him occupying a large establishment, and he received us most warmly, and placed every comfort at our disposal. He was not only the head of the Greek Church in this southern province, but also of the Bulgarian, and many Bulgarian acolytes were serving at the house in a menial capacity. It struck us that by these we

were not so warmly received as by the Gerriek brethren.

Gumurdjina lies about fifteen miles from the little port of Kara-aghatch, and we had arranged to start for that point on the following morning. The troops were to march at an early hour. The hospitable Archbishop was anxious that we should breakfast with him before our departure, and we started about mid-day, having first laid in a supply of the far-famed Yenidjé Turkish tobacco, for which this district is so celebrated.

We had not been more than about half an hour *en route* when Shakir Bay, Captain Burnaby, and myself, were seized with violent symptoms of poisoning. Fortunately Dr. Gill was at hand as usual with the requisite remedies, and as the staff of doctors of the Stafford House was also following in our suite, there was no lack of medical attendance. The symptoms were pronounced as those of arsenic, and it was most difficult to account for the occurrence as an accident. Our suspicions in no degree fell upon the hospitable Archbishop, but it seemed probable that one of the Bulgarian acolytes might have adopted this means of revenging himself upon those whom he would consider as the open enemies of his country.

We were all so seriously ill that we only reached Kara-aghatch with difficulty, and suffered all that night and part of the following day from the excruciating pains which arsenical poisoning is said to produce.

We put up for the night at a small store which lies on the east side of the backwater, but removed the next day to the little station of Kara-aghatch itself, which lies close to the mouth of the bay or backwater of Lagos.

All day long the country boats were employed in embarking the troops, and by night all Ibrahim's brigade was on board the "Selimia" frigate. On the following morning the 5th Brigade also commenced its embarkation in the same vessel, and in the afternoon 5000 troops had been stowed on board the frigate in addition to its usual crew.

Picking out the best of our horses, we placed them in a sailing barge, and started for the transport. Unfortunately the wind had turned to the south and was now blowing in-shore, creating a nasty sea upon the bar, and making it difficult for the shallow barges employed on this coast to beat out to the transport in the offing.

The wind and sea were rising rapidly, and the crew of the barge, composed of only two men,

showed the most indifferent seamanship. Twice we had arrived within hailing distance of the frigate, but by some mismanagement on the part of the crew, again drifted quickly to leeward.

At length we determined to try and make the "Sultanié," which was the other transport, and to get a boat from her which might take us on board the frigate. I had made arrangements with Shakir Pacha to bring on with him all my staff and servants that it was impossible to convey on board the crowded vessel.

On reaching the "Selimia" the captain of that ship reported to me that she was already so densely packed with troops that it would be absolutely impossible to carry in addition even the small number of horses that had embarked in the sailing barge. We had left all our baggage and the servants in the barge when we quitted the "Sultanié," with directions to make as quickly as possible for the frigate, and we intended to take with us, at least, our personal servants and effects, even if the horses had to follow us in the "Sultanié" but to our dismay we soon discovered that the barge having failed to make the "Selimia" on her first tack, her crew had put her before the wind, and were sailing back as rapidly as possible to Kara-aghatch with all our effects.

The captain of the "Selimia" proved to be an old Turk of the most impassible type. He informed me that he was waiting for Redjib's arrival, when he should be perfectly ready to sail, but that he could not do so without an order to this effect from Suleiman.

As the moments might be golden and the whole safety of Gallipoli might depend upon our rapid arrival, I requested him to send a boat on shore and to obtain the sanction of Suleiman to our departure on the immediate arrival of Redjib.

The captain declared that the sea was now so high that this was impossible. It was evident to me that he was quite incapable of believing that I was really anxious for the departure of the vessel in the absence of all my baggage and servants, and that he looked upon this sending of the boat on shore as a mere excuse for obtaining them and bringing them on board.

The sea had risen considerably, and if a gale commenced from the south we might remain for an indefinite time without communication with the shore.

The captain himself had assured me that he had now over 5000 troops on board, and that it was impossible to carry a single man in addition.

Soon after dusk the boat which had been

previously sent for Redjib, who had established his quarters at the small store at the east of the backwater where we had passed the first night, came on board, but without that general.

I again urged upon the captain of the frigate the importance of immediate departure, and we had animated discussions upon the subject, only varied by his retiring to the corner of the cabin and praying whenever anything disagreeable to him was proposed.

"If you are so anxious," said he, "for the vessel to leave, take the responsibility yourself, and give me an order in writing, and I will sail."

I immediately called for pens, ink, and paper, and gave him the required order.

At the same time I said, "You have stated that you can take no more troops on board, having already upwards of 5000 men embarked. Just give me that statement in writing."

The captain positively refused to put his pen to paper.

I immediately called upon the superior officers of my staff who had been present when he made the statement.

"Write down," I said, "that you have heard the captain of the frigate state that he is perfectly ready to sail, and that the vessel is incapable of



carrying any more troops, and sign all of you a statement to that effect."

The captain immediately rushed into the corner and prayed violently, but he gave directions to weigh anchor and commence our voyage.

When morning broke we were almost out of sight of the mainland which we had quitted, and the island of Samothrace lay towering in the sea upon the port bow.

It was blowing nearly half a gale of wind. The soldiers were lying down upon the deck so closely packed that it was almost impossible to move about the vessel. The "Selimia" was a magnificent frigate of over 4000 tons, and was certainly overcrowded with troops. I doubt whether so large a number of men had ever been previously conveyed for a sea voyage upon one vessel.

The captain came to me evidently endeavouring to establish more amicable relations, and I went with him to the bridge of the vessel. The wind would have enabled us to sail, and as the commander of the frigate appeared doubtful whether we could reach the Dardanelles that night, I was very anxious that he should accelerate her speed as much as possible; but this again he refused to do, declaring that the vessel was too crowded to admit the crew to work.

The captain informed me that we had now 5133 soldiers on board. On my expressing some doubt as to the absolute accuracy of his figures, he assured me that he must be correct, as he had given orders that every man was to have an orange, and he had issued 5133 oranges.

The poor soldiers suffered much from thirst. Not that there was a dearth of water on board, but it was impossible to organize a proper division of supply on account of the crowded state of the vessel.

As we neared the island of Imbros the wind increased in force, and we saw two transports that were evidently making their way towards Kara-aghatch to embark the troops. They had been compelled to take shelter under the lee of Imbros in order to escape the gale. We fortunately, however, were enabled to enter the Dardanelles just before dusk, and I was anxious that the captain should steam straight away to Gallipoli. This, again, he refused to do, once more taking refuge in prayers.

At that time orders had been issued by the authorities that no vessels were to be allowed to pass the Dardanelles during the night, but the order evidently did not apply to a Government frigate bringing up troops during a time of emergency.

The captain, however, declared that he must adhere to the order in question, and after steaming into the straits for about four miles he cast anchor. I was most anxious to send on a telegram to the War Minister at Constantinople, announcing our arrival, and also to telegraph to the Mutessarif of Gallipoli to make preparations for the disembarkation of the troops on the following day, but the captain again opposed the idea of sending a boat on shore, declaring that the weather was too severe to enable a boat's crew to land.

"Will you take the responsibility," he demanded, "and send one of your own people?"

Captain Burnaby immediately volunteered to go, and a boat was eventually despatched. I sent a telegram to Said Pacha, the Minister of Marine; another to Raouf Pacha, the War Minister; and another to the Mutessarif of Gallipoli, announcing that we should arrive at about twelve o'clock on the following day, and requesting that every available boat should be ready to assist in the disembarkation.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

The English fleet—Its return to Besika—Raw troops—  
Buried in the mud—An inspection of the fortifications—  
The position of Boulair—Called to Constantinople—  
Sailing down the Dardanelles—Council of ministers—  
The capital may be saved—A Russian trick—Treacherous  
diplomacy—Captured trains—The Russian advance—  
Abandonment of the lines—Start for England.

It was some time after daylight on the following morning before we weighed anchor, the obstructive captain declaring that the slight haze which existed would render navigation dangerous ; but on my telling him that I had already telegraphed to the Minister of Marine complaining of his delay and obstructiveness, he altered his tone, and we were soon afterwards steaming up the straits.

We passed Chanak and saw three small English despatch boats lying off the town, and towards mid-day when nearing Gallipoli we eagerly scanned the water in the neighbourhood of that town expecting to discern the presence of the English fleet, but all in vain.

Before we had cast anchor off the town it was evident that my telegram had arrived and been carefully acted upon, for no less than thirty-six cargo-boats came sailing out to meet the frigate.

The orders for the disembarkation from six different points of the vessel had already been issued.

On going on shore I met the Mutessarif at the landing-place, who had come down to meet me, and we eagerly inquired the news; and then we learnt to our dismay that the English fleet had entered the Dardanelles only the day before, but, suddenly receiving a telegraphic despatch from England, it had again retired to Besika.

We made our way to the house of the English Consul, and here met Captain Fife, British assistant military *attaché*, whom we had last parted with on the heights of Tashkessen on the day previous to the battle. From him we heard all the details of the countermand of the fleet, and that England, notwithstanding the danger of the situation, was still maintaining an expectant attitude.

I learnt that 3000 raw troops had arrived from Constantinople some few days before, and were now encamped on the lines. Captain Fife described the road leading to Boulair as almost im-

passable from mud, but I determined to ride out immediately in order to make preparations for the arrival of the troops, and to examine the condition of the fortifications.

By three o'clock in the afternoon every man of the 5000 troops who were on board the "Selimia" had been safely disembarked, and I gave orders for the two brigades to march immediately for Boulair. But after riding about two miles out of town, I found the road in such an impassable condition that I directed the brigades to halt in the neighbourhood of the town for the night.

Everything appeared to be in a state of perfect confusion, guns which were intended for the lines were lying half-buried in the mud, and with some difficulty our horses could make their way along the track.

We reached the central fort of the lines just before dusk. Here a sort of barrack had been built, and I was courteously received by Hussein Pacha, Governor of the Dardanelles, who was in command of the troops who were assembled on the lines. He assured me that the position was perfectly defenceless, and must be abandoned if the Russians advanced.

We started at daybreak and made a careful examination of the fortifications. The whole

country was one sea of mud, and as the troops had no tents, and the weather was very wet, I determined to push the two brigades forward into the village of Boulair, which had been abandoned by the inhabitants. The village of Boulair lies about a mile and a half in front of the line of fortifications which extends continuously from the Marmora to the Gulf of Saros. These fortifications had been thrown up during the war under urgent pressure by the British Government, and had been carried out by means of forced civil labour.

To a great extent the line which had been laid out by the English and French armies when they occupied Gallipoli prior to the Crimean war had been adopted, but a large advanced work had been thrown up immediately in rear of the village of Boulair. It appeared to me on examination, that it was wiser for the small number of troops then at my disposal to occupy this advanced position, which if carefully strengthened by infantry entrenchments demanded a smaller number of men for its defence than the main line in rear. A telegram had arrived notifying the arrival of the "Sultanié" at Gallipoli, early that afternoon with 3500 more troops under Redjib Pacha.

Raouf Pacha had sent a telegraphic despatch

from Constantinople requesting my immediate presence there, and having designated the positions to be occupied by the troops, and planned the construction of a road which should follow the sea-shore, and then be continued along the rear of the works, I returned to Gallipoli.

We passed the troops on the line of march, and with feelings of the deepest regret I bid adieu to the officers and men of the 5th Brigade with whose fortunes I had been so intimately associated.

As no steam communication existed between Gallipoli and Chanak, a distance of about fifteen miles, and it was necessary to descend the Dardanelles to the latter town in order to catch the steamer for Constantinople, we hired a sailing boat, and with a fair wind and favourable current reached Chanak in about two hours and a half. Here we found an Italian steamer on the very point of departure. She had come from Salonika, and we met on board some officers who had been at Sofia when Gourko's army crossed the Balkans, and who had fallen back to Kustendil with twenty-two battalions drawn in from the extreme west, which had been placed under the command of Azaf Pacha, and which were still occupying the district of Kossova.



At about nine o'clock on the following morning, we steamed into the Golden Horn. I lost no time in proceeding to the Seraskierat or War Ministry. On my arrival there I was told that an important Council of Ministers was then sitting. I immediately sent in my card. Raouf Pacha, Mahmoud Damad Pacha, Said Pacha, and other Ministers came out to see me, and I strongly impressed upon them that even deducting the troops which we had left at Gallipoli, 25,000 men from the army of Suleiman would still be available for the defence of the capital and the lines of Buyuk-Tchekmedji-Derkos.

Raouf Pacha informed me that 30,000 men were already concentrated on the lines under Mukhtar Pacha, but considerable difficulty was experienced in dragging the guns which were necessary to occupy the position through the sea of mud which the continuance of wet weather had created.

I strongly impressed upon all the Ministers the fact that this same difficulty must attend the concentration of a sufficient force of Russian artillery to produce any appreciable effect upon the naturally strong position, and that with 60,000 men the lines might certainly be held in the face of any Russian army which could be brought against them for several weeks to come. I urged

also that as the line of the Lom had been given up, troops should be immediately brought down from Varna in order to strengthen the capital and to secure the Buyuk-Tchekmedji-Derkos position against all attack.

I found the Ministers at first despondent, but left them sanguine and hopeful. Raouf Pacha requested me to take a command at the lines, but begged me to remain at Constantinople for a few days in order to supply information that might be requisite.

The Ministers were in a state of extreme uncertainty.

Namyk and Server Pachas had been sent to Adrianople to negotiate the terms of peace. The Russians had at first defined some very severe conditions, but Server and Namyk, having received instructions from Constantinople to conclude an armistice at any price, immediately accepted the Russian demands in full.

The authorities at Constantinople very naturally concluded that this armistice upon the terms imposed by the Russians themselves was now in operation, but to their surprise the news arrived daily that the Russian troops were still in full march towards the capital, and they then learnt that, with the treachery common to Rus-

sian diplomacy, the Muscovite leaders, surprised at the ease with which their conditions were accepted, had now imposed terms of a much severer nature; at the same time they virtually cut the communications between the delegates and the Government at Constantinople by imposing every kind of difficulty and delay in the transit of messengers bearing despatches, whilst the Russian troops were pushing on by forced marches towards Constantinople.

The very trains which were sent up with the delegates or messengers were appropriated by the Russians, and used for the despatch of troops towards the capital.

The ministers were in a state of considerable uneasiness, but could not fully realize the treacherous nature of the trick which was being played upon them. The troops were arriving rapidly from Kara-aghatch, and being posted in the lines of Buyuk-Tchekmedji. Fresh messengers had been despatched from Constantinople with directions to immediately communicate to the Porte the exact conditions which had been arranged by the delegates; but again no definite reply arrived.

The defence of the line, however, had been determined upon in case of a Russian advance to that point, but news had come in that Russian

cavalry had reached Tchataldja, which lies only four miles in front of the position, and had requested the Turkish cavalry to withdraw according to the terms of the new armistice, which was as yet unknown to the Turkish authorities.

I was to leave on the next day to take up my command.

That evening Mr. Whitaker, the editor of the *Levant Herald*, arrived from Tchataldja.

He brought the most astounding intelligence. Server and Namyk had returned with the news that in the absence of communications with Constantinople, they had been compelled to agree to the following new terms which had been imposed by the Russians. The Russian army was to advance; the Turkish army was to withdraw from the strong position of Buyuk-Tchekmedji-Derkos, and to fall back to Kutchuk-Tchekmedji.

The great natural line which should have formed an impregnable barrier to the advance of any enemy upon Constantinople had been relinquished without a struggle, and was now to form a neutral boundary between the two armies.

I cannot attempt to describe the profound and painful impression made upon me by this abandonment of the line of defence with which I had so long been intimately associated. Except that

Mr. Whitaker was absolutely certain as to his facts, I should have been inclined to doubt the accuracy of the report.

I paid a visit to Raouf Pacha at the Seraskeriat early on the following morning. He was greatly depressed, and confirmed the news. Utterly disgusted, and determined not to be a witness of the unnecessary retreat of the Turkish army, I requested immediate permission to return to England on leave of absence, and started for London *via* Brindisi on the following afternoon.

## CHAPTER XXV.

Military and political prophecies—A reorganized army—Short service—Regulars and Reserves—The Mustaphiz—Distrust of Christians—The battalion unit—Depôt battalions—Untrained troops—The strain of war—Patriotism or religion—Absence of fanaticism—Military virtues—Intrigues and jealousies—Countless hosts—Enemies on all sides—Roumania saves Russia—Dearth of military commanders—Russian troops in the Crimea—Military intelligence—Loose order—Superiority in cavalry—Army supply.

THE war which had just terminated had falsified all the prophecies, both military and political, which had been advanced relative to a contest between Russia and Turkey.

When in the early spring Turkey had thrown down the gauntlet to her formidable and aggressive enemy, her chances of offering a protracted resistance were looked upon as slight.

The contest which she was about to wage was not with Russia alone. Roumania, Servia, Montenegro, and Persia, would all be sure to act

against her, directly or indirectly, and thus prevent the concentration of her forces against her most powerful foe. But the military resources of Turkey had been but little studied, and the fighting power of her troops had been considerably underrated.

Whatever might have been the faults of Abdul-Aziz, during his reign he had bequeathed to the nation a powerful fleet and a reorganized army. Moreover, the arsenals and storehouses of Constantinople teemed with *matériel* of war.

The Turkish artillery had been re-armed with Krupp guns of the latest pattern. The Turkish infantry were being rapidly re-armed with the Henri-Martini, or rather the Peabody-Martini rifle. The contract for the delivery of 600,000 of these arms had been made in America, and was being quickly executed.

The experience of the Crimean war had proved the defective organization of the then existing Turkish army. Abdul-Aziz, on coming to the throne, had taken this question seriously in hand, and he had instituted a system of short service and large reserves, which, though very incomplete as compared with the more recent models of Germany, Russia, Austria, and France, still gave the power of bringing a very great proportion of

the population under arms in case of a national emergency. Hussein Avni Pacha had laid before his sovereign a scheme for effecting this object. Its errors and advantages may be briefly described. It made the whole Mussulman population, with a few exceptions, liable to military service from their twentieth to their twenty-sixth year. From this levy the number of men requisite to maintain a standing army of 150,000 men was selected annually by ballot. The remainder passed into the reserve, available in case of extreme necessity, but untrained and unorganized. The Nizamié, or regular soldiers, served for four years. They then passed into the Ikhtiat, or reserve, for two years. On the completion of this term of six years, they were drafted into the Redif, or reserve battalions. In the Redif they served for six years longer. The Redif was composed of two classes. The Redif Mokadem, or formed and officered battalions, comprising the men who had actually served their six years in the active army or its reserve, and the Redif Tali, or men belonging to the uncalled-for and untrained levies of each year who had escaped the ballot for service in the active army.

After completing their term of six years' service in the Redif, all these men passed into the



Mustaphiz, or last reserve, in which they served for nine years.

It will at once be seen that the system had two cardinal defects. Firstly, it created reserves out of all proportion with the existing *cadres*. Secondly, the great mass of these reserves was both untrained and unorganized, and no depôts existed which might make them available for filling up the ranks of the formed battalions in case of need.

Traditional religious fanaticism had also deprived the Turkish Government of the military services of the greater portion of the population, and to this misplaced distrust of the Christian subjects of the Porte may directly be ascribed the disasters which befell the Turkish empire. Instead of Christians being admitted into the army, they were subjected to a poll-tax in lieu of military service.

Had the Ottoman empire, in the reorganization of its army, applied the system of general service irrespective of creeds, the Bulgarians, who assisted so materially in the success which eventually attended the Russian armies, would probably have fought faithfully against the ancient enemy of Turkey.

But notwithstanding the inherent defects of the system at the commencement of the war with

Russia, a force of some 800,000 trained and untrained men stood inscribed upon the lists as available for military service.

Had a good military organizer at that time stood at the head of the War Ministry at Constantinople, great results might still have been obtained; but Redif Pacha, who then held the position of Seraskier, was totally destitute of administrative ability.

Nominally framed upon a system of corps-d'armées, divisions, brigades, and regiments, the true unit of the Turkish army was virtually the battalion; and although regiments, and in many cases brigades and divisions, were formed upon the system of territorial organization, and drawn from the same districts or provinces, yet even during the Servian campaign the carelessness of the general military arrangements had so destroyed the practical working of this larger organization, that it was never recovered up to the termination of the war.

During the operations against Servia the losses in the Nizamié, or regular battalions, were so great that the Ikhtiat, or trained reserve, was, for the most part, practically exhausted. The Mokadem, or first ban of the Redif, called out as formed battalions, had also suffered a considerable strain.

The sensible system to have adopted, when war with Russia threatened, would evidently have been to form the second ban of Redifs into depôt battalions, and to have drafted the men, when sufficiently trained, from these dépôts to strengthen the ranks of the Nizamié and Mokadem-Redif battalions serving in the field. Instead of adopting this system, the untrained men of the second ban of the Redifs were brought *en masse* to Constantinople, and there hastily armed, clothed, and equipped. They were formed into distinct battalions, and, half-officered by men entirely destitute of military instruction, were sent immediately to the front to meet the enemy.

As the war progressed, and the strain grew heavier and heavier, this same system was eventually applied to the Mustaphiz, or untrained last reserve.

What could be expected from battalions so constituted?

It was not to be wondered at that in the latter stages of the campaign these Mustaphiz battalions proved only an encumbrance and a source of weakness; for it must be remembered that the Turkish system of organization had not been sufficiently long in operation to infuse the ranks of the Mustaphiz with trained men, and this

reserve was formed, for the most part, of those who had never been drawn for active service, and yet had passed the age to be inscribed upon the lists of the untrained *Redif*.

These men, of considerable years, were usually the fathers of families, and in many instances they knew that their wives and children had been left in the country then occupied by the enemy, or were perhaps flying in despair, and swelling the suffering train of fugitives.

With no *esprit de corps* to serve as a bond of union, and unpaid by the State, it was not surprising that desertion was rife amongst them, or that they failed to distinguish themselves when brought into contact with the enemy.

That the Turkish military system stood the strain of the war so successfully was a matter of wonder to all who were acquainted with its working. In its application during the campaign, the first principle of military administration had been violated.

It is difficult to determine where to seek for an explanation of the cohesion which was to be found in the trained *Nizamié* and *Redif* battalions even up to the termination of the war. Many of the men had been unpaid for years. The system of supply was so defective that they were called

upon to bear all kinds of unnecessary hardships which would have destroyed the efficiency of any other army.

Can the spirit of endurance which sustained them up to the very last as effective military bodies be traced to patriotism or to religious zeal?

Associated intimately as I have been with the Turkish army even during the time of its severest trials, I have never detected any sign of that fanaticism which is supposed to animate the Mussulman soldier in his relations with all who hold a different creed. They proved just as willing to submit themselves to the discipline or to give their lives at the dictation of a Christian leader as for a general who held the same faith as themselves.

No one who followed the fortunes of the Turkish army from the days when it was advancing victoriously on the Lom until the last trying retreat from the Balkans to the shores of the Egean could fail to believe that the raw material which could fight so gallantly under such privations and military difficulties was the finest in the world. The trained Turkish soldier seemed to possess every military virtue. Patient and enduring, submissive to discipline, of strong *physique* and a good marcher, cool and brave in moments

of danger, and possessing to a high degree that military instinct which is so valuable in the loose formations demanded by modern warfare, the Turk forms the beau-ideal of a soldier.

The preceding description of the general phases of the war will have shown conclusively where lay the element of weakness which led to the final discomfiture of the Turkish army. The regimental officers, although leaving much to be desired, had still improved considerably under the organization and training of latter years. The responsibility of the disaster which eventually befell the Turkish armies must rest upon the generals and the staff.

It has been seen how in the month of September the Turkish forces were triumphant all along the line, and only wanted the master mind of one good military leader in order to have achieved complete success. The intrigues, the weaknesses, and the jealousies of the commanders who threw away the grand opportunity and led up by their own acts to the final reverse, have been carefully noted; but those who criticize, and with much justice, the errors of the Turkish leaders, forget the credit which even in those final days of retreat still attaches to the trained mass of the Turkish army.

They forget the extraordinary numerical superiority against which the military strength of the Turkish empire had so long struggled.

When in the months of December and of January the countless Muscovite legions which under Gourko, Radetsky, and Skobelev swarmed with success through the defiles of the Balkans, a pæan of victory rang out throughout Russia, and was thoughtlessly re-echoed throughout Europe; and even military writers, in sounding the success of the Muscovite arms, forgot the numerical weakness of the small remnant of Turkish troops which, misled and ill-commanded, was still striving against overwhelming odds.

It had been entirely forgotten that throughout the whole campaign the small Mahomedan population of the Turkish Empire which gave the military quota of men, had not been fighting against the whole strength of Russia only.

With Greece and Persia neutralizing a considerable portion of the Turkish army; with Bulgaria virtually hostile and swelling the ranks of the enemy; with Montenegro and Roumania openly to contend against, and Servia ready to add to the list whenever she could do so without danger to herself; nevertheless, in the early autumn of 1877, the Russian armies, both in Asia and in

Europe, were on the verge of a complete disaster ; nor can it be doubted by any impartial military historian that but for the aid of the Roumanian forces, the whole Russian army which was fighting north of the Balkans would inevitably have been driven into the Danube.

The war which had just concluded had proved singularly barren in the production of generals of conspicuous military talent on either side.

If the Turkish commanders throughout the campaign may be accused of incompetence, an equal want of military intelligence certainly characterized the Russian commanders in the earlier phases of the war. We look in vain through the list of Russian leaders for such brilliant instances of military talent as Germany produced in her shorter campaign against France in 1870-71 ; and even now the names of Gourko, Skobeleff, and Radetsky alone stand out conspicuously in the host of Russian Generals who held commands during the progress of the campaign.

Totleben came upon the military stage at a late period of the campaign, but he had no opportunities of more than sustaining the reputation he had so justly acquired in the Crimean war.

Nor did the Russian army generally maintain the European reputation which it acquired in past



wars. It was impossible for those who had been given opportunities of marking the courage and endurance of the Russian troops in the trenches of the Crimea or in the desperate attacks made during that campaign on the English and French positions not to believe that the Russian army as a whole had deteriorated since that period. The passive endurance and stolid discipline which had paralyzed if not resisted the supreme genius of Napoleon were found wanting in that period of 1877, when defeat was falling upon the Russian armies. Nor was the reason for this deterioration difficult to seek.

The Russian soldier in past history had ever been distinguished more for his stolid discipline than for his military intelligence. Modern war, with the changes which it has compelled in military tactics, demands a higher standard of military intelligence from the individual soldier.

In the different phases of the campaign it was singular to remark the great superiority of the Turk over the Russian in this respect. As has been before mentioned, many of the battalions of Turkish troops which were acting against the enemy had only been hastily raised and officered some few weeks before. Russia, on the other hand, was using an organized and well-constituted

military system. Yet in the loose order of fighting which the precision, range, and rapidity of modern firearms has necessitated, these individual Turkish soldiers were decidedly superior to the Russian. The Russian officer, as ever, had distinguished himself by great personal bravery. The Russian troops had shown the same patience under hardship which had characterized them in former wars. But to one who was able to compare the Russian army as a whole with that of Germany, it was impossible not to believe that the former showed a vast inferiority.

In the earlier stages of the war the want of military intelligence shown by Russian commanders upon the Lom was so great that it became at times actually puzzling, and we could not even guess what would probably be the military action of the enemy under certain contingencies.

Russia throughout the whole campaign had the immense advantage of a more than fourfold superiority in cavalry, and this in a country peculiarly suited for cavalry action. She failed to derive the slightest benefit from this advantage. She held the same superiority in the artillery branch of her service. In almost every engagement during the war the Russians were able to

bring a far greater number of guns into action than the Turks, and although the Russian guns left much to be desired, the action of the Russian artillery was usually effective and intelligent.

Whatever might have been the corruption of her administrative system, Russia was certainly enabled to supply her armies under positions of considerable difficulty and towards the latter part of the campaign in a way which reflected some credit upon the activity of her administrative department.

A careful examination of the little effect produced by the action of the whole military strength of the Russian Empire for a long period against a small Power like Turkey, beset by other enemies on every side, must throw some discredit upon the Russian Generals and the Russian Staff.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

A rough-and-ready system—A lesson for England—Poverty of military strength—Comparative arms—The reserve system—Offence and defence—Russophobists—Our Indian Empire—Preparations for the future—Regulars and Militia—War *matériel*—Cumbersome system—Faults of the Turkish system—Red-tapeism—Want of foresight—Turkish Staff College—Regimental experience—Grand *manœuvres*—Financial considerations—Armies and battalions—The French model—England and France—Minor operations of war.

THE various phases of the war had clearly demonstrated how completely the Turkish army lacked the organization and administrative direction which is common to the great Powers of Europe ; still there were many good points in her rough-and-ready military system, the study of which may prove useful and instructive. The ease with which the Turkish army in the field was moved, fed, clothed, and supplied with ammunition was marvellous to those accustomed to the more cumbersome organizations of other military powers.

England especially might copy with advantage much of the practical and common-sense system which is adopted by the Ottoman armies. When we consider the immense cost of the military forces of Great Britain, and the very small number of troops that we are able to place in the field in case of any emergency, we may reflect with some advantage upon the mode by which a Power like Turkey, crippled in her finances, was able suddenly to place 800,000 men on foot at very short notice, armed with the best of modern guns and small-arms, and, although lacking thoroughly organized administrative departments, still capable of moving at any instant to almost any point that might be required.

No one who knows the English army can doubt that it has made immense strides in practical usefulness in the course of the last fifteen years; but it will be wise to remedy the defects shown by the minor test which has lately been applied to it by the calling up of the reserves, and to prepare for future possible requirements.

England has as yet failed to thoroughly realize the immense bodies of men which must be brought into the field in order to produce real military effect in these modern days of conscription and large armies.

It will give us some idea of our poverty as a military power when we consider that Turkey, with a population to draw upon only half as large as that of the United Kingdom, was enabled for many months to maintain an army of upwards of 250 battalions on the line of the Balkans and Danube, at the same time carrying on a campaign upon a large scale in Asia, and watching many other points upon which she was threatened.

England, with a long time given to her for preparation, when lately menaced by the chance of war, had twenty-one battalions ready for embarkation, and only twenty-one more which might have followed some six weeks afterwards. High as is undoubtedly the quality of the British army, it is impossible to expect that so small a force could, acting without allies, produce any great military effect if pitted against the large existing standing armies of the continent.

Fortunately in 1870 the reserve-system was adopted, and although it was so strongly opposed for some years afterwards, the recent calling up of these reserves has proved the value of the organization. But it must be remembered that the British military system of reserves will not be complete for many years to come. At a time when political clouds lower round us in all direc-

tions, it would be wise if England takes seriously to heart many of the lessons of the late campaign.

We buoy ourselves up when danger threatens with the thought of the comparatively large number of auxiliary forces which remain at our command, but the great mistake which England has made in latter years by merely considering herself a defensive and not an offensive power has been only too evident in the current of recent events.

An empire that has interests of vital importance to watch in every quarter of the globe cannot long pursue a policy of selfish isolation, and if the late war proved one fact more than another, it showed the folly of relying upon untrained and undisciplined troops in the hour of battle.

It is but a few years since when those who urged views which are now apparent to every mind were taunted as alarmists or Russophobists. Even those who foresaw that from the aggressive attitude that was being assumed by Russia, coupled with her unreasonable thirst for conquest, British and Muscovite interests in the East must some day fatally clash, were not prepared for the rapidity with which recent events would hasten that antagonism.

It is but a little time ago since we were told

that there was plenty of room for Russia and England in the East. The idea that our Indian Empire could even be seriously menaced in our generation by Muscovite intrigues was scouted as far-fetched and unpractical. Yet we now find ourselves at war with the greatest military power which lies conterminous with India, that war being directly brought about by Russian intrigues if not by Russian assistance.

Doubtless the causes which conduce to the poverty of England as a military Power do not apply to her Indian Empire. There, no dearth of men exists who are willing and able to form an army that might vie numerically with the greatest military Powers of Europe; but it would be well, whilst time is yet given to us, if we looked carefully at the organization of that Indian army and studied the means by which it might be rapidly augmented without at the same time losing its efficiency. It would be well also if we carefully considered the means by which the offensive rather than the defensive strength of the United Kingdom might be rapidly increased before the exigencies of war come upon us, and perhaps serve to dislocate the means which are now at our disposal.

Small as is the army of England as compared with that of Turkey, the defects inherent to the



system are precisely those which led to the disasters which have befallen the Ottoman Empire. Turkey, like England, possessed a small, trained, active army, and a large untrained, or partly untrained, reserve; but she had one advantage which even England has not—namely, that this reserve was available for offence, and not strictly limited to defensive purposes.

The blot of the English military system is plainly evident. We keep under arms but a small trained regular army, and even that force is in every quarter of the globe. Of late years we have formed reserves intended to swell the ranks of that army to a war-footing in case of emergency. We have a volunteer force now numbering some 200,000 men intended for defensive purposes. But, in addition, we have the militia, whose position is nondescript. It is useless to maintain this third army merely available for defence.

We possess this force of some 120,000 men not only able but willing to take upon themselves the duty of offensive action in case of emergency.

Could the whole strength of the militia be added to that of the regular army for purposes of offence, England would at least be somewhat formidable in her military action beyond her own shores. Nothing would be more simple, and

nothing more popular with the militia themselves, than to enlist them not only for service at home, but for service abroad in case of emergency.

There is another point of cardinal importance which merits the careful consideration of England, namely, the limited amount of our war *matériel*, together with its enormous cost.

When we find nations like Germany, Russia, and even Turkey, capable of always maintaining the necessary military stores to place armies effectively in the field, some of which armies number upwards of a million and a half of men, we cannot but be surprised at both the deficiency and the cost of the *matériel* of war which exists in the United Kingdom.

The same cumbrous and expensive system pervades all the auxiliary departments upon which the action of the army rests. Embarkation is the first necessity for the offensive action of a British military force, yet the British soldier requires three times the amount of transport that is considered sufficient for that of any other soldier in Europe; and five times that which was generally made use of by the Turks in the late campaign.

All these evils tend to make British military action cumbrous and difficult. In order to correct or mitigate these evils, it may be useful to study

the simple and inexpensive system followed by Turkey in the late campaign more carefully in detail.

The errors pertaining to the Turkish field organization have been constantly alluded to in describing the phases of the war ; but at the risk of repetition, and in order to derive useful lessons from that which is in some cases good and practical, I will now proceed to summarize those errors more in detail.

The faults which lay with the generals, with the staff, and the want of manœuvring power, have been repeatedly referred to. That these defects should have existed was not extraordinary. Generals had been pushed into high commands, not for their military acquirements and intelligence, but because they had protection and patronage from those temporarily high in office at Constantinople. The habits of command which exist in Turkey amongst the superior officers were not such as were likely to achieve success in the field against active and energetic European leaders.

It has been pointed out how cumbrous is the official machinery by which the Turkish military organization is worked, and how officers high in command spent the whole of their time in the per-

formance of official duties, and were thus obliged to neglect the study and knowledge of their troops; but we must never forget that it is not many years past since the same fault attached to the field organization of England.

Those who remember how entirely the time of the late Lord Raglan was occupied by official work during the progress of the siege of Sebastopol, that work being thrown upon him by the want of an effective system of military administration and organization, will also remember how little time was spared to him for more active duties.

But, in addition to the cumbrousness of the Ottoman military system, the whole Turkish character is a strong mixture of fitful sloth and activity. The value of time is never appreciated as we understand it in Europe. Foresight is a quality which may be said to be almost non-existent. The consequence is, that nearly all work gets into arrear; then, when the emergency arrives, extraordinary activity is shown in order to meet it, but, in nine cases out of ten, that energy is applied too late.

Some years before the war the Turks had established a Staff College in Constantinople in imitation of those of Europe. Officers who had passed the military school with honour, pursued a

further course of study which qualified them for the Staff. They then entered the army with the rank of captain. From that time forth they acted as Staff officers of the army. Thus the very first qualification for a good Staff officer—namely, the knowledge of troops, and of all the small details of that organization which he afterwards aids to direct—was entirely wanting. At the same time, in their studies at the military school of Constantinople these Staff officers had acquired a certain technical and scientific knowledge, which imposed itself strongly upon the generals to whom they were attached, and who, for the most part, were entirely deficient in this same technical knowledge.

The consequence, in nine cases out of ten, was that the Staff officer gave himself airs of superiority, which the generals nevertheless acknowledged, and thus the officer of the Staff, never having passed through the regular ordeal of some years of regimental service, found himself called upon virtually to direct large movements in the field without any of that primary regimental knowledge which is so absolutely necessary. The result of this superficial Staff knowledge has been constantly alluded to and described. In the Turkish system previous to the war no attempt

was made to improve the practical knowledge either of the generals or the Staff. Manœuvres of the respective corps which formed the Turkish army were never carried out. Battalions lay detached, as a rule, all over the country, and were rarely, if ever, brought together, unless some sudden emergency called for their united action. It was not to be wondered at that when large armies were collected and required to be manœuvred against an enemy, generals and Staff were entirely wanting both in the habits and the knowledge which were requisite.

Perhaps the most important element which has conduced to success in modern warfare is the system of manœuvring in large bodies in time of peace. That system, first carried out in Prussia, brought its fruits. It was adopted in England, and at its commencement was carried out with vigour; but latterly, from purely and unworthily petty financial considerations, it seems to be falling into disuse. Yet it may almost be assumed, as a military axiom, that the army which has had the greatest habit of manœuvring in time of peace will be certain to be successful in time of war. The most ordinary exercise of common sense will prove that this must be the case. If drill is requisite for the battalion, how much more must it

be requisite for all that cumbrous machinery which goes to form an army. If a highly trained and drilled battalion were to be pitted against one untrained and undrilled, the result would be looked upon as certain. Yet, from petty motives of economy, we fail to give to our armies the training which is necessary, although we are willing to spend millions upon the training of our battalions.

The disasters which fell upon Turkey may be ascribed directly to this want, for, with all the other defects which have been alluded to, had the Turkish forces possessed the necessary quality of manœuvring power, a complete success over the Russian armies must have been the result.

The lack of this power was made evident every day during the war in the action of the respective arms of the service. The Turkish artillery is naturally good, yet the batteries were entirely ignorant as to how to direct their fire to the best advantage.

Although spoilt by an attempt to imitate the ancient French model, the Turkish cavalry soldier is apt and intelligent, yet Turkish cavalry officers were absolutely ignorant of the proper application against the enemy of the arm which they commanded.

The Turkish infantry soldier, as has been so often pointed out, possessed the highest military qualities, yet generals and superior officers were unable to use this arm in such a manner as to give it due effect.

Modern military tactics had not been followed or studied. After the Crimean war Turkey had taken her two principal allies as models on which to form the respective branches of the army and the navy. She had, perhaps naturally, imitated France in all that pertained to the former, and England in that which related to the latter.

In the military schools French was taught to the pupils; in the naval schools English was the language to which most importance was attached.

The same blind imitation of what was French pervaded the whole military system, and the disasters which fell upon France in 1870 did not warn the Turks that their previous model had failed, for they still clung to the technical system which had been previously adopted.

But the frequent insurrections which Turkey had been called upon to quell in latter years had given some of the Turkish leaders a certain aptitude in the minor operations of war. Acting constantly in mountain districts and difficult ground, they had found by practical experience



that a loose order was necessary, and although no official system of working in that order had been devised, the Turkish infantry accepted it, as a rule, as a necessity, and never attempted during the war to fight in masses. If there was one lesson in that war which impressed itself more strongly than another upon the military observer, it was the absolute necessity of organizing and constantly practising a system of fighting in loose formations.

Arms of precision have acquired in later years, such a rapidity of fire and such extreme range that they can now be brought to bear at distances which were considered long cannon range in the days of our forefathers. The Turkish infantry battalions, destitute as their army was of general military instruction, showed great aptitude in accepting these modern lessons.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

Use of the spade—Turkish and Russian losses—Working pay  
—A front attack—Shelter-trenches—Gun-pits—Attack  
and defence—Turning movements—Columns and lines—  
Wagons or pack transport—Entrenching tools—Loss of  
marching power—Toy spades—The English navy.

AN important point highly developed by this war was the absolute necessity of the constant use of the spade in military operations. At the commencement of the war this habit was much neglected by the Russians, but they suffered so terribly in consequence that in the latter phases of the campaign they attached almost greater value to the system than the Turks, from whom they had learnt it.

In the earlier actions of the war the reports given as to the relative losses of the Russians and Turks by the Ottoman commanders were looked upon as ridiculous and absurd. Without in any way vouching for their accuracy, all impartial observers who were present in those earlier actions when the Russian commanders were ever ready

to throw their troops against the Turkish shelter-trenches, will grant that the losses of the former were nearly always fourfold those of the Turks.

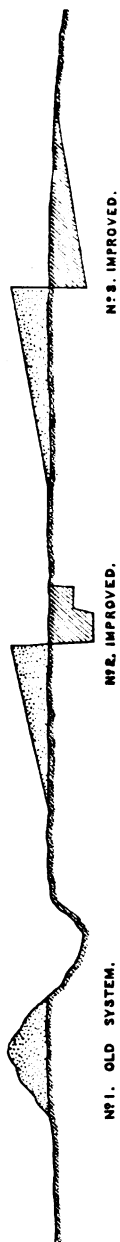
Unfortunately the British soldier in the field is a bad workman with the spade, but this results merely from the want of habit and of practice. But a pernicious system exists in the English army, which actually prevents the practical instruction of the soldier in working with the spade. This evil arises from the present custom of giving working pay. The British soldier is taught that he is never to work with the spade unless he receives extra pay for so doing, and as that extra pay must be a matter for a special vote by Parliament, the whole system tends to give the soldier as little instruction as possible in this most necessary duty.

Unless England is prepared to court disasters in future wars, she must immediately correct this crying evil. If working with the spade destroys the clothes and throws a pecuniary stress upon the soldier, let that question be met by such an increase of pay, or issue of working clothing, as will meet the stress: but let the recruit be as carefully taught to handle his spade as to handle his rifle, and let the practice of throwing up light field-works form a part of the instruction of both officers and men of every battalion.

The extraordinary value of a system of shelter-trenches, or light field fortifications was constantly exemplified during the war. I never once during the campaign saw a position which had been lightly fortified in this manner taken by a front attack by either one side or the other.

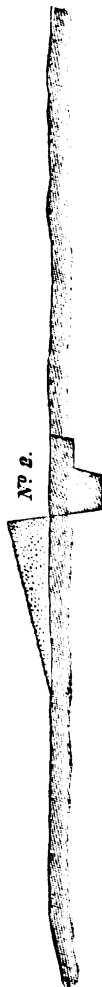
The moment the Turkish soldier moved into a position near the enemy, even if it were possible that he might only remain in that position for one day, the pack-horses carrying the shovels and pickaxes were immediately brought to the front, and there and then each battalion entrenched itself. The result was that if a Turkish army advanced, it left behind it a succession of entrenched positions on which to fall back in case of a reverse. The soldier, being constantly accustomed to the use of the pickaxe and the spade, took as much pride in the execution of this work with rapidity and correctness as in the performance of his drill and manœuvres.

The system of shelter-trenches adopted by the Turkish army varied as they gained experience. The common trench with the earth thrown up in front of it, adopted in the little instruction imparted to the English army, was soon abandoned for a more practical and useful profile which gave cover from artillery as well as from infantry fire. This progress is shown in the following diagrams.



Nº 2. IMPROVED.

Nº 3. IMPROVED.



It was singular to note the extraordinarily small loss suffered by the men when occupying trenches of the latter type, even if exposed for hours to a continuous and heavy fire of artillery. The same system was used for guns with an equally good effect, and gun-pits sunk almost to the level of the earth were found to be most practically useful.

When some few years ago the value of shelter-trenches was brought prominently forward, the system was for a short time applied in the English army, but it was suddenly and hastily assumed that this habit of constantly seeking shelter would destroy the attacking qualities of the soldier. Experience had proved that troops constantly accustomed to the shelter of trenches during the siege of fortified towns or positions lost to a certain extent their power of attack, and based upon this superficial view of the subject the idea was almost entirely abandoned. But the cases alluded to and the system practised by both the Turkish and Russian armies during the late war are not analogous. If a soldier is taught to throw up trenches wherever he rests, and consequently to leave those trenches for more forward positions as opportunity offers, there is no falling off in his willingness to attack. It is true that conscious as he will be of the value which he himself

derives from entrenchments, he may hesitate to attack with vigour positions so entrenched which are held by the enemy; but in my opinion his reasoning is both just and natural, and commanders who in the future urge their men forward to front attacks upon previously prepared and entrenched positions simply court disaster and defeat.

It rarely happens that such positions are so constituted as not to be open to turning movements, and where practical these turning movements should invariably be adopted.

We have failed in England as yet to thoroughly realize the fearful effect produced by modern firearms. Troops brought forward to the attack of entrenchments in anything like the old column formation would simply be swept off the face of the earth; nor can the line formation be retained within effective range of modern firearms.

I have alluded pointedly to the incident which occurred on a reconnaissance at Metchka, exemplifying this rule, when four companies drawn up in line lost twenty-five men in the space of about ten minutes from the fire of the enemy distant at least 1200 yards. But least of all should the British army shrink from establishing a system of action in loose formation when exposed to the fire of an

enemy. The very quality which enabled English soldiers to act in what were once designated as the "thin red lines" as opposed to the columns of the continent is the very same which makes it their speciality to manœuvre in loose formations.

If, then, we assume that in the future action of infantry the spade is to occupy a position second only in importance to that of the rifle, it becomes a question worthy of consideration how this implement is to be carried.

In the recent organization of the British army it has been determined that spades and pick-axes sufficient for entrenching purposes, and carried in transport waggons, shall be attached to every regiment.

Acting on the broad undulating plains of Germany or France this system would, probably, be effective; but though myself an advocate of the plan which has been adopted, the lessons of the late war have led me to believe that these implements carried on pack-horses are much more likely to be ever-present with the battalion.

It is impossible in acting on a broken country and when troops are marching by different roads to keep any number of transport waggons present with their battalions in column of route, and if not present with those battalions, they would



probably reach the positions occupied too late for throwing up the necessary entrenchments. The conclusion which I have formed is that the Turkish system of attaching one pack-horse for the special purpose of carrying implements attached to each company is that which is most likely to be useful in modern war ; and moreover, as has before been mentioned, this same pack-horse becomes useful for administrative purposes when not actually employed in conveying the entrenching tools belonging to the company.

So impressed were the Russians towards the conclusion of the campaign with the inestimable value of the spade to the infantry soldier, that Skobeleff with his division in front of Constantinople made every man carry one of these implements slung on his back in addition to his arms and equipment. But the loss of marching power which must attach to this encumbrance would seem likely to counterbalance the value that might be derived from its constant presence with the soldier.

Bearing in mind all the advantages and disadvantages which have been developed by the war, I have come to the conclusion that the system of company pack-horses appears to be the most efficient.

Numerous attempts have been made in England to invent portable spades and pick-axes for military purposes. These toy instruments should be carefully avoided. As a rule the heavier and more solid the implement, provided only that it is manageable, the more work may be accomplished by it. In the general use of the spade the Englishman can bear the palm from any nation in Europe. Even on the continent, in the construction of railways, the English navvy is sought for on account of the extraordinary amount of spade-work which he can accomplish. Let it not remain as a stigma on the British soldier that he is neither instructed nor accustomed to its use.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

Larger organizations—*Corps-d'armée*, divisions, and brigades—

A too large unit.—British field organization—A misnomer

—A school of instruction—A regimental system—A severe

strain—Organization of the Turkish battalions—Com-

pany columns—Ammunition supply—Wild fire—Breech-

loaders—Expenditure of ammunition.

I now propose to consider in detail the practical tactical and administrative lessons of the late war as applying to each of the respective arms of the service.

First in importance, as first in value, comes the infantry battalion and the larger formation of which it forms the tactical unit, such as brigades, divisions, and *corps-d'armées*.

Perhaps no subject has been so exhaustively considered by the great military Powers of the Continent than these larger organizations, and with the exception of England they have nearly all arrived at an approximately uniform conclusion.

During the recent war the importance of an uniform system was entirely ignored in the

Turkish army. A brigade would one day consist of six battalions and the next of ten. Divisions would vary in number from twelve to twenty-six battalions according to circumstances; and *corps-d'armées* sometimes numbered two and sometimes three divisions. In fact the whole maintenance of brigades, divisions, and *corps-d'armées* as units of action in the field was entirely ignored.

The evil of this system was only too evident.

As a rule there was no tie between the generals of brigade and division and the troops which they commanded. Battalions, regiments, and brigades were changed daily according to the freaks or fancies of the Staff, and the result was that as a rule there was none of that *esprit de corps* and confidence in the commander which forms such an important element of success in war.

Assuming that these larger organizations are important, it remains for us to consider how, from late lessons of experience, these formations should be constituted.

As bearing upon this point, it is a question which has been much canvassed in the highest military circles of Europe as to whether a *corps-d'armée* does not form too large an unit of organization for active operations in the field.

It has been found, as a rule, in all recent campaigns, that from the force of circumstances the division seems to supersede the *corps-d'armée* as the highest tactical unit, and that the attempt to maintain the *ensemble* of the corps serves rather to cramp the military action of the division.

Certainly the experience of the late campaign would lead me to believe that there is truth in this criticism.

In the recently-adopted field organization of the English army a compromise was accepted which experience would induce me to believe to be most valuable; but it was adopted in a cumbersome fashion. The stereotyped *corps-d'armée* of the continent was abandoned as the highest tactical unit, and a so-called *corps-d'armée*, but properly a division, was substituted for it. This division was composed of three brigades, each brigade numbering seven battalions.

Judging from my past experience in the late war, nothing can work better than this system. But a mistake was made in the English nomenclature of the units. Abroad a regiment is generally composed of three battalions, and everywhere the term "brigade" is supposed to imply from six to eight. As the term "regiment" in the English army is usually applied to the battalion,

the continental regiment was held to constitute a British brigade, and to the unit, which almost universally is considered as a brigade, the term of "division" was applied.

This misapplication of terms would in itself be a disadvantage; but, unfortunately, the distinction is not merely nominal, for the so-called division, which is really a brigade, has the unnecessarily large Staff of a real division. If, then, we consider the so-called British *corps-d'armée* as what it is, namely, a really large division composed of three brigades, I am inclined to believe that it will be found to be the most useful tactical organization that exists amongst the armies of Europe; and certainly the experience of the late war would go to prove the great importance of maintaining, as far as possible, the larger tactical formations in time of peace as well as in time of war.

It is of the highest possible importance that generals and Staff should know each other, and be known by the troops which they direct.

The small experience of Aldershot has conclusively proved this theory. All who know that largest school of military instruction which England possesses, must have been strongly impressed by the difference in the tactical value of a brigade

when it has long been directed by one commander as compared with that which pertained to it when first constituted under the same leader.

It may, we think, be assumed, as a sort of military axiom, that, according to the efficiency of the larger organizations in time of peace, so will be their relative values under the stress of war. But this assumption should not lead us to neglect the perfecting of the battalion as a sort of general tactical and administrative unit.

If the late war has proved one point more than another, it has shown the immense advantage that is gained by giving to every battalion the highest degree of efficiency both in a tactical and administrative point of view; and this is thoroughly in accord with past traditions of the British service, although, unfortunately, those traditions have not generally been adhered to.

We pride ourselves, with justice and with reason, upon what we term the "regimental system."

In carrying out that system there is much to be learnt from the Turkish army.

Having no larger organizations which were thoroughly adhered to, the Turks were compelled, by the force of circumstances, to bring the bat-

talion unit to the highest pitch of administrative perfection.

Perhaps no army ever bore a sterner stress than that which fell upon the Turkish troops during the later stages of the campaign ; and yet it must be admitted that the battalion system never thoroughly broke down.

Consonant as it is with British traditions, it would be well to take a lesson from this fact, and to examine carefully the constitution of the battalions which bore so strong a strain.

This subject has already been touched upon in the description of the war ; but, at the risk of repetition, I will again refer in detail to the constitution of the Turkish battalion with all that pertains to it.

During the war a Turkish battalion was composed of eight companies. Since the war the general European system of four companies and so-called company columns has been adopted. And here, at starting, we meet with a point which has been the subject of much military discussion, and one which, from the attention it had attracted, I watched with some interest during the campaign. The conclusion that I arrived at was that the eight-company formation, provided that the battalion was strong, was as effective as the four-



company organization which I had previously seen severely tested during late European struggles. But where the battalion is much weakened, as often happens under the stress of war, the four-company formation certainly has the advantage. It enables the battalion to maintain its cohesion with a smaller number of officers, and it certainly lends itself more readily to the new and necessary system of loose formations which are requisite for the purposes of attack.

To each of the eight companies of the Turkish battalion is attached a Saka, or water-horse, and importance almost amounting to veneration applies to the Saka of a Turkish company. The man in charge of the pack-animal that carries the water-skins must possess the highest military qualifications. He is exempted from all other duties, and is expected to be forthcoming with the necessary supply both at the bivouac and even in contact with the enemy.

Nothing can work better than this plan, and it is curious, in consequence, how little a general in command of Turkish troops has to consider the necessary water-supply of his men.

In addition to the water-horses, as previously mentioned, a pack-horse bearing entrenching implements is attached to every company. The

value of this system has been dwelt upon in the preceding chapter, but experience has proved to me that pack-horses should be attached to every company for this purpose.

Thirty pack-animals carrying the reserve ammunition of the battalion are attached to it ; and here we come to one of the most important, if not the most important, question in military organization, namely, the supply of ammunition to troops in action.

All countries are but too apt blindly to worship military success, and blindly to imitate the nations who have achieved it.

Thus, after the Franco-Prussian war, there was a mania for imitating all that attached to the German army, without carefully inquiring into the value of the details which were so readily copied. Amongst other points, the German ammunition supply was very generally adopted as equal to all ordinary military requirements. Yet the careful study of the history of that campaign, as written by the Staff officers of the German army, will show that in almost every serious encounter a portion at least of the Prussian forces engaged fell short of ammunition whilst in actual contact with the enemy.

In the recent war between Turkey and Russia,

the former, from defects of organization, employed a vast number of untrained battalions. Untrained troops invariably waste their ammunition in action; but I never recollect an instance, in the minor phases of the war, in which a Turkish battalion was more than momentarily short of a supply of cartridges.

I have already alluded to the, as I believe, unprecedented consumption of ammunition by certain battalions which fought in the action at Tashkessen, yet a sufficient supply was always forthcoming. Still it may, I think, with reason be doubted whether the Turkish system, though worthy of imitation, is not excessive. I am inclined to think that three pack-horses attached to each company, coupled with a system of brigade and divisional ammunition columns—the ammunition in these columns being carried by waggons—would prove sufficient. In this case, however, the ammunition should be so packed as to be readily adapted to pack-animal transport.

As before described, every Turkish soldier in a battalion always carries with him 100 rounds of ammunition. I am convinced that this personal supply is absolutely necessary; and here a great tactical question opens out, namely, the ex-

penditure of ammunition by breech-loading firearms to the best advantage.

The lessons of the war certainly lead me to conclude that in this respect recent Continental and military writers are completely in error. They prove to me that we have not as yet thoroughly realized the advantages we have gained by the rapidity of fire which is obtained by modern breech-loading weapons.

Russian officers have often mentioned to me, since the conclusion of the war, the extraordinary effect and loss which was occasioned by the wild and rapid fire of the Turkish troops.

That wild fire should be encouraged is, of course an absurdity; but that a rapid and considerable expenditure of ammunition conduces to success, I am perfectly convinced. It remains to be considered whether the important result attained by the wild, rapid fire of the ill-trained Turkish armies in the recent war (and, as we know, by the demoralized French troops in the Franco-German war) may not be imitated and employed when brought under control and direction.

In dismissing this subject, I may express my absolute conviction that in the use of the present long-range weapons, rapidity of fire is all-

important ; that a great expenditure of cartridges is most useful, and that this expenditure should be provided for by very largely increased reserves of ammunition.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

Tents and *tentes-d'abri*—Bivouacs—Comparative health—An easy supply system—Sick and wounded—Infantry packs—The fez as a head-dress—Importance of boots—The Henry-Martini rifle—Cheap cartridges—Range of modern fire-arms—Turkish and Russian cavalry—Mounted rifle-men—Russian dragoons—Turkish and Russian artillery—Krupp field-gun—Heavy calibres—Breech-loaders and muzzle-loaders—Massing artillery—Uniform calibre—Auxiliary departments.

IN the further consideration of the requirements of a battalion in the field, the supply of shelter for the men by means of tents or otherwise becomes of material importance. The Turkish army during the war was either supplied with the ordinary bell-tent, or bivouacked, forming shelter for themselves of branches of trees when acting in a wooded country. The Russians, on the contrary, carried large *tentes-d'abri*, supposed to be sufficient for six men, each man carrying his portion.

The experience of the war proved the value of

the system which has recently been adopted in the field organization of the British army, namely, carrying tents in the second line of transport, and adopting the system of bivouac when close contact with the enemy makes it advisable not to block the roads with an additional transport line.

There could be no comparison during the war between the health of the opposing Turkish and Russian armies. The Turkish forces never, during the campaign, suffered seriously from disease, although, from want of a good administrative system, the men often suffered from the neglect which usually creates disease. The Russian army, on the contrary, was never healthy, and this I ascribe materially to the close contact induced by the use of these *tentes-d'abri*. It will be remembered by those who were present in the Crimean war that the same comparative result followed, when disease was rife in the French army, which was sheltered in *tentes-d'abri*, whilst the English soldiers were occupying bell-tents.

In addition to the sundry advantages which the experience of war seems to indicate, there is the gain of the reduced weight carried by the soldier under the new British and the Turkish systems.

It will be seen that by the battalion system for

the transport and supply of war implements and ammunition that has been advocated, forty-eight pack-horses would be requisite for each battalion. It will be found by experience that this number of transport animals, without any addition—except under extraordinary circumstances—will prove sufficient also to supply the battalion with the provisions necessary for the men from their nearest supply depôt.

As regards that supply of provisions, again the Turkish army may give us useful lessons. It is an established system with every Turkish battalion that the soldier invariably carries with him three days' biscuit. If, from any unforeseen circumstances, this quantity should fall short, it is immediately replenished at the earliest opportunity. Thus the occasions of the men being absolutely destitute of food are most rare, and, whenever the army halts, the ordinary distribution of meat and other requisites can be carried out by the same pack-animals that bear the ammunition and implements on the march.

The facility which this number of transport animals always attached to the battalion affords for conveying sick and wounded men immediately to the field hospitals in the rear has already been touched upon. The sanitary regulations of the



Turkish camps left very much to be desired, but notwithstanding this, the health of the troops was on the whole remarkably satisfactory, and I attribute this, to a very considerable extent, to the fact that the transport present with the battalion was always sufficient to send sick and wounded men quickly to the rear.

In considering the efficiency of a battalion from the experience gained in the recent campaign, the question of equipment must not be omitted; but on this point little can be learnt from the equipment of the Turkish army during the late war.

The pack adopted in the British army was not carried either by the Turkish or Russian soldier in the last campaign, but experience leads me to believe that it is decidedly superior to any other mode yet invented by which the soldier can carry his effects with the greatest ease and comfort to himself when on active service.

The poor Turkish soldier often carried his pack, or a bundle which represented a pack, attached by straps of raw hide or sometimes by strings.

The want of good boots, and the substitutes for them, have already been described; but the Zouave dress which was copied from the French stood the soldier in good stead, and proved useful and serviceable. The fez was a most inefficient head-

dress and in the summer sunstrokes were commonly prevalent.

I believe that the equipment of the British soldier is more useful and complete than that of any other European army; but we should take care that whatever dress may be given for purposes of show on parade, the soldier on service is dressed in an uniform which is easy, and more especially untrammelled about the neck. The greatest desideratum of all for the soldier is a good and useful boot. Upon this point appearances should never be considered, and company officers should be held responsible that boots, which would usually be considered unnecessarily large, should be compulsorily adopted by the men when proceeding on service.

As the Turkish infantry during the war were, for the most part, armed with a weapon almost similar to that which has been adopted in the British army, some slight mention of the merits of this arm may be of interest. My experience leads me to believe that the Henry-Martini, or Peabody-Martini, rifle is the very best weapon yet placed in the hands of a soldier on service; but the Turks were able to afford that which the poverty of England has not yet enabled her to achieve, namely, a sound and good cartridge

which was entirely unaffected by weather or by the wear and tear of the campaign, the Turkish cartridge being formed of solid metal, and not made up, like those in use in the British army, from supposed purposes of economy.

That this economy is apparent and not real, the simplest consideration will prove. The great expenditure of an army in ammunition is rather during practice in peace than in time of war.

The metal cartridge can be easily refilled, and re-used; but England, from those motives of economy which swell her army estimates to upwards of fourteen millions, is unable to afford an amount of efficiency which is provided for in Turkey.

As it is usually believed that the arms in use by the Turkish and English infantry are practically the same, it may be as well to mention that the cartridge used for the one cannot be applied to the other.

Much has been said and written relative to the delicacy of the Henry-Martini rifle as a military weapon. The Turkish battalions were, as a rule, very deficient in armourers, yet the weakness of the Peabody-Martini, was never practically apparent. The extraordinary range of the Henry-Martini, and, in fact, of all the recently adopted fire-arms

of Continental armies, must evidently lead to still further developments in the application of loose formations to modern tactics, and it seems probable that we have not, as yet, reached the extreme limit of range and accuracy to be attained by modern fire-arms.

### CAVALRY.

The tactics both of the Russian and the Turkish cavalry, and the relative efficiency of this branch in the respective armies of either nation, may be gathered from the foregoing pages. The Russians had the great advantage of immense superiority in this arm, acting in a country which was especially suitable for its development, but they failed to derive the slightest benefit from this superiority. During the retreat of the Turkish forces, which terminated the campaign, endless opportunities were constantly recurring for the effective use of the Russian cavalry. When the Turkish armies fell back from the Balkans in a slow but almost uninterrupted retreat to the *Ægean*, almost destitute of this branch of the service, their movements might have been utterly hampered by active cavalry operations on the part of the enemy. As a rule, the outposts of the two armies were in

actual contact, the main forces being separated by a comparatively small distance, yet, on no single occasion did the Russian cavalry ever seriously press the retreat of the Turks.

The disorderly character of the march of the Turkish army has been constantly dwelt upon; but the very sight of a few Turkish infantry soldiers seemed to be quite sufficient to arrest the offensive action of the many regiments of Russian cavalry which hung around the retiring army. In everything that related to cavalry equipment, both the Turkish and Russian cavalry were inferior to this branch of the service in England, in Germany, or in Austria.

Some short time prior to the war the Russians had seized upon the idea of mounted riflemen, and their dragoon regiments were drilled to act either on horseback or on foot. They had assumed the correctness of the views held by some American writers, that large bodies of cavalry might be used with the double purpose of acting either as cavalry or as infantry, as the circumstances might require. Judging from the experience of the campaign, these theories were not verified by the result. No single instance came under my notice in which the Russian dragoon was used with any practical effect. I am far from disbelieving in the advan-

tage of having small corps of mounted riflemen attached to an army; but the whole experience of the late campaign would lead me to believe that the Russian dragoon is not a good cavalry, and is a very bad infantry, soldier. In those scouting duties in which the German, the Austrian, and, fortunately, at present, the British cavalry soldiers so especially excel, both the Russian and Turkish horsemen were absolutely deficient. In the general actions fought during the campaign the cavalry of either army played an utterly insignificant part. The rapidity and range of the modern infantry weapon seemed to frighten them out of all idea of vigorous action in the presence of the latter arm: but this must not be held to prove that circumstances never occur when a good, active, and energetic cavalry may render efficient service, even during a general action, in which infantry and artillery are engaged.

#### ARTILLERY.

The artillery branches of both the Turkish and Russian armies played a prominent part in the campaign. The Turks were armed with the Krupp field-gun, which the Russians also commenced to adopt in the latter phases of the war.

In everything that pertained to efficiency in this branch of the service the Russians held a decided superiority. The Turks, at the commencement of the war, were in possession of a comparatively small number of trained batteries, although they had in reserve a large supply of Krupp field-guns. As, after the commencement of the campaign, batteries were hastily raised and sent untrained and undrilled, to take their places in the line of battle, it is scarcely fair to compare the Turkish artillery with that of the more highly-trained branch of the Russian armies; but, whether from want of drill or want of experience, the Turkish artillery officers, as a rule, proved grossly inefficient. The individual Turkish artilleryman forms a good type, but the necessary direction is wanting in this branch of the Turkish service.

The Turkish batteries possessed no heavier field-guns than the excellent nine-centimetre Krupp cannon. My experience of the war would lead me to believe that great advantages may be gained by maintaining with an army a small number of batteries equipped with guns of far heavier calibre. The twelve-centimetre Krupp gun so commonly used in Turkish lines of defence is the *beau-ideal* of the necessary cannon for this purpose. I will not enter into the much-vexed question of breech-

loading or muzzle-loading guns for field service. My experience would point to the belief that there is but little practically to choose between the two systems. The breech-loader has the advantage of lightness, and, perhaps, of more extreme accuracy, and the men are more protected from fire whilst working the gun. On the other hand, the muzzle-loader is decidedly more simple, admits of the use of larger charges—in itself a point of great importance—and lends itself more readily to the effective use of shrapnel. In actual war it also has a superiority in its rapidity of fire. This is not generally understood, for, of course, a breech-loading weapon can be laid and fired more rapidly than a muzzle-loading gun! But the muzzle-loader can be pointed whilst the gun is being loaded. Thus, though on ordinary field-days, when firing with blank cartridge, breech-loading guns appear to have a greater rapidity of fire, the test is fallacious, and the superiority in this respect really lies with the muzzle-loader.

The Krupp twelve-centimetre cannon, as a gun of position, certainly has the advantage of wonderful lightness as compared with its range and power. The experience of the late campaign, like that of the Franco-German war, would point to the little actual damage done by field-artillery



on service, but it is probable that the moral effect will ever remain, and we should be foolish indeed, if, acting from abstract figures of losses in action, we suffered any diminution of the usually accepted three guns per thousand combatants, which proximately prevails in the recent organization of the British army.

During the Russo-Turkish war neither side availed itself of the chance of massing artillery to anything approaching the extent to which this system was carried by the Germans in their late campaign with France. I am inclined to believe that the massing of artillery to the extremes exemplified by the German army in the battles of Gravelotte and Sedan (at the latter of which I was personally present), will be found to be a mistake in future wars; but that a great advantage is gained by the massing of a large number of batteries upon an objective point, is beyond all question, and the desultory action of the Turkish batteries during the war, proved a source of very great weakness. Their passion for replying to the fire of the enemy's guns and losing opportunities of directing their attention to the effect which they might have produced upon the Russian troops, has already been repeatedly described.

The fact of there being guns of two calibres

attached to the Turkish infantry, often proved a serious disadvantage during the war. This same disadvantage still attaches to the British army, and, with the powerful horses so well suited for artillery purposes which are at the disposal of England, I am inclined to think that we should be wise to make the so-called sixteen-pounder gun the chief weapon for field-battery purposes, and to retain the so-called nine-pounder for the horse-artillery batteries only.

All the auxiliary departments which serve to complete the organization of an army when in the field, and whose action was brought prominently into notice during the recent campaign, have been touched upon in the preceding pages giving a description of the war.





## CONCLUSION.

The Treaty of Berlin—Aggressive policy of Russia—Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria—Russian designs on India—Intrigues with Austria—Extension of territory south of the Oxus—Merv and Kizil Arvat—English and Russian prestige in the East—Danger to Indian finance—A bold English policy—Settlement of the Afghan Question—A secure frontier-line—An opening for commerce.

ALTHOUGH the signature of the Treaty of Berlin appears to have stilled for a time the sea of troubles which so lately environed the Eastern Question, still those must be sanguine indeed, who imagine that this question has arrived at a permanent settlement.

It may be that Russia, weakened both in men and money by the long struggle which she has sustained, will want rest in order to recruit her forces and finances, but the elements of discord have been too deeply sown not to promise a rich harvest of political troubles in the future.

It is impossible to believe that Russia, in consequence of recent events, will renounce the per-

sistent policy of aggression which she has pursued for more than a century.

Her lengthened occupation of Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia will have given time and opportunity for laying the foundations for further troubles in those provinces. It is difficult to expect that the people of the latter district will consent to sever themselves from their kindred north of the Balkans after the organization for a complete civil and military unity which has been accomplished under Russian guidance in despite of the Treaty.

Unfortunately, the past policy of Russia has been marked with so much duplicity and intrigue, that there is little hope that she will abandon it for one of greater straightforwardness.

The European provinces of Turkey, shattered and dislocated by the events of the recent war, will prove an easy field for further disintegration. With her finances deeply embarrassed and hopes of independence raised amongst the many races that form the Ottoman Empire, except by the aid of some firm and friendly hand, it will be difficult for Turkey to arrest that process of disintegration. It is to England alone that she can look for that true and honest assistance which

will enable her to reorganize her empire on an established and permanent footing of security.

Nor is it possible to overrate the interest which England has in sustaining the power of Turkey.

The current of recent events has surely proved how utterly the political interests of England must clash with those of Russia in the time to come. The designs of Russia with reference to our Empire in Hindostan, which not long since were disbelieved in by the mass of the people of England, have now been clearly proved.

The ink with which the Treaty of Berlin was signed was scarcely dry before Muscovite intrigues were set on foot in Afghanistan which might hamper the power of England to enforce the fulfilment of the stipulations of that Treaty. At the same time, an attempt was made to induce Austria to recede from the position which, in common with the other Powers of Europe, she had so lately assumed.

Both these attempts miscarried, but can we hope that further Muscovite efforts will not be renewed?

Should Russia, frightened by the political combinations which might be formed against her in Europe, recede for the moment from the position which she has assumed in Central Asia, we may

be sure that she will still attempt to gain some extension of territory south of the Oxus. Probably she may agree to withdraw her interference with Afghanistan provided that she is allowed to permanently occupy both Merv and Kizil Arvat. It is impossible to overrate the importance of the step in advance which would thus be gained to her.

Merv will offer a point of concentration for her armies when it may suit her to make some further advance within the ill-defined Afghan frontier, and she has an easy military route at her command by following the banks of the Moorghab till within the Afghan boundary.

From Kizil Arvat she could move north of the great mountain chain which forms the frontier of Persia, until she reached Sarakhs, from which point the march upon Herat would not be difficult.

No better opportunity than the present can occur for England to solve for many years to come the Central Asian Question.

Her victories in Afghanistan will have raised her prestige throughout the entire East, and lowered that of Russia.

If once the latter power is allowed to permanently establish herself south of the Oxus, there will be no peace and tranquillity for our



Indian dominions in the future. The finances of India must be seriously hampered by the increased military expenditure which will be rendered necessary. Fresh and heavy taxation must be imposed, and this would create discontent amongst the population of Hindostan, and predispose them to listen to Muscovite intrigues.

Russia knows this full well. Her policy will be to sap the foundations of our Indian Empire.

In order to prevent this, we should firmly demand that the Oxus shall form the southern boundary of Russia in Asia, and that her movements east of the Caspian shall not extend beyond Krasnavodsk, the mouth of the Attrek, and Ashurada.

Surely the events of the last two years should prove to us conclusively that when England assumes a bold and determined attitude, Russia immediately recedes from her aggressive demands. We have not sought the position in Afghanistan into which we have been forced by Russian designs. But, as it has arisen, we should not lose the opportunity of finally settling the Afghan Question.

To attempt a permanent occupation of that country would be a folly, but England must have in her possession the Afghan side of the mountain passes which form, as it were, the gates of her

territory in Hindostan, and that advanced line should include Candahar. English Residents should be established at Cabul and at Herat.

We should remember, also, that strategical considerations are sometimes more important than pure questions of finance, and a railway should be constructed under Government guarantee, leading through the Bolan Pass by Quettah and Candahar to Herat. Thus the whole commerce of Afghanistan and southern Central Asia would find a natural outlet through India to Kurrachee. Then, Russia, knowing that any designs upon Herat could be immediately frustrated by the fact that an English army could occupy that position much sooner than she could march to it from the banks of the Oxus, would probably cease to trouble us for many years to come.

Let England but adopt a bold, settled, and consistent policy in her relations with Turkey and with Russia, and the much-dreaded Eastern Question may yet be staved off for a considerable period.

But England must maintain her prestige in the East by deeds, and not by words.

In the reorganization of the Turkish provinces of Asia Minor she has a glorious field for enterprise; whether it be considered in a humanitarian, a political, or a commercial point of view.

To aid to the utmost in this regeneration, she is now bound by Treaty.

Let her take the difficult task in hand with the same energy and determination that characterized our forefathers, and which enabled them to raise the British Empire to the pinnacle of greatness and influence which it has attained.

THE END.

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