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THE EASTERN QUESTION

" The first time I had the misfortune to differ with my friends was about the year 1683, *when the Turks were besieging Vienna, and the Whigs in England, generally speaking, were for the Turks taking it—which I, having read the history of the cruelty and perfidious dealings of the Turks in their wars, and how they had rooted out the name of the Christian religion in above three score and ten kingdoms, could by no means agree with: and though then but a young man and a younger author, I opposed it and wrote against it, which was taken very unkindly."*

DANIEL DEFOE.*

* "*Life of Defoe*," *by George Chalmers. Defoe's Works, Edin.* 1869.

THE EASTERN QUESTION

FROM THE TREATY OF PARIS 1856 TO THE TREATY OF BERLIN 1878, AND TO THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR

By THE DUKE OF ARGYLL

TWO VOLS.—II.

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CHAPTER X.

NEGOTIATIONS SUBSEQUENT TO THE DECLARATION OF WAR, DOWN TO THE MEMORANDA WHICH PASSED BETWEEN THE EMPEROR OF RUSSIA AND THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT, IN JULY AND AUGUST, 1877.

IT is necessary to follow in some detail the feeble attempts which were made even after the Russian declaration of war to shield Turkey from the consequences of her own conduct. In these attempts the English Cabinet as usual took a helpless part, useless for any purpose except that of showing that the Queen's Government stood alone in its estimate of the course which was consistent with the dignity of Europe, and with the absolute necessity of reform in Turkey.

It is needless to say that the English reply to Russia was received with gratitude by the Turks. On the 12th of May the Turkish Chamber of Deputies voted an address of thanks to her Majesty's Government and to the English people. "We have seen with joy," says this address, "that in their reply to the Circular of Prince Gortchakow, they embraced, as is their wont, the cause of justice, and have judged

with equity the conduct of the two parties. . . . . This decision has given us courage and satisfaction, so that the Representative Assembly, and all who sacrifice themselves for their country, must feel that they owe the above-named Government a great debt of gratitude for having done an act of justice at a moment of such difficulty and delicacy."*

Mr. Layard had arrived at Constantinople on the 20th of April,† and had an interview with the Grand Vizier on the same evening. At this interview the British Ambassador urged that Turkey should do something to neutralise the effect of her rejection of the Protocol, which had placed her in the wrong in public opinion. He pointed to the 8th Article of the Treaty of Paris, which bound each Power before going to war to apply for the mediation of others. The advantages which Turkey gained by taking this step were farther explained by Mr. Layard in a memorandum which was submitted to the Porte. In this Paper it was pointed out that as matters then stood, "public opinion in England would not support or approve any Government that was prepared to help Turkey." It was farther urged to be "of vital importance that she should seek to change or modify this opinion." Then followed a very curious passage, which ran as follows: "If Turkey is anxious that the present state of things should

* Turkey, XXV., 1877. No. 349, Inclos., p. 266.
† Ibid., No. 205, p. 151.

cease, and that Russia should be compelled to declare war, a proposal for mediation on her (Turkey's) part would be more likely than anything else to make Russia come to a decision, and to avoid loss of time. Russia would have either to accept mediation or to refuse. In the first case she would be placing herself under the control of the Powers, who might call upon her to disarm, and Turkey might either disarm of her own free will, relying on the support of the mediating Powers, either making a condition on the subject or not, as might appear most prudent, or she might propose an immediate simultaneous disarmament as the first condition of the mediation. If Russia refused this condition, she would undoubtedly place herself in the wrong before public opinion."* Mr. Layard was careful to explain to the Porte that in thus offering to submit her cause to the consideration and decision of friendly mediating Powers she need not run any risk of compromising her independence as guaranteed to her by the Treaty of Paris, and especially recognised and upheld by England, because the Porte "might reserve all questions affecting it in the case submitted for mediation."

Although this very elaborate and ingenious scheme for making the worse appear the better cause, and for enabling Turkey to reserve everything on which she professed to appeal, was at first resisted by the Grand Vizier as inconsistent with the dignity

* Ibid., No. 211, Inclos. 1, p 162.

of the Porte, yet by the exertions of Mr. Layard with various members of the Government and of the new Chamber, it came ultimately to be favourably entertained, and on the morning of the 24th the British Ambassador learned that the Council of the Porte had finally decided on accepting his advice.* One motive which probably prevailed in the adoption of this course had been indicated by the Grand Vizier in his conversation with Mr. Layard on the 20th. That astute Turk, on being asked by the Ambassador whether he had anything to suggest which might "stave off the danger of war," answered "that had Turkey money—only (even) five million sterling—she might prolong negotiations, and time gained was always in favour of peace." Like everything else done by the Turks, even this determination to re-open negotiations came too late. Mr. Layard, as we have seen, had suggested to Turkey the expediency of forcing the hand of Russia, of putting an end to suspense, and of "compelling her to declare war." But then he had calculated that Turkey would have time to make her nominal appeal first. For he had also pointed out to the Turks that if hostilities had once commenced, the eighth article of the Treaty of Paris was no longer in vigour. But this little game of the British Ambassador was spoilt by the dilatoriness of Turkey

* Ibid., No. 211, p. 161.

and by the promptitude of Russia. The Russians, as we have seen, declared war on the 23rd, and it was not until the 24th, when the Turks were called on to reply to the Russian Declaration, that they made a formal appeal to the Powers to re-open negotiations, founding that appeal on the eighth article of the Treaty of Paris.* Even if the motive of this appeal had not been sufficiently apparent, it was obviously too late to be entertained.

Nevertheless, when the proposal was communicated to the English Foreign Secretary on the 26th of April, he intimated his opinion that it was "in strict conformity with the Treaty," although he did not anticipate that any success could attend the proposal.†

The reply of France to the Turkish application was conceived in a very different spirit. The Turks in this new appeal made no offer of conceding that which had been demanded by the Powers, all of whom had just been united in a joint mediation which had been frustrated by nothing except the pride and obstinacy of the Turks. Accordingly, the Foreign Minister of France had at once told the Turkish Ambassador in Paris that "in order to put the other Powers into a position to mediate, the Porte must set itself right with them. In short, the first step for the Porte to take was to signify its acceptance of the Protocol."‡

* Ibid., No. 140, pp. 89, 90. † Ibid., No. 147, p. 93.
‡ Ibid., No. 144, p. 92.

This was the only reply that could be given by any one of the European Governments which desired to preserve even the appearance of sincerity in the demands which they had made in common on the Porte. In the Memorandum from Turkey in which this new appeal was made there was no hint of any disposition to concede what the Powers had asked. There was, on the contrary, a defence of the refusal which had been given, and a reassertion of those doctrines of absolute independence which, under the circumstances of the case, was only a renewed insult to Europe. It is evident, however, from the language of the English Foreign Secretary, that if there had been the slightest hope of success, none of these considerations would have prevented the Cabinet from acting on the appeal of Turkey. The Porte had all along counted upon the support of the British Government, and Mr. Layard reported, on the 29th of April, that at his first official reception of the Turkish Ministers on the previous day he found among them "a conviction that in the end England would not abandon Turkey."*

On the supposition that Russia had been playing a game of selfish ambition, her success was now complete. It is difficult to say which of three prominent agencies had most effectually contributed to

* Ibid., No. 215, p. 165.

this result. The pride and obstinacy of the Porte, together with its weakness and corruption, stand first. The timidity and helplessness of the English Cabinet come next. These two causes had reacted on each other. It is only fair to the Turks to admit that the effect of English weakness had been to expose them to that kind of menace which was most offensive to them, and to which it was most difficult for them to yield. If all Europe had threatened to use compulsion they might have yielded at least without loss of dignity. But as we have seen that England had threatened not in her own name or in the name of Europe, but in the name of Russia alone, the effect was inevitable. It is impossible, indeed, to read without some sympathy and compassion the account given by Mr. Layard of his "solemn audience" with the Sultan on the 24th of April. The Turkish Sovereign spoke throughout as if Russia were really the only Power with which he had to deal. His language was:—"A great Power is determined to force me into war. He did not want war. It was Russia that was intent on driving him into it. Turkey was only defending herself from wanton aggression from an ancient hereditary and implacable enemy." This was the tone throughout. It was a perfectly natural tone, under the circumstances in which he was placed. And for those circumstances British Diplomacy was largely responsible. It had been doing nothing else for months than trading on

the threats of Russia, presuming on the Porte's sense of weakness, and declining to give to that sense of weakness the way of escape which might have been afforded by a really determined union of the Powers. On the other hand, the skill with which the game of moderation had been played by Russia herself took the best advantage of all these conditions of the case. She had carefully cut down her demands on the Porte to the basis which had been proposed by England, and had been accepted by the other Powers. She had done this by successive concessions on other demands which those Powers had confessed to be reasonable in themselves. She had helped to elicit from the English Plenipotentiary at the Congress emphatic declarations that, as a remedy for the evils of the country, the Turkish Constitution was a sham, and Turkish promises were illusory. She had farther drawn England into the signature of a Protocol, and into the approval of a separate Declaration by Russia, which two documents, when "taken in conjunction," threw the whole blame of the consequences of refusal upon Turkey. The result of the whole of these transactions was that Russia was free to declare war, with the knowledge, and with the confession of the Cabinet of London, that neither England nor any other Power was in a position, however much they might desire it, to defend the Turks against their hereditary enemy. Thus, that very consummation

was brought about which was most hostile to the legitimate interests of the rest of Europe—that consummation which the Crimean war had been fought to prevent—namely, the consummation that Russia was left undisturbed to deal, separately and alone, with the fate of Turkey.

There was just one more advantage and one more credit which it still remained for Russia to secure, and this was now afforded to her by the next step of the Government of the Queen. Hitherto England and the other Powers had at least professed to consider the cause of the subject populations of Turkey as at the root of the matter, and as a cause which they were bound to promote. Russia had, indeed, long appeared as the only Power which was prepared to prosecute this cause at the expense of war. But, up to this time at least, no confession had been made that this cause might be dropped out of the account altogether, or that it was esteemed of no value as compared with other interests purely selfish. That Russia should be enabled to say not only that she was the only Power which would fight for this cause, but that she was the only Power which even professed to care for it, was a triumph which she could not have expected. Yet this, too, was given to her. The English Government gave it by the publication—the ostentatious publication—of a despatch setting forth the position of Great Britain in the contest which was now approaching, and in so framing that despatch

as to eliminate all reference, however remote, to the cause of reform in Turkey, or to the welfare and interests of the subject populations.

Celebrated as this despatch became, as the official definition of "British interests," it is not half-celebrated enough. Its ingenious impolicy was sufficiently apparent at the time, but it acquires additional lustre in the light of subsequent events. I give it here in full :—

The Earl of Derby to Count Schouvalow.

"Foreign Office, May 6, 1877.

"M. L'AMBASSADEUR,—

"I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Excellency's letter of the 6th instant, in which you inform me that you are about to proceed to Russia on a short leave of absence.

"As your Excellency will then doubtless have an opportunity of personally conferring with your Government, I take this occasion of placing before them some considerations of importance to the future good understanding between Great Britain and Russia.

"Her Majesty's Government do not propose again to enter on the question of the justice or necessity of the present war ; they have already expressed their views with regard to it, and further discussion would be unavailing. They have accepted the obligations which a state of war imposed upon them, and have lost no time in issuing a Proclamation of Neutrality. They, from the first, warned the Porte

that it must not look to them for assistance, and they are determined to carry impartially into effect the policy thus announced, so long as Turkish interests alone are involved.

"At the same time they think it right that there should be no misunderstanding as to their position and intentions. Should the war now in progress unfortunately spread, interests may be imperilled which they are equally bound and determined to defend, and it is desirable that they should make it clear, so far as at the outset of the war can be done, what the most prominent of those interests are.

"Foremost among them is the necessity of keeping open, uninjured and uninterrupted, the communication between Europe and the East by the Suez Canal. An attempt to blockade or otherwise to interfere with the Canal or its approaches would be regarded by them as a menace to India, and as a grave injury to the commerce of the world. On both these grounds any such step—which they hope and fully believe there is no intention on the part of either belligerent to take—would be inconsistent with the maintenance by them of an attitude of passive neutrality.

"The mercantile and financial interests of European nations are also so largely involved in Egypt that an attack on that country, or its occupation, even temporarily for purposes of war, could scarcely be regarded with unconcern by the neutral Powers, certainly not by England.

"The vast importance of Constantinople, whether in a military, a political, or a commercial point of

view, is too well understood to require explanation. It is, therefore, scarcely necessary to point out that her Majesty's Government are not prepared to witness with indifference the passing into other hands than those of its present possessors, of a Capital holding so peculiar and commanding a position.

"The existing arrangements made under the European sanction which regulate the navigation of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, appear to them wise and salutary, and there would be, in their judgment, serious objections to their alteration in any material particular.

"Her Majesty's Government have thought it right thus frankly to indicate their views. The course of events might show that there were still other interests, as, for instance, on the Persian Gulf, which it would be their duty to protect; but they do not doubt that they will have sufficiently pointed out to your Excellency the limits within which they hope that the war may be confined, or, at all events, those within which they themselves would be prepared, so far as present circumstances allow of an opinion being formed, to maintain a policy of abstention and neutrality.

"They feel confident that the Emperor of Russia will appreciate their desire to make their policy understood at the outset of the war, and thus to respond to the assurances given by his Imperial Majesty at Livadia, and published at your Excellency's request, when he pledged his word of honour that he had no intention of acquiring Constantinople, and that, if necessity should oblige him to occupy a portion of Bulgaria, it would only be provisionally,

and until the peace and safety of the Christian population were secured.

"Her Majesty's Government cannot better show their confidence in these Declarations of his Imperial Majesty than by requesting your Excellency to be so good as to convey to the Emperor and the Russian Government the frank explanations of British policy which I have had the honour of thus offering to you.

"I have, &c.

(Signed) "DERBY."*

It will be observed that in this despatch, not only is there the total omission of all reference to the welfare of the subject-populations of Turkey, but also that there is a most inadequate account even of those larger political interests which were clearly endangered by the possible action of Russia. The interests enumerated are those which concerned England alone, or England especially, to the total omission of many other interests which were common to Europe. Not one word is said of the ultimate disposal of the European provinces of Turkey, exclusive of Constantinople. The Emperor is indeed reminded of his promise that his military occupation of a portion of the country would be only temporary. But not one word is said of the danger of exclusive Russian dealing with the institutions of Bulgaria and of Roumelia, or the establishment of a Russian protectorate over these provinces. Nothing that did not touch England to the exclusion

* Russia, II., 1877.

of other Powers, and especially the real or supposed interests of her Indian Empire, is even mentioned in this extraordinary despatch. And this is the more remarkable as in the very nature of the case a Paper which professed to set forth and enumerate the interests which might affect the future action of England, implied that all other interests not enumerated (except as covered by a saving clause of the vaguest character), were left to be dealt with according to events. It is indeed the fitting close of that long series of negotiations which we have traced in the previous chapters.

It is needless to say that Russia took immediate and effective advantage of the opportunity thus afforded to her. On the 12th of May the Despatch setting forth the position of England was answered by another Despatch setting forth the position of Russia. Her sole championship of all that was of interest to the subject populations, and through them to the ultimate peace of Europe, was brought prominently into view. This position was expressed and defined with undeniable truth and with conspicuous moderation in the following despatch from Prince Gortchakow to the Russian Ambassador in London :—

(*Translation.*)

"St. Petersburg, May $\frac{18}{30}$, 1877.

"M. LE COMTE,—

"Your Excellency has been entrusted by Lord Derby with a letter which develops the views

of the English Cabinet as regards the questions which might be implicated in the present war, and would affect interests that England ought to defend.

"His Majesty the Emperor has perused it with deep interest, and appreciates the frankness of explanations, the object of which is to remove misunderstandings between the two Governments.

"Our august Master instructs me to respond with complete reciprocity by putting you in a position to develop with equal frankness and equal clearness our own views, both on the points raised by Lord Derby and on those that affect interests which his Imperial Majesty is bound on his side to protect.

"The Imperial Cabinet will neither blockade, nor interrupt, nor in any way menace the navigation of the Suez Canal. They consider the Canal as an international work, in which the commerce of the world is interested, and which should be kept free from any attack.

"Egypt is a part of the Ottoman Empire, and its contingents figure in the Turkish army. Russia might, therefore, consider herself as at war with Egypt. Nevertheless, the Imperial Cabinet does not overlook either the European interests engaged in the country or those of England in particular. They will not bring Egypt within the radius of their military operations.

"As far as concerns Constantinople, without being able to prejudge the course or issue of the war, the Imperial Cabinet repeats that the acquisition of that capital is excluded from the views of his Majesty the Emperor. They recognise that, in any case, the future of Constantinople is a question of common

interest, which cannot be settled otherwise than by a general understanding, and that if the possession of that city were to be put in question, it could not be allowed to belong to any of the European Powers.

"As regards the Straits, although their two shores belong to the same Sovereign, they form the only outlet of two great seas in which all the world has interests. It is, therefore, important, in the interests of peace and of the general balance of power, that this question should be settled by a common agreement on equitable and efficiently guaranteed bases.

"Lord Derby has alluded to other British interests which might be affected by the eventual extension of the war, such as the Persian Gulf and the route to India. The Imperial Cabinet declares that it will not extend the war beyond what is required for the loudly and clearly declared object for which his Majesty the Emperor was obliged to take up arms. They will respect the British interests mentioned by Lord Derby as long as England remains neutral.

"They have a right to expect that the English Government will, on their side, in like manner take into fair consideration the particular interests which Russia has at stake in this war, and in view of which she has imposed such great sacrifices on herself.

"These consist in the absolute necessity of putting an end to the deplorable condition of the Christians under Turkish rule and to the chronic state of disturbance provoked by it.

"This state of things, and the acts of violence resulting from it, excite in Russia an agitation caused

by the Christian feeling so profound in the Russian people, and by the ties of faith and race which unite them to a great part of the Christian population of Turkey. The Imperial Government is the more obliged to take account of this since it reacts both on the internal and external situation of the Empire. At each of these crises the policy of Russia is suspected and accused, and her international relations, her commerce, her finances, and her credit are affected.

"His Majesty the Emperor cannot leave Russia indefinitely exposed to these disastrous accidents, which check her peaceful development and cause her incalculable injury.

"It is in order to dry up their source that his Imperial Majesty has decided to impose upon his country the burden of the war.

"The object cannot be attained unless the Christian populations of Turkey are placed in a position in which their existence and security will be effectually guaranteed against the intolerable abuses of Turkish administration. This interest, which is a vital one for Russia, is not opposed to any of the interests of Europe, which suffers, too, on her side, from the precarious state of the East.

"The Imperial Cabinet endeavoured to attain the desired end with the co-operation of the friendly and allied Powers.

"Forced now to pursue it alone, our august Master is resolved not to lay down his arms without having completely, surely, and effectually guaranteed it.

"Be good enough to lay these views before Lord Derby, stating to him that the Imperial Cabinet has

a right to hope that the Government of her Britannic Majesty will appreciate them with the same spirit of fairness that induces us to respect the interests of England, and that they will draw from them the same conclusion as ourselves—namely, that there is nothing in the views that have been exchanged with reciprocal frankness between the two Governments which cannot be reconciled so as to maintain their amicable relations, and the peace of the East and of Europe.

"Receive, &c.

(Signed) "GORTCHAKOW."

So far as this correspondence goes it cannot be denied that Russia appears as taking the highest ground, and that the Queen's Government on the contrary appears as taking the very lowest. Every interest in the great Eastern Question which was general and European, as distinguished from interests predominantly or purely English, was neglected and abandoned. Russia was left the immense advantage of appearing as the only Power able and willing to redeem the subject populations of Turkey from the curse of centuries, and the not less conspicuous advantage of being able to advance her own interests without let or hindrance in the execution of this work.

Two months elapsed between the declaration of war and the successful passage of the Danube by the Russian army. That passage was not effected till the last week in June. During this interval diplomacy

was not wholly silent. The Ministers and Ambassadors of England had one more opportunity of exhibiting their sense of the political situation. On the 8th of June the Russian Ambassador had a confidential conversation with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and made to him a most important communication. This was no less than an explanation, made with the utmost frankness, of certain conditions on which Russia would still be willing to conclude a peace, and a farther explanation equally frank of the very different conditions upon which she might insist if she were compelled to fight her way across the Balkans.

In the first place, it was distinctly explained to the Cabinet of London that in this last event Russia would not bind herself against advancing on the Turkish Capital. All that she was willing to give a pledge against on this subject was the "taking possession of the town or occupying it permanently." It was pointed out that the obstinacy of the Turks might compel Russia to pursue the war to the walls of Constantinople; and if the Turks knew beforehand that they were to be guaranteed against such a result it would only lead to a prolongation of the war. England, however, might be fully assured that under no circumstances would Russia remain at Constantinople. It would depend very much upon England and the other Powers to relieve Russia from the necessity of even approaching that city. Let them induce Turkey to

accept reasonable terms of peace, and this object would be effected.

The Ambassador then proceeded to indicate what these terms were, and in doing so, he took care once more to set forth in the plainest terms the narrow aims of the policy avowed by England, as contrasted with the broader and larger interests of which Russia was the champion. It is not pleasant for any subject of the Queen to read the definition given of British policy by the Russian Ambassador in this conversation, as contrasted with the accompanying definition of the policy of Russia, and to find that it appears to have been received without one word of remonstrance by the Secretary of State. There was no affectation or pretence that Russia had not her own legitimate interests to secure. Her military honour and her position as a great Power must be vindicated. But these are carefully connected with the interests of the subject populations, and through them with objects which all the other Powers had admitted and declared to be objects of general desire. "What is necessary to England," said Count Schouvalow, "is the maintenance in principle of the Ottoman Empire and the inviolability of Constantinople and the Straits." "What is absolutely necessary to Russia," said the same authority, "is that she should put an end to the continual crises in the East, firstly, by establishing the superiority of her arms so thoroughly that in future the Turks will not be tempted to defy her

lightly; and secondly, by placing the Christians, especially those of Bulgaria, in a position which would effectually guarantee them against the abuses of Turkish administration."

This general description of the Russian basis was further developed by specific explanations of the terms demanded. And it is very remarkable to observe that these terms would have avoided any exclusive Protectorate of Russia over the provinces whose liberties would nevertheless have been entirely due to her firmness. They demanded autonomy for Bulgaria north of the Balkans. But it was still to be vassal to the Porte, and it was to be under the guarantee not of Russia, but of Europe. Bulgaria, south of the Balkans, was also to be assured, under the same guarantee, such securities for good Government as might be agreed upon with the other Powers. Bosnia and Herzegovina were to be dealt with on the same principle, and the preponderating interest of Austria-Hungary in the organisation of these provinces was recognised. Montenegro and Servia were to receive some increase of territory. Servia was to remain as it had been, vassal to the Porte; and the ambition of Roumania to be declared independent was to be considered by Europe as a whole. On these terms—terms identified with the acknowledged interests, not of Russia only, but of Europe—the Russian Ambassador intimated that Turkey might even then have peace.

One only further reservation was made, and the early communication of it to England was at least frank and candid on the part of Russia. As compensation for the costs of war already incurred, Russia would stipulate for certain special advantages, which, however, would not exceed the retrocession of that part of Bessarabia which had been taken from her by the Treaty of Paris in 1856,* and the cession of Batoum, with its adjacent territory.

These terms were confidentially communicated at the same time to Germany and to Austria-Hungary.† It was, however, expressly stipulated by Russia that if England refused to enter upon a negotiation on this basis, it was not to be communicated to the Porte at all. Russia did not profess to entertain the smallest expectation that Turkey would assent to these terms unless compelled to do so. But she did wish to assure herself of the neutrality of England by an open declaration both as to the terms with which she would be content if peace were made then, and by a declaration equally open that if compelled to fight her way across the Balkans, she could not be bound by the same terms.

The course taken by the English Cabinet was to express no opinion of its own, but to consult Mr. Layard as to what he thought of the probability of the

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* Turkey, XV., 1878, No. 1, pp. 3, 4.
† Ibid., No. 4, p. 6.

Porte consenting to the Russian terms.* This was done by telegraph on the 12th of June, and the reply of Mr. Layard was written on the following day. That reply was that it would be "even dangerous to suggest the Russian terms to the Sultan or his Ministers at the present moment." He then entered into an analysis of the terms, pointing out the objections which Turkey would entertain to every one of them. These objections were stated from the Turkish point of view with force and fervour. To establish an autonomous Bulgaria north of the Balkans, with the Danubian fortresses destroyed, with the Turkish armies excluded, and the province placed under the guarantee of Europe, would be to lay the foundation not only for its speedy and complete independence, but for its union with Servia, and the consequent extension of Russian influence over the whole Slav population of Turkey. Greece would be encouraged to invade Thessaly and Epirus. A large Mohammedan population would be handed over to Christian government. Bosnia and Herzegovina would be cut off from the rest of Turkey, and with their new institutions would be practically lost to the Empire. The cession of Batoum would be handing over to Russia the key of Armenia and of all Asia Minor. To propose such terms would be fatal to whatever influence yet remained to England

* Ibid., No. 6, p. 6.

at Constantinople. "We should be looked upon as greater enemies to Turkey and to Islamism than Russia herself, as false friends, and traitors."*

In the meantime, on the 14th of June, before this reply had been received in England, the Russian Ambassador had intimated that on reconsideration Russia must make one important modification of the terms to be demanded. She found on examination that the separation of Bulgaria into two provinces was practically impossible. Local information proved that it must remain one province, otherwise the most laborious and intelligent part of the Bulgarian population, and notably that which had suffered most from Turkish maladministration, would remain excluded from autonomous institutions.

The calmness of the Foreign Secretary was not much disturbed by this communication. But when it was reported to Mr. Layard, it drew from that diplomatist, on the 19th June, a vehement despatch, denouncing over again the terms as a whole, and this addition in particular. To do Mr. Layard justice, he had clearly an intelligible policy of his own. His contempt for the merely negative and listless attitude of his Government is but thinly veiled. He would have supported Turkey: and he would have supported her on the good old doctrine that whatever

* Ibid., No. 8, pp. 7, 8.

might be her faults or vices, the maintenance of her power was necessary to the interests of England. The passage in which this superstition is expressed is so vigorous, and is so probably the last and latest expression of it by an able man, that I reproduce it here :—

"I would venture to urge most earnestly upon her Majesty's Government not to be the medium of communicating, or of suggesting, any such terms as those proposed by Prince Gortchakow to the Sultan or to the Porte. The Russian Chancellor's language does not admit the possibility of a mediation. It is simply that of dictation. The terms offered are to be accepted at once, or the consequences will be a further dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. Let some other Power accept this task. It is vital to our gravest interests, to interests the importance of which no words can adequately describe, much less exaggerate, that we should be ready to interpose to save the Turkish Empire from complete dissolution. If we have even determined to abandon it to its fate, we have not determined to abandon to the same fate the highest interests of the British Empire. Surely the policy which has hitherto made us support Turkey for our own purposes and safety, and for no abstract love of Turks or their faith, a policy approved and adopted by the greatest statesmen that England has produced, is not one which the events of the last few months, having no relation whatever to it, are sufficient to reverse. That policy was partly based upon the belief that Turkey is a barrier to the ambi-

tious designs of Russia in the East, and that the Sultan, the acknowledged head of the Mohammedan faith, is a useful, if not necessary, ally to England, which has millions of Mussulmans amongst her subjects. He may be deprived of his Empire, and may be reduced to the condition of a fifth-rate Asiatic Potentate; but he will still be the Caliph of Islam, and the Mussulman world, in a struggle for very existence, may turn upon England as the principal cause of the danger that threatens it. Some persons, not without authority, are, I am aware, disposed to treat this consideration lightly; but I am persuaded from what I see passing around me, and from what I have learnt, that it is one which we ought seriously to bear in mind.

"It is scarcely necessary to dwell, in this place, upon the result of the breaking up and partition of the Ottoman Empire on the balance of power, or upon the great danger to liberty and civilisation of the establishment of a vast military Slav Empire in the east of Europe.

"If her Majesty's Government are of opinion that there is nothing to be done to oppose the designs of Russia, we should, at least, be prepared to mediate when the time comes. In order to be in a position to do so, we should make Turkey feel that although, as we have warned her, she cannot expect any help from us in her struggle with Russia, we shall be ready, at a favourable moment, to do our best to see that she be treated with justice and moderation, and her Mohammedan and Christian subjects alike with impartiality and equal humanity. It has been my object to raise such hopes, as I have none others to

give, without committing in any way her Majesty's Government, whose views and policy it is my duty to consider and carry out. It is the only course left to us if we are not prepared to give Turkey even such indirect aid as the preservation and maintenance of our own national and imperial interests may render necessary. By following it we may recover and maintain a part of that great and preponderating influence—I hesitate to use a word which has been so indignantly denounced as 'prestige'—which England once enjoyed amongst the Mussulman, and even Christian, nations and communities of the East, and which she was able to use most effectively for their good and her own."*

There is only one opinion of Mr. Layard, as expressed in these despatches, in which we can all agree. "Were Russia over the Danube," he said in his reply of the 13th of June, "and at the Balkan Passes, and were she in possession of Armenia, there might be grounds for forming a different opinion to that which I have now expressed." This was quite true. It meant that nothing short of the military success of Russia could bring home to the mind of Turkey, and of the Turkish party in England, that the time had come to abandon her claims to absolute independence. The knot was left to be cut by the sword. But it is not the less important to observe that from this early date, before as yet the

* Ibid., No. 10, pp. 9, 10.

Russians had crossed the Danube, England and Europe were offered the opportunity of enforcing on the Porte, in so far as they could or would, terms of peace which were generally in accordance with the demands which they had themselves made upon the Porte ; and, moreover, that the Powers of Europe had due notice given to them that even then Russia had determined to demand the restoration of her old Bessarabian frontier, and in Asia the cession of Batoum. Moreover, it is equally important to observe that this intimation had been received by the English Government without, so far as appears, one word of remonstrance or protest.

And now once more we find the Cabinet of the Queen waiting on the steps and relying on the strength of Russia. On the 27th of June the Russian armies had, at three separate points, completed the passage of the Danube. Possibly this success might make the Turks more willing to concede what had been required by England and by Europe. It was as well to try. Accordingly on the following day the Foreign Secretary authorised Mr. Layard to sound the Sultan on the subject of terms of peace. He was to be assured that he might rely on the friendly offices of the Queen's Government with a view to obtain for him "the most favourable possible terms under the circumstances."*

Probably it is fortunate for Europe that this

* Ibid., No. 11, p. 11

attempt also failed. The "most favourable terms possible" for the Turks could not have been the most favourable terms possible for the subject populations, or for the permanent interests of peace in the east of Europe. Mr. Layard, however, was not called upon to answer this instruction till the 2nd of August, and in the meantime important military events had occurred. On the 7th of July, the Russians had captured Tirnova, and a week later General Gourko had made his celebrated dash across the Balkans. But, on the other hand, Osman Pasha had entered Plevna on the 19th, and on the 21st had established himself so firmly within his now famous lines that he was enabled to repulse the first Russian assault. On the 30th of July the second attack had been repelled with still more disastrous results to the army of the Czar. In Asia, also, after the capture of Ardahan so early as the 17th of May, the Russian forces had met with serious reverses. When, therefore, on the 2nd of August, Mr. Layard had to reply to the instruction he had received on the subject of peace, he was obliged to report that the Turks were confidently expecting to drive the enemy out of Bulgaria and Roumelia, as he had already been driven out of Armenia. It is not the first time in the history of the world that the foregone conclusions of a great contest have been obscured by temporary causes suggesting idle expectations of a different result.

It was during this period of the contest that some important communications took place with Russia through Colonel Wellesley, who represented the English War Office at the head-quarters of the army of the Czar. On the 20th of July, the Emperor, in referring to some false accusations made by the Turks against the Russian army, took occasion to intimate to that officer that, although he would not suspend military operations, he was still ready to treat for peace, if the Sultan would make suitable propositions.

This message was received in London on the 27th of July, the very day on which the Russian army crossed the Danube. On the following day the Cabinet of the Queen responded by communicating to the Russian Ambassador a Memorandum of their views. In this Paper the same tone was continued which we have traced throughout—the tone, namely, of representing the whole quarrel as one between Russia and Turkey. In this tone her Majesty's Government assured the Emperor that they would be "ready to use their influence in concert with the other Powers to induce the Porte to terminate the present disastrous war by acceding to such terms of peace as shall be at once honourable to Russia, and yet such as the Sultan can accept."* It was then farther intimated that the Queen's

* Turkey, IX., 1878, No. 2.

Government looked with much anxiety at the prospect of disorder, bloodshed, and even anarchy at Constantinople, if the Russian forces should draw nearer to that Capital. England was fully determined not to depart from the line of neutrality which the Government had declared their intention to observe, unless any deviation from it should be necessary for the preservation of interests which had already been defined. But the Queen's Government would not consider that they were departing from neutrality, nor would Russia consider that they were doing so, if they should find themselves compelled to direct the British Fleet to proceed to Constantinople and "thus afford protection to the European population against internal disturbance." It was anxiously explained at the same time that no decision had then been taken in favour of such a proceeding. But her Majesty's Government was desirous that "in the event of its being necessary no misunderstanding should arise as to their intentions, and that the Government of Russia should not be taken by surprise."

Again, on the 30th of July, the Emperor of Russia made some further remarks to Colonel Wellesley, which he authorised that officer to communicate to his Government. These remarks conveyed the following important declarations:—1st, That the object of the war was solely the amelioration of the condition of the Christian population of Turkey; 2nd, That the conditions of peace then demanded by

Russia remained the same as those lately explained to the British Cabinet by Count Schouvalow; 3rd, That the Emperor had no idea of annexation beyond perhaps the territory lost in Bessarabia by the Treaty of 1856, and a certain portion of Asia Minor; 4th, That the Emperor would not occupy Constantinople for the sake of military honour, but only if such a step were rendered necessary by the march of events; 5th, That the Emperor was still ready to treat for peace if the Sultan would offer suitable proposals, but that he could not accept the mediation of any Power on behalf of Turkey; 6th, That Europe would be invited to a Conference for the formal settlement of the conditions of peace; 7th, That the Emperor had not the slightest wish to interfere with any one of the British interests which had been specified—Constantinople, Egypt, the Suez Canal, or India; 8th, That a temporary occupation of Bulgaria would be necessary; 9th, That the Emperor feared that the present policy of England only tended to encourage the Turks, and consequently to prolong the war, whereas if the influence of England were brought to bear upon the Porte, the Sultan would be ready to come to terms, and thus a war regretted by all Europe would be brought to a speedy conclusion.*

The reply of the English Government to this message was in the same form—namely, in that of

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* Ibid., No. 3, Inclos., p. 2.

a Memorandum to be communicated to the Emperor by Colonel Wellesley. It was dated August 14th.* The only sentence of any importance is the first—in which the Queen's Government intimate their satisfaction that the Emperor disclaimed any "extensive" ideas of annexation—a sentence which involves tacit acquiescence in those not "extensive" annexations which were then very clearly indicated, and which were afterwards so violently denounced in England. This sentence was as follows:—"They have received with satisfaction the statement made by his Majesty as to the object of the war in which he is engaged, his disclaimer of any extensive ideas of annexation and his readiness to enter into negotiations for peace. They are grateful for the assurance which he has given of his intentions to respect the interests of England." The Queen's Government then proceeded to disclaim the influence with the Porte which had been attributed to them by the Emperor, and pleaded that since the Turks had ceased to hope for the military support of England "the position of the British Government, in Turkish opinion, is no longer that of protectors who must be conciliated at any cost, but of neutrals from whom neither assistance nor hostility is to be anticipated." The Memorandum then proceeded thus, in direct allusion to the defeats which Russia had sustained:—

* Ibid., p. 3.

"The military events which have occurred since the date of the communication made by the Emperor to Col. Wellesley will have necessarily indisposed the Turkish Government to entertain any propositions of peace except on conditions such as it is unlikely that the Russian Government could accept."

Here, again, it will be observed, the whole stress is laid not on the justice or necessity of the proposed terms with reference to the condition of the subject populations of Turkey, but exclusively on the acceptability of those terms to Russia.

The principal importance, however, of these Memoranda lies in the proof which they afford that Russia was, even at this early period of the contest, singularly open and unreserved to us, as regarded the probable extent of her demands, if her arms should be attended with success. So far as cessions of territory were concerned, these Memoranda show that the British Government had from this time full notice of the Emperor's intentions. The retrocession of Bessarabia speaks for itself. The "certain portion of Asia Minor" might mean anything. It could only mean, at least, the acquisition of Batoum. It might mean a great deal more. In full possession of this knowledge, the Cabinet of the Queen was silent.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WAR DOWN TO THE CONCLUSION OF AN ARMISTICE, AND RELATIVE NEGOTIATIONS, IN FEBRUARY, 1878.

THE check which the Russian armies had sustained both in Asia and Europe, during the months of July and August, was indeed quite sufficient to inspire with hope the Turks and their friends in England. These hopes, however, were doomed to speedy disappointment. In the beginning of September the tide began to turn, and in the middle of the following month the main current of this eventful history became visible to all observers. The bombardment of Plevna began on the 7th of September, and on the 11th the Gravitza redoubt was taken. But it was not till the 15th of October that a great victory, secured in Asia, gave token of the end. On that day the Turkish army was overthrown on the Aladja Dagh, with one of those great routs which are decisive of the fate of more than a campaign. This triumph in Asia was

followed on the 29th of October by the complete investiture of Plevna. Another period of twenty days brings us down to the fall of Kars, which was taken by the Russian forces on the 19th of November. But it was not till the 10th of December that the gallant Osman Pasha marched a captive out of the lines of Plevna, after a defence perhaps as brilliant as any recorded in the history of war.

It forms no part of the object of this work to follow the events of the war in so far as these were of a purely military character. Some of them, however, have a bearing more or less important upon the fundamental question of the condition and character of the Turkish Empire. The decline of its military power has been but a symptom and a consequence of its decline in all that constitutes the vitality of nations. Nobody, perhaps, will now contend that the events of the late war, taken as a whole, gave any indication that this decline had been arrested. But, unquestionably, during the months of July, August, and part of September, the friends of Turkey were jubilant over her military successes, and loudly declared that these were of such a character as to indicate a great revival. It was denied that the ability of Turkish generals was confined to the defence of strong positions. It was asserted that they had shown vigour, and had attained success in the open field. It was triumphantly predicted that the Russians would be compelled to retreat

across the Danube. And even now, when this tone has been silenced by ultimate results, the impression remains on many minds that the defeat of Turkey was due entirely to the overwhelming forces which Russia was able to hurl upon her, and that in the conduct of her defensive campaign Turkey showed not only a courage but a skill which was deserving of a better fate.

That the men of the Turkish armies, and in many cases their officers also, displayed great courage, and great powers of endurance, is unquestionably true. Nor is this fact to be treated lightly, or with undue depreciation of all that it may involve. Mr. Bright, in a recent speech, spoke of physical courage as an article of which more might be had for a shilling a-day than of any other article with which he was acquainted. The sarcasm, though strictly founded upon fact, cannot affect the universal feeling of mankind. That feeling rests upon an instinct which, like all other instincts, has its seat and its justification in the nature of things. The willingness of men to sacrifice their lives at the call of duty, or, in other words, at the command of legitimate authority, is the highest witness both to the value of human life, and to the still higher value of that which may call us to lay it down. Physical courage, however common it may be, and however capable of it almost all men, under drill and discipline, are found to be, has never failed, and will never cease to be

the object of sympathy and admiration. In this war it was displayed with equal brilliancy by every one of the races which were engaged. The Servian and Roumanian contingents, which ultimately joined in the contest, displayed it as remarkably as the Turks and Russians. They displayed it, too, under conditions which of all others are perhaps the most trying. The attack on strongly fortified positions defended by men armed with the modern weapons of precision, is a kind of attack in which the probability of death is at a maximum, and in which the incitements to courage are at a minimum. The foe is unseen and under shelter. The storming parties are entirely uncovered. They have often considerable distances to traverse during which the carnage is visible and dreadful. In this war there was the prospect—much more dreadful than that of being killed in battle—of a cruel death inflicted by the Turks in cold blood upon the wounded, in the event of the attack being repulsed. That this was the habitual practice of the Turkish soldiery is attested by eye-witnesses without number. Yet under all these aggravated circumstances, not merely of danger but of horror, whole columns of men, unused to war, flung themselves unflinchingly against the redoubts of Plevna. The Turks, exposed to the same danger, but not under the same risks of cruelty, dashed with equal determination, and with equal slaughter, against the Russian fortifications in the Shipka Pass.

So far, therefore, as the mere quality of physical courage is concerned, no inferences can be drawn either comparatively favourable or unfavourable to Turkey from the events of the late war.

When, however, we come to review the military conduct of the war as a whole, it is vain to deny that it confirmed in a most striking degree the decline of Turkey as a military Power. Some of the very best generals in the service of the Porte, with a large part of its regular army, were not only kept at bay for many months, but were at last completely defeated by the little bands of indomitable Montenegro. It is not too much to say that this is a result discreditable, if not actually disgraceful, to the arms of the Sultan. Even in the war with Servia in 1876, although the Turkish forces were ultimately victorious, the triumph cannot be rated very high, considering the raw and untrained levies to which alone they were opposed. As regards questions of purely military strategy it would be absurd for a civilian to express any opinion, except that kind of opinion which rests upon the proof furnished by events. But this is a kind of proof which does justify conclusions of the most important kind. I recollect hearing Macaulay on one occasion give an effective reply to a critic who objected to an opinion he had expressed on a military question. "You are judging," said the critic, "by the event." "Of course I am judging by the event," Macaulay replied;

"how do I know that Wellington was a better general than Soult except by the fact that Soult was beaten by Wellington?" And surely in the case of this Russo-Turkish war there were some results which leave no doubt as to the conduct of the campaign by the Turkish generals. When the Russian army was so seriously defeated in its first attack on Plevna that for a time at least it seemed to be demoralised, it was confidently expected that the Turkish army which rested upon Schumla would have pressed on the left flank of the Russian position and compelled a retreat across the Danube. So great was the failure in this expectation, and in others of a like kind, that it has been ascribed to corruption or treachery on the part of the Turkish generals, or to their jealousy of each other. It was observed with apparent truth that if the columns which during weeks and weeks were dashed in vain against the Shipka Pass had been used to reinforce the army of the Lom very different results might have been attained. And even as regards the action of Osman Pasha in seizing and fortifying Plevna, the brilliancy of his defence must not blind us to the grave doubts which attend his strategy. It does not seem to be a great triumph of military genius to place a whole army in such a position that in the event of defeat there could be no retreat, and no other resource than unconditional surrender. Or if Osman Pasha had any good reason to hope that he could be relieved by any force so

large as to enable him to take the offensive, or even to cover his retreat, what becomes of the reputation of that military Empire which suffered these hopes to be disappointed?

On the whole, then, the result of the war has been to show that whilst there appears to be no deterioration in the fighting qualities of the Turkish soldier, there has been in Turkey no reform of the administrative system on which the success of campaigns depends, and no revival of that military genius to which the Turks owed their conquests and establishment in Europe.

But there are some of the military events of that war which cannot be passed over in any narrative which has in view the light cast by those events on the character and condition of the Turkish Empire. And especially amongst its most terrible and instructive episodes, it is necessary to refer to the dash across the Balkans which was made by General Gourko in the middle of July, 1877. It is difficult to know how far officers of this class, in the midst of a campaign, act under the immediate direction of the Commander-in-chief. It is still more difficult to know how far even the Commander-in-chief of an army engaged in active operations in the field feels himself under any obligation to take into consideration the political consequences of any given movement. But in a war such as that which was then being waged by Russia against Turkey—a

war in which political considerations were all important—a war undertaken with the express aim and object of relieving subject-populations from a corrupt and oppressive Government,—it was the bounden duty of the Russian authorities to abstain from any military movement not absolutely essential to the safety of the army, which ran any serious and needless risk of aggravating the horrors of the war. It has been said, indeed, in a very interesting letter from Lord Melgund,* who was at that time present with the Turkish Army, that Raouf Pasha's force, which was at first the only force opposed to General Gourko, was thoroughly demoralised, and that if the Russian General had made his attack one week earlier, he would certainly have succeeded in the capture of Adrianople. He was only compelled to retreat by the timely arrival of Suleiman Pasha with the battalions which had been vainly employed against Montenegro. But the Russians had no right to count upon such a chance as this ; and it was their duty to consider the terrible and the certain results of failure. This duty was grievously violated by sending across the Balkans, into Southern Bulgaria, a Russian force which was wholly insufficient to occupy or to hold the country—which, in fact, could do nothing but make a raid—and which, having first compromised a large

* Published in the *Times* newspaper about the 12th or 13th of October, 1877.

native population, had then immediately to retreat and leave them to the vengeance of the Turks. This was the character and the result of General Gourko's expedition, and the worst horrors of the war were directly due to it.

I shall not enter here into the continual disputes which have arisen whether the Cossacks and armed Bulgarians did or did not commit cruelties as aggravated, in proportion to their opportunities, as those committed by Turkish Irregulars—the Circassians and the Bashi-Bazouks. This is the favourite hunting-ground of men, who, in the great pursuit of politics, are ever running upon false scents, and stopping to dig out all the little vermin that cross the field of view. In the present case they think they are defending the policy which delivered up the Eastern Question into the hands of Russia, if they can prove that Russians are as barbarous as Turks. If this were so, it could only serve to aggravate the censure due to the Cabinets who abandoned their own duties in the East of Europe, with the effect of enabling and entitling Russia to take them up. But, even in this by-path of inquiry, the friends of Turkey are not successful. The civilisation of Russia is indeed very far behind our own. But it is two centuries at least in advance of the civilisation of Turkey. I say nothing of the sap which is flowing in the one, and of the rot which is visibly affecting every fibre of the other. Those who read the accounts from all sides, which have been furnished by

Mr. Layard, and who remember as an absolute rule that nothing is to be believed on either side except such facts as are vouched for by the direct or indirect evidence of European witnesses, will have no difficulty in making up their minds as to which of the two parties was the most savage throughout the contest. The united testimony of all the foreign officers at the head-quarters of the Russian army proves that as a rule and on the whole it conducted the war humanely to the wounded and to the captives. The same evidence proves that the Turks habitually killed the wounded, whilst the correspondents of the European press united on more than one occasion to testify to the barbarous mutilations which were practised by the soldiers of the Sultan upon the dead, and too probably also on the dying. The insignificant number of prisoners who ever came under the charge of the Turkish Government is a sufficient indication and a crucial test of the barbarous conduct of its soldiery. These facts were so well established that they became the subject of formal remonstrance with the Porte from other Powers. On the 18th of August the German Ambassador in London called on the Foreign Secretary and "read a telegram from his Government stating that the German officers at the Russian head-quarters have corroborated the statements made that in the battles at Plevna and in the Balkans the Russian soldiers who fell into the hands

of the Turkish regular troops were mutilated and killed. The German Government thinks this contrary to the Genevan Convention, which was adhered to by the Porte."* It will be observed that this charge does not refer to one battle only, but to many, and that it does not refer to the Irregulars, but expressly to the Regulars of the Turkish army. But the consequences of General Gourko's raid are of a special kind. They involve the direct action of the Turkish Government during a long period of time; and they cast light upon the most important of all questions—namely, the question: What would have been the result of the defeat of Russia in the war, and of the establishment of unrestrained Turkish power over the subject-populations of Bulgaria?

The facts so far as attested by direct European evidence may be very shortly stated—first, as given in the letter of two American missionaries to Mr. Layard, dated August 14th, 1877;† and secondly, as given by the reports of Consul-General Fawcett, and others who visited the districts at a later date. The two American missionaries were present at Eski-Zaghra; and from their narrative the facts seem to have been these:—

General Gourko crossed the Balkans on the 14th

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* Turkey, I., 1878, No. 216, p. 167.

† Ibid., No. 228. Inclos. p. 195.

of July, at the Hain Pass. This news reached the city of Eski-Zaghra on the same day. The Turkish authorities sent out irregular troops, which were the only troops at their disposal, to meet the Russians. On the 17th the Russians took Kyzanlik, and the worst classes of Turks in Eski-Zaghra gave token of their intention to plunder the Christians of the town. The Turkish Governor seems to have done all he could to prevent this. But the Christians, believing that they would be attacked on the 23rd, sent a secret message to the Russians to urge them to advance. Accordingly, the Russians entered the city on the 22nd of July, and "were welcomed by the Bulgarians with unbounded demonstrations of joy." Some plundering of Turks by Bulgarian villagers followed the Russian occupation, although this was opposed by all the respectable Christian inhabitants, as the better class of Turks had before resisted their own countrymen in plundering the Christians. On the 23rd some Turkish villages in the surrounding plain were deserted by their inhabitants, and the Bulgarian neighbours then burned and plundered them. On the 25th there were some military executions of Turkish men, and of one Turkish woman by the Russians, the crime being the possession of arms and the firing at Russians in the streets. But as the Russians held nothing of the country except the spots where their troops were stationed, the Circassians and Bashi-Bazouks had, by this time, begun the work of fire

and slaughter on the surrounding Bulgarian villages.* On the 26th of July, waggon-loads of wounded Bulgarian peasants, men, women, and children, were seen coming into Eski-Zaghra. It was on the day following this event that a massacre of Turks was begun by men who are styled in the letter of the American missionaries "the Bulgarian police." "On the 27th, a large number of Turks were executed by these men; and on the 28th, the worst class of Bulgarians began to take it on themselves to seize obnoxious Turks and despatch them with sword and musket at the border of the city." This was a massacre. But it was a massacre by no means either

* Since this passage was written I have seen the evidence given by Mr. W. K. Rose, correspondent of the *Scotsman* newspaper, who crossed the Balkans with General Gourko's force. This evidence proves beyond the possibility of doubt that the devastation of the country into which that General penetrated had begun, and had gone great lengths, before his expedition was undertaken. Mr. Rose states that he almost invariably accompanied the avant-guard, and that everywhere they met bands of refugee Bulgarians flying from the ravages of the Turks. He states that in the town of Jeni-Zaghra, a week before it was entered by Gourko, there had been a massacre of 600 men, women, and children, and that he saw horrid evidences of the work. Mr. Rose also saw the wasted bodies of Bulgarians, numbering over sixty men, women, and children, in one house, where they had taken refuge, and in which they had been burnt by the Turks. This was in the village of Dalboka. Farther, Mr. Rose saw the town of Eski-Zaghra fired by the Turks when it was evacuated by Gourko on his retreat. This important information from an eye-witness must be taken as modifying, to a considerable extent, some of the observations in the text.

on the scale or of the kind with which we have become familiar as perpetrated by the Turks. "From what we saw and heard," add the missionaries, "we judge that, perhaps, 100 Turks may have been cut down during those three days." The temporary Government of the city tried to stop these murders—and on Sunday punishment was denounced in all the churches against those who participated in them. It is, however, expressly added by the missionaries, "We do not believe that any Moslem woman or child was killed in the city by Bulgarians, though for several days Christian women and children were brought in wounded in a frightful manner. We heard of one Jewess being injured."

On the 31st of July, the city was retaken by the Turks under Suleiman Pasha. It was immediately given over to plunder, "and from the frequent reports of muskets heard in our neighbourhood, and from the dead bodies which we saw, we judge that large numbers of Bulgarians were massacred in the houses."

Such is the most authentic account—indeed, the only account which seems at all authentic—of the outrages committed by Bulgarians, which brought down upon a large district of country the indiscriminate vengeance of the Circassians and Bashi-Bazouks who swarmed around the advancing forces of the Porte. Nothing seems to have been done by the Turkish generals or by the Turkish Government to

restrain these wretches, and in many instances they attacked and destroyed villages and massacred the inhabitants, who were wholly outside the line of the Russian march, and had taken no part directly or indirectly in those displays of Bulgarian feeling which invariably attended the arrival of Russian troops. During a great part of the month of August, one of the richest and most beautiful countries in Europe was the scene of cruelties and orgies as bad as, or worse than, those which signalised the operations of the Turkish Government in May, 1876. Early in September, the district was visited by Consul-General Fawcett, whose accounts are as dreadful as those of Mr. Baring from Batak. "If the aspect of Carlova," he says, "was appalling, that of Sopot was really awful. The same beautiful country, the same running streams, trim gardens, but not a house standing, half the place burnt, and every house and shop ransacked from top to bottom, and everywhere a horribly mingled smell of attar of roses and putrefying human flesh."* These had been towns respectively of about 20,000 and 10,000 inhabitants.

Writing some days later on the 19th of September, Mr. Fawcett declared that the "present war has probably caused more human misery than even the invasion of the Visigoths, who, fourteen centuries ago, desolated these same fertile countries. From Sopot

* Turkey, I., 1878, No. 368, Inclos. p. 330.

to Yeni-Zaghra, a distance of 150 miles, the country, as far as the towns go, is a desert, and, in my opinion, it is a country almost unequalled in Europe for fertility. It lies between the Great and Little Balkan, and it is, in fact, one great garden." In this letter, Mr. Fawcett supplies us with a very important correction of a statement which he had made in a former report, namely, that "the Bulgarians had fallen on their Turkish neighbours and massacred them." He now explains that, "from more minute inquiries he had made on the spot, he was inclined to think that an organised band of Bulgarians from the North of the Balkans, carrying a sort of badge or uniform, accompanied the Russian column, and that when the Russians retired, it was this corps (calling themselves 'Vengeurs') who commenced the hellish work." It will be observed that this agrees with the account of the American missionaries, who ascribe the slaughter of about 100 Turks at Eski-Zaghra to a body of men which they call "Police." It has been said that this corps was largely composed of men who had fled from Bulgaria after the insurrection of 1876, and who had lost their families in the massacres of May. If such a corps, composed of such materials, was really formed under the authority of the Russians, a heavy responsibility indeed rests on those who organised General Gourko's reckless expedition. Bad, however, as the conduct of this Bulgarian corps was, the account given of it by the American missionaries does

not accuse them, but, on the contrary, expressly exonerates them from the charge of indiscriminate slaughter, or of the massacre of women and children. This, not in one city or town, but in many, was the familiar work of the Circassians and Bashi-Bazouks, who were armed and sent forth by the Turkish Government. Besides which, it is to be recollected, that the Russo-Bulgarian corps had a very short time, and a very small area of country in which to operate. Gourko's expedition was a flying one. There was no rest for the sole of his foot. We have seen that Eski-Zaghra was recaptured by Suleiman Pasha a few days only after its occupation by the Russians. The widespread and terrible devastation described by Mr. Fawcett was therefore unquestionably due to the Turks. It is remarkable, also, that it is generally the higher official representatives of the Porte who are everywhere represented as exhibiting especial brutality. Local Turks were often humane. There were two Turkish officers at Sopot, of whom in particular Mr. Fawcett reports that they were a "credit to their race"—doing everything they could to protect the wretched women and children who still cowered among the ruins. But of the Turkish Mudirs his report is strongly condemnatory. At Carlova, where 8000 women and children were dying of hunger and fear, Mr. Fawcett had to remonstrate most strongly with the Mudir "on the infamy of allowing these helpless creatures to be nightly visited and tortured,

or worse, by roving bands of Bashi-Bazouks."* In like manner the Mudir of Sopot told Mr. Fawcett that if the Bulgarian men who had fled should return, he would send every one of them to Philoppopolis, "which," says Mr. Fawcett, "as far as I can see, means to be hanged."†

And this brings us to transactions in which, at least, there can be no doubt of the direct responsibility of the Government of the Sultan. It might have been supposed that this Government would have been satisfied with the sweeping and indiscriminate vengeance which had been and was then still being inflicted on a whole country and a whole population by its armed bands. But this was not to be. A Military Commission was sent to Philippopolis, armed with summary powers of execution, and presided over by two men, Ibraham and Rifaat Pashas, of both of whom Mr. Layard had to report, on the 29th of September, that "he heard a very bad account."‡ We know what this means. It means that the most unscrupulous avarice and the most callous indifference to human life were enthroned on the Seat of Justice. It is not too much to say that the revelry in massacre of such savages as the Circassians, is less guilty than the deliberate murders of a Tribunal such as this. The seizure and judicial murder of Bulgarians was

* Ibid., No. 400, p. 348.
† Ibid., No. 368, Inclos. 2, p. 331.
‡ Ibid., No. 435, p. 391.

not determined by any evidence of participation in revolt, but simply by the fact whether the prisoner had property and wealth enough to pay the confiscators well. In the midst of his terrible accounts of the devastation of Bulgaria, Mr. Fawcett had to add that at Adrianople and Philippopolis, batches of thirty and forty had been hanged during the last few days.* "As to the men," he says, "I can only think that the authorities have come to the conclusion that they will exterminate the Bulgarian race in those parts. I am aware the Turks have had great provocation, but such deeds as have been, and are going on here, must, if known, bring down on the perpetrators the execration of the world; and looking at them from a political point of view, it is suicidal if the Turkish Government wish to have the sympathies of Europe."

It was not till the 20th of October, after about 300 Bulgarians had been hanged under this mockery of justice, that Mr. Layard succeeded in procuring the recall of Ibraham Pasha, the military governor of Philippopolis.†

But it was not the British Ambassador who really prevailed. It will be observed that this date—the 20th of October—is just five days after the great rout of the Turkish army, under Mouktar Pasha, at

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* Ibid., No. 368, Inclos. 2, p. 331.
† Ibid., No. 502, p. 455.

the Aladji Dagh, near Kars. This is no mere coincidence. The supporters of Turkey in England have always been connecting the danger of massacre and of cruelty to Christians, with the disposition of the Turks to revenge defeat. But it has ever been in the hour of triumph that the Turks have shown the worst ferocity. In defeat they show a prudent regard to consequences. The truth is, that all the concessions of the Turkish Government in the direction of justice and humanity can, throughout the whole of these transactions, be traced to fear, and to external pressure. Up to the overthrow of their army in Asia Minor, the Turks had been so successful, both in Europe and in Asia, that they had the fullest confidence in their prospect of finally resisting and defeating Russia. It is always under such conditions that the real nature of their Government comes out without alloy. Mr. Layard had been interceding for the Bulgarians for weeks and weeks. But his intercessions had no effect till a terrible disaster to the Turkish arms shook the confidence of the Porte in its immunity from punishment. Mr. Layard's success, like all the other successes of British diplomacy in this deplorable history, seems to have been entirely due to the action and to the arms of Russia.

When, therefore, we recollect that a large party in England, embracing apparently all the supporters of the Government, were for some two months rejoicing in the prospects of Turkish success and of Russian

defeat, we can judge of the results which would have followed the attainment of their desires. The infamies of the Philippopolis Commission, which was in action during the sittings of the Conference of Constantinople, are eclipsed by the doings of the Military Commission which sat during the months when Turkey thought she was triumphant, and when, therefore, she was free to act according to her own bent. It must not be supposed that the sufferings inflicted by this great Turkish judge, Ibraham Pasha, were measured by the number of persons whom he condemned to death. Exile and confiscation, determined by the same corrupt motives, and supported by narratives of notorious falsehood, were added in still larger proportion to the capital executions. A fortnight after the great Russian victory in Asia Minor, we have a glimpse of the iniquities which had been going on, afforded to us by Vice-Consul Calvert, writing from Philoppopolis on the 1st of November, 1877. He says: "The telegram recalling him reached Ibraham Pasha, at Carlova, where he had been for some days previously, in command of the troops in that district, and where I now see by the English papers he has sent to the Porte accounts of engagements with insurgents which I can only describe as fictitious, all traces of insurrection on this side of the Balkans having disappeared more than two months ago." Even at that date, when Ibraham had been removed,

and capital executions were stopped,—when a new President of the Court-Martial had been appointed, "who was reported to be a just man, and inclined to be lenient,"—even then, Mr. Calvert gives us this further indication of the Turkish methods of proceeding :—

"The principal Bulgarian merchants of Hasskeui and Tchirpan, to the number of about forty, who are probably fully as innocent as these Bulgarians of Tatar-Bazardjik, have just been brought here under arrest. Like the Bazardjik merchants they have never borne arms or had any dealings with the Russians, though I could not, of course, undertake to say that none of them entertain pro-Russian feelings; they have regularly paid all the extraordinary contributions which they were called upon to furnish towards the war expenses, and though I am not acquainted with any of them personally, I think it may safely be said that they, being engaged in commerce, were not the kind of persons likely to countenance insurrectionary schemes. Yet they have been torn from their homes and families without a moment's warning, and I hear that it is contemplated to send them all into confinement in Asia Minor."*

Such was the Government which, when the rout in Asia had been followed on the 10th of December by the capture of Plevna, addressed Europe in these words :—"In the name then of humanity, we appeal to the Great Powers, and to their feelings of justice."†

* Ibid., No. 576, Inclos. p. 526.
† Turkey, II., 1878, No. 1, p. 3.

The audacity of this was great. But it was, if possible, still greater audacity that in the framing of this appeal, the determination of the Porte to persist in refusing the one great demand of Europe, was expressed as clearly as in all previous negotiations. What Turkey called upon the Powers to do was—not to consider some concession of guarantees such as had been asked—but once more to accept Midhat Pasha's Constitution as all that could be desired. It was again declared that special guarantees granted to special Provinces could not be admitted, for they would simply be "a premium offered to rebellion." It was gravely added that if any doubt remained in any minds, however sceptical, as to the validity of Turkish reforms, "this doubt ought to disappear in view of the formal and solemn declaration which we make of the sincerity of our resolutions."

The reply of the English Cabinet to this wonderful appeal was as benevolent to the Turks as usual. Mr. Layard conveyed to the Porte the assurance of the British Government that, "whenever negotiations for peace were set on foot, they would do what lay in their power to obtain favourable conditions for Turkey." The Turkish Government thanked the Foreign Secretary, on the 14th of December, for this message.

It was on this occasion that a remarkable episode occurred. The Turkish Ambassador in London intimated the impression of his Govern-

ment, that the Cabinet of the Queen knew what the probable demands of Russia would be in regard to Bulgaria, and were acquainted generally with the conditions on which Russia would agree to the re-establishment of peace. This was repudiated by the Foreign Secretary in the following words :—"I explained to Musurus Pasha, in reply, that his Government were mistaken in supposing that I knew what were the conditions of peace likely to be insisted on by Russia." Now, considering the communications which had taken place in July through Colonel Wellesley—the formal Memoranda which had been exchanged between the Emperor and the English Government—this was a statement which it is difficult to explain. The only possible solution of the difficulty would seem to be that the Cabinet could not feel sure that the terms which Russia had explained in July were terms which would still be open to Turkey in December. Even this explanation fails, however, when we recollect that although the Emperor had said distinctly that farther terms would be demanded in certain events, His Majesty had clearly indicated the passage of the Balkans as the military contingency which would operate to enlarge the terms he might demand. But the passage of the Balkans had not been effected on the 14th of December, when this conversation was held. And then what are we to say of the farther declaration made to the Turkish Ambassador on the same occasion : "I had no information on the

subject?"* Surely this was a great stretch of diplomatic licence.

Very different, as usual, in tone was the reply of Germany to the new appeal from Turkey—an appeal which only afforded fresh evidence of her obstinacy and impenitence. It was dignified and decisive:—"The German Emperor declines to accede to the Sultan's request for mediation."†

On the 21st of December, Musurus Pasha renewed a declaration of the unyielding attitude of the Porte. That Government would allow no interference of the Powers in its independent administration.‡ It knew that this would be no matter of offence to the Queen's Government, and so it again appealed to the good offices of England. The Foreign Secretary said, with very proper caution, that it would be convenient to know the general conditions of peace which the Porte would be prepared to accept. It was, indeed, high time to know how far Turkey had come to a consciousness of her position since the fall of Plevna. No reply, however, seems to have been given to this inquiry; but on the 25th of December, the Porte intimated that it would gladly know through England what terms would be offered by the Emperor of Russia. Turkey again declared that it trusted to the friendly mediation of the Queen's Government, which

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* Ibid., No. 2, p. 3. † Ibid., No. 3, p. 3.
‡ Ibid., No. 4, p. 4.

the Porte was convinced "would not be refused by our ancient and constant friend."* Accordingly, on the 27th, Lord Augustus Loftus was desired to make the inquiry of the Russian Government. Prince Gortchakow replied on the 28th, in a courteous and friendly spirit, that the Porte must now address itself to the Imperial Commanders-in-Chief in Europe and in Asia, who would state the conditions on which an armistice would be granted.†

On the 4th January, 1878, the Queen's Government remonstrated with Russia against this reply, and argued that as an armistice must include operations both in Asia and in Europe, and must farther involve the operations of both Servia and Montenegro, it was clearly indispensable that the conditions of it should be discussed between the two belligerent Governments, and not merely between Generals commanding a portion of the contending forces.‡ This argument was, as usual, confidentially communicated to the Porte. By this time, however, the Government of the Sultan was beginning to have its eyes opened to its real position. Sofia had been taken. The Balkans had both been turned and traversed. The Russian army was pouring down their southern slopes upon the Roumelian plains. On the 5th of January, the

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* Ibid., No. 9, Inclos. p. 6. † Ibid., No 15, p. 8.
‡ Ibid., No. 16, p. 9.

Ottoman Government telegraphed that it "accepted in principle the armistice proposed by Russia," and begged the Queen's Government to ask the Government of Russia to stop the progress of its armies.

On the 7th of January, the Foreign Secretary was obliged to explain to the Turkish Ambassador that England had not accepted the position of a mediator, and that she could take no step which it was evident would be useless. She had declared her neutrality, except under conditions affecting her own interests. These interests, moreover, had been specified and defined; and unless they were affected she could not interfere. It was necessary to repeat this, that no false hopes might be raised.* On the 8th of January, the Cabinet desired Lord Augustus Loftus to intimate to the Russian Government that England would advise the Porte to send delegates to the Russian Head-quarters to negotiate an armistice with the Russian Commanders. But Russia was now wisely determined to push her military advantage. She knew the skill of the Turks in the arts of delay. She knew that the British Government had already promised to help the Turks in reducing to a minimum the results of negotiation. The whole fruits of a campaign very dearly won might be lost by procrastination. On the 10th of January, therefore, the Grand Duke Nicholas replied to the Turkish Foreign Minister that

* Ibid., No. 21, p. 10–11.

"there cannot be any question of an armistice at this moment without bases of peace." The English Cabinet, when informed of this reply, telegraphed to Lord Augustus Loftus that they could not reconcile it with the declaration of Prince Gortchakow that the Russian Military Commanders were instructed to state the conditions upon which an armistice would be agreed to. The alleged inconsistency is not apparent. It was quite within the terms of this declaration to require the signature of a basis of peace as one condition of granting an armistice. Prince Gortchakow knew well that the British Government would befriend Turkey to the utmost, and would put every iron in the fire to procure for her the best possible terms. He was not bound under these circumstances to show his hand. He explained, accordingly, that the instructions as to the terms of peace which had been sent to the Imperial Commanders were too important to be confided to the telegraph. They might reach their respective destinations in about fifteen days from the 4th of January.

Under these circumstances the Foreign Secretary, on the 12th of January, advised the Porte to inquire of Russia what would be the nature of the conditions demanded as the basis of peace.* On the 13th of January, the Grand Duke Nicholas telegraphed to

* Ibid., No. 37, p. 15.

the Porte that he would communicate the basis of peace "to a person sent to him with full powers to accept them, and to conclude thereupon the principles of an armistice, which will afterwards be carried out." On the same day a prolonged Council of Ministers was held at the Porte, the result of which was a decision to send Servet Pasha, the Foreign Minister, with a colleague, to Kyzanlik on the next day, to meet the Grand Duke, "for the purpose of accepting bases of peace and concluding an armistice."

It will be observed, from this rapid narrative of events, that the disposition of the Porte to accept terms of peace underwent a rapid development during the four weeks which elapsed between the 14th of December, 1877, and the 14th of January, 1878. As usual, this favourable change was due entirely, not to English diplomacy, or to English effort of any kind, but exclusively to the arms of Russia. The moment Plevna had fallen, the Russian army resumed its march to the south. Its passage of the Balkans in the middle of winter was unquestionably one of the most brilliant operations of modern war. By rapid movements, effected simultaneously on several lines of attack, in mid-winter and in severe weather, the great mountain barrier of Bulgaria was traversed with complete success; the very flower of the army which was yet left to Turkey was captured at the southern entrance of the Shipka Pass; and the broken

remnants of Suleiman Pasha's army were chased and driven to the Ægean coast. The Russian army advanced upon Adrianople and took it without a struggle.

These were the events which had at last convinced the Porte that it was no longer safe to defy Europe, to slaughter its subjects by Bashi-Bazouks, and to hang them by military Commissions. But the Turkish Government was not the only one which was deeply agitated by the success of the Russian arms. The Cabinet of the Queen began to be seriously uneasy from the moment that Plevna fell. Three days after that event, on the 13th of December, 1877, the Foreign Secretary communicated to the Russian Ambassador a new Memorandum explanatory of its views. A misgiving had arisen that the previous definition of "British interests," given on the 6th of May, was perhaps just a little defective. In this new Memorandum the despatch of that date was referred to as a definition only of those British interests which might be affected "most directly." The contingency of Constantinople "passing into other hands" was recalled. Prince Gortchakow's assurance that Russia did not aim at the "acquisition" of the Turkish Capital, and that the fate of that City must be matter of common interest and of general agreement—this also was recalled, with due appreciation of the "courtesy and friendly character" of such assurances. But it was now

urged that "the occupation of Constantinople by the Russian forces, even though only of a temporary character, and for military purposes only, would be an event which it would, on all accounts, be most desirable to avoid." Were such an occupation to appear imminent, it was represented that public feeling in England, "founded on a just appreciation of the consequences to be apprehended, might call for measures of precaution on the part of Great Britain from which Her Majesty's Government have hitherto felt justified in abstaining." The Foreign Secretary was therefore charged by the Cabinet to express its earnest hope that, should the Russians advance to the south of the Balkans, no attempt would be made to occupy Constantinople or the Dardanelles. "In the contrary event, the Queen's Government must hold themselves free to take whatever course might appear to them necessary for the protection of British interests." All this was conveyed under the grave intimation that it was "with the view of avoiding what might seriously endanger the good relations happily maintained between the two countries."*

It will be observed that this intimation was a complete departure from the tacit understanding which had been previously established. For five months—ever since the communications in July through

* Turkey, III., 1878, No. 1.

Colonel Wellesley—the British Government had remained silent under the emphatic and repeated declarations of the Emperor that he could not and would not absolutely bind himself to abstain from occupying the Turkish Capital. What he would promise, and what he did promise, was that he would not occupy Constantinople for the sake of mere military honour, but only if compelled to do so by the march of events. To this intimation no rejoinder had been made by the Cabinet of London. They did not any farther press for an assurance which the Emperor had thus pointed out he could not safely give. They had watched the struggle in silence when it appeared to be going against the Russians. But now, when the fortune of war had declared itself against the Turks, the British Government came forward to impose on Russia an absolute limit on her belligerent operations which might involve her in serious military and not less serious political complications, and which was in violation of the previous understanding.

It was not likely that Russia would submit to such a threat, conveyed under such conditions. Accordingly Prince Gortchakow replied in a Memorandum, dated December 16th, in which, indeed, the former assurances were repeated respecting the "acquisition" of Constantinople, but in which also any farther engagement was repelled with firmness.

It was all the more imperatively necessary that Russia should keep her military freedom as, at that very moment, even in professing to seek for peace, the Porte, as we have seen, was declaring anew its determination to resist the one essential demand of Europe. "His Majesty the Emperor," said the Russian reply, "considers that it is his right and his duty to oblige Turkey to conclude a solid and real peace which shall offer effectual guarantees against the return of the incessant crises which disturb the peace of Russia and that of Europe. These crises can only cease with the state of things which gives rise to them. The whole of Europe has recognised the impossibility of allowing them to continue. It is with the view of finally putting a stop to them that His Majesty the Emperor has taken up arms and exposed his people to heavy sacrifices. These sacrifices, borne with devotion, render it all the more the duty of His Majesty not to stop before having achieved a result which shall preserve Russia from the renewal of similar trials, which shall satisfy her Christian feelings, guarantee her repose, and at the same time consolidate the peace of Europe. This end must be attained. If the obstinacy or the illusions of the Porte shall oblige His Majesty to pursue his military operations in order to dictate a peace responding to the openly proclaimed object of the war, His Imperial Majesty has always reserved to himself, and still continues to claim in regard to this point, the

full right of action, which is the claim of every belligerent." Finally, the British Government was courteously asked "to have the goodness to define more clearly what are the British interests which they consider might be touched by the eventualities of the war within the limits to which the assurances of the Imperial Cabinet have restricted them, with a view to seeking in common the means of reconciling these interests with those of Russia, which it is the duty of His Majesty to protect."*

It is remarkable that no reply was returned to this inquiry of the Russian Government, and no rejoinder to their Memorandum for nearly a whole month. That paper was dated December 16, 1877; and the next communication from the British Cabinet was dated the 12th of January, 1878.† It is true, indeed, that the text of the Russian Memorandum does not seem to have been placed in the hands of the Foreign Secretary till the 2nd of January. But the substance of it must have been communicated by telegraph, and must have been known at once. The truth is, as subsequently appeared, that at this time the Queen's Government, from internal dissensions, did not know its own mind from day to day. About the 21st of December it was intimated that Parliament would be assembled. Even this, however, was not to be done at once, but only about three weeks

* Ibid., No. 2, p. 3-4. † Ibid., No. 3, p. 4.

earlier than the usual time. This was a measure which could be assented to by opposite opinions, because it gave time to feel the pulse of the country. The beat of that pulse was not responsive to the party which desired, but did not yet dare, to interfere in support of the Turkish Government. During the next three weeks, Chambers of Commerce, Town Councils, and public meetings in more than one hundred and fifty different places, gave expression to the general feeling against such a policy.*

In the meantime the inquiry of the Russian Government remained unanswered. At last, however, on the 12th of January, the Cabinet of the Queen replied to Prince Gortchakow's request that it would define more clearly the British interests supposed to be endangered, by desiring Lord Augustus Loftus "to state to Prince Gortchakow that Her Majesty's Government are of opinion that any operations tending to place the passage of the Dardanelles under the control of Russia would be an impediment to the proper consideration of the terms of the final settlement between Russia and Turkey. You will ask His Highness whether he is willing to give an assurance to Her Majesty's Government that no Russian force shall be sent to the Peninsula of Gallipoli."

It will be observed that this reply did not press

* Sequence of Events in the Eastern Question, p. 28.

the former representations of the Cabinet against the possible military occupation of Constantinople. It made no rejoinder to the arguments by which the Emperor had defended his refusal to bind himself farther on that subject. Yet it was expressly framed in answer to the Memorandum in which those arguments were set forth. It specified a military operation wholly distinct from the occupation of the Capital as the one to which England must still object. It was a tacit acquiescence therefore in the refusal of Russia to give any binding engagement against the possible occupation of Constantinople.

On the day following this telegraphic reply of the English Government, Lord Augustus Loftus had an interview with Prince Gortchakow, in which he made the new, but more restricted, demand in respect to the occupation of Gallipoli.

The Prince replied formally, but verbally, on the 15th, in these words:—"The Russian Government have no intention of directing their military operations on Gallipoli, unless the Turkish regular troops should concentrate there. They farther hope that, in putting the question, Her Majesty's Government do not contemplate an occupation of Gallipoli, which would be a departure from neutrality, and would encourage the Porte to resistance."*

At the same time, when these communications were

* Turkey, III., 1878, No. 8, p. 6.

going on, the British Government became alarmed by sensational reports from their Ambassador at Constantinople as to the terms of peace which Russia was likely to demand; and in view of these reports they desired Lord Augustus Loftus to intimate to Prince Gortchakow "that in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government any Treaty concluded between the Government of Russia and the Porte affecting the Treaties of 1856 and 1871 must be an European Treaty, and would not be valid without the assent of the Powers who were parties to those Treaties."* On the same day, January 14th, this opinion was conveyed to the Porte through Mr. Layard.†

It was not till the 21st of January that the Foreign Secretary replied to the request of Russia that England would give an assurance corresponding to her own against the occupation of Gallipoli. But on that day this assurance was given through Lord Augustus Loftus:—"You are authorised to inform Prince Gortchakow that Her Majesty's Government do not, under present circumstances, contemplate any occupation of the position in question."‡

On the same day, January 21st, the Russian Ambassador in London informed the Foreign Secretary that as false reports prevailed on the subject, he thought it right to inform the British Government

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* Ibid., No. 6, p. 5. † Ibid., No. 7, p. 5.
‡ Ibid., No. 21, p. 11.

that in the bases of peace sent from St. Petersburgh to the Grand Duke Nicholas, "no mention was made of either the Bosphorus or Dardanelles."*

On the 23rd January, Mr. Layard forwarded a telegram from the Vice-Consul at Gallipoli, dated the 22nd, stating the Russians had advanced to Demotica, and that fears were entertained that by the occupation of Keshan, Gallipoli would be cut off from direct communication with the Capital. Although another telegram was received on the same day, showing that there was exaggeration in this report; and although, if it had been all perfectly true, it would have involved no breach on the part of Russia of the understanding come to in respect to the occupation of Gallipoli, the Cabinet seems to have taken the utmost alarm, and the dignity of the British Government was sustained by transactions of which the official record is as follows:—

"Admiralty, 23rd January, 1878, 7 P.M.,
to
ADMIRAL HORNBY, Vourlah.

"Most secret.

"Sail at once for the Dardanelles, and proceed with the fleet now with you to Constantinople. Abstain from taking any part in the contest between Russia and Turkey, but the waterway of the Straits is to be kept open, and in the event of tumult at Con-

* Ibid., No. 23, p. 11.

stantinople you are to protect life and property of British subjects.

"Use your judgment in detaching such vessels as you may think necessary to preserve the water-way of the Dardanelles, but do not go above Constantinople.

"Report your departure, and communicate with Besika Bay for possible further orders, but do not wait if none are there.

"Keep your destination absolutely secret.—Acknowledge."

"ADMIRAL HORNBY, Vourlah, 24th January, 1878, 6.10 P.M.,
to
Admiralty (received 5.12 A.M., 25th January, 1878.)

"Orders received. Sail at 5 P.M. to-day for the Dardanelles and Constantinople. Orders left for *Alexandra* and colliers to follow."

Then, twenty-four hours later we have the following :—

"Admiralty, 24th January, 1878, 7.25 P.M.,
to
ADMIRAL HORNBY { Vourlah. Koumkaleh. Chanak.

"Annul former orders, anchor at Besika Bay and await further orders. Report arrival there."

The result is recorded thus :—

"ADMIRAL HORNBY, Dardanelles, 25th January, 5.45 P.M.,
to
Admiralty (received 25th January, 11.5 P.M.).

"Received your telegraphic communication to anchor Besika Bay when abreast Dardanelles Forts.

Firman received there for passage of Straits. I returned to Besika Bay immediately, as ordered."

It is remarkable that the order which sent back the fleet to its former anchorage, when it was already "abreast of the Dardanelles Forts," was immediately followed by the receipt of information from Mr. Layard which, if it had been correct, would have been really alarming. For that diplomatist on the 24th of January announced that "he had just heard" the Russian conditions of peace, and the fifth of these was reported thus: "The question of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles to be settled between the Congress and the Emperor of Russia." In this first form the news was reassuring, and made it more easy for the Cabinet to send back the fleet. But on the very next day, the 25th, it was discovered that in the telegram as first deciphered the word "Congress" had been substituted for "Sultan." Therefore, the British Ambassador's message remained to the effect that Russia demanded the great question of the settlement of the Straits to be regulated by a Treaty between herself and the Sultan alone. Nevertheless the return of the fleets to Besika Bay was suffered to remain. When, three days later, on the 28th of January, the Government had to explain to Parliament the dangers of the situation, they were obliged to confess that at that very moment they believed the Russian basis to include a separate

agreement between Russia and the Porte on the subject of the Straits. Yet even under this belief they did not repent of having sent back the fleet. There could be no clearer indication of distracted councils.

It was not until the 25th, that the Queen's Government had any fresh and authentic information as to what the Russian bases really were. On that day they were communicated to the Foreign Secretary by Count Schouvalow. They were as follows :—

"Bulgaria, within the limits of the Bulgarian nationality, not less than that of the Conference, to be an autonomous tributary Principality, with a national Christian Government, a native militia, and no Turkish troops, except at some points to be determined.

"Independence of Montenegro, with increase (of territory) equivalent to the military *status quo ;* the frontier to be decided hereafter.

"Independence of Roumania, with sufficient territorial indemnity.

"Independence of Servia, with rectification of frontiers.

"Autonomous administration, sufficiently guaranteed, to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"Similar reforms for the other Christian provinces of Turkey in Europe.

"Indemnity to Russia for the expenses of the war ; in a pecuniary, territorial, or other form, to be decided hereafter.

"Ulterior understanding for safeguarding the rights and interests of Russia in the Straits.

"These bases being accepted, a Convention, an Armistice, and the despatch of Plenipotentiaries to develop them into Preliminaries of Peace."

On the same day Count Schouvalow, in the name of Prince Gortchakow, repeated the assurance that "we do not intend to settle by ourselves European questions having reference to the peace which is to be made."* On the 26th Mr. Layard telegraphed another version of the Russian terms of peace, with his own comment at the close: "It is scarcely necessary to say that this amounts to destruction of Turkish Empire in Europe."†

In the meantime, on the 17th of January, 1878, Parliament had met. The Ministers opened the Session by a Speech from the Throne, in which as usual the war was treated solely as a contest between Russia and Turkey. Not one word of anxiety or of interest was spoken in the cause of good government and of freedom in the East of Europe. Again, therefore, and this time from the most exalted place in the civilised world, Russia was exhibited as the only Power which even professed to care for that cause. It was a cause which assembled Europe had recently declared to be one affecting both its

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* Ibid., No. 39, p. 15. † Ibid., No. 40, p. 15.

interests and its honour. But England had nothing to say about it. Exclusive stress was laid upon the risks which the war was supposed to involve as regarded British interests. "I cannot conceal from myself," the Sovereign was advised to say, "that should hostilities be unfortunately prolonged, some unexpected occurrence may render it incumbent on me to adopt measures of precaution. Such measures could not be effectually taken without adequate preparation, and I trust to the liberality of my Parliament to supply the means which may be required for that purpose."* In this Speech, however, it was expressly admitted that so far as the war had then proceeded neither of the belligerents had infringed the conditions on which the Queen's neutrality was founded.

Upon the determination of the Cabinet, on the 23rd of January, to order the fleets to proceed to Constantinople, both the Foreign Secretary and the Colonial Secretary had tendered their resignation. But the Colonial Secretary alone persisted in this resolution. The Foreign Secretary consented to remain when the fleets were countermanded on the following day. The countermanding of the fleet, however, was expressly rested by the Prime Minister, in his speech in the House of Lords on the 25th of January, not on any desire to conciliate and retain his

* Hansard, vol. 237, p. 5.

colleague, but on the very important conclusion which had been arrived at by the Government—that the Russian conditions of peace which had then been communicated by Count Schouvalow "furnished a basis for an armistice."* But, strange to say, notwithstanding this formal and public admission that the Russian demands constituted a reasonable basis of peace, the Cabinet on the same day communicated to Parliament its resolution to ask for a vote of six millions sterling for warlike preparations.

On the 28th of January, 1878, a vote of credit for six millions was moved in the House of Commons by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The speech of the Minister on this occasion marks an important change in the attitude and language of the English Government. Hitherto, as we have seen, since the beginning of the war, it had been declaring that nothing but danger to British interests as these had been defined in the despatch of the 6th of May, 1877, would induce England to interfere in the contest which had arisen. It could not be alleged that any one of these interests had been as yet endangered. The Queen's speech, eleven days before this date, had expressly said so. A suspicious ambiguity indeed rested on one of the Russian terms of peace, which might be interpreted to contemplate some separate dealing with the question of the Straits

* Ibid., p. 436.

between Russia and Turkey alone. But the Government did not even pretend to feel much alarm on this point. So little, indeed, did they seem to regard it that, as we have seen, they had not repented of their countermand of the fleet. The Cabinet, probably, were of opinion that there was no real danger of any modification being effected in the Treaty of 1856 on the question of the Straits, without the general consent of the Powers. The Russian Ambassador had informed them on the 21st of January that no such demand formed any part of the bases of peace sent from St. Petersburgh to the Grand Duke Nicholas.* The mere intimation on the part of England that she would not acknowledge any such modification would be enough to render any such arrangement nugatory. It was not, at all events, and for whatever reasons, considered worth while to resume that forward movement of the fleets which had already very nearly cost them the resignation of an important colleague.

All this, however, showed the vacillation of the Government, and added to that feeling of helpless irritation which is the best of all preparations in the public mind for foolish and hasty action. Moreover, it compelled the Ministry to hoist some other signal of alarm. Since it could not be alleged that Russia had attacked, or was likely to attack, any

* Turkey, III., 1878, No. 23, p. 11.

one of the British interests of which she had been warned—since it was not even thought worth while to move up the fleets to defend the waterway of the Straits—it was necessary for the Government to take up some new ground on which to rest a vote for warlike preparations. Accordingly it was now discovered, apparently for the first time, that the British interests which had been defined in May were by no means the only interests which might induce the Queen's Government to interfere. Suddenly the Cabinet had opened its eyes to the fact that the Russian terms of peace, although not touching any one of those interests, would be very damaging to the interests of Turkey. The whole sentiment and feeling of the Government had all along been in favour of the good old doctrine that the interests of Turkey were the interests of England. They had been obliged to suppress this sentiment, and even to declare the opposite, by the revolt of public feeling in the autumn of 1876. But a reaction had now begun. The triumphant success of the Czar had evoked, as it was quite sure to do, that fear and dislike of Russia which is a predominant feeling among large sections of the British people. The Cabinet, or a portion of it, had been watching for this awakening as men watch for the morning. Advantage might be taken of it. That desire to uphold the Turks, which hitherto had been whispered only to the ear in closets, or worked

only through unacknowledged and unofficial agencies, might now be proclaimed on the house-tops. Accordingly, the Chancellor of the Exchequer dissected the Russian terms of peace, and pointed out all the dangers they involved. In particular he attacked the formation of a Bulgarian Province. He referred to the fact that it crossed the Balkans and would extend probably to the Ægean. Now there was one good objection to such a Bulgaria, namely, that it might deal unjustly with the interests of the Greek race—one important section of the Christian populations whose redemption was drawing nigh. But this was not the objection felt by the English Minister, and pointed out by him to the House of Commons. It was the effect of the new Bulgaria, not on any section of the subject populations, but on Turkey, that he dwelt exclusively. It amounted, he said, to a dismemberment of Turkey. So again of the war indemnity. In regard to this, also, he pointed out how it might be worked to the detriment of the Ottoman Empire. Against all these results it might be necessary for England to contend in the coming Congress—and it was useless to contend in Congress, unless she was also prepared to contend in arms. The Government, therefore, desired to enter into Congress "armed with the strength of an united nation"—having for its great end and aim to support Turkey, and to save her from dismemberment.

If it had been the desire of the British Minister to second the most selfish designs imputed to Russia, he could not have made for that purpose a more effective speech. It seemed to identify her action and her policy with the interests and the feelings of the whole subject races in the East of Europe. It tended to identify the action of England with everything which they detested. Those races might be jealous of each other; but they were at least united in the desire to get rid of the Government of Turkey. The speech of the British Minister represented England as desirous, above all things, of preventing this great deliverance. Russia therefore was held up to them once more as the only Power which had the will and the strength to secure it. Such an exhibition of the relative position of the two countries was worth a great deal more to Russia than an additional army of 100,000 men.

Then let us look at this speech from another point of view, quite as important and quite as serious. Let us look at it in its relation not only to good policy, but to honour and good faith. Was it a new thing to the English Cabinet that Russia would demand the establishment of a Bulgarian Province stretching across the Balkans, and extending far down into the district of Salonica? No, the Queen's Government had known this since the 14th of June, 1877.*

* Turkey, XV., 1878, No. 6, p. 6.

England's own Plenipotentiaries at the Conference at Constantinople had demanded the establishment of a Bulgaria which included both sides of the Balkans. Russia had told them that this would be her demand before she crossed the Danube. The English Cabinet knew very well that this demand was not likely to be departed from after Turkey had been defeated in a bloody contest to prevent it. For seven long months not one word of remonstrance or even of objection had been intimated to Russia in reply. More than this—the confidential communication made by Count Schouvalow to the Foreign Secretary on the 8th of June, 1877, and the personal but formal communications from the Emperor of Russia, which passed through Colonel Wellesley in the end of July, 1877, had not only made this intimation, but had even explained in some detail the very terms which were now being demanded from Turkey in January, 1878. These had been for many months in the possession of the Government. Yet at this critical moment they were concealed from Parliament. The daily telegrams from Mr. Layard repeating the excited reports of a panic-stricken city were served up, hot and hot, to the two Houses of Parliament to fan the excitement and intensify the passions of the hour. But the evidence which would have shown the long silence of the Government when it was in full possession of Russia's intentions—all this was carefully kept back, till at last, when it was produced, it failed, in

the prevailing excitement, to attract attention.* If it had been produced at the opening of the Session it would have served to allay irritation and to prevent alarm. It would have shown that Russia was adhering strictly to intentions long announced and long tacitly acquiesced in. When the Chancellor of the Exchequer expatiated on the dangers involved in the indemnity, and pointed to the possibility of part of it, or the whole of it, being taken in the shape of territorial cession, no member of the House of Commons could have supposed that the Minister had for months been in possession of a document explaining that Russia would probably limit her demand for territorial cession to the restoration of her old Bessarabian frontier, and to the cession "of a certain portion of Asia Minor," including the district of Batoum. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his speech of the 28th of January, went the length of saying, "On this subject (territorial cession) I have no information to guide me." The Ministry had a right to disbelieve the Emperor if they saw cause to do so. Or they might expect him to be more exacting now that he had achieved such victories. But they had no right to conceal from

* The Paper containing the Memorandum of Colonel Wellesley is No. 9 of the Session: whilst that containing the communications of June, 1878, through Count Schouvalow, is No. 15. Thus Papers much less important were allowed a long precedence.

Parliament at such a moment the assurances which had actually been given, and which, as it turned out, were fairly adhered to by the Russian Government. The "portion of Asia Minor" had never been defined, except by the explanation that it would include Batoum. But this was the very cession of which there was the greatest jealousy in England. Parliament did not then know, and Parliament was not told, that the intentions of Russia in respect to this port on the Euxine had been frankly intimated long ago, and that this intimation had been received by the Queen's Government with silent acquiescence.

Lastly, let us look for a moment at the time when this vote for six millions was asked as a warlike demonstration. If it had been intended to resist the establishment of autonomous provinces in Turkey as equivalent to her dismemberment, the necessity of taking military precautions against such a result might have been taken with advantage just a little earlier. Before the Russians crossed the Danube—or after they had crossed it, when they were held at bay for months before the earthworks of Plevna—when Mouktar Pasha seemed to be triumphant in Asia—such a policy might have had some chance of at least a temporary success. It is possible even that at a much later period it might have been attended with some result. If, when Plevna fell, active measures had been taken to save the Turks, their fate might have been at least post-

poned. There is no saying what they might not have done under the guidance of English officers in opposing the passage of the Balkans. But it was twelve days after the fall of Plevna before it was determined even to call Parliament together. Then when Parliament was summoned it was not called at once, but for a date three weeks later. Then, when it actually met, the Government had nothing to propose. Ten days before that time they heard that Sofia had fallen, and that Adrianople was to be abandoned. The truth is that the rapidity of the Russian advance, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer candidly confessed, "had been enough to take their breath away." It took away more than their breath ; it took away their common sense. The result was that this new policy of preventing the dismemberment of Turkey was announced at a moment when Turkey was prostrate at the feet of her foe, and when an army of 200,000 men were at the gates—the undefended gates—of Constantinople. The inadequacy, too, of the proposed preparations, even when they were made, ought not to escape remark. If Turkey was to be saved from being cut up into autonomous or tributary provinces, and if Russia was to be prevented from taking back her Bessarabian frontier, or acquiring a new frontier in Asia Minor, which was to include Kars and Batoum, a vote of six millions represented a puny effort indeed for the attainment of such results.

Let us now return to the progress of events. The Turkish Plenipotentiaries, for the conclusion of an armistice, and for the acceptance of the bases of peace, left Constantinople on the 14th January. But they did not reach the Russian headquarters till the 21st. More than another week elapsed, and on the 29th of January Mr. Layard telegraphed to his Government, that although the Porte had, on the 23rd, sent full powers and instant orders to accept the bases of peace as submitted to them by the Grand Duke, nothing had as yet been heard from them.* The drift of this telegram, of course, was to throw the blame of intentional delay upon the Russians. It appears, however, from a previous telegram of the 27th, that at first, at all events, the Turkish Plenipotentiaries had played the usual game of the diplomatists of the Porte—the game of delay. Like the Government of England, they objected to the first article of the Russian bases relating to Bulgaria, and to the second part of the fourth article respecting reforms in the Turkish provinces.† It was only under the last and latest instructions of the Porte, issued on the 23rd, that the Plenipotentiaries were authorised to accept the whole. Still nothing had been heard of the result. In the meantime the Russians were advancing on Constantinople, as Mr. Layard reported on the 28th: "in two, or, perhaps, three columns in

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* Turkey, IV., 1878. † Turkey, V., No. 4, p. 1.

great force."* The English Cabinet became more and more uneasy in sympathy with the Porte. On the 29th the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg was desired to inquire the cause of the delay. But Prince Gortchakow could not explain. This was on the 30th of January.† Under these circumstances the anxieties of Her Majesty's Government relieved themselves by a renewed intimation to Russia that England could not recognise any treaty concluded between Russia and Turkey alone, in so far as it might modify European treaties, or affect general interests.‡ To this declaration Prince Gortchakow at once replied that to effect an armistice certain bases of peace were necessary, but they were only to be considered as preliminaries and not definitive as regarded Europe. "His Highness stated categorically, that questions bearing on European interests will be concerted with European Powers, and he had given Her Majesty's Government clear and positive assurances to this effect."§

On the day following, the 31st of January, the Russian Government further intimated that it had abandoned that Article in the Bases of Peace which referred to "an understanding between Russia and Turkey in regard to the Straits," and had no objection to suppress it altogether.‖

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* Ibid., No. 7, p. 2. † Ibid., No. 12. ‡ Ibid., No. 11.
§ Ibid., No. 14, p. 4. ‖ Ibid., No. 15.

It was constantly represented at this time that the continued advance of the Russians during these negotiations was hardly consistent with good faith. But the papers presented to Parliament do not bear out this imputation. On the 15th of January the Emperor of Russia had told the Sultan that "he could not consent to a suspension of military operations during the negotiations," and this had been communicated on the same day to the Cabinet of London.* And when the Turks did at last accept the whole terms offered to them, those terms provided for the complete occupation by the Russian army of the defences of the Capital. It was not till the 31st of January that the Protocols were actually signed at Adrianople, and orders were issued for the suspension of hostilities to all the armies, both in Europe and in Asia. It is, however, quite true that the Russian armies continued to advance after that date. But they did so, not in contravention of the armistice, but in fulfilment of its terms. On the 5th of February Mr. Layard telegraphed that the Russian forces were to occupy Tchataldja on that day, and on the 6th the final result of the campaign was announced by the Ambassador in the following terms :—"The Russians have occupied Tchataldja in considerable force. The Russian General insisted on the abandonment by the Turks of the Tchekenedje lines, as one of the condi-

* Turkey, III., No. 9, p. 8.

tions of the armistice, and the Turks have been compelled altogether to retire from them, leaving Constantinople quite undefended."*

It will be observed that the whole of these proceedings were in strict accordance with the openly declared intentions and with the assurances of the Emperor of Russia as announced to the Queen's Government when they had urged him not to occupy Constantinople. He distinctly declined to give any promise on the subject, except one—that he would not occupy the Turkish Capital for the mere sake of military honour, but only in the case of being compelled to do so by the march of events. It would, however, have been the height of imprudence if he had halted before securing the defences of the Capital. Three considerations were conclusive against such a course. In the first place, the experience of Plevna had shown what a power of resistance lay in fortified positions armed with modern weapons of precision. In the second place, a like experience had shown the infinite resources of Turkey in the arts of diplomatic fence. In the third place, indications were not wanting that the Cabinet of London were as ready as ever, at any moment, to adopt the interests of Turkey as identified with the interests of England. Under those circumstances it was the policy and the duty of the Russian Government to take effective advantage

* Turkey VII., 1878, No. 11, p. 3.

of the brilliant military successes which had rewarded its arms after the fall of Plevna. Whether the motives and aims of Russia were as purely selfish as her enemies asserted them to be, or whether they were mixed in as fine and just proportions as her own diplomatists had described them, the course then imposed upon her was the same. Nothing short of a position placing Constantinople at the mercy of her army could secure Russia from the danger of great military embarrassment, and of a great political defeat.

Accordingly, the armistice not only secured to Russia the power of occupying Constantinople at any moment, but it placed in the hands of her forces almost all Bulgaria, Roumelia, and Thrace, up to the lines of Constantinople and Gallipoli. They occupied also Bourgas and Media on the Black Sea.

All this having been successfully accomplished by Russia, the English Government resumed its fitful and feeble action in a manner involving the utmost danger to the interests of the Turks, and serving no other purpose, as regarded the interests of England, than that of showing useless and undignified irritation. Not the Fleet, but, as it was specially explained, a portion only of the Fleet, was again ordered to proceed to Constantinople. This was on the 8th of February. The pretext was that the object of the measure was to secure British life and property in case of tumults in the Capital. When in the Session of 1877

the Cabinet was blamed for not having occupied the waters of Constantinople in combination with the other European Powers, when Russia and Austria had invited them to do so for the purpose of compelling the Turks to adopt the reforms which the Powers had recommended, Lord Salisbury had replied that Fleets were in that position really powerless. They could do nothing but bombard Stamboul. This was by no means true of the time when that measure was proposed by the Powers. But it was perfectly true of the time when the measure of sending the English Fleet was now actually adopted by the Cabinet. At the beginning of the war the occupation of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles would have laid an effectual arrest on some of the most necessary measures of the Turkish Government for the recruitment and reinforcement of their army. It would have stopped the passage of troops from the Asiatic Provinces. But now, when Constantinople might be occupied at any time by the Russian Army, the British Fleet would have been absolutely helpless to prevent it. Accordingly the Russian Government at once replied that this step obliged them, on their side, to consider the means of protecting—not British or Russian subjects only, but all Christians, and in order to obtain this result to contemplate the entry of a portion of their troops into Constantinople. The Foreign Secretary, of course,

protested that the two measures were entirely different in their nature. But, whether different or not, it cannot be denied that it was precisely such a step as Russia would have desired if she had wished an excuse to occupy Constantinople. The Turks were therefore in great alarm. They protested against it; and declared that its ostensible excuse had no foundation in fact, as the Government of the Porte was perfectly competent to maintain order in the Capital. It served, however, for the moment, to satisfy in some little degree the irritation of the many sections of English political society who longed to see their country involved in a war with Russia in defence of Turkey. Most fortunately Russia, on reflection, saw that no good purpose would be gained by taking any serious notice of the presence of the English Fleet. She did, however, actually advance her troops beyond the lines fixed by the armistice, and continued to hold this advanced position in spite of the remonstrances of the British Government. In a few days the war party in England were disgusted by finding that, as usual, the Cabinet had compromised its attitude of menace by entering into a new understanding with the Government of Russia. Prince Gortchakow agreed to assure the Cabinet of London that the Russian forces had no intention of occupying the Peninsula of Gallipoli, or the lines of Bulair. In return for this assurance the Foreign Secretary promised that England would not land troops at any

point on the European side of the Straits, and with effusive generosity added, that he would give the same assurance as to the Asiatic side if Russia would give a corresponding assurance on her part.* This was at once agreed to by Prince Gortchakow, and so the matter ended.

And now we come to a new episode in this strange and eventful history, which must be told in another chapter.

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* Turkey, XVII., No. 2, p. 1.

CHAPTER XII.

NEGOTIATIONS FOR A CONGRESS.

WHEN men have been weak and vacillating on great questions they are apt to take revenge upon themselves and others by being obstinate on small points. Perhaps there has never been a more signal illustration of this tendency than in the transactions which followed in respect to the proposed Congress for the final establishment of peace.

The greater part of the month of February was occupied by those negotiations between Russia and Turkey, which converted the bases signed at Adrianople into the Preliminary Treaty of Peace, which was signed at San Stefano on the 3rd of March. In the meantime, however, on the 4th of February, the Austria-Hungarian Government had invited the Government of the Queen to an "International Conference" to be held at Vienna. This invitation was immediately accepted.* On the 7th the Austria-Hungarian Government amended its proposal by substituting a Congress for a Conference, and Berlin for Vienna

* Turkey, XXIV., No. 1.

as the place of meeting. It was explained that at the Congress the Powers should be represented by their Prime Ministers. On the following day this amended proposal was also accepted by the Queen's Government, and on this occasion the Foreign Secretary explained it to be the opinion of Her Majesty's Government "that it would be desirable to have it understood, in the first place, that all questions dealt with in the Treaty of Peace between Russia and Turkey should be considered as subjects to be discussed in the Congress, and that no alteration in the condition of things previously established by Treaty should be acknowledged as valid until it has received the assent of the Powers."*

As this sentence is the first beginning of a dispute in which the British Government chose to maintain an inflexible obstinacy, and which went very near to prevent any Congress being held at all, it is worth while to look at it somewhat carefully. And in order to do so it is necessary, in the first place, to recollect what is the real nature of a Congress such as that which was now proposed. It is not a Court of Justice, nor is it even a Court of Arbitration. It is not a Court with any coercive jurisdiction, or a Court in which any matter can be conclusively settled by vote, or by majority. It is essentially a Court of Conciliation—an assembly

* Ibid., No. 5, p. 3.

in which an endeavour is made to settle high matters in dispute by discussion and mutual concession. On the other hand, it is not less necessary to recollect what was the real nature of the Treaty which was then being drawn up between the two late belligerents. It was the result of a war between two independent Powers, each perfectly entitled to wage that war, and to obtain from it such results as its success might warrant. Those results must necessarily alter the previous *status quo*. Other Powers had of course a right to object to any one of these results if they thought it their interest to do so. But it was an extravagant assertion of that right to maintain that there was no alteration whatever of the previous *status quo* which the belligerents were competent to settle between themselves. At all events, it was an extravagant expectation that the successful belligerent would admit this doctrine expressly, and without any limitation. It was still more extravagant to suppose that the successful belligerent would admit not only the right of the other Powers to object to everything it had obtained by war, but to declare also its own willingness to give way to such objection if that should be the result of discussion. There were obviously some stipulations enforced by the victorious Power upon the defeated Power, which the victor had an absolute right to stand to against all objectors, and at any cost. For example, Russia had not secured her victory

without allies. Those allies were to have some reward in the victory they had helped to secure. It touched Russia's honour that the stipulations which affected them should not be negatived in any Congress. Yet these stipulations did in a very important matter affect the previous *status quo* as it had been established by European Treaties. There was nothing unusual or unnatural in this. Treaties always are affected by the result of war. The Powers which looked on whilst the contest was being fought out between Russia and Turkey knew perfectly well that in its result it must affect largely the previous condition of things. To assert their right, therefore, after it was over, to set aside the whole of these results if it pleased them to do so, was to assert an abstract proposition which was of no theoretical value, and which in a practical point of view was unreasonable and even absurd. But to demand from Russia an assent to the meeting of the Congress under a form which not only would have implied her assent to that abstract proposition, but would have implied her willingness to this claim being carried into operation, was a demand which Russia could not rationally be expected to concede. Yet this was the demand which the English Cabinet was pleased to make, and to persist in with verbose tenacity for weeks together. Not one of the other Powers supported the Government of the Queen in this demand. Russia reso-

lutely refused to accept the Congress under any form of words which would have carried her assent to the proposition that any other Power, or all Europe combined, could replace matters in the East of Europe exactly as they had been before she had sacrificed so much blood and so much treasure to amend them. She did not deny or dispute the right of the other Powers to "discuss" what they pleased. The Treaty, and the whole Treaty, would be laid before the Congress. But allowing other Powers to discuss the whole and every part of the Treaty was a very different thing from admitting beforehand that she considered everything without exception as open to discussion. Such an admission might be held to imply that Russia bound herself to accept the results of that discussion even on points most really affecting her interests and her honour.

The Austria-Hungarian Government took the reasonable view of this dispute, when it said, in commenting on the English demand, "The Austrian Government maintains that all the stipulations which affect European interests ought to be discussed at the Congress, and that Europe will decide upon them; but as Prince Gortchakow has declared to Austria that it was the Congress which would decide what are the Preliminaries of Peace which affect the interests of Europe, and that all the points which were found to be of European interest would be submitted to its deliberation, and could not be considered

as valid until they obtain the assent of all the Powers; it appears to Austria that the object of the English Declaration—that is to say, the reservation of full liberty of action, a point of view which Austria entirely shares—is thereby attained; and Count Andrassy thinks that under these circumstances it is neither for the interest of England nor of Austria to raise difficulties in regard to this question."*

The truth evidently is, that the obstinacy of the English Cabinet on this question of form arose out of its position at home. Its supporters in Parliament and in the Press had become thoroughly disgusted and alarmed by the results of its vacillation. It was absolutely necessary to stick to something. An ambiguous formula which had a plausible sound was better than any other for the purpose. It involved no danger of immediate action, either in one direction or another. It was something on which a divided Cabinet could agree, and it could be easily manipulated so as to convey the impression of great resolution. An excellent example of this use of ambiguous words is to be found in the form in which the demand of the Cabinet of London was expressed in a despatch to Sir H. Elliot, on the 13th of March:—"Her Majesty's Government desire to state that they must distinctly understand before they enter into Congress that every article in the

* Ibid., No. 9, p. 5.

Treaty between Russia and Turkey will be placed before the Congress—not necessarily for acceptance, but in order that it may be considered what articles require acceptance or concurrence by the several Powers, and what do not."* In this formula the words "not necessarily for acceptance" have a very resolute air. They seem to say to Russia, "Don't suppose that acceptance of any one of your articles will be a matter of course. Don't suppose that there is even any part of your Treaty which you can bring for mere registration. The whole and every part must be open to our decision." Accordingly, this was the defiant sense and tone in which these words were accepted and explained with shouts of triumph by supporters of the Government. The real truth was that no such bravery was intended. What it really meant was, "We don't pretend that every part of your Treaty needs our acceptance at all. But other parts do: and in order to discriminate, we must see and discuss the whole." This was a most reasonable proposition, and if this had been said in plain words, there would have been no dispute at all. Russia never pretended to keep back any part of the Treaty from sight, or from such discussion as others might choose to raise. But "accepting discussion" was an ambiguous phrase which might mean accepting the results of discussion. In this sense she could

* Ibid., No. 8, p. 4.

not admit it. She would only pledge herself to "accept discussion on those portions of the Treaty which affected European interests." "The liberty which she did not dispute to others, Russia claimed for herself. It would be to restrict this liberty, if alone, among all the Powers, Russia contracted a preliminary engagement."*

This frivolous dispute lasted the whole of March. At last, on the 26th, the Russian Ambassador defined the position of his Government to be as follows:—"It leaves to the other Powers the liberty of raising such questions at the Congress as they may think it fit to discuss, and reserves to itself the liberty of accepting or not accepting the discussion of these questions."†

This final reply of Russia was received on the 27th of March; and on the same day the Foreign Secretary resigned his office. He did so on account of decisions come to by the Cabinet, some of which were soon revealed, but in regard to others of which there is a direct conflict of testimony between Lord Derby and his former colleagues. What is certain is that these decisions looked in the direction of warlike preparations against Russia: the calling out of the Reserves at home—the novel employment of Indian troops in European operations—and the occupation of Cyprus, if not also of some part of the Syrian coast.

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* Ibid., No. 15, p. 7. † Ibid., No. 19, p. 9.

It is not my intention here to enter upon the constitutional argument which was raised by the announcement of the intention of the Government to bring some 7000 men of the Indian army, without the previous consent of Parliament, to take part in military operations in Europe. That it was a novelty is admitted. That there is a strong presumption under our Constitutional system against all measures of novelty, except in cases of extreme necessity, cannot be denied. On the other hand, in any contest involving the highest issues of national safety, the Crown could not wisely be refused the right of using its Indian army. Early in the present century it was used in a contest which was virtually European, when Abercromby's Expedition was sent to Egypt. Moreover it is to be recollected that as both Russia and England are Asiatic as well as European Powers, there can be no absolute separation between Asiatic and European operations in the event of a war between them. Each Power would naturally use both European and Asiatic troops wherever it may be convenient to do so. In the present case the measure must be viewed with reference to the fact that it was a time of actual peace, and with no immediate prospect of war, that Parliament was sitting, and that no sufficient reason was ever alleged for the secrecy which was maintained.

The conduct of the Government, however, in

this matter must be mainly judged by the purpose which was really in view. If it was seriously contemplated to count on 7000 Indian troops as a competent reinforcement of the British Army with a view to military operations against the Russian forces in complete possession of the Balkan Peninsula, it may safely be left to the judgment of later times. In all probability it had no more definite purpose than to satisfy that clamour and craving for warlike resolutions which had alternately been fomented and mortified by the fitful and abortive policy of the Government, and which found a temporary satisfaction in the occupation of Cyprus. It cannot be doubted that the disclosures of Lord Derby, though discredited by his remaining colleagues, reveal a good deal of the atmosphere in which this movement was conceived. The best thing that can be said of it is that it pleased the Indian Army, and may have stimulated its military spirit. Against this benefit, however, if it really accrued, there are heavy counter weights of which this is not the place to estimate the value. It is enough to say here that the judgment to be passed upon all the military preparations of the Government must depend on the wisdom of the policy which they were intended to support. What that policy had been up to this date has been traced in the previous chapters. What it still continued to be and what were the results to which it led, remain for us yet to follow.

We have seen that the very first of the Russian conditions of peace was the establishment of a new Province of Bulgaria. We have seen, also, that this was the very first condition which the English Minister specified to the House of Commons on the 28th of January as a source of danger and a subject of alarm. He did not say that it would be a danger to British interests, as these had been defined on the 6th of May, 1877. Still less did he say that it would be a danger to the population. What he did say was that it would be a danger to the Porte. It was an approach to the dismemberment of Turkey. For many months—since the outbreak of the war—the original "diapason" of the "integrity and independence" of Turkey had been professedly abandoned. Instead of that venerable formula, there had been substituted the new diapason of "British interests." But the first fundamental note had, in reality, never been silenced in the ears or in the hearts of the Queen's Government. Once more the old drone was sounded. The new Bulgaria, it was only too apparent, could not be easily reconciled either with the integrity or independence of the Ottoman Empire in Europe. It was further explained to the House of Commons that the danger arose especially from the great size and geographical position of the new Province. It was not at that time absolutely known what its boundaries were to be. But Russia had long ago given the alarming

intimation that these boundaries would not be less than those which had been assigned to the new Province at the Conference of Constantinople. Mr. Layard had already telegraphed, referring his Government to the Protocols of that Conference, as indicating the probable extent of the Russian demand. It did not need all the sagacity of the British Ambassador to be sure that the extent which all Europe had agreed upon as necessary for the new Bulgaria before the war, was not likely to be less than the extent with which Russia would be content now that she had triumphed in a bloody contest. The new Bulgaria would be found to extend into the district of Salonica. It would not embrace that town; but it could scarcely be doubted that at some other point it would reach the Ægean.

This reference by Mr. Layard to the Conference of Constantinople, and the repetition of it to Parliament by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, recalls us to that happy time when England had made a show of union with the other Powers of Europe; when she had held a Preliminary Conference with them, from which the Turks were excluded; when the Russian Embassy had been the place selected for this dictatorial assembly; and when the British Plenipotentiary and the Russian Ambassador were, like twin stars in the firmament of diplomacy, never seen except in continual apposition.

Let us then accept the reference of Mr. Layard

and of Sir Stafford Northcote, and let us trace the history of this new Province of Bulgaria.

When the Cabinet of London had first suggested the idea of a Conference of the Powers, it had also suggested the basis of a settlement. The first and most important item in the basis was that Bulgaria should be granted "Administrative Autonomy" under the guarantee of the Powers. No geographical description was given of this new Province, and no political definition was given of this new Constitution. These were the details to be filled in by the work of the proposed Conference. General explanations, however, were given, which made it plain that the new Province could not exclude those districts south of the Balkan, in which the massacres had occurred; and that "autonomous administration" must greatly limit if not exclude that direct government by the Sultan which had been so long and so grievously abused.

Accordingly, when the Preliminary Conference had done its work at the Russian Embassy, and when, on the 20th December, 1876,* its proposals were confidentially communicated to the Grand Vizier, the Turks found that the scheme of the Powers was one which would establish a new Province in the heart of their Empire in Europe—a Province not only stretching across the Balkans, but extending

* See ante, Chap. VII., vol. i., p. 319.

from the Danube to a point far south in the district of Salonica. It did not actually touch the Ægean, but it left between its southern boundary and the Mediterranean coast only a narrow strip of territory in which Turkey might still misgovern or ravage as before. It is true that this Province was to be subdivided into two "Vilayets" or Administrative Districts, each with a Governor of its own. But these Vilayets, thus nominally separated, were to be united by common privileges of the most important kind, and were to be separated from the rest of the Turkish Empire in Europe by large and semi-independent powers of administration. The Governors must be Christians. They might be subjects of the Porte; but they might also be foreigners. The Sultan was not to be free in his right of appointing those high officers. His selection was to be subject to the approval of the Powers. And when once appointed, they were irremovable by the Turkish Sovereign. They were to hold their office for a fixed term of years. They were to have the exclusive right of appointing all the subaltern officers of the new native militia, and the Porte had no right of appointing even the superior officers except in the case of more than a thousand men being concentrated in a single place. Moreover, this militia was to be organised under the superintendence of a Foreign International Commission, on the principle that officers, non-commissioned

officers and soldiers to the extent of from 2000 to 4000 men should be taken from European armies, who were to act as cadres.* The Sultan was not allowed to station his army in any part of the Province except in the fortresses and the chief towns. It was to be employed only in the defence of the frontier, and all operations in the interior of the Provinces were interdicted unless in the case of war, or in the case of the Governors calling for the troops. Quite as important as these stipulations, and quite as significant of the future, were the financial demands of the Conference on behalf of the new Bulgarian provinces. The Sultan was no longer free in the collection of the revenues, or in the imposition of taxes. A sum which was to be fixed by a Commission of Supervision, but which was not to exceed thirty per cent. of the revenue of the Province, was to be payable to the Imperial Treasury, for the wants of the central Government. The whole remainder of the revenue was to be appropriated to the internal needs of the Province. All these were indispensable conditions in the opinion of the Conference. Without them the abuses of Turkish administration could not be terminated, and the liberties of the Bulgarian populations could not be established. Moreover, these exceptional privileges and exceptional

* Turkey, XXIV., p. 167.

powers were to be secured by a European guarantee, whilst the inauguration and establishment of this separate Constitution was to be under the protection, for a time, of foreign troops, and under the guidance of an International Commission.*

Such was the general nature of the proposals which the Turks found cut and dry for their acceptance when the doors of the Russian Embassy were opened to admit them at the close of the Preliminary Conferences. Against these proposals the Ministers of the Porte resolutely set their face, and from the Turkish point of view they were quite right. They were absolutely incompatible with any reality, or even with any show of independence as belonging to the Sultan. They would have established an *imperium in imperio* in the heart of his dominions. They were not only a step, but a very long step towards the independence, not of Turkey, but of the new province. The Porte had ample experience of the inevitable results of such special privileges. It was by similar steps that Wallachia and Moldavia and Servia had at various dates worked their way, first to the position of vassal Principalities, then to the expulsion of the Turkish garrisons, and to a position of virtual independence, and had now too clearly assumed the position of hostile States. The Turks were too sharp to be deceived; and the expecta-

* Turkey, II., 1877, p. 163–4–5.

tion that they would admit such terms, except under the determined pressure of united Europe, was an expectation childish in the extreme. In the sittings of the Conference which succeeded, the Turkish Plenipotentiaries had fought every inch of ground—and they fought it with arguments which, from their point of view, were of undeniable force. They astutely observed that the limitation of the Sultan to the enjoyment of a fixed sum out of the Provincial Revenue, was virtually the restriction of the right of that Sovereign to the receipt of a Tribute. They argued that if the proposal of the Conference was not this avowedly, it was this in reality; and would inevitably come to it in form as well as in substance. They objected to the geographical expansion given to the Province of Bulgaria. They pointed out that the Province known to them by this name lay wholly to the north of the Balkans. They objected to the constitution of a Province entirely new, which, though divided into two Vilayets, was specially intended to include, as far as possible, all the Bulgarians in European Turkey. The very aim of such a scheme was incompatible with maintaining the integrity of Turkey, whose Empire was, and always had been, an Empire over many nationalities. Least of all could the Sultan consent to give especial reward to that one nationality which (as the Turks alleged) had been specially favoured, and had only been incited to rebellion by

foreign intrigue. The proposal to single out this one nationality because of the very fact of its consanguinity or sympathy with the hereditary enemy of Turkey, and to cut across all the established divisions of Turkish administration in order to create a new Province for this favoured population, was a proposal not only involving everything which could be most offensive to Turkey, but involving everything which could be most dangerous to her Empire.

It was in the face of all these considerations, and in defiance of all these arguments, that England and the other Powers persisted in their demand for this new Bulgaria. At the meeting of the Conference which was held on the 8th of January, 1877, the Italian Plenipotentiary was empowered by his colleagues to explain and to enforce the reasons of their demand. In that explanation the Cabinet of London was put forward as the main agent in the Bulgarian proposal. "The principal motives for the initiative of her Britannic Majesty's Government are found in the deeds that had taken place in the localities situated outside the vilayet of the Danube: that from that time no abstraction could be made from the southern slope of the Balkans: that the measures on which they agreed are thus brought to extend over all, or parts of, the vilayets of the Danube, of Sofia, of Prizrond, of Monastir, of Adrianople, and of Salonica." Such was the deliberate decision of the European Powers as to the geographical ex-

tension which ought to be given to the new Province of Bulgaria, with its special privileges and its special political position.

When the Plenipotentiaries of the European Powers had left Constantinople, "bag and baggage," and when the Turks had again defied them by the indignant rejection of the Protocol of London, we have seen that the British Government had warned the Turks that Russia would be left alone to deal with them, and that for the war which then became inevitable the Porte was alone responsible.

When that war was as yet only beginning, and before the Russians had crossed the Danube, we have seen that the Emperor of Russia had explained to England that he must continue to demand the establishment of a Bulgarian Province embracing both slopes of the Balkans, and that if compelled to fight his way to Constantinople, he might have to insist on terms even somewhat larger than those which had been offered to the Turks by the Conference.

Under these circumstances the true policy of England and of the other Powers of Europe was not to be mistaken. That policy was to show no hostility to those terms which they had themselves already demanded in the interests of the subject-populations —to show no hostility even to such extension of those terms as were the natural and inevitable consequences of the war, but carefully to separate

between these and any needless adjuncts or additions, such as could fairly be charged with being conceived in the exclusive interests of Russia. It is quite true that the very same terms which had been asked by all the Powers united, necessarily acquired a new meaning when enforced by Russia alone. But this was the inevitable effect of having allowed Russia to be the solitary champion of a common cause. It was an evil which could only be aggravated by England even seeming to go back on her own footsteps, and objecting to the Russian terms, not in the interests of Europe, nor in the interests of the Christian populations, but in the interests of the Turks. Such a course could have no other effect than that of confirming the subject-populations in the belief that Russia was their only friend, that England not only cared for nothing but her own selfish interests, but had returned to the folly of identifying these interests with the interests of the Porte.

If, therefore, on the 28th of January, when the English Ministry asked Parliament to enable them to go into Congress "armed with the authority of a united nation," they had declared that they would gladly support any proposition which was really necessary to secure the well-being of the subject-populations of Turkey, and that they would oppose only such conditions of the approaching peace as might tend to establish an exclusive protectorate on the part of Russia, they would have stood on solid

ground, and would have placed their country in the position of seeking nothing but the permanent interests of liberty and of peace.

It pleased the Queen's Government to make no such announcement ; but, on the contrary, to intimate that the size and the privileges of the new Bulgaria were the special objects of their hostility, and to intimate farther that they had reverted to the policy of saving Turkey as far as they could from the consequences of her crushing defeat.

With what perseverance this suicidal policy was pursued, we shall now still farther trace.

The Russian basis for an armistice and a peace which had been communicated to England on the 25th of January, 1878—was not fully drawn out into the form of Treaty till the end of February, and was only signed at San Stefano on the 3rd of March. It bore on the face of it that it was only a "Preliminary Treaty" between the belligerents, thus formally admitting that the final pacification of the East of Europe must be matter of Conference with the other Powers.

Let us now go at once to Art. VI. of this Preliminary Treaty which provided for the extent and for the constitution of the new Bulgaria.

Its extent corresponded generally with that indicated by Mr. Layard in the telegram quoted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the 28th of January. It did enlarge the boundaries which had

been traced by the Conference of Constantinople. But the enlargement was by no means very great. That enlargement, however, included a portion of the coast line of the Ægean. It left out Salonica and Adrianople, passing both of them to the north. Speaking generally, the Bulgaria of the Conference had extended from the Danube to within a short distance of the Mediterranean. The Bulgaria of the Preliminary Treaty extended from the Danube to the sea-shore, and gave a maritime outlet on the Mediterranean to the new Province.

The new Bulgaria, moreover, was to have something more solid and definite than Administrative Autonomy. It was to be erected into a tributary Principality with a Christian government and a national militia.

By Art. VII. the Prince was to be freely elected by the people and confirmed by the Porte with the assent (not of Russia) but of all the European Powers. No member of the reigning families of the great European Powers was to be eligible.

On the other hand, by the same Article, Russia claimed for herself special privileges in establishing, and giving their first impulse and direction to the new institutions. An assembly of Bulgarian Notables was to draw up the organisation of the future administration, and this was to be done "under the superintendence of a Russian Commissioner." Moreover, an Imperial

Russian Commissioner was to be charged for a period of two years with the duties and the powers of introducing and superintending the new system. At the end of the first year two other European Powers might associate special delegates with the Russian Commissioner. But this could only be done if an understanding had been established "between Russia, the Porte, and the Cabinets of Europe." Apparently, therefore, it would have been in the power of Russia to put a veto even on this degree of European influence. It was specially explained that this stipulation was drawn in conformity with the precedents established in 1830, after the peace of Adrianople, in respect to the Danubian Principalities. There was at least no deception here. It is well known that up to the Crimean war Russia had the exclusive right of protectorate over the Danubian Principalities. Russia might seek, but she could hardly expect that Europe would consent to give to her a similar exclusive protectorate over the new Bulgaria.

By Art. VIII. the Ottoman army was no longer to remain in Bulgaria, and all the ancient fortresses were to be razed. Until the new Militia should be organised, which was to be done by agreement between Russia and the Porte, the Russians were to continue in occupation with an army of 50,000 men.

By Art. IX. the amount of tribute was to be settled with the assent of the European Powers.

By Art. X. the Porte was to have the right of sending by fixed routes its regular troops through the Principality to the remaining Turkish Provinces which lay to the West.

Without going one step farther into the Treaty of San Stefano, than suffices to make us acquainted with these Articles touching the new Province of Bulgaria, it is manifest at a glance that it was perfectly easy to object to several of their provisions without incurring the odium, and without committing the impolicy of opposing the interests of the subject-populations, and without identifying the objections of England with a desire to support the Turks. The articles of San Stefano looked in two directions, which, if not wholly opposite to each other, were at least completely different. They provided, in the first place, more effectual securities for the Christian populations than could have been obtained previous to the war. They provided, in the second place, for very large and predominant influence over these populations on the part of Russia. Moreover, the stipulations which belonged to this second object, seemed to be not accidental, but deliberate. If there had been no provision at all in the Treaty of San Stefano for any association whatever of the other Powers, it would have been less objectionable in this respect than it actually was. Russia might fairly and consistently have said that in the Preliminary Treaty between herself and

Turkey it was not her business' to make any provision in the interest of the other Powers. She might have said, and said with truth, that it remained for them to make such demands as they pleased in their own interest, and that this work must be left to the Powers themselves, when, in Congress assembled, it would become their duty to consider a Treaty which was to be not preliminary but definitive. Russia certainly owed nothing even in the shape of courtesy to the English Cabinet. The language of Ministers, and of the whole Ministerial press, was the language of violent suspicion, of hostility, and occasionally almost of insult. She had a perfect right to frame her own Preliminary Treaty, on the principle that it should provide for her own demands, and for nothing more. If Russia had taken this ground, there would have been no cause for jealousy or even for suspicion in the stipulations which gave her powers of protectorate which were apparently exclusive. In that case they would have been avowedly exclusive only until the other Powers had made their demand to be equally associated. But, unfortunately, this was not the principle on which the Treaty was actually framed. It did not abstain altogether from stipulations affecting to represent the interests and the rights of the other Powers. It contained, on the contrary, as we have just seen, several stipulations in great detail, which did affect to represent those interests and

those rights, but which manifestly did so in a manner most unsatisfactory and incomplete.

There could not possibly have been a position of affairs lending itself more favourably for the English Government. They had nothing to do but to draw firmly and distinctly the line between stipulations in the interest of the subject-populations of Turkey, and stipulations in the interest of Russia alone. They had nothing to do but to take their stand upon that line, and to say that every provision lying on one side of it they would heartily support, and every provision lying on the other side of it they would require to be amended. By pursuing this course they would have put themselves in harmony with the cause of justice, liberty, and humanity—with the inevitable tendency of events in the East of Europe—and with the true honour and interest of England.

On the other hand, if this dividing line between the two kinds of stipulation in the Treaty of San Stefano were not respected, if indiscriminate hostility were shown to everything which Russia had done, and to everything which Russia had demanded, there could be no possible result but dishonour and defeat. In respect to honour, it was discreditable to range England on the side of Turkey against the subject-populations. In respect to policy it was most inexpedient to confirm and intensify Russian influence by letting those populations see that they

could trust to nothing else. Surely these considerations hardly belong to the region of mere opinion. They come under the category of axioms and inevitable deductions. Yet over all these considerations, involving as they did both the honour and the interests of England, passion and prejudice were suffered to prevail. The friends of Turkey have been accustomed to say that their opponents were swayed by "sentiment." And so they were. In the region of sentiment lies the home of the highest political truth. But it is equally true that in the same region are to be found the dens of every political folly. Sentiment inspired the conduct and the language of the friends of Turkey, quite as much as it inspired the conduct of the language of those who denounced the Pashas. The only difference was that in the one case the ruling sentiment was in harmony with justice and with the real interests of Europe, whilst in the other it was opposed to both.

Let us now see how this Turkish sentiment worked in practice, and what were the results to which it led.

We have seen that the Treaty of San Stefano was signed on the 3rd of March. It was not, however, officially communicated to the British Government till the 23rd of that month.* It probably

* Turkey, 1878. No. 22.

contributed to produce in the Cabinet some of those obscure and critical resolutions in the direction of warlike preparations which led to the resignation of Lord Derby on the 28th. Lord Salisbury replaced him as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and thus it fell to the lot of the British Plenipotentiary at the Conference of Constantinople to utter the first voice of England on the natural consequences which had now followed that memorable triumph of Turkish diplomacy.

Within a few days of his accession to office the new Foreign Secretary had issued, on the 1st April, a Circular Despatch* to all the Ambassadors and Ministers of England at the Courts of Europe, which, at least as regards its momentary effect, is one of the most memorable documents connected with the history of the Eastern Question. His predecessor in office had been occupied, as we have seen, for several weeks in the unprofitable dispute whether Russia would or would not agree before going into Congress, to declare that she admitted the whole and every part of the Treaty of San Stefano to be equally and unreservedly "subject to discussion." We have seen also that the final reply of Russia in this dispute was received on the very day of Lord Derby's resignation. It was a resolute refusal to be bound in the Congress by any previous declaration not exacted

* Turkey, XXV., 1878.

from other Powers. Under these circumstances there was no prospect of a Congress. The English demand had put a stop to it. This on the face of it was a heavy responsibility, and required justification and defence. Accordingly, the new Circular of the new Foreign Secretary was intended to give this explanation and to supply this defence.

It obviously fell naturally and necessarily in the way of an argument directed to this end, that it should examine the Treaty of San Stefano with a view to show that almost every stipulation in it did, more or less, affect European interests. In the conduct of such an argument it was perfectly fair to bring forward every conceivable objection to the stipulations of the Treaty. It was even fair to strain these objections to the utmost, and to put interpretations on the Treaty which were of doubtful validity. The putting forward of such objections, and of such interpretations, did not in any way commit the Government to maintain them if a Congress should, after all, be held. In that Congress these objections might be all successfully refuted, and the British Government was in no way bound to maintain them, if, as the result of discussion, such refutation could be given. But in the meantime they were fair arguments in support of the proposition that discussion of the whole Treaty was really required.

Viewed in this light, and restricted to this purpose, the Circular of Lord Salisbury was drawn up

with the skill of a good debater. The fundamental proposition which it put forward, and which it supported by an elaborate analysis, was the proposition that "every material stipulation which the Treaty of San Stefano contains involves a departure from the Treaty of 1856." It did not need the ability of Lord Salisbury to establish this conclusion. The Circular did establish it with superabundant force. Many of the objections which it urged against the Treaty of San Stefano were unquestionably sound. Others, though less valid, were fairly ancillary to the general contention. A few of them were founded on mistakes and on interpretations of the Treaty. But taken as a whole they represented with truth, if with some exaggeration, the various European interests which were affected more or less directly by the provisions of the Treaty of San Stefano. The only objection to them, in this point of view, is that the inference in support of which they were ranged in such formidable array was an inference which Russia had never disputed. She had never contended that in the Congress, England and the other Powers were to be precluded from discussing any and every stipulation, which in their opinion might affect the general interest of Europe. What she had refused to admit was that Russia could fairly be called upon to declare beforehand that she would hold every stipu-

lation in the Treaty to be "subject to discussion." This was a very different thing.

The effect of this Circular in England was very curious. It was taken not for what it was, and for what it professed to be—an argument in favour of free discussion. It was taken to be the announcement of conclusions which were to supersede discussion or at least to forestall it. It was taken to be the statement of objections which England would not only put forward, but to which she would inflexibly adhere. The whole and every bit of the Treaty of San Stefano was arraigned and condemned. All the sections of English society which desired to involve the country in war in support of the Turks were in a transport of delight. Editors reprinted the Circular *in extenso*, as the best leading article they could publish in exposition of their own views. It was exactly what "we" had always said. Here was a Foreign Minister, at last, who would assert the position of England, and put a stop to the aggressions of Russia. Perhaps the Government were not to blame for all this. Perhaps the Foreign Secretary himself was not wholly indifferent to the pleasure of writing a slashing Despatch which might obliterate some of the impressions made upon the friends of Turkey by certain passages in the life of the British Plenipotentiary at Constantinople, and by the *entente cordiale* with General Ignatieff. It must be confessed too, that any explanation of the popular

mistake would have been difficult at the time. It might be awkward publicly to point out that in the Circular the Foreign Secretary bound himself to nothing. On the whole, it was better to be quiet and enjoy the adulation of the hour. When men are sitting as in a Temple, with worshippers before them, and amidst clouds of incense, it is hardly to be expected of them that they should blow away the smoke.

But now the curtain rises on a very different scene. The Temple and the worshippers vanish like a dream. The Foreign Secretary is once more seen "arm in arm" with Russian diplomatists—secretly bargaining for interests supposed to be British—yielding to almost every one of the demands of the Czar—consenting to sacrifice much of the integrity, and the whole of the independence of Turkey—and absolutely abandoning our previous demand that the whole Treaty of San Stefano should be *bonâ fide* submitted to the Congress.

In all this the Cabinet was consistent. Throughout the whole of these transactions it had never taken a step forward in any one direction without carefully preparing the way for a strategic movement to the rear.

I do not hold that the Government were to blame for endeavouring to come to some understanding with Russia. Quite the contrary. They ought to have adopted this course long before. If they had done

so after the failure of the Conference of Constantinople, or when both Austria and Russia were willing to co-operate in coercing Turkey, all the miseries of the war would almost certainly have been averted. But at that time they shrank from any alliance with Russia, partly from jealousy and partly from moral cowardice. Now, at last, under most unfavourable conditions, they were driven by sheer necessity to make some bargain with the Czar. They were quite right in doing so. The situation had become intolerable and absurd. Clever Despatches cutting up the Treaty of San Stefano could not abolish or nullify the work of big battalions. Neither could they bring back health and life into the bones of Turkey. The Government were not quite so insane as most of their supporters, both in Parliament and in the Press. Much as they may have desired to turn back the handle of the clock, they knew that they could not arrest the day. Much as they may have desired to neutralise the results of war, they knew that they were too late. They knew, too, that to refuse to go into Congress except upon conditions which represented little more than verbal quibbles, was a course which would simply leave Russia in possession of the field, and England without an ally in Europe. Not even 7000 Indian troops, not even six millions of money, could extricate the Government from this dilemma. Under these circumstances it was perfectly reasonable to get out

of the dead-lock into which we had been brought by vacillation on every great question of policy, and by obstinacy in little things. It was reasonable, too, as it always must be, not to go into Congress without some previous understanding with the Powers to be there assembled. Every man conversant with the conduct of affairs knows very well that public and formal discussions cannot be conducted with any hope of a successful issue unless such preliminary understandings have been arrived at.

But what the Government now did was something widely different from this. Their Circular dissecting the Treaty of San Stefano was dated, as we have seen, on the 1st of April. But during that month and the month of May they were busy in escaping from the position in which it left them. They entered into a separate negotiation with Russia, kept secret apparently, not only from the public, which was wise enough, but from the other Powers of Europe. Yet the main ground of opposition to the San Stefano Treaty, and the main hope of success in modifying its provisions, lay in the argument that the whole of it affected more or less directly the interests of the other Powers. It was impossible to enter into a secret engagement with Russia alone without tying our own hands upon questions on which those other Powers might be entitled to our support. To judge of the force and sweep of this objection it is only necessary to apply that great test of all moral

considerations—namely, the test of considering what we should have thought of any similar secret negotiation, kept secret from us, between Germany and Russia, or between Austria and Russia, or between Greece and Russia. Russia may have made some high-handed demands in the Treaty of San Stefano. But when England was insisting upon her submitting the whole of it to Congress, she could, and she did, make the proud reply, "We have nothing to conceal." It is indeed humiliating to think that when the Plenipotentiaries of England entered the Congress doors at Berlin, they could not, if they had been asked, have given the same assurance. They entered those doors with a concealed instrument in their pocket, which might indeed leave them free to discuss the "whole" Treaty of San Stefano with a show of earnestness and sincerity, but which really bound them to be contented with this show, and nothing more.

Let us now examine the nature of the Secret Agreement with Russia, which has never been communicated to Parliament, and which, if the Government could have helped it, would never have seen the light.

The "Anglo-Russian Agreement," as the result of this secret negotiation was called, was contained in two Memoranda, dated and signed at London on the 30th of May. The very first article of the first Memorandum went straight to the question of the geographical extent of the new Bulgarian Province.

That is to say, it presented as the head and front of the offending in the Treaty of San Stefano, not the special or the exclusive protectorate of Russia, but the length and breadth of the country which was to enjoy new securities for freedom. It did not attempt to negative the erection of a new Principality, which was to be only tributary to the Porte. It did not attempt to prevent the destruction of the old military frontier of Turkey on the Danube. It did not attempt to save to her the great fortresses on that river which had done such good service in many invasions. Accepting these great changes as irremediable—changes which Mr. Layard had denounced as fatal to the Turkish Empire in Europe—this new Anglo-Russian Agreement was contented with an effort to patch up a new military frontier under conditions which we shall have to examine presently.

The next provision of the Treaty of San Stefano, against which this Secret Agreement declared the implacable hostility of England, was that which gave a portion of the sea-coast to the new Bulgaria. It was specially declared that this was no question of detail or of frontier lines. The object was declared to be "the exclusion of the littoral of the Ægean Sea" from any territory connected with the new Bulgaria. Next, it was specially agreed that the new Bulgarian Principality should be limited to the country north of the Balkans. The Province to the south was only to receive a "large measure of administrative self-

government, with a Christian Governor, named with the acquiescence of Europe for five or ten years."

Then follows an article which assigns to the Emperor of Russia the desire of freeing the new Provinces from unlimited occupation by Turkish troops, and which assigns to England the wise and honourable part of giving a grudging and reluctant assent to this Russian desire. "The Emperor of Russia," says this wonderful Agreement, "attaches a peculiar importance to the retreat of the Turkish army from Southern Bulgaria. His Majesty does not see any security or guarantee for the Bulgarian population in the future, if the Ottoman troops are maintained there." And then follows the following confession of English aims and English intentions in the coming Congress :—"Lord Salisbury accepts the retreat of the Turkish troops from Southern Bulgaria ; but Russia will not object to what is settled by the Congress respecting the mode and the cases where the Turkish troops would be allowed to enter the Southern Province to resist an insurrection or invasion, whether in a state of execution or in a state of menace." This sentence is very instructive. England specially reserves her freedom to fight in Congress for the power of the Turks to keep armed watch over the liberty of the Southern Bulgarians. Russia is represented as wishing to restrict their power as much as possible. England is represented as desirous of extending it.

There are other clauses of this Secret Agreement to the aim and object of which no just objection can be taken. If they had been made subjects of consultation with the other Powers of Europe, as matters of common understanding before going into Congress, there would not be one word to say against them. But, on the other hand, the whole scope and purport of the transaction was to represent England as bent on setting up again, as far as she could, some semblance of a real Turkish Empire in Europe ; and yet at the same time as yielding up almost everything which was really substantial in the fatal demands which the military success of Russia had enabled her to enforce upon the Sultan.

Let us take, for example, one sentence from the "Salisbury Circular" of two months before—the sentence which perhaps, as much as any other, had inspirited the friends of Turkey—"The compulsory alienation of Bessarabia from Roumania, the extension of Bulgaria to the shores of the Black Sea, which are principally inhabited by Mussulmans and Greeks, and the acquisition of the important harbour of Batoum, will make the will of the Russian Government dominant over all the vicinity of the Black Sea. The acquisition of the strongholds of Armenia will place the population of that province under the immediate influence of the Power which holds them ; whilst the extensive European trade which now passes from Trebizond

to Persia will, in consequence of the cessions in Kurdistan, be liable to be arrested at the pleasure of the Russian Government by the prohibitory barriers of their commercial system." Now, to every one of these formidable results of the Treaty of San Stefano, except the very last, England virtually gave her assent in this Secret Agreement. It made it all the worse and not the better that she reserved her right to keep up a show of remonstrance and of resistance in the Congress. She was not to push her objections to any decisive issue. The restoration to Russia of her old Bessarabian frontier was expressly acquiesced in. The Armenian fortresses were not to be rescued from the Muscovite. Batoum, although not taken by Russia, was to be surrendered to her demand. Well might those who had cheered the Circular be ashamed of their own credulity when they found themselves duped by the Agreement.

There is another point of view in which this Secret Agreement must be considered, and that is the relation it bears to the contention which had been maintained so long and so tenaciously, that the whole of the Treaty of San Stefano must be fully and completely "subject to discussion." This position had been held in a form and to an extent which was unreasonable. But it was not only reasonable but essential to the Congress that no two Powers should enter into it bound by secret engagements to convert discussion into a mockery, by pretending to argue

against conclusions which had been thus clandestinely agreed to. Yet after the signature of the Agreement the British Plenipotentaries were in this position: they were bound not to persevere in objections which the Agreement had overruled. We have only to look at the following paragraph in the first of the two Secret Memoranda to see that this is really the result: "Her Majesty's Government, being consequently of opinion that the modifications of the Treaty of San Stefano, approved of in this Memorandum, suffice to mitigate the objections that they find in the Treaty in its actual form, engage themselves not to dispute the Articles of the preliminary Treaty of San Stefano which are not modified by the ten preceding points, if, after the Articles have been duly discussed in Congress, Russia persists in maintaining them." Under this Agreement the British Plenipotentiaries went into Congress with their hands bound, and with their tongues only untied for the purpose of keeping up an appearance of freedom. Their colleagues in the Congress, if they were really kept in ignorance of this Secret Agreement, might commit themselves very far in support of other objections to the Treaty in a manner in which they would not have committed themselves had they known the truth. On the other hand, if the Secret Agreement was confidentially communicated to the other Powers, then the aspect of it is very materially changed. It then simply stands as a device by

which the English Cabinet escaped from the untenable position it had assumed, that Russia must go into Congress holding as open to discussion everything she had gained. By the Secret Agreement Russia had, on the contrary, secured that her principal demands in the Treaty were not to be seriously contested.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CONGRESS AND THE TREATY OF BERLIN.

RUSSIA was now as triumphant in diplomacy as she had been victorious in arms. She had secured two great advantages. In the first place, she had secured the final acquiescence of England, after a mock discussion, in every one of the substantial gains which she had demanded for herself. In the second place, the Cabinet of the Queen had so managed the whole transaction for her that the concessions she made were to be deductions, not from her own gains, but from the gains of the subject populations of Turkey. It had moreover been so contrived further in her interests that these concessions should be wrung from her in a European Congress, as the result of a public discussion, in which England was to be seen contending for the utmost possible limitation of the privileges of the enfranchised populations of Turkey.

Let us look for a moment at each of these great successes. The consent of England to the direct acquisitions of Russia was very important. In Europe there was the retrocession of her old Bessa-