

THE EASTERN CONFLICT.

CRUEL ATROCITIES ON BOTH SIDES.

THE FUGITIVES FROM KAVARNA—HOW THEY ARE OUTRAGED BY TURKISH IRREGULARS

—THE STORY TOLD OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT—CONDUCT OF THE CIRCASSIANS—HOW COSSACKS TREATED THE INHABITANTS OF BALVAN.

From Our Own Correspondent.

VARNA, Sunday, July 29, 1877.

The fugitives from Kavarna who arrived here last Thursday afternoon on board the Austrian Lloyd's mail steamer which had been sent expressly to fetch them, thus delaying its departure for the capital 24 hours, were ordered by the authorities to be carried to Constantinople and thence sent on to Broussa. As soon as the fugitives heard of this order they broke out into the most bitter lamentations, for most of the families on board were incomplete, fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, sons, or daughters being missing, and the poor creatures on board had clung to the hope that their relatives had escaped from the Circassians, and would find their way here, the distance by road being only a day's journey. To be sent into Asia seemed to them like being exiled to the antipodes, and they despaired of ever again seeing home or their missing relatives and friends. So great was their distress that representations were made to Prince Hassan, who is in command of the Egyptian troops which garrison this place, and his Highness ordered the refugees to be transhipped into a Turkish vessel. This was done at 10 o'clock at night and the following morning they were landed here and lodged in the Greek public schools. Yesterday and the day before I visited the schools and hospitals, and from the information I obtained at these places I am now able to give a tolerably succinct account of what happened at Kavarna. The school-rooms are so large and lofty that two of them afford accommodations for 320 persons without overcrowding. The families are grouped together in rows on straw mats covered with quilts and cushions. The poorer classes are now better off than wealthier inhabitants, for the former, offering too poor a prize for the Circassians, escaped with all their worldly goods—that is to say, bedding and cooking utensils—whereas the well-to-do were glad enough to get away with a whole skin. I noticed that there were very few young women, and on remarking this fact was told that the Circassians had carried off a great number with a view to selling them. It is roughly estimated that about 300 persons—mostly young women and boys—are missing, but a report has reached here that a large number had succeeded in escaping to a neighboring village. In the public schools and a school attached to the Greek Church there are altogether 847 refugees from Kavarna alone, and distributed among private houses is about an equal number of fugitives from various villages along the coast between Balchik and Shabla. When the Austrian boat arrived, some correspondents, who witnessed the destitute condition of the fugitives, got up a subscription, which, aided by the Consuls and some funds from the Red Crescent Society, produced a sufficient sum to supply the 500 new arrivals with bread and cheese and some small luxuries for the old people for more than a day. In the meantime, I was informed that the military authorities were going to distribute rations to all the fugitives. Up to the present this promise has not been fulfilled, and the fugitives to the number of at least 1,000 are totally dependent on public and private charity. To the honor of the Greek community be it said that all the fugitives are every day supplied with the necessaries of life, and clothing has been distributed to those who required it.

The Greek Hospital is an exceedingly clean and well-ordered establishment, with a pretty little garden and chapel. It was founded in 1869 by a wealthy Greek merchant of Odessa, who left sufficient money in Russian banks for its maintenance. Though it can only accommodate 18 patients, it is attended by two surgeons, so that the service is excellent. It is noteworthy that the patients at present comprise three Mussulmans and three Bulgarians, races who certainly have no claim on Greek charity, and more especially at the present moment. The first objects which attracted my attention were two pretty girls—Austrians—whose legs had been amputated. They are victims of the bombardment of Rustchuk. They were sitting at luncheon with their mother when a shell fell near them, and the splinters shattered a leg of each of the girls, while the mother escaped unhurt. When they arrived here their wounds were gangrened, as they had laid for nearly a week without medical aid. The girls are now getting on first-rate, and can sit up and sew. Their case has excited great interest, and a subscription—again started by correspondents—is on foot to enable the family to go to Vienna. In another ward I found two wounded women from Kavarna. One was shot in the side, and the bullet has been extracted from her back. Her son, a little boy, was shot through the thigh. In answer to my questions, she said that the Circassians shot her and her son because she could not give them money. The other woman received two shots in her foot, which will have to be amputated. There is another Kavarna woman here who, on witnessing the fight and the burning village, lost her reason, and is still in a state of insanity. In the men's ward are seven men and the boy I have alluded to. One fine young man has his shoulder shattered by a ball, and is expected to die. His old mother is constantly by his bedside weeping, and almost crazily recounts snatches of the heart-rending scenes she witnessed. An old man in the next bed is wounded in a most extraordinary fashion. The ball passed through his shoulder from behind, entered under his jawbone, came out at his cheek, and cut off the top of his nose. He was lying on his face on the ground when he was fired at. Another man has his jaw broken. Another was shot in the throat, and the ball is in his larynx, whence it cannot be extracted. His death is looked upon as inevitable. The most important patient is the tchorbadji, who was one of the four notables of the village who treated with the Yuzbashi. This old man received two balls in his right thigh and one in his left arm. His life is despaired of on account of his age and feeble state of health. His name is Constantine Gabriel, and he is the most important witness in the affair. I now put in the form of a narrative the information I obtained in scraps from these and other witnesses:

About 10 days before the affray some 100 Circassians made their appearance at the village, and were refused admission. Every day their numbers increased, until several hundreds of Circassians, Tartars, and Nogais were assembled in the vineyards around the village. The Mussulmans and Christians united in common accord against this threatened invasion, and refused to obey the order of the Circassians to leave the village. The Greeks, fearing that the Circassians would resort to violent measures, sent to Balchik and got the Armenian telegraph clerk to transmit a dispatch to the Greek Consul in Constantinople, though it is against the rules to send dispatches at present unless they have been approved of by the authorities. A Yuzbashi (in this case by the term corresponds to Police Sergeant) came down from Balchik to Kavarna, accompanied by two (not 50, as I was previously informed) policemen. He advised the Greeks to leave the village, and meeting with a firm refusal he proposed that the tchorbadjis (rich proprietors) should come to the *Konak* (Government offices) and have a *pour-parler* with the Circassian chiefs. Out of 15 tchorbadjis only four had the courage to go to the *Konak*. Up to this time (Saturday afternoon) the Circassians and their savage-looking companions had remained outside of the village. The Yuzbashi not only brought in several chiefs but a band of followers. The tchorbadjis refused to recognize the Circassians as representing the Government, and consequently refused to evacuate the village. The Yuzbashi then proposed that the Greeks should pay the Circassians 100,000 piastres, (about \$4,250,) and on that condition they might remain in quiet possession of their homesteads. The tchorbadji Constantine Gabriel said that they had already paid large contributions to the Government in horses and money, and that they would not refuse any official and reasonable demand for further contributions, but that they could not yield to this irregular sort of requisition. Thereupon a Circassian shot him three times with a revolver. Another tchorbadji received a cut over the head with a yataghan. A third made his escape in the confusion which ensued, and the fourth, hastily drawing his pocket-book, bought his life for 1,000 piastres paper money, say \$20.

The Greeks outside, hearing the shots and the

cries of the wounded tchorbadjis, put themselves on their defense, fired on the Circassians, and a mêlée ensued. The Circassians immediately set fire to the town, and several people were afterward found dead among the ruins. Some had been previously killed, but the large blisters on others and the absence of wounds showed that they had been burned alive. The wounded men in the hospital estimate the number of deaths on the Greek side at a minimum of 25, but there may be more. The Greeks were badly armed with sporting-guns and old-fashioned pistols, whereas the Circassians were armed with Winchester repeating rifles. The combat was put a stop to by the arrival of the Caïmakam—sub-Governor—of Balchik and by the appearance of a Turkish iron-clad before Kavarna. The tchorbadji Gabriel lay for five hours bleeding on the floor of the *Konak*, no one of his countrymen during the affray daring to go to his assistance. The Turkish marines landed and fired on the Circassians, some of whom were killed and the rest put to flight. The wounded Greeks were taken on board the iron-clad and treated with great kindness. Had it appeared a few hours sooner nothing, said the tchorbadji, would have occurred, and, he added, but for its arrival it is probable that all the Greek inhabitants of Kavarna would have been massacred. The principal question is still left in doubt, and that is: Did the Governor of Varna send these Bashi-Bazouks to Kavarna to turn to turn the people out, or did they go there of their own accord? The Governor of Varna has not yet returned from Balchik, therefore I cannot obtain any official information; but I think that from the evidence we have, it is pretty clear that this Kavarna affair was a case of brigandage on a large scale, committed by a body of irregular troops. The Nogais, whom I mentioned as forming part of this band of marauders, are most unprepossessing people, natives of the Crimea. They are of Tartar or Mongolian type, with small eyes and flat noses, and wear rings through their nostrils. Respecting the apothecary Amvia, who, according to a semi-official account I received a few days ago, was a Russian emissary, and, after inflaming the Greeks, had commenced the disturbances by firing on the Circassians, and then made his escape, I could get no information from the wounded men; but Gabriel was positive that the first shot fired was when the Circassian fired at him. A Greek priest who was attending the wounded men at the hospital had made his escape from Kavarna disguised in a Circassian dress. The Greeks of Kavarna, and in fact all along the Black Sea coast, speak only Turkish. Those of Kavarna claim kindred with the Varna Greeks, and the hospitable way they are being treated here is the best proof of their claim being acknowledged. The wounded men attribute all the harm that has happened to the Yuzbashi who gave a sort of official sanction to the illegal demands of the Circassians. They say that a few days before this same Police Sergeant went to Shabla, a village higher up the coast, and after getting the Greeks to disarm, sent the Circassians in to pillage the town. The British gun-boat *Rapid* went up there last Thursday, and gave four bags of biscuits to the inhabitants. Three of them had been killed by Circassians. The Circassians are not officered by regular Army officers, and the Greeks say they cannot distinguish who are the chiefs. As soon as news of the disturbances at Kavarna reached the neighboring villages, the inhabitants of the latter places fled to the caverns in the rock on Cape Gulgrad, which is called by the Greeks Kaligara. This is a natural fortification, which has been rendered still more commodious and defensible by circular walls on the land side. A score of men could hold it against a battalion. Several Circassians lost their lives in trying to dislodge the defenders of this place, and three Greeks who went out to fetch water were shot by the besiegers. The Circassians, it appears, soon raised this unprofitable siege, for last Thursday it was found that the place had been evacuated by the Greeks.

The conduct of the Circassians is doing immense harm to the Turkish cause. The Greeks, who if not philo-Turkish, were at all events anti-Russian, are now obliged to look, as they did in 1828, to the Russians as their saviors. It is a mistake for the Turks to look upon the Circassians as a force which will be useful to them. In regular battles the Circassians are cowards, and their retreat upon the regular Army demoralizes the latter. Circassians, by their traditions and education, are only fit for nomadic warfare, and that is not required here. The only chance they have of distinguishing themselves is by cattle-lifting and massacres, and it is clear they do not mean to let any chance go by. However, they are likely to have a hard time of it, as Mehemet Ali Pasha has declared that he will shoot the first Circassian convicted of plundering or indulging in any other of his lawless propensities, and Mehemet Ali has the reputation of being a man of his word.

I must now show you the *revers de la medaille*—the conduct of the Cossacks. The following is a copy of a deposition just made here by an old Mussulman before Mr. Reade, English Consul at Rustchuk. The man in question is a fine old fellow, about 75 years of age—a turbaned Turk, with a long flowing white beard. His name is Osman Mehemet Oglou, and he is a native of the village of Balvan, in the district of Tirnova. This village consists of 200 houses inhabited exclusively by Mussulmans. On Saturday, (says Osman,) three weeks ago, on the 7th of July, the Russians attacked the village of Balvan, called some of us out, and asked whether we would fight or surrender, and if we chose the latter they added that we were to give up our arms. We replied that we had no power to fight, and consequently we placed our arms in a cart and took them to the Russian camp. The Russians, having received them, went the same day to Tirnova. Next morning the Russians, accompanied by Bulgarians, came from Musina with 12 guns, which they pointed at Balvan, at the same time placing sentries on every side of the village. Meanwhile the Bulgarians from Musina, Jalla, Liska, Balvan-Mahalle, Caliman, Ilensa, Balvansa, Kirajak, and Drenova entered the village and houses, took away first all our cattle, and then all our effects. While the Bulgarians were plundering the village we went to complain to the Russians, and begged them to stop the pillage. Some of the Russians were looking at a map, and then went off, but one of them answered thus: "During the insurrection last year you killed the Bulgarians, burned and plundered the monastery; for this reason they now retaliate." He then went away, and left the village to the Bulgarians. The burning of the monastery happened thus: During the insurrection last year the Bulgarians from the surrounding villages were collected at Musina, and passing along our village they wounded one of our shepherds. When informed of it we followed them, and drove them into the monastery of Tirnova. The troops of Tirnova afterward came and carried on hostilities for 10 days, when Fazli Pasha arrived with two guns, and destroyed the monastery. Some of the Bulgarians escaped, but most of them perished.

Resuming his narrative of the Batoum affair, the deponent continued: "Seeing that there was no hope for us, we collected all our women and children in the mosque. About 11 o'clock Turkish time (7 P. M.) the Bulgarians surrounded it, and massacred all except my son—who is 22 years of age, and whom I left at Shumla as a soldier—and myself. In this massacre I lost my wife and daughter, two daughters-in-law, two grandsons, and two granddaughters, of which my family consisted." He added that Custamboul was burned in the morning of the same day, and most of the inhabitants massacred. Those who remained alive fled to our village, where all were massacred. He also affirmed that the same night the villages of Kadjabournou, Kelomensé, Batak, and Pavlikan were also burned and their inhabitants massacred. The old Turk gave his evidence with the unmoved muscles of a Stoic, and in a straightforward way which engaged the confidence of his auditors.

The more you hear of atrocities out here on one side or the other, the more you will become convinced of a truth to which even many old residents here have long been blind, namely, that the level of civilization of the races of Turkey and Russia is very much the same. The ignorant Christian out here will act, *cetera paribus*, in the same way as the ignorant Mussulman. Apart from the formulæ of religion, their habits and customs bear a close resemblance, and it is proved that in natural ferocity and vindictiveness they all try to excel. If any exception be made it must be in favor of the genuine Turk, whose disposition is naturally mild and averse to bloodshed. The massacres which have been committed here for the most part have been done by Circassians and others of Russian origin. It is only fair when speaking of the Turks to distinguish between those who belong to the country *ab antiquo* and those who migrated here only 10 years ago from Russia.