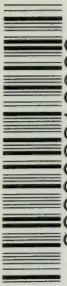


CZAR FERDINAND AND HIS PEOPLE



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CZAR FERDINAND
AND HIS PEOPLE



CZAR FERDINAND AS EMPEROR OF THE ORIENT

From the painting in Sofia Cathedral

CZAR FERDINAND AND HIS PEOPLE

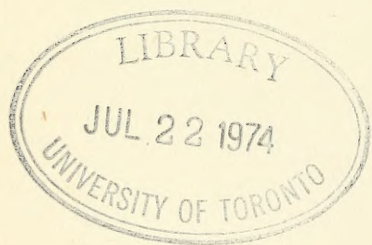
BY

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LONDON: T. C. & E. C. JACK
67 LONG ACRE, W.C.
AND EDINBURGH

DR
87
M 25
1913
cop. 2



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CZAR FERDINAND

AND HIS PEOPLE

I

THE BULGARIANS REDISCOVERED

It is related that the Russian soldiers, in their Turkish campaign of 1828-9, were surprised to discover between the Danube and the Balkans a people speaking a language nearly identical with their own: a Slavic race in fact. And the educated officers were as surprised as the rank and file. Even the cultured Greeks, not only of that period, but of the centuries from the capture of Constantinople until the insurrections of the seventies—their patriarchs in Constantinople, their bishops, whose dioceses were distributed over the vast territory enclosed between the Danube and the three seas—denied the existence of anything worth calling a Bulgarian people. There once had been, they would admit, a savage horde, of Central Asiatic origin, named Bulgars, who in the Dark and Middle Ages harried the Roman Empire of the East, but of whom only a few remnants, in secluded places, had survived the process of ethnic absorption; and the noisy people, who in mid-nineteenth century originated what they called a Bulgarian agitation, were not Bulgarians at all, but low-class, renegade Greeks. So the Hellenes, the

intellectual *élite* of the East, used to say when, soon after the Crimean War, certain natives of the country now known as Bulgaria began to petition Sultan Abdul Medjid to grant them a religious chief of their own, in place of the Greek Patriarch, who for centuries had been their official medium of communication with the Ottoman Government. The Ottoman theocracy knew nothing of races, only of religions : Bulgars, Serbs, Macedonian Slavs were lumped up together, in the Christian ' herd '—the *rayah*.

Some thirty years after the Russian discovery, an English statesman, notable in his day, Mr. Shaw Lefevre, passed through Bulgaria on his way to Constantinople. Of course, there was at that time no Bulgaria, in the official sense at least ; only a group of provinces—Widin, Rustchuk, Sofia, Philippopolis, etc.—under Turkish pashas. And Mr. Shaw Lefevre was struck with the natural richness of the country—and with its desolation. It was as if its inhabitants, scared by the Turkish invader to seek refuge in their mountain fastnesses, had remained there. Not that Mr. Lefevre knew anything about a vanished nation. He was exactly in the position of the Russian officers and soldiers of 1829. This is what he wrote, many years later, of this first visit of his to the lost people who have since become a powerful nation, with a Czar Ferdinand for ruler :—

‘ Like almost all other Englishmen of the time, I was profoundly ignorant of the very existence of a people of Bulgarian race. It is curious, indeed, in looking back, to have to make

the admission that I was under the impression, even when travelling through the country, that the population consisted of Turks and Greeks. It was, indeed, a common assumption that the Christian population of the district were Greeks in race, as they were in religion. It was not till I reached Constantinople, and made acquaintance with the late Lord Strangford, then attached to the British Embassy, who alone of these existing Englishmen knew anything of the Balkan Peninsula and its people, that I learnt the existence of a Bulgarian people with a past history and a possible future.¹

Mr. Lefevre's first visit must have taken place in 1860, or 1861—the year of Prince Ferdinand's birth. Another thirty years pass, and in 1890 Mr. Lefevre visits the country a second time. He is overcome with astonishment. He is among a parliamentary people, governed constitutionally, democratic to the core, quick at learning all that Europe can profitably teach them, advancing—to quote Mr. Lefevre's great master in politics—'by leaps and bounds.' He makes inquiries about the new ruler of Bulgaria, Prince Ferdinand—who at that time had been three years on the throne—and he comes to the conclusion that the Prince is 'able and conscientious.' The English politician, knowing what severe ordeals the new state has just survived, thinks it possible that 'a coup may happen at any time.' But still his impression is that young Prince Ferdinand is 'firmly established,' and that Bulgaria 'will hold its own.' And then Mr. Lefevre makes some observations that, in view of Ferdinand's foreign policy—as prince and as king—

¹ *Contemporary Review*, April 1891.

and of the great events of 1912-13, are especially interesting. 'Friendship with the Porte,' 'pacific negotiation' with his neighbours, always has been Czar Ferdinand's purpose. From the day of his accession to this hour Czar Ferdinand has been a conciliator. Mr. Lefevre has the Macedonian problem in mind. He is apprehensive of the effect of rivalry between Greece, Bulgaria, and Servia. History will show the decisive part played by the Conciliator in creating the Balkan Alliance—whose aim, after all is said and done, is peace.

In European history there is no more extraordinary phenomenon than the renaissance and rapid progress of this Bulgarian race, once thought to be extinct. We shall see, later, how the Greeks strove to 'Hellenise' the Bulgarian race, just as the Turkish revolutionists of 1908-12 have striven to 'denationalise,' 'Ottomanise' their non-Moslem populations. The Greeks, to some extent, succeeded. In the lifetime of men still living, Bulgarians of the higher ranks—if, indeed, there was much room for any such distinction in a society trampled by the Turks into an impoverished, servile dead level—were ashamed to be heard speaking their ancestral tongue. They spoke the language of their Greek clergy and Greek schoolmasters. They hoped to pass for Greeks—even of mixed descent, should some facial reminiscence of Tartar origins belie any pretence to a more flattering heredity. Only the laborious peasants, in their melancholy hamlets, undiscovered of Europe, habitually

spoke the old Slavonic tongue. Only the peasantry, and insurgents in the *zelena gora* (the greenwood) of the folk-poets; and the solitary monk in his cell, brooding over the mutilated records of the past, which the Greek inquisitors had overlooked: dreaming of the resurrection of his race.

In the childhood of the Czar's subjects now in their eighties, not one indigenous school did there exist in all Bulgaria. Queen Victoria had been eight years on the throne before the birth of the first timid little sheet calling itself a Bulgarian newspaper. When Ghazi Osman and his heroic starvelings were making their last stand in the snows of Plevna, seven or eight small hand-presses was about all that the country between the Danube and the chain of the Rhodope could show in the way of printing machinery. One of these rude ancestors of the modern Bulgarian press is preserved as a priceless treasure in Sofia Museum. The primitive machine is a memorial of an age when *rayah* printers, as in Montenegrin Cettinje—whose invention preceded Caxton's—were sometimes forced to convert their leaden types into bullets, wherewith to beat off the Turk's bashi-bazouks.

And yet there was a time when this 'extinct' or submerged Bulgarian people ruled South-Eastern Europe. There were Bulgarian czars centuries before the Muscovite czars were heard of. They made treaties, now on a footing of equality, now as superiors by right of conquest, with the successors of the

Roman Cæsars, the lords of 'Golden Byzantium.' They formed marriage alliances with the Greek emperors. In the heyday of their power, seven hundred years ago, when our King John's barons were mustering at Runnymede, the Bulgarian czars ruled a prosperous, peaceful, industrial, and commercial realm larger than the reconquered Bulgaria of Czar Ferdinand I. And the Bulgar czar's court was far more refined and elegant, and more cultivated intellectually, than the English king's.

One is sometimes struck by the modernity of much in the Bulgarian politics of those remote epochs, and by curious parallelisms between diplomatic incidents then and now. The great Czar Simeon—a sort of rudimentary Cobdenite in political economy—wages war on the Greek emperor, his friend and old college comrade in professorial Byzantium, about a protective tariff, excluding Bulgarian merchandise from the markets of Greece. Then, as now, the Bulgarian czars fought for 'a place in the sun,' by the shining sea, and they got it. The reader will remember how an insult, needlessly inflicted by the Turkish Foreign Minister upon the Bulgarian Diplomatic Agent at Constantinople, provoked Prince Ferdinand (and his people with him) to cast off the last shreds of vassalage to the Sultan, and declare Bulgaria an independent kingdom.

An insult to the representative of one of the mediæval czars was atoned for on the battlefield, the Bulgar king rejecting every apology. His was perhaps the

worse case of the two. For whereas his accredited minister was reported to have suffered personal castigation, Prince Ferdinand's Monsieur Guechoff had nothing more serious to complain of than the refusal of an invitation to a diplomatic dinner.

It is curious, too, to note how in their wars with the Greek emperors, Bulgarian czars, victoriously marching on a Christian Constantinople, would halt at the line—the Chatalja line—at which Czar Ferdinand's army, marching upon a Mohammedan Constantinople, has paused since last October. Rodosto figures in the military history of the time, as it does in the hard bargaining between the Porte and the Czar over the determination of the new boundary. Nor was it only the formidable risk of an assault upon the city that deterred the victorious invaders—either then or now. The veneration which 'Golden Byzantium' awoke in the minds of the warlike nations that would fain possess it was a protective force not computable in the arithmetic of siege machinery. It was the same kind of emotion that the vision of Rome stirred in the mind of the Gothic conquerors of the Western Empire, or that the first sight of Jerusalem awoke in the mind of the Crusaders when, kneeling on the Mount of Olives, they covered their faces with their shields, as if they deemed themselves unworthy to enter within the sacred walls. The sort of sentimentality which has clung round the name of the Second Rome lately found expression in a newspaper article by a novelist, essayist, and critic of European repute,

Mr. Joseph Conrad. Constantinople, he suggested, was too illustrious, held a place too unique in the imagination of mankind, not to say too imperial in the path of intercourse between three continents, to become the inheritance of a Bulgar people but lately semi-barbaric, or, for that matter, of any one of the Turk's successors. A 'free' Constantinople, for the material benefit and the æsthetic delight of the civilised world, is Mr. Conrad's ideal.

Yet there was a time when the Bulgarian czars might have become masters of Constantinople. But for untimely death, Czars Simeon and Samuel might have ruled South-Eastern Europe from the Golden Horn. Czar John Açen, the humanest, most enlightened and progressive of them all—a great civilising force—came nearer than they to the goal of so many haunting ambitions. In civilisation—such as it was in the Europe of the epoch—the Bulgaria of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was the equal of any Western state. It is questionable if the history of the human race suggests any thought more desolating than this, that but for the irruption of the Turks into Europe five and a half centuries ago, the South Slavic peoples might have kept pace with their Western neighbours in physical, moral, and intellectual progress.¹ In spite of the uselessness of any such exercise of the imagination, one is tempted to speculate on what might have been, and what to-day there might be, had the great mediæval czars seized their oppor-

¹ Bousquet, *Histoire du Peuple Bulgare*, 1909.

tunity to erect on the Bosphorus a Slavic barrier against the Turkish invasion. Yet the last of the great czars had been little more than a hundred and fifty years in his grave when his successors' empire, with all its latent capacities for betterment, hurriedly vanished—not a trace thereof discoverable for the next five centuries.

Some writers have compared its destiny to the disappearance of a stream beneath the sands of the desert, and to its upspringing in a distant land, there to renew its fertilising potency. Others have had recourse to the similitude of the Egyptian 'mummy wheat,' that, having been restored to earth after an imprisonment in the palm perhaps of a Pharaoh dead six thousand years, grew, and gave birth to fields of waving corn. Not an inapt figure of speech for a rustic community, which no one in mid-nineteenth century thought of calling a nation, but which, as prime mover in a formidable and novel combination, suddenly sprang, fully armed, as it were from its Mother Earth, and with a celerity, an *élan*, and a disciplined precision that amazed Europe, wrecked European Turkey, and 'shifted the axis' of international polity—so that the long-predicted combat between the Slav and the Teuton is once more agitating men's minds, and Germans, Austrians, Russians, Frenchmen are enlarging their armies, and Lord Roberts' followers are crying, more shrilly than ever, for universal conscription.

To what innate character in the race itself, in the

kindred peoples with which it was in alliance or in conflict, in the Power that so long held them all in subjection, can we ascribe the rise and the grandeur of mediæval Bulgaria, its long eclipse, its sudden, amazing resurrection as a military state of the first order ?

II

THE VITAL FORCE OF A RACE

IT is one of Czar Ferdinand's claims to distinction among rulers of men that he perceived from the first the latent force of character in the Bulgarian race—its immense 'vitality,' as he called it in his first proclamation to his people. His rôle as a statesman may be compared with the rôle of a Socratic trainer of youth—to 'educate,' draw forth powers already existing, not merely to impose, 'knowledge' in the one case or systems in the other. To appreciate Czar Ferdinand's career, a comprehension of the character of the Bulgarian race is essential. King and people are inseparable.

A review of the historical facts, which in an outline such as this is must be very cursory, shows that some of the chief characteristics which determined the ebb and flow of dominance among the south-eastern races survive unimpaired from the days of Asparouch, the first Bulgar king who in the full sense may claim the title, to the days of his latest successor, Ferdinand 'Macedonicus'—a period of more than twelve hundred years. The prowess of Asparouch's Bulgars was as indisputable as that of Czar Ferdinand's. And though only a century or so had elapsed since his people, migrating from the Volga and the shores of the Sea of Azoff, had crossed the Danube, they had

already conquered the entire region between the river and the Rhodope. Asparouch approached as closely to the Constantinople of Constantine IV. as Czar Ferdinand to the Constantinople of Mehmet v.

But the Bulgars of the early age formed but an element—though a forceful element—in the composition of the race over which Czar Ferdinand rules. The Slavs, preceding them as invaders of the Balkan region by more than a century, had already occupied and permanently settled the whole of it, including modern Servia and a large portion of Thrace. The Bulgars conquered the Slavs as these had conquered the indigenous Thracians, driving them into the mountains. But the Bulgar conquest had a different result. The victors and the vanquished intermarried, produced a new race as valorous as either of its original components ; but, if their Greek critics are to be believed, not less savage in manners or cruel to their foes. According to these authorities, the Slavs, when they did not sell their captives into slavery, impaled them or flayed them alive, making no distinction of rank, age, or sex ; or they suspended them between four posts and clubbed them to death, or locked them in, in crowds, and burnt them. The Turk himself, who came later on the scene, could not outmatch these atrocities, some of which are identical with the Turk's habitual method of suppressing insurrections. Yet we must not place implicit faith in these frightful pictures of Slav and Bulgar ferocity. Until the later years of Czar Ferdinand's reign, the

hatred of the Greek for the Bulgar was as intense as the Bulgar's for the Turk, and the 'barbarous Bulgar' was the butt of every loquacious joker in the Athenian coffee-houses. Even in the early period there were Greeks whose testimony was much less unflattering than the foregoing. They speak of the hospitality, frank manners, and bravery of the new race of conquerors. The Slavs are described as of tall stature and fresh complexion. Their ideas of political life were democratic. The Bulgars, on the other hand, favoured an aristocratic organisation—in other words, one-man rule, a logical system, in an age of incessant warfare, when it was essential that the ablest man should lead the mass.

Let us linger for a brief space over these ethnic characteristics, physical and moral ; for we shall see how they asserted themselves in the evolution of the race. King Peter's Servians are, generally speaking, taller and fairer than their first cousins, Czar Ferdinand's Bulgars. They are also, generally speaking, more accessible, less reticent, more hail-fellow-well-met, more impressionable, more subtle and sensitive intellectually. Take a typical Servian Slav and a Bulgar of the less frequented interior (where the existing type most closely approaches the ancient one, before the amalgamation of the two races), and the physical distinction will strike the most careless observer. The personal appearance of a Bulgar peasant of this pattern will at once recall the early portraiture of the ancestral Bulgar, as a shortish, muscular, dark-

haired, somewhat swarthy, high cheek-boned interloper from Tartar-land. We are speaking, be it remembered, of an extreme, disappearing type in the most Bulgarian part of Bulgaria, the part between the Danube and the Great Balkan, the 'Father Balkan' of the Bulgarian patriot-outlaws. It will remind us of the ancestral Bulgar's family relationship to the Turk—who is a 'Turanian,' ethnically distinct from the 'Aryan' species of mankind, of which the Slavs are a variety. It will remind us that the first Bulgar filibusters who harried the Empire in Justinian's day, and fought Belisarius—last of the great Roman generals—followed the horse-tail standard, just as in after time the Turkish invaders did, when they landed in that same peninsula of Gallipoli which Ferdinand's men are striving to wrench from the Caliph's grip.¹

Bulgaria and Servia are both Slavic—with the difference that the former contains a considerable Bulgar ingredient, from which it derives its geographical and political name. It is exceedingly interesting to note how, even within the czardom itself, the characters of regional populations seem to vary according to the strength of this eponymous ingredient. The most remarkable example of this distinction is none other than Stephan Stambouloff himself, the greatest Bulgarian of modern times, the chief artificer of the Bulgarian state before Prince Ferdinand's advent, the ruthless autocrat-minister who so often bullied and defied His Royal Highness—and was

¹ The Turks seized Gallipoli in 1356.



BULGARIAN PEASANT LADS OF BAZARDJIK, ONE OF THE
SCENES OF THE ATROCITIES OF 1876-7

accused, by his enemies, of aiming at permanent dictatorship. This political genius—as even foes describe him—was of the thick-set, Tartar-ish pattern already mentioned. He hailed from picturesque, romantic Tirnovo, the old Bulgar capital, on the slope of the Great Balkan, in the more primitive region of Bulgaria. The kind of man, in mind and body, whom one might imagine shouting his orders in guttural Jaghatai Turki (or whatever it was), galloping, with his horse-tail standard and band of freebooters, over the plain of Adrianople, in Asparouch's rush upon Golden Byzantium. The 'tapster,' superior persons in another Bulgarian city, 'Hellenised' Philippopolis, sometimes called him, in allusion to his father's trade. He was a peasant, raised to the epoch-making position for which Mother Nature had equipped him. He had, in abundance, the staying power, the obstinate tenacity, the still, dour, unswerving resolution which Czar Ferdinand's soldiers (nine-tenths of them peasants) have displayed on the fields of Thrace. He was a true son of the local community in which the ancestral Bulgarian element is relatively powerful. The regional variety of Bulgars from whom he came are less swiftly responsive to the artistic appeal in life and things, to the ideal appeal in polity, than their fellow-compatriots in the beautiful province that used to be called Eastern Roumelia, and in which the primitive Bulgar element is comparatively weak and the Greek element comparatively strong. The difference in temperament revealed itself in the

irrepressible agitation (1883-4-5) of Eastern Roumelia (then an autonomous government under a Turkish official supervised by the European Powers) for union with the Principality. At first the Bulgarians of the Principality seemed inclined to hold aloof, to rest in peace with what they had already won, and consolidate that, to wait patiently for the destined opportunity—in short, to give their deaf ear to the eloquence of Philippopolis. As the Scots, who in some ways resemble them, would say, they were cautious ‘bodies.’ But when the thing had to be done, and the East Roumelia Bulgarians had burnt their boats, their brothers of the west and north welcomed them with open arms and loud acclamation, and vowed, by all their gods, to uphold a flagrant breach of the sacred Treaty of Berlin, in spite of all the ‘*Status quo*’ chancelleries of Europe. The chancelleries knew they would. One has only to read Lord Salisbury’s Blue-Book reasonings with the Turk—they are pure common sense—to detect, between the lines, his sympathy with the repudiators of a treaty of which he himself had been a collaborating author, and his humorous appreciation of the helpless perplexity into which the ‘accomplished fact’ had left the Sublime Porte and the Foreign Offices.

The incorporation of Eastern Roumelia with the Principality has had, and will have, a social influence of great value, independently of its strictly political effect—an influence which will speedily be reinforced by the absorption of Macedonia. The writer would

corroborate his own impressions—gathered from intercourse with the populations in question—by the opinion of M. Bousquet, who knows the South-East as few Europeans do.¹ The arrival of the East Roumelia deputies at the National Parliament in Sofia meant the importation into the relatively rude north of an educated *personnel*, with considerable claim (rather exaggerated, one suspects, by the good citizens of Philippopolis) to a degree of social finish not elsewhere discernible south of the Danube. Our northern brothers, said they, have grit in them, any amount of it, but they lack polish: even the Sofians do; they must cultivate the metropolitan tone; we shall show them how to. They did it. As M. Bousquet has remarked, the Eastern Roumeliots have had readier means of intercourse with the world than was possible for the people of the Danube-Great Balkan region. They had the immense advantage of some direct ‘contact with Hellenism.’ Their delightful climate had contributed its share to the formation of a temperament more sunshiny than that of the stern northerners. Philippopolis, says the same author, always was a capital town—though an unofficial one.

For one thing, in the beauty of its site, it is immeasurably superior to Sofia. Besides being more well off than that of the established capital, its society was more ‘elegant,’ more intellectually curious than any town population in Bulgaria. It could boast ‘a sort of Atticism.’

¹ *Histoire du Peuple Bulgare*, 1909.

The same general observation applies to Macedonia, whose Bulgarian inhabitants, constituting the largest part of the population, show shades of difference from their northern kinsfolk in physique, in temperament, in taste : a difference arising, in the first place (apart from the effect of an enchanting climate), from the fact that the original Bulgarian element among the Slavs of the province was numerically weaker than in the lands on the other side of the Rhodope ; and in the second place, from contiguity with Greece and intermarriage with its people.

III

CZAR FERDINAND'S AMBITION

THEIR land-locked position subjected the Northern Bulgarians to a serious disadvantage. Unlike Greece and Servia, they were shut out from the civilised world. Belgrade of the Servians had, so to speak, its front door and windows looking out upon Europe—so that Goethe was reading, in a delighted surprise (and with him the Wolfian theorists of Homeric origins), the folk-lays and legends of the Serbs, long before Western scholars learnt that poetical treasures, as rich and as copious (in process of transmission from the popular memory to the printed page), existed among the Bulgarians. Unlike Belgrade, the old Bulgarian capital, Tirnovo, had its front door and windows facing—Scythia (if the Roumans and Russians will pardon the word). Sofia has its two fronts, one looking towards Europe, the other towards the long-dreamt-of bourne of the Bulgarian race, the blue Ægean, on whose sun-steeped shore Czar Ferdinand's soldiers, for the first time, stand at gaze. On the vague, irrepressible longing of the Bulgarian people for a wider horizon and an ampler light, the French Orientalist already named expresses himself in the simile of a plant that, rooted in its river bed, strives upwards, that its leaves may expand, and its flower blow, afloat on the surface, in the air and sunshine.

What we are now witnessing in Greater Bulgaria is the evolution of a new people combining the qualities of its component parts—a fusion of types, with the promise of greater good to mankind than it was possible for the Slavo-Bulgar fusion of the Middle Ages to bestow. The creation of such a nation, on an industrial, intellectual, progressive level with the advanced nations of Central and Western Europe, is Czar Ferdinand's ambition. The extent and nature of its possible influence among the Great Powers may be divined from the plausible prediction that in fifty years its population of about four and a half millions will be quintupled, and that in the same period the population of the Alliance of which Bulgaria is the head will rise to forty millions. Fusion of political interests between the individual states will be as indispensable as was the reconciliation of rival parties and classes within each of them during the long combat with the Byzantine Empire, and next with the Turks. We have already alluded to the Slavs' impatience of centralised government, to their 'democratic' individualism, as some historians have named it, during that epoch. It was their centrifugal tendency. The early Bulgars, according to the same authorities, adapted themselves to a centralised rule, the control of their ablest man. It was their centripetal tendency—weakened, however, as their absorption into the Slavic mass progressed. Irrecoverable ruin, as penalty for sectional rivalries, egoistic disunion, in the presence of mortal danger, is the tre-

mendous lesson of Slavo-Bulgar history in the Middle Ages. Of that lesson no one has a keener appreciation than the observant, reflective man of action and resourceful diplomatist that the world recognises in Czar Ferdinand. He has been born in due time to fulfil a distinguished part in the transformation of the European East. His success in reconciling the turbulent factions whose rivalries nearly shattered the nascent Principality at more than one crisis during his predecessor's reign, and harassed the first years of his own, justify the hope that his talent for conciliation may be exercised with the like result on a larger scale. The party wars that rent the Principality at a time when it was literally struggling to exist were a repetition of the intestine discord that made mediæval Bulgaria the Turks' easy prey. The modern party leaders were akin to the mediæval boyards, semi-independent territorial magnates who fought each other, or held aloof, when the foe was at the gates. The main difference was that in the one case the combatants had the floor of an assembly house for battlefield; in the other, the Balkan Peninsula from the Danube to the three seas. We have now to show in rapid outline how it fared with the Slavo-Bulgars during the epoch of the boyards and of the despots who succeeded, or failed, in controlling them.

Counting from about the middle of the seventh century and the reign of the Bulgar king, Asparouch, already mentioned, to the death, in 907, of the great Czar Boris the First, after whom Czar Ferdinand's

heir is named, the Bulgars in two and a half centuries had shorn of some of its largest and fairest possessions an Empire that stretched from the Danube to the Euphrates. At the first-named date the pagan Bulgarian leader was exacting tribute from the Christian emperor, the successor of the Cæsars, whose capital he was investing. In the two and a half centuries the fusion of the Bulgars with the Slavs, who had preceded them in the occupation of the country, and who, like them, were pagans, was effected. In fact, it is not quite clear that the Slavs were disinclined to treat the new invaders as allies rather than as enemies. For the Eastern Empire, though decaying, was still capable of spasmodic bursts of heroic energy. Moreover, the new invaders, just because conquest was the business they had in hand, were more compactly organised and more ready for leadership than were the Slavs, already permanently settled in the larger portion of the peninsula. Even the Greek emperors recognised the import of the Slavic settlement when they conceded to that portion of their former possessions the name of Slavonia. Though far inferior in numbers to the Slavs, the invaders were more warlike and virile. What the Bulgars did when they voluntarily, or rather unconsciously, acquiesced in their absorption by a race more numerous and more civilised than their own was to infuse an iron tonic into the Slavic blood. It was an interesting process : the Bulgars abandoned their own language for the language of their partners, and gave their national name to the amalgamated

people. So that Czar Ferdinand's Bulgarians are fundamentally Slavic—the strength of the iron dose in their blood varying, as stated in a foregoing paragraph, according to locality, being lower in reconquered Macedonia, higher in and about the Great Balkan.

Asparouch's successor seems to have been the first Bulgarian chief who bore the title of Czar. It was bestowed upon him by Justinian the Second, Emperor of the Romans. It was the symbol of the barbarian's election to the freemasonry of monarchs. The bestowal deserves a passing notice. Over and over again in the history of the Bulgarian rulers—even the most powerful among them—we may see how flattered they were by the gift of titles from the divine, if decadent, successors of the Cæsars ; how their sons and relatives, and even they themselves, were proud of admission to the rank of Byzantine patricians. So the Gothic invaders of the Western Empire rejoiced in empty titles granted them by the phantom senate of the immortal city, whose fate they held in the hollow of their hand.

The most conspicuous of the Bulgar rulers before the reign of Boris I. was Czar Krum, the ferocious victor over the Emperor Nicephorus, whose head he caused to be carried on a pike in front of his armies, and whose skull he turned into a drinking cup, to be produced, for the amusement—and perhaps the edification—of his guests, on gala days. That festive use of a foe's skull is described by ancient authors as

a Scythian custom—though Krum does not appear to have stood in need of any extraneous aid to his inventiveness. In the next czar's reign, Omortag's, two striking symptoms of social transformation in the Slavo-Bulgar people, still in process of 'becoming,' were manifest. One of them was the growing prevalence of Slavic family names among the governing classes. The other, of far greater significance, was the spread of Christianity. Christian missionaries from Constantinople were penetrating the south-east as far as the German confines. Christian slaves in Bulgarian households, or employed in the state service, chiefly prisoners taken in the constant wars with the Greeks, were efficient propagandists of the new faith. At the same time, education began to make way among the illiterate and still half-formed race. The systematic encouragement of literary culture, the adoption of Christianity as the state religion, were the distinctive achievements of the first of the great Bulgarian czars, Boris the First. To the missionary travellers whom Boris entertained at his court, Saints Method and Cyril, Czar Ferdinand's subjects owe the somewhat uncouth characters of their alphabet. His personal motives for conversion were barbaric—though he might point to the example of a potentate more illustrious and enlightened than himself, Constantine the Great, or to that of Clovis the German. He made choice of the God whom the victorious Charlemagnes of his epoch, and his ally, Louis the German, worshipped. It being a business

choice, Czar Boris the convert showed no mercy to those of his subjects who refused to abandon their ancestral heathenism. For, as it was clear that the Christians' God rewarded His people with worldly prosperity, it was the duty of all who cared for the general welfare to declare themselves converted. So Czar Boris, it is recorded, slew large numbers of his recalcitrant boyards, who, from their position, ought to have been prompt in setting a wholesome example. The natural result followed—the Bulgarian heathen flocked in crowds for baptism. In spite of his murders, Boris has his place in the Orthodox Calendar of Saints. In his pagan, as in his Christian, days Czar Boris the First laid the foundations of a state which, at the time of his death in a monastery, whither he had retired in the year 888, extended from the Danube to the Thracian plains, to and beyond Belgrade as far as Moravia, and through Western Macedonia to the Greek border. The motives of his and his subjects' conversion to Christianity were unchristian: but its political benefit was enormous. It imparted a new and powerful stimulus to the unification, the fusion, of Slavs and Bulgars. It was the first definite, serious, calculated step of the Bulgarian state towards participation in the political and intellectual movement of the West. It opened, to repeat a former simile, a window upon Europe. Another window opened on Byzantium, the seat of such culture as did exist in the Christian world. When the Emperor Michael III. stood as godfather to the converted heathen Boris I.,

he was assisting at something more respectable and enduring than a ceremonial show. With Boris the tide of Greek civilisation began to flow into the rising Bulgarian Empire. With what results, the reigns of his successors, Simeon and Samuel—two of the three greatest Bulgarian czars—would show. Boris deserves his pedestal in the Bulgarian pantheon. Czar Ferdinand gave proof of his innate tact when he named his son and heir-apparent after the first of the great czars.¹ The act proclaimed baby Boris, the future Boris III., and great-grandson of Louis Philippe, and descendant from Henry of Navarre, a native Bulgarian. It raised Czar Ferdinand immensely in the esteem of his Bulgar subjects, who are sensitive on the theme of the past grandeur of their race, and who also, if the truth must be told, were only just then getting over their somewhat uneasy scepticism regarding their Coburg prince.

¹ Prince Boris was baptized into the Bulgar Orthodox Church, 14th February 1896.

IV

THE FIRST GREAT EPOCH

THROUGH an incapable czar, Vladimir, who reigned but four years, Boris bequeathed a compact state to Czar Simeon, the first of the cultivated rulers, besides being a successful warrior and a statesman of great organising capacity. He stands out in Bulgarian history as a man of humane character—humane, at least, if measured by the standard of a harsh age. Educated in Constantinople—just as, in the Western Empire, Gothic youths of noble parentage were brought up in Rome—Czar Simeon made himself familiar with the ancient Greek classics. He was a student of the science of his time. Succeeding to the czardom at the age of twenty-five (a year younger than Prince Ferdinand at the time of his accession), he began his career with the ambition of making his court and capital the seat of an indigenous Slavonic culture. At that time Preslav—of which hardly a trace has survived—was the Bulgarian capital. The new czar, whose architectural tastes had been developed in Byzantium, beautified it with stately palaces and temples. It became the admiration of travellers. For the first time the court of the Bulgarian czars won a reputation for refinement. Nor did this patron of letters and the arts neglect the material exigencies of his *métier* as a ruling prince. His severe retaliation

for the indignity to which his ambassador at the capital of the Eastern world was subjected, announced to all and several that a Bulgar diplomatist must be reckoned as the equal of a Roman emperor's. A still more striking assertion of equality was the marriage of the Czar's son with Cæsar's daughter, an alliance which in after time gave the Czar a plausible reason (at a dynastic crisis in Constantinople) to lay claim to the imperial throne. Simeon adopted the title of 'Czar of the Bulgarians and the Greeks.' His successors perpetuated it for nearly four centuries—though, in fact, there were intervals when the title, even without the word Greeks, conveyed no more meaning than the legend 'King of Great Britain, "France," and Ireland' on the Georgian coins. In Czar Simeon's reign, however, the title was justified. There were a great many Greeks in a Bulgaria that included Macedonia, with its capital, Salonika; and even Thessaly; and Epirus, the capital of which, Jannina, has just been captured by King George's army; and a great part of Servia—in a word, nearly the whole of the peninsula. In this king's reign the Bulgarian realm reached its widest limits.

But Czar Simeon's empire was less solid than it seemed. For with the Byzantine culture there had crept in the Byzantine poison. The imported 'Hellenism' was merely superficial. In religion it meant nothing more than mechanical ritual and sterile logomachy. The cultivated and aspiring Czar Simeon had committed the mistake of foisting upon

his subjects a form of civilisation for which they were as yet unprepared. The condition into which the Bulgarian czardom fell after Simeon's death, and especially during the long reign of his immediate successor, the amiable but weak Czar Peter, strongly resembled that of the South American so-called republics throughout the nineteenth century. The great South American presidents and dictators, imported from Europe—as did the czars from Byzantium—forms of intellectual culture which the mass of their compatriots were unfitted to receive. And the rival boyards of the Bulgar Empire, who in the general débâcle defied the central authority, set up governments of their own, and fought each other for supremacy, resemble the *caudillos* of Latin America.

The boyards, it is related, resented the cultured courtiers' airs of superiority, despised their foreign æstheticism, and scorned the elaborate pomp and etiquette of the royal palace. Here, also, there is a curious resemblance to a modern instance. It is well known that the regal formalities, the minute protocol, of Prince Ferdinand's palace irritated great numbers of his subjects, among them some of his ministers, especially the autocrat-minister, Stambouloff. Stambouloff, it is related, was at no pains to conceal his scorn, even in the Prince's presence, for trappings more to the taste of the gorgeous idlers who thronged round the person of the 'Grand Monarque,' than to the taste of Bulgaria's plebeian notables and rude, raw rustics. The exigent etiquette of the palace of

Sofia was one of the causes of the Prince's sometime unpopularity.

But the boyards did something worse than rebel against Simeon's and Peter's new-fangled pomposities. In the first place, in the general upsetting of manners and morals, they appear to have become more mercilessly exacting to the peasant class, long reduced to the position of serfs, though, on the whole, secure of a not intolerable life. After rather more than two centuries of existence under able kings, with a united people obedient to them, the Bulgar state edifice began to crack. A huge fragment of it, Western Bulgaria, with its chief town, Sofia, fell away, and was taken possession of by a warlike, energetic, and extremely able prince, or boyard, Schishman, first of a name conspicuous in Bulgar history. It is to be noted that the race fusion in Western Bulgaria was less advanced than in the eastern territories, over which Czar Peter kept hold to the end of his life. Schishman's share of the disrupted czardom comprised Central and Western Macedonia as far as Ochrida, a large part of Albania, as well as Thessaly and Epirus. The fragment of a fortified castle at Ochrida is a solitary memorial of pre-Turkish Bulgaria. Like other upstart despots before and after him, Czar Schishman of Western Bulgaria started a national Church of his own, with a patriarch of its own. As pointed out in a foregoing page, a national Church, with a patriarch at its head, was, in the Slavo-Bulgar-Greek epoch, the symbol of national independence, as it

was in the Turkish era the symbol of certain Christian privileges.

It was an alleged, and prematurely lugubrious, custom of the ancient inhabitants of Thrace to assemble around a child newly born, and make moan for him because of his entrance into so wretched a universe. More terrible, unforgettably terrible, was a saying of the Bulgarian peasants, that God was not sinless, inasmuch as He created the world. And indeed there were times—not only during the Turkish oppression, but also during the rule of Christian monarchs, whether Greek or Bulgarian, or of the petty usurpers of local governments—when the serf's reproach might be excusable, or at least intelligible. In the era we are now considering there was a moral as well as a material collapse. Or, rather, it was the moral corruption that caused the political downfall—temporary in this case, yet prophetic of further disasters—and prepared the way for the Turkish invasion, though at this date the Turks had not emerged from their Asiatic obscurity: the corruption of 'Byzantism,' that lurked in the elegancies of the Bulgarian court at Preslav. The infection was, writes M. Mijatovitch, late Servian minister in London, 'inevitable'; for the Bulgars went to Byzantium for religious as well as for political wisdom. Even as early as the tenth century, Bulgarian Christianity was declining into an 'adoration of old bones, rags, and mummies,' such as the Orthodox ritual consisted of, when the Turks came. In Czar Peter's long reign the

ecclesiastical hierarchy became the mainstay of political absolutism. The higher clergy taught, in its grossest form, the doctrine of the divine right of kings. Unquestioning submission to the czar and the priest was enjoined upon the masses of the Bulgarian people, whose indigenous form of Christianity was consistent with a virile spirit of independence. The higher clergy occupied the position of feudal lords, no less exacting than the boyards themselves, to the peasant classes. From this condition of things, as from its natural soil, there sprang up the moral and religious insurrection known as Bogomilism—precursor of the Albigensian movement in Southern France and of the Protestant revolt in Germany. The form it assumed was precisely what we should expect in an illiterate community, the helpless victim of social injustice, whose Christianity was tinged with the melancholy of their ancestral nature-worship and retained many of its barbaric elements. This note of gloom, though not the dominant note, pervades the folk-songs of the Bulgars, as of their Serb and Rouman neighbours. Bogomilism was but an expression of it. It was a religion of despair, of renunciation, of conviction in the profitlessness of battle with the evil in the world. So the Protestantism of the mediæval Bulgarians widely differed in spirit from the Protestantism of the self-assertive, genial, fighting Martin Luther and his followers. In a former passage we have cited a pessimistic proverb of the Bulgars on the scheme of the world. We hear the echo of it in the



CZAR FERDINAND OF BULGARIA

Bogomile 'heresy,' as the outraged Byzantine Church called it. The difference is that the Bogomile doctrine attaches to 'Satanael' the responsibility which the proverb attributes to the Deity. For the 'Love of God' (which the name Bogomile signifies) men must abandon the world. And so, quite naturally, the Bogomile age became an age of monastic retreat. It was at this time that Monk Ivan, destined to become the patron saint of Bulgaria, took refuge from the world on Mount Rilo, where after his death there was founded, in memory of him, the great monastery which in a later age played its part in the renaissance of Bulgaria, and which still attracts its multitudes of pilgrims—among them Czar Ferdinand, who in this as in other respects shows himself a good Bulgar.

V

THE ZENITH OF MEDIÆVAL BULGARIA

THE Bulgar Protestants bore some resemblance to the 'anti-militarists,' 'anti-patriots,' 'anti-capitalists,' 'ultra-democrats' of the twentieth century—at least as these are exhibited for the popular scorn by the orthodox. They were also, in their way, woman-suffragists. They had women-preachers. In spite of their moral justification in a period of pernicious shams, these earliest of European Protestants are by some historians held responsible, to a large extent, for the helplessness of the state in face of the foe—first the Greek foe, now shaking off his lethargy, and turning from theological dialectics to the art of war, and after him the Turk. A suggested explanation of the ease with which, in a later century, the Turks conquered Bosnia is the prevalence of Bogomilism in that province.

Here, then, there is repeated the principal lesson of the epoch, as eloquent a lesson to modern Bulgaria and her Allies as to the mediæval states. Owing to their union and singleness of purpose, the Bulgars' career for well-nigh three centuries had been one of uninterrupted progress. But it was also owing to the lack of these advantages on the side of their opponent—an empire rent by civil and religious strife. Now, however, the parts of the actors on the stage are to be

reversed for a time : the Greeks are falling in, the Bulgarian kinglets, like the proverbial bundle of sticks, falling asunder. A short line of energetic emperors, beginning with Nicephorus, prop up the tottering edifice of the Cæsars. Thrace was wrested from the last czar of East Bulgaria. Czar Peter's successor, having lost his entire kingdom, was taken to Constantinople, where he lived in a state of luxurious captivity. For the Eastern Bulgarians it was a choice between subjection to the Greeks, or to the Russians, who were raiding on the Bulgarian side of the Danube, vaguely anticipating Peter the Great's 'dream.' As we have already pointed out, the western portion of the Bulgarian realm became at this period an independent state, but the fissiparous tendencies of its feudal chiefships went far to neutralise the energy and the talents even of a Czar Schishman. Czar Samuel, a greater man and ruler of men than Schishman, displayed, it is true, all the valour and all the fiery energy of the early czars. But he had to contend not only against his feudatories' separatist bent, but also against an opponent, the Emperor Basil II., his equal in ability and activity, the ruthless 'Bulgar-killer' of the Greek and Slavonian chroniclers. Czar and Emperor were well matched, and so the long combat between the Greek and 'the barbarian' (as the Hellenic people have customarily named the Bulgars, even unto Czar Ferdinand's day) proved to be the most sanguinary on record, before or since. One of the show-places for tourists in Bulgaria

is Trajan's Pass, where the ' Bulgar-killer ' (whom, by the way, a deliriously delighted populace had not yet rewarded with the title) suffered a crushing and bloody defeat by the alert Czar Samuel. Historical students are familiar with the tales of Basil's treatment of his Bulgar captives. It is recorded that on one occasion he put out the eyes of fifteen thousand prisoners, but sparing an eye to every hundredth man, so that the hundred and fifty one-eyed men might see their way to lead the totally blind rabble to Czar Samuel in Prilip, the Macedonian town captured by the Servians, the capital of the mediæval Prince Marko, whom the Serbs and the Bulgars claim as their typical hero. The historians make mention of the Czar's horror. But the Bulgars themselves were experts in eye-gouging, though never to the Christian Emperor's frightful extent. An eye for an eye. They were Old Testament Christians, those Greek and Bulgar worshippers of the Prince of Peace in the religious Middle Age. Bulgar Christians perpetrated atrocities on their fellow-creatures long before the Turk's advent. The barbaric taint reveals itself times without number in the traditional songs and legends of the people: jilted lovers tear out their ladies' eyes and drop them, with a cutting sarcasm, into the bosom of their dress; jealous husbands behead their wives or burn them alive; sons, in their irritation for some trivial cause, drag their mothers about by their hair. The frequency of political assassination, in these latter days,

in the South Slavic countries, the mere fact that tales and lays of horror such as those alluded to retain their vogue among the peasantry (who constitute the great majority of the population), may lead one to reflect that there still exists some ground for the distinction which a Bulgar or a Serb makes between his country and 'Europe.' 'I am going to Europe,' you may hear him say—as a Turk in Anatolia might say—when about to start on a journey in a certain direction.

But in restoring the old boundaries of the Byzantine Empire up to the banks of Danube, Basil II. left his Bulgarian subjects in a worse plight than he had found them. To the boyards who had submitted, and whom he pacified and flattered with courtly titles and official posts, he committed the uncontrolled government of the Bulgar townspeople and peasantry. Provided they were punctual in their remittance of tribute—extorted from a population already impoverished—they had nothing to fear from the Emperor in Constantinople. In his capacity of local administrator the Bulgar boyard was as avaricious and corrupt as his Greek colleague: Greek and Bulgar, having, as a rule, bought their offices, recouped themselves at the taxpayers' cost. The people were ground between the upper and nether millstones. It was said of the boyard class that they were no better than brigands. The situation under Byzantine rule closely resembled that of Moldavia and Wallachia, centuries later, under the Turks, when bishops and members of the higher

clergy and civil officials purchased, at extortionate prices, posts which they were permitted to hold only for short periods—the more frequent the sales the more profit for the pashas by the Golden Horn. Precisely the same system of ecclesiastical blackmail was imposed upon the Bulgarian clergy, high and low, so long as the Greek Church held the religious monopoly in the country—that is to say, until 1870. The result was rebellion—but an anarchic rebellion, resembling the South American *caudillo* wars already cited by way of illustration. Rival boyards betray each other for reward by the Emperor. One of them is stoned to death. Another is deprived of his nose and eyes. And the Emperor of the Romans is powerless to put an end to the disorder. The Greek Empire might be compared to a tree, fair and solid to look at, but worm-eaten within, and fated at the next tempestuous blast to crumble into dust. But in spite of institutional disasters, the vitality of the new Slavo-Bulgar race, which at the time we have now reached (the end of the twelfth century) had been five hundred years in process of growth, was unimpaired. They had not yet attained, in their evolution, to the stage of national cohesion. The race—a most virile one—existed. The nation, in the sense attached to the name by Czar Ferdinand's people, did not. They still needed an ablest man to keep them together, and to achieve a fresh success over chaos. And the ablest man did appear when prospects seemed blackest. He was a boyard of high character, İvan Açen the First, a

servant of the oppressive Imperial Government—just as many a patriotic Bulgar (Stambouloff himself, for one) served the Turkish Government up to the War of Liberation. Ivan the First resumed the title of Czar of the Greeks and Bulgars. Ivan Açen the Second, the greatest and nearly the last of them, is perhaps the Bulgar people's favourite. His name is familiar to every small boy and girl in the elementary schools, which Czar Ferdinand makes his special care—for he is an ardent educationist. Like Czars Simeon and Samuel before him, he cherished the great idea of a union of all the Slav principalities—Servian, Bulgarian, Bosnian—to take the place of the decaying Byzantine Empire. He was centuries before his time. But he accomplished a step in consolidating the Bulgarian people, or at any rate in developing among them the sentiment of race. The translation of the relics of St. John of Rilo from Sofia to Tirnovo was effected by the Açenides. It was a politic step. For Tirnovo was the capital, and the cause of national unity would be promoted by the pilgrimages to the shrine of Bulgaria's patron saint. Another Açenide, Czar Kaloyan—Gibbon's Calo-John, who figures, by name, in the heroic lays that have been transmitted from mouth to mouth among the people since the final collapse of the mediæval czardom—regained much of the territory which the 'Bulgar-killer' had won from Czar Samuel. He became celebrated as the 'scourge of the Romans.' But his morals were the morals of his age, and the mercen-

aries whom he employed in his successful wars with the Greeks were no more humane than the Turkish bashi-bazouks whose misdeeds have in our own time shocked Europe. The manner of his death, also, was characteristic of the age. He was assassinated by his wife, who then married her accomplice, the Czar's nephew, Boril, who in his turn paid the penalty for his crime when Ačen II., whom we have already mentioned, and who succeeded him, or some enemy perhaps acting in his interests, took the fashionable course of putting his eyes out.

In the folk-songs of the Bulgars no form of vengeance is commoner than deprivation of sight. The Christian hero, who regards the non-observance of Easter Day as a mortal sin, will have no scruple in blinding a hated rival, and dismissing him with the savage sarcasm, 'Now go and get a *gadoulka* (fiddle), and in the market-place, for money, sing my renown.'

Yet İvan Ačen, the alleged gouger of his predecessor, Boril (though the slightest touch of a dagger point would have done the business), is the humanest, most attractive, most intelligent of all the Bulgarian czars. A warrior and conqueror (the Bulgarian Empire regained its former limits during his prosperous and happy reign), he was, by preference, a man of peace. Development of industry at home, and of trade with foreign countries, was, next to the possession of Constantinople, his main ambition. This dream of possession haunted him, as it has done all the great Bulgarian czars. And in that epoch there were sound

reasons why it should. Muscovy was still in process of becoming. The Byzantine Empire was doomed. Nor was the Turk, as yet, within sight, though his movements in Anatolia were more or less notorious. And in the Balkan Peninsula there existed the material for the creation of a powerful state, to which the possession of the imperial city would be needful for trade with the East. But the so-called emperors of the 'Latin,' otherwise Frankish invaders, still in temporary occupation of Constantinople, as also the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church, defeated a plausible scheme which the Czar had formed for assuming the government of the capital in the capacity of regent during the minority of his somewhat distant relative, the Imperial heir. It was the least unpromising chance the Bulgarian czars have ever had of securing a foothold on the Golden Horn. But a small strip of country, nearly identical with that which the Bulgarian negotiators would leave in Turkish possession, separated Czar Ačen's hosts from Constantinople.

VI

FAILURE OF MEDIÆVAL CONFEDERATION

LIKE Czar Ferdinand, the last great Aĉenide was a patron of the arts. He beautified his capital, Tirnovno—as his latest successor is beautifying Sofia, a town far less favoured by nature than is the historic town on the slope of the Great Balkan. In İvan Aĉen's reign the mediæval czardom reached its zenith. Soon after his death the Greeks recaptured Macedonia, and under a succession of incapable czars, unable to restrain the boyards, whom the greatest of the Aĉenides had not only reduced to submission, but also associated with him in the public administration, united Bulgaria gradually became the prey of rival factions. And while the Bulgarian state was sinking, its neighbour, Servia, was rapidly rising to the leadership of all the Slavic races between the Danube and the three seas. Servia had found what Bulgaria had lost—a ruler of men, the sort of man needed by a people still in the early stage of its path towards nationhood. It is the advent of the great man among a people endowed with merely potential capacity for organised self-direction, that lends a peculiar interest to this epoch in the story of the Near East. The Servian great man, Stephan Dushan, who now appears on the scene, might have found a place among Carlyle's *Heroes*. He interests us here because,

though not a Bulgarian, he partially realised the dream cherished by all the great czars, Servian or Bulgarian, of a confederation of the Slavic races. To this end he began by consolidating his native Servia, in which the centrifugal tendency, already remarked as a Slav characteristic, was as active as in the neighbouring state. In neither of these states had there been a regular army, on anything resembling the modern European model. Even Czar Dushan's armies, and the Bulgar Czar Kaloyan's, were composed of semi-feudal contingents, whose co-operation could only be secured by the iron hand of a Carlylean 'Hero.' We shall see that on the field of Kossovo, at a moment when the fate of the Servian Czar Lazare, the Allies' commander-in-chief, and of Sultan Murad, hung in the balance—as Hector's and Achilles' in the scales of Zeus—the desertion of a Servian contingent made the Christian defeat a certainty. 'Down sank the scale' of Lazare's 'fated day,' when Brancovitch rode off with his ten thousand men.

And the necessity for the combined effort which the Serb king strove to achieve was more urgent than it had ever been since the first Slav and Bulgar raiders crossed the Danube. For in 1348, when he was crowned at Uskub, the great battle which decided the fate of the Christian races for the next five centuries was only forty-one years ahead. Seldom had the Greeks been formidable enemies. But the most formidable, and also the most ruthless, in the world, the Turks, were at last at hand. At the date of the Serb

king's coronation, two or three years had passed since the Turkish landing in Gallipoli. They were now ravaging Thrace and threatening Macedonia. A combined attack by the Serb and Bulgar armies under Dushan's command failed disastrously. His early death, in 1355, put a stop to further plans for a joint campaign on a larger scale, and was followed by dynastic disorders in both states. In Bulgaria the two sons of the reigning czar fought for the succession, with the result that the country was split up into a number of independent states. Worse than all, one of the independent princes—Schishman the Third, the last of his name and lineage—called in the Turks to aid him against his rivals. As lord of Central Bulgaria, and of Tirnovo, the old capital and rallying-point of the Bulgarian people, he boasted a superior degree of power and prestige. In profiting by Sultan Murad's help, he became Sultan Murad's vassal. He witnessed helplessly the occupation of one town after another by the Turks. In 1382, seven years before the decisive battle, the Turks, leaving Tirnovo unmolested, annexed Sofia. Not only had the leading Bulgarian prince become the Sultan's vassal, but Marko himself—who, though a Serb by birth, is made to figure in the Bulgarian folk-songs as the typical Bulgar, 'the incarnation of the Bulgar character,' as German writers designate him—served on Murad's side during the Sultan's conquest of Macedonia. Murad, one of the best of the early sultans, was at the same time imposing an orderly government upon

his newly won territories. A harsh system in many respects. Turkish colonists from Anatolia, soldiers from the wars settled in Thrace, Macedonia, and the central and eastern regions of Bulgaria, took possession of the larger share of the lands held by the boyards and their peasants. Historians are agreed that at least during this period the Bulgarian peasantry were treated more mildly by their new masters than by their own compatriots, the boyard landlords. But it is as certain that the Turks were merciless to all Christians whose influence they feared, or whom they suspected of disaffection. For all such persons banishment or extermination was the probable fate. But conversion to the Mohammedan faith was an infallible guarantee for security. It would be a curious revelation were it possible to trace the ancestry of the 'Turks' who at this moment inhabit Czar Ferdinand's enlarged dominions, or have been fighting him in his late campaign. It would doubtless be found that great numbers of them were the descendants of Christian Slavs—such as the Pomacks of the Bulgar-Macedonian border, who have often done their share in crushing a Macedonian rising. Conversions to Mohammedanism appear to have been wholesale among the rich class, the boyard class—as in after time was the case among the Bosnian beys, who became more Turkish than the Turks. And if the Turks often gave a Christian notable his choice between Islam and the sword, they were no worse than the Czar Boris, who, as we have already seen, slaughtered

those who refused to follow him into the Christian fold. But there was another form of conversion which the Turks had introduced into Europe, and which proved as efficacious as the innate valour of their own unmixed race, for the conquest of Bulgaria. This was the institution of the military order of janissaries (the tribute soldiers, levied upon Christian families, and brought up from boyhood as Mohammedans), briefly described by the writer in an earlier volume.¹ And the second generation of these redoubtable warriors, 'Turks' without a drop of Turkish blood in them, were mustering for the last conflict. Kossovo fight, described in the little volume already named, followed. A few years later the Turks occupied Tirnovo, and before the eyes of a captor less indulgent and humane than his grandfather Sultan Murad, the city was pillaged, its palaces set on fire, its people massacred, with all the circumstances of indignity and humiliation that for the next five centuries marked every Turkish repression of an attempt at freedom. Bulgaria ceased to exist. Of the end or the resting-place of her last czar, Schishman III., nothing is known.

But, as M. Bousquet narrates in his excellent history,² the obscure masses of the Bulgarian people escaped the moral contamination which ruined the boyard class, and through them the state. Neither in the ruling nor in the subject classes had the idea of

¹ *Turkey and the Eastern Question* (Messrs. Jack), 1913.

² *Histoire du Peuple Bulgare*, 1909.

country—of the *patria*—emerged from its rudimentary stage. The race was overwhelmed before it had the time to evolve a literature, a religious cult, a dynastic feeling, a sentiment of social solidarity, without which the stage of nationality was unattainable. Except in periods of merely mechanical concentration against a common danger, and under leaders exceptionally intelligent and masterful, the Southern Slavs, Bulgar and Serb alike, were no better than a mob, through which the solid, compact, organised mass of the Turkish invaders could rush, like a bullet through cloud. But though the Bulgar state vanished, the Bulgar himself, the man of the people, with all his rude virility, and his great capacities, latent though undisclosed, remained. We are again reminded of the similitude of the mummy wheat. Ages of oppression failed to destroy the vitality of the race. The Bulgars of Czar Ferdinand's War of Liberation are the Bulgars of the Turkish oppression. The Bulgar character is revealed in the centuries of folk-songs with a vividness unsurpassed in the corresponding productions of any other people. Forced labour, deprivation not only of public but also of domestic rights, hardships of fugitive patriots among the mountains and in the forests, massacres, capricious punishments of the most atrocious description—the themes of these folk-songs—failed to crush the silently enduring race, arrested in its slow growth—slow as the oak-tree's—gone out of the world's ken. The bursting forth of the vitality of this seemingly extinct

race, its swift advance in national coalescence and to a commanding position among the Powers of Europe, its recent exploit in the cause of human freedom and justice, its amazing progress under Czar Ferdinand—all within the short space of thirty-five years—is not the least astonishing phenomenon of the age.

VII

BULGAR CHARACTER IN THE FOLK-SONGS

To the folk-bard, to the patriot outlaw, to the monk, but principally to the first of the three, the Bulgarians owe, more than to any other special agency, the salvation, from extinction, of the spirit of their race. The folk-lays, though dating, large numbers of them, from the destruction of the czardom and the establishment of the Turkish dominion, are not of much historical value, in the narrow sense of the adjective. But as a picture of the mind and character of a people they are unique : a picture occupying five hundred years in the painting, and in a manner to be regarded as the work of the people themselves, inasmuch as the nameless bards who composed them, and from whom they were transmitted by word of mouth, were men of the people. So that these popular lays are history in a real sense. An attentive reader of these songs will often come upon an incidental allusion which, like a minute aperture revealing a landscape, will open up for him a whole social horizon. For example, in one of the most beautiful of the heroic lays, Princess Grinya tries to dissuade her husband from going forth to the battle in which his brother, Czar Schishman, the last king of the Bulgarians, and his chiefs, and a great multitude of his people, are doomed to perish. She would divert him from his purpose by the fascination of her

beauty. ' Beautiful thou art,' says the Bulgar prince, ' but thou art a Greek. What carest thou for the Bulgar people, or for me who am one of them ? ' The secular contempt of the Greeks, the intellectual *élite* of the East, for the ' Bulgar animal ' (*boulgaros apan-thrópos*) is summed up in the prince's little speech. It was as unmeasured as the Turk's. We have already made mention of the survival—even to the outbreak of the present war—of this Greek detestation, which had its origin in the early Bulgarian wars (usually victorious) with the Byzantine Empire. The rivalries in the negotiations for distribution of the Turk's lost possessions, little of which is revealed to the newspaper press, and which, as is believed, the conciliatory Czar Ferdinand is doing his best to assuage, remind one that the old jealousies still live. The folk-poetry of the Bulgars is far less known to the British public than it deserves to be. A series of representative lays, translated into English, is given in *The Shade of the Balkans*, the joint work of Dr. Dillon, Mr. Bernard, and the Bulgarian poet, Slaveikoff. M. Dozon, the French Orientalist, produced, many years ago, a series of translations from the heroic ballads. In the University of Paris M. Louis Leger has recently lectured on the legends that have clustered round Marko—that is to say, the hero as appropriated and portrayed in their own image by the Bulgars, for the Serbs, also, claim him as their own. But the most copious translations are in German—Dr. Adolf Strausz's, for example.



BULGARIAN PEASANTS DANCING THE HORO DANCE

Of the various classes into which native editors and foreign translators have arranged the Bulgarian folk-songs—heroic songs, brigand songs, songs on marriage and other social customs, mystical songs, songs of death and the other world—the first-named have been the popular favourites. ‘They are the gems of our literature,’ M. Slaveikoff says, as the outlaws whose tragical lives they describe are ‘the glory of our race.’ M. Slaveikoff himself, besides being the laureate of Bulgaria, had done notable things in the fighting line. But in this place the lays interest us less as memorials of five centuries’ warfare with the Turks than as expressions of the temperament of the race, of their character, and spiritual attitude towards the world. From this point of view they are a revelation of the Bulgar’s intense love of, and sympathy with, nature. Love of nature, of music, and the dance is innate in the very humblest of Czar Ferdinand’s subjects. It is a trait which no foreign traveller among them can fail to detect. In many a popular lay, the Samovila spares the life of a mortal who has offended her, as a reward for his sweet playing on his lute or pipe. (The Samovila is a deity, or spirit, of the brook, the hill, and the forest, with whom the Bulgarian heathen found it impossible to part when he became a Christian.) Sometimes, also, the folk-poet sings how, for the same reason, an atrocious Turk was melted into forgiveness of a Bulgar ‘brigand’ whom he had captured.

But the love of nature is the trait constantly in

evidence, and love in the sense of sympathy, mystic communion, between the two. Father Balkan draws his robe of cloud over his face, 'when the land is dark with the smoke of burning villages.' More quaintly, he droops his chin on his breast, and dreams of the fate that awaits the race in the far-off years. Or he rejoices to hear the music of the outlaws' swords and the murmurous twanging of their bows. And the 'dear Greenwood' bows her head in sorrow for the children whom the Turk has made orphans. A voïvode (captain of an outlaw band) passing by 'the little forest' in summer tide is amazed to see that she is withered. To his questioning she replies that neither frost nor fire has done it, but only the apparition of the Turk, as he marched thereby with his band of captives—youthful heroes, wives, maidens, and children. In no literature is the pathetic fallacy more poignantly expressed. The Greenwood is the outlaw's mother, or bride, or sister—as the Balkan is his father. The bride arrays herself in her green robe and flowers for his coming, on or immediately after St. George's day, when the leaves are coming out, and the haïdouk (outlaw) bands are betaking them to their haunts from their winter hiding-places in the villages. And she sorrows when her haïdouk, wearied of his romantic existence, returns to the commonplace life of civilisation. The forest sounds are to him a mystic language unintelligible to all save her lovers. Like Siegfried in the *Lay of Nibelungs*, he understands the speech of the forest birds. Some of the most touch-

ing passages in the heroic songs relate how a raven, or falcon, whom the hero had befriended, sheltered him when left wounded after a battle, brought him tidings of his kindred, and carried to his home the token of his approaching end.

The Bulgar's deep delight in nature finds expression in another class of charming songs, associated not with the outlaw's life, but with the everyday domesticities. Such are the songs about holiday trips made by husband and wife to their relatives, whom, perhaps, they have not seen since their marriage. One of the charms of these songs is that the personages in them are sometimes of princely rank. They are as homely in their preparations for their jaunt across country as any labouring rustics. Even Prince Marko himself looks on cheerily while the wife and her servant folk load the cart outside with the necessary wrappings and refreshments. It is a revelation of the 'democratic' character of the Bulgars. There are no 'classes' among them. There are only 'masses.' The Turks wiped out the classes, or converted them to Mohammedanism. If ever there are to be dukes and marquises in the peasant czardom, it is about time for His Majesty King Ferdinand to begin. Well, we have seen the husband sauntering about his cart and horses. And now they have started, just before sunrise. They always do, these trippers, with their affectionate eye to Eôs the Rosy-fingered. The last star has winked itself out in the blue ether. The morning glow steals through the tree-tops. One hears the wheels clatter

in the depths of the forest, and then the wife's song, renewing the romance of their youth.

All unsurpassably idyllic. But, by itself, an incomplete picture of the Bulgar character. For the Greenwood and her hero-lover sometimes congratulate each other on atrocities to which they have been parties. When Liuben bids farewell to his 'dear Greenwood,' he boasts of his exploits, that have made countless wives and children widows and orphans. Often does the haïdouk figure like a Robin Hood, relieving the rich of their superfluous wealth, and distributing it among the poor. To this end he plunders Turkish treasure-convoys. He sets Christian prisoners at liberty, after slaying their Turk captors. But he is also guilty of cruelties such as would send a thrill of horror through Robin Hood, with whom certain writers, such as M. Dozon, loosely compare him : for the heroes of the lays are but the glorified personifications (when they are not actual personages) of the Bulgar people, in whom tenderness and ruthlessness are curiously blended. His forest birth, like Robin Hood's 'among the gilly flowers,' too often constitutes his chief or only claim to comparison with the English outlaw. Robin, sings the English folk-poet,

' Would never do company harm
That any woman was in ' ;

not to the mistress of ' fair Kirkley Hall ' who had lured him to his death,—

' I never hurt woman in all my life,
Nor man in woman's company.'

There are splendid things, enchanting things, in the haïdouk lays, but you will find it hard to detect in them any such note as that. Or as this :—

‘The Percy leaned him on his sword,
 And saw the Douglas dee,
 He took the dead man by the hand
 And said wo is me for thee,
 To have saved thy life I would have given
 My landes for years three,
 For a better man of heart nor of hand
 Was not in the North Countree.’

It is somewhat of a surprise to meet in these lays with a wholly chivalrous person—chivalrous in the best sense—like the young hero Golonese, who, refusing all reward for the rescue of a stranger lady in distress, declares proudly that the trust reposed in him by those who requested him to undertake the business was his exceeding great reward. It may be pointed out that boy heroes, child heroes even, often supplant the mature warriors in the Bulgar folk’s affections. The feats these youngsters perform are astonishing. They are miracles of precocity. They belong to the immortal family of Jack the Giant-Killer and the beanstalk boy. And they are jovial, helpful souls. Again, the Ban Strahinya, one of the fighters at Kossovo, behaves like a chivalrous gentleman in his treatment of his wife, who not only ran away with the Turk, but who, with her paramour, conspired to put him to death. Her virtuous relatives seriously offered to slice her in pieces, and got their knives ready for

the operation. But, as already indicated, such manifestations of the chivalrous spirit are exceptional. One hero murders his lady-love and benefactress because his boon companions make sport of him for some flaw in her comeliness. Another because she refuses to marry him. And sometimes the hero's fond mother gently remonstrates with him for his crime, on the ground that the victim would have been useful as a housemaid. The rank and file naturally are not morally superior to the heroes they admire, and celebrate in their village songs. A British wife-kicker is mildness itself in comparison with many an atrocious offender painted in ballads of Bulgar domestic interiors. The professional stroller, with a crowd round about him beside the village well, or under the village tree, sings—sings, remember—how a model husband devised a hideous, unmentionable form of death for his wife because she bore no children, and how he invited the neighbours to call for the occasion. Even though the horrors sung or recited be imaginary, they are an indication of the *morale* of the race at a low stage of its development. But let us weigh the matter. In the first place, it is a primitive stage, though represented in songs transmitted to modern times. In the second place, the existence of these repellent ballads leaves undiminished the lustre of the heroic lays, and the beauty of the nature songs, the joyousness of the festival songs, and the profound pathos of the songs on death and the other world. The emotions, passions, and ideas

of the mind of the race of which this poesy is the exhalation are in a state of unstable equilibrium. Or they are as chemical ingredients that have not yet coalesced—like the oxygen and hydrogen in water. They are the spiritual analogue to the separatist anarchy in politics that gave the Turk his chance. But the evil ingredients are being thrown off. And perhaps the Bulgars are pretty much like other people. In the European soul—not to specify any one national incarnation of it—‘the ape and the tiger’ still have comfortable room for themselves. Instead of throwing them out, we let them ‘die out.’

And if we go back a few centuries in our own history, with some splendid ‘Minstrelsy’ for guidance—particularly the minstrelsy of the romantic Anglo-Scottish Border—we shall find many a compeer of the gallant ones who murder and pillage all through the Bulgar epos. Such was Edom o’ Gordon, who, having nothing better to do, raided Rodes Castle while its master was absent, and because its lady refused to yield to his commands—criminal as well as merely predatory—burnt her and her children alive. Or Lamkin, the mason—‘as good a mason As ever hewed a stane’—who with the connivance of the nurse—‘a fause limmer As e’er hung on a tree’—slew Lady Weare and her infant, because his wages were in arrears. Or the brother-in-law in ‘The Banks of Yarrow,’ who, having to fight a duel with his sister’s husband, hid nine assassins in ambush, and with their assistance killed him. Such were the seven foresters

who slew 'Johnnie o' Braidislee'; and the three 'fause Ha's' who massacred Parcy Reed, their comrade in a hunting trip. The three Halls did it exactly in the manner often described by the Bulgar folk-poets :

'They've stown the bridle aff his steed,
And they've put some water in his lang gun ;
They've fixed his sword within his sheath,
That out again it winna come.'

These songs of war, love, adventure, social custom, and the domestic hearth are a curious record of mental furnishings acquired in the career of the race. Their childish cosmogony, their nightmare monstrosities belong to the crudest period of 'primitive culture'—to borrow Sir E. B. Tylor's expression. Spiritual luggage, perhaps reminiscent of the cradle of the race in Tartary, or of their Scythian wanderings. When, after reaching Europe, the Bulgars became converts to the Byzantine Church, one could not always tell exactly whether Elias and the other saints whom they borrowed were Christians or pagans : the Virgin herself became a co-partner—not always a directing one—with the pagan gods. Elias became a Græco-Tartar Zeus—a character which has recently suggested to the Bulgarian airmen the idea of making him their patron saint. Next neighbours to the Greeks, they 'lifted' a good many of their myths : and Bulgar deities could cheat and lie with the best of Homer's immortals. Orpheus was their favourite—naturally, for the Orphic Hebrus is the

Bulgar-Thracian river Maritza now famed in the wars. Never does a Bulgar hero in his wanderings play, or sing, but the trees bend their heads, and the wild creatures of the woods follow him. The Bulgar's superhuman beings are more vulnerable than the Greek's: when Vukashin thrusts at his son Marko, who has taken refuge behind a church screen, the father discovers that he has stabbed an angel—who forthwith bleeds profusely. No less materialistic are the notions of the unseen world, as in the quaint songs, in which messages to those who have gone before, about the harvest, about the family fortunes good or bad, about children grown up—since then—are committed to the dying. Or in songs of death in youth, and the departing soul lamenting her fate, as Hector's before the Scæan gates:

‘ὄν πότμον γοόωσα, λιπούσ’ ἀδροτήτα καὶ ἦβην.’

Or in the song of the mother, sad and blind in Hades, ‘as she was in this world,’ but who ‘will remember thee and rejoice when she hears thy voice.’

It is a subject as vast as it is fascinating, but the foregoing outline may afford a general idea of the Bulgar temperament and character.

As remarked in an earlier page, many writers have adopted the hero Marko of the folk-songs as the typical Bulgar. Other writers reject the Bulgarian claim to the monopoly of him. But the fact that he was the son of a Servian king does not affect the real point at issue, which is, that the Bulgar bards and

people, in appropriating him, attributing to him virtues and achievements that may not have been real, ever keeping him in their mind's eye, created a Prince Marko in their own image.¹ The Servian folk-poets, of course, appropriated him. And it is interesting to observe how the two creations differ. The rougher, ruder Bulgar hero and the more refined Serb hero differ precisely as their respective races.

¹ 'Das bulgarische Volk hat diesen seinen Nationalhelden ganz nach seinem Bilde geschaffen. Wer den Marko des Epos characterisiert, der characterisiert zugleich das bulgarische Volk. . . . Was den Character Marko's anbelangt, so können wir getrost sagen, dass dieser die getreue Copie des Characters des bulgarischen Volkes ist' (Strausz's *Bulgarische Volksdichtungen*).

VIII

MARKO AS THE TYPICAL BULGAR

OF the countless ballads on Prince Marko, many of them containing hundreds of lines, and which are sung and recited among Czar Ferdinand's subjects to this day, only the shortest account is here possible, and that only as an indication of the national character. The national hero is a compound of strength and weakness, tenderness and brutality. He can put forth enormous energy in the service of humanity, and loves his ease—especially in 'mine inn.' He is the most arrant toper in South Slavic story. Sometimes, when his oppressed countrymen need his aid, they have to hunt him up in a wine shop. His sensitiveness to music and to natural beauty is, we have already shown, a national trait. He is kind to the lower animals, and to his 'brothers,' the birds of the mountains and the forests, who relieve him in his sore distress, as he does them. In one of the songs he rescues a wild bird sitting aloft, guarding her young, although the flames of the tree set on fire during a battle have already scorched her wings. He takes the wounded bird home to his mother, Euphrosyne, the gentlest, most radiant personage in Bulgar folk-poesy. Marko's worship of his mother is the finest trait in his character. He kisses the forehead of his horse Sarac, after or before his pursuit of

an enemy, now a mortal, now a superhuman being. He chides a friend's ill usage of a horse, because, says he, the poor creature is not morally responsible. He is capable of romantic friendship. When, through any unintentional fault of his, his friend suffers disaster, his grief and remorse are inconsolable. Yet this tender-hearted hero knocks out a princess's teeth by way of retaliation for an imaginary offence on her prince's part, and urges his steed—the aforesaid Sarac—to trample upon her. He is guilty of many brutalities as heinous. In a ballad of great poetic beauty he treacherously slays the Croatian Star-Maiden, a heroine who, instead of promising to marry him, made light mockery of him. On the entreaty of the Greek Emperor of Constantinople he goes crusading against the 'Black Arabs' (the Turks) in Anatolia, is captured, is imprisoned for many years in the Turkish emir's dungeon. The Turk's daughter falls in love with him, and he with her. Secretly she conveys meat and drink to the starveling captive. She plans his escape. He promises her a happy life in 'the Bulgar land.' They take to flight. And in the Bulgar land the unstable lover, wearying of her, gets his people to kill her. Wandering, knight-errant wise, over the Balkans from Albania to the Euxine, from the Danube to the Ægean, he sets free Christian slaves, and slaughters their oppressors; he feeds and clothes the hungry, and divides his money among them. He sings the Turkish Sultan's beard, as no Christian dog had ever done before, or has done

since. And he does it in the Sultan's own palace in Stamboul—by anachronism, for Constantinople was first occupied by the Turks sixty years after Marko's death. The Sultan had prohibited the Christians from wearing green, and Marko went clothed in green for an interview with the Sultan. He cut off the head of a 'Black Arab' who had been told off to assassinate him, and threw it at the Sultan's feet. And the Sultan so admired his bravery that he made him a present of the town of Uskub in Macedonia—another instance of anachronism. Yet this Christian hero served with the Turks in their wars against the Christians.

But the contradiction is more attributable to the anarchy of the age than to any perversity in the Bulgar hero. The Christian chiefs, at internecine strife, sometimes found the Sultan, now installed in Adrianople, a more trustworthy ally than the Emperor in Constantinople. Robbed of his patrimony in his native Servia, Marko went over to the Turks. Though so many of the tales concerning him are legendary, it seems certain that he fought on the Turkish side at the battle of Kossovo. However, his principal rôle is that of a Christian liberator. In the lays of his adventures there are many episodes of rare poetic beauty—as in the imagining of his ride through the heavens, with the swiftness of the Valkyries, on his magical horse, Sarac, in pursuit of the Vila who had struck down his comrade, Milosh, and whom he overtook and hurled to earth. The tale of his taming the

colt, Sarac—how the colt reared and bucked and galloped wildly about in the vain attempt to pitch him off, and how Sarac took a swim in the sea that he might drown him—is vigorously realistic. Having got the better of Sarac, he takes him off to be shod at a blacksmith's in Salonika, where he refreshes himself in his customary Falstaffian manner, whilst the blacksmith is occupied with an immediately pressing engagement. The ballad says that the blacksmith's shop was in 'the long street.' That must mean Vardar Street, which presents to-day pretty much the appearance it did centuries ago. Many a Bulgarian soldier lately strolling in Vardar Street could recite the legend. Nor would it be difficult for him to find a farrier's smithy recalling the folk-bard's picture.

He is, on the whole, a most genial soul, this 'image of the Bulgarian people.' A mediæval Kipling could write a charming tale about him and his two cronies, Milosh and Milan—'soldiers three'—sauntering through the forest where the 'Black Arab' lurked, spinning heroic yarns, striking up a song. Marko was killed in battle in 1392, three years after Kossovo. He was on the Turkish side, but with a heavy heart, according to the legend—wherein it is related that he prayed God for victory to the Christians or death for himself. Some said he died in the battle. The peasants believed that the Vilas carried him away to a mountain cave, and that there he was not dead but asleep; that his horse, Sarac, browsed on

the moss in the cave, that his sword was stuck in the roof up to the hilt—but that the sword was imperceptibly extricating itself as the centuries passed away, and that at the sound of its fall the hero would start up, mount Sarac, and sally forth to free the land from the Turk.

IX

NURSING THE VITAL SPARK

FOR nearly five hundred years, counting from the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Bulgarian people, as a people, were non-existent. There were only the comminuted fragments of what once was a people, growing more localised, more isolated, as the years passed, and developing linguistic varieties, which Czar Ferdinand's educationists, with the King's sympathy and encouragement, have during the last twenty years been welding into a literary, national speech.

As already said, the sentiment of a common race was kept alive in the monasteries, which became exceedingly numerous in Bulgaria in and after the eleventh century, and by the folk-poets, with their lays on the wars with the Greeks and the Turks, and the strife between Cross and Crescent, which could only be ended by the expulsion of one or the other. To the monk's share in maintaining the racial sentiment we shall refer more at length in an account of the monastery of Mount Rilo and Czar Ferdinand's visits to the spot. The *tchorbadji's* share in it may now be mentioned. The Christian *tchorbadji* is the village or district notable. Because of his means and of his social position he was the chosen intermediary

between his brethren, the Christian 'herd' (*rayah*), and the local Turkish governor. He had to see, usually at his own risk—a serious one when the governor chanced to be exceptionally avaricious—to the punctual payment of the taxes. If the *rayah* had any complaint or petition to make, they made it through their *tchorbadji*. This official was supposed to know the exact circumstances and tribute-paying capacity of every one of his co-religionists. The delicacy and the peril of his position may readily be understood. A weak, or selfish, or ambitious *tchorbadji* was always tempted to sacrifice his people's interests to the Turkish governor's whenever these came into collision. And in the popular poetry of the Bulgars—which, let it be repeated, is the true history of the Bulgarian people during the ages of the Turkish oppression—there are numerous instances of *tchorbadji* infidelity to the Christian side of the trust; and in the Servian ballads as well. But, on the other hand, the Christian official, if a tactful man, had it in his power to mitigate his co-religionists' lot; and the songs show that he did it, even when he seemed (but only seemed) to fall in with the Turk's wishes. He might be able to do it all the more easily if he and the Turk were—as often happened—bound to each other as 'Brothers,' in the form of a chivalrous union existing among the Southern Slavs, by which persons unrelated by blood became 'brothers' or 'sisters,' or 'brothers and sisters,' consecrated to their mutual service. In the Slavic ballads there is

no character more beautifully heroic than the sworn 'brother' or 'sister' 'in God.'

But whatever else he may have done, the *tchorbadji* was the literary, and political monk's co-worker, and the bard's and the *häidouk's*, in keeping alive the suppressed flame of race sentiment. The writer had the privilege of acquaintance with men of his class during part of the sanguinary, miserable period in Bulgaria and Macedonia preceding the Young Turk revolution. One of them was a first-rate reciter of heroic ballads, and open-handed friend of the *comitajis*—the modern representatives of the old-time *häidouks*—many of whom were just then on the war-path, in Mount Pirin and the Rhodope. It would be difficult to exaggerate the effect of these domestic entertainments upon a people among whom it was customary (particularly with the Serbs) for the host and his guests to sing or recite in turn. During the Servian outbreaks in the middle of the nineteenth century the authorities—so it is recorded—deemed it prudent to prohibit recitations, at least in public, on the ground that they filled too many young men, who might in other wise serve their country, with a thirst for the guerilla life. Yet, in truth, the 'apostles' of the Bulgar idea could leave no means of propagandism untried. It is matter for surprise that the popular spirit survived at all. An attempted insurrection in the last years of the sixteenth century ended in the slaughter of large numbers, and the flight of many others into Roumania. The lot of the Bulgar *rayah*

grew harder, and ever harder, as time passed—and that, in the main, for reasons that were as creditable to the early sultans as discreditable to their successors. The early sultans took an active part in the government of their dominions, and saw to it that justice (of a rough sort, no doubt, to modern notions) was done. But their indolent successors, in abandoning the routine of government to local administrators, subjected the people to a tyranny as merciless as it was irresponsible. Between Turkish oppression, oppression by the Orthodox Church, flight of persecuted *rayah*, and the immigration of Anatolians, Kurds, Circassians, and Albanians to replace the runaways and seize their property, the Bulgar population might have been well-nigh exterminated. The policy of extermination was tried in the later years of Abdul Hamid's reign. It found favour among the extremists of the Young Turk party. Shortly after the decisive defeat of the Turks before Vienna in 1683, there was a very considerable retreat of the Bulgar peasantry to the northern side of the Danube. Irritated by their recent failure, the Turks became more severe in dealing with disaffection. The Bulgars—in fact, all the Slavic population of the Balkans—would have rejoiced in annexation by Russia. But for Napoleon's jealousy of Russia that solution of the Balkan question would in all probability have been effected.

As to the Orthodox attempt to destroy the Bulgar name and nationality, only a few brief particulars may

be added to what has been recorded in an earlier page.¹ The mediæval Bulgarian czars had liberally endowed their national conventual houses at Mount Athos. In these houses were stored vast numbers of documents on the history of the race, written in the Slavic language. It would be a marvel if they did not contain abundance of the sterile, logomachic stuff, the burning of which, in the Alexandrian library, was regarded by Gibbon as a praiseworthy act. But they also contained much that historians in a future age would have found extremely useful. The Orthodox patriarchs and their bishops, supreme at Athos, destroyed quantities of Bulgar records kept in the monasteries. Early in the nineteenth century Joachim, Orthodox Bishop of Sofia, carried out a similar visitation in his diocese. A collection of Bulgarian MSS. discovered at Tirnovo, the ancient, venerated, beautiful capital of czars, was about the same period destroyed by the metropolitan of the district. No one knows what valuable material it might have contained. As M. Bousquet² remarks, it was an unprecedented act of vandalism, meant to destroy the very soul of a people. It was an Orthodox bishop who, during the Russo-Turkish troubles of 1828-9, gave the Turks timely warning of an intended rising in the Great Balkan. The civilised Greek and the barbarous Turk were colleagues in the attempt to destroy Bulgarian nationality.

And to the two associates—now separated for ever

¹ Page 4.

² *Histoire du Peuple Bulgare*, 1909.

—it did seem as if they had succeeded in breaking the dour, silent, obstinate Bulgarian spirit. The number of Bulgarians who during the larger part of the nineteenth century took refuge on the other side of the Danube must have largely exceeded that of the Macedonians—estimated at over three hundred thousand—who flocked into the Principality from 1880 onwards. Stambouloff himself—who tried to rule Prince Ferdinand, and came to grief in the effort—sometimes despaired of his people's future. That was in his earlier days, when he organised and led bands of conspirators. The Bulgarian rustics' apparent indifference astonished him, threw him into fits of depression. Even the Macedonians he denounced as worse than lukewarm—'treacherous.' Yet the spirit of new Bulgaria was all the while in a state of incubation. And the Turks had driven the rebellious spirit outwards as well as inwards. The refugees in Bessarabia, at Bucharest, at Odessa, Moscow, St. Petersburg, and elsewhere were the people who would apply the match to the gunpowder mine upon which the Turk, in the years preceding Alexander the Second's war, trod securely. There's nothing quieter, some one has said, than a powder barrel a moment or two before the explosion. In taking its revolutionary impulse from abroad, the Bulgarians were following precedent. Revolutionary Greece was influenced to a large extent by Servia, where she had active sympathisers. And Bulgaria, in her turn, influenced desponding Macedonia. During the

twenty years following the Crimean War, the patriots abroad, in their secret clubs and committees, organised the Herzegovinian rising, which led to the Bulgarian agitation and the despatch of the Zankoff-Balabanoff mission to the European chancelleries. The mission was an intimation to Europe that a Bulgarian people was in existence, and would have some day to be reckoned with. The deputies denied that 'Bulgarian slavery was necessary to the peace and the progress of Europe.' 'Our people,' they said, 'are numerous, have capacity for intellectual, moral, and social progress, and an independent life.' They demanded autonomy. The result was the Constantinople Conference.

The mission was interesting, in the first place, as a direct, personal appeal to Europe of a people who less than half a century earlier were scarcely known to exist; and secondly, as an unconscious step to the final assumption of the policy of self-help through which a future Prince Ferdinand¹ was destined to save the Bulgarian state, and to the Balkan Alliance which has liberated all but a small remnant of the Turkish Empire in Europe. At the conference the new policy was partly defeated by the old diplomacy, with its imbecile 'principle' of the 'integrity' of an incurable Power in a state of chronic spoliation by its self-appointed guardians.

The moral of Bulgarian history since Prince Alexander's advent and Prince Ferdinand's is that

¹ Prince Ferdinand was at this time in his fifteenth year.



CZAR FERDINAND IN NATIONAL COSTUME

the confederal plan of two 'autonomous' Bulgarian provinces, under Christian governors appointed by the Sultan and approved by the Great Powers, with a gendarmerie and local representative councils, would not have long delayed an insurrection for national union. However that might have been, the plan was outflanked by Midhat's Constitution, which was in its turn shelved by the Sultan as soon as the plan was dead and buried.

The sequel is too well known to require more than a summary of a few lines by way of connection in this narrative. Russia, irritated by the constitutional sham (whose repetition, thirty-two years later, has caused the downfall of European Turkey), declared war. The war ended in the Russo-Turkish Treaty of San Stefano, which created a Greater Bulgaria nearly identical with the mediæval empire. With 'Peter's dream' in their minds, and resolved to prevent Bulgaria from becoming a Russian protectorate, the Powers in July 1878 substituted for the San Stefano Treaty the Berlin Treaty, which placed Northern Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia under separate governments, and restored Macedonia to the Turk—with another imbecility, an incredible one, in the form of a friendly admonition to the Turk to be kind to the *rayah*. Russia accepted the task of provisional administrator. The repair and reconstruction of the Bulgarian edifice after the Turk's departure proceeded with most commendable rapidity. Police, military, judicial, financial, fiscal reforms were intro-

duced. Generous, maternal Russia lent her officers—hundreds of them—to create the first Bulgarian army, and they had not been long at work before they learnt they had first-rate raw material to work upon. Indeed, they might have learnt it during the war, when those uncouth Bulgar peasants, in their cowhide sandals and sheepskin coats, volunteered for the Russian ranks. In eight months a Constituent Assembly drew up the first scheme of a Bulgarian Constitution, for which a more democratic one, based on universal suffrage, was immediately substituted. At this assembly all classes and ‘interests’ were represented. Bulgarians journeyed from distant lands to take their places in it, and many a *comitaji* leader who had fought the Turk in the Old Balkan and the Greenwood. The Bulgarian monasteries—silent, patient nurses of the spirit of the race during the Turkish oppression—had their representatives there. And in the multitude of these representatives of the new state there were Turkish delegates—among them a doctor of the law of Islam. This took place in Tirnovo, the old capital—at whose name a chord in every Bulgarian heart responds—in the spring of 1879, four hundred and eighty-six years after the Turks captured the city.

X

FIRST GREAT RENT IN THE BERLIN TREATY

A FEW months later Prince Alexander of Battenberg, unanimously chosen, 'with loud acclamations,' by the national representatives, reigned in Sofia, and the peasant state started on its wonderful career.

Prince Alexander was Russia's nominee. He became her victim. For during the larger part of his seven years' reign he was acting in opposition to her plans of supremacy over the newly liberated territories. Yet he steadily proclaimed his loyalty to the Russian Czar, and at the crisis of his career, when the fate of Bulgaria trembled in the balance, he carried his subservience to the point of abject humiliation. Prince Alexander's career interests us for its effect—unconsidered by him, at least in its earlier stages—in emphasising the nascent spirit of independence and self-assertion among his subjects. It was an illustration of the futility of verbal logic contending with the logic of things, *la force des choses*. It was under the headstrong, inconsequent, though amiable and fascinating Prince Alexander that Bulgaria achieved her first great feat in European politics—namely, her first breach in the treaty to which she owed her existence as a state. Alike under Prince Ferdinand and his predecessor, Bulgaria has grown by repeated violations of it. The methods of the two rulers

differed, but the great end—the liberation of Bulgaria from control by the Power to which she owed her existence—was the same. In the struggle for release from the Russian shackles, the aspiration of the race determined the rulers' diplomacy. A brief sketch of the internal dissensions within the newly born Principality and of the conflict with Russia will explain the nature and extent of the task which the far more capable, experienced, accomplished, and prudent Prince Ferdinand inherited from his unlucky predecessor.

Lovable and brave though Prince Alexander was (he gave abundant proofs of his personal courage in his short campaign against Servia), his prejudices, no less than his youth (he was twenty-two years of age at his accession) and imperfect education, disqualified him to a serious extent for the rôle of ruler over a democratic state. His education was mainly military—nor thorough even at that, for he was but a lieutenant when he became Prince of Bulgaria. Imbued with the narrow notions of a small German court, he had no love for parliamentary institutions. He abhorred anything savouring of demagoguery. His first Parliament, elected in October 1879, he abruptly dismissed, after it had lived a five or six weeks' existence of noisy quarrelling between Liberals, Radicals, and Conservatives, principally on the question of Eastern Roumelia. The Radicals were in active sympathy with the Roumeliotes, who were agitating, in an orderly manner, for union with the Principality.

The Conservatives discouraged a movement which they considered premature, even if laudable. Their attitude pleased Russia. Yet Russia at San Stefano had carved out, on paper, a Great Bulgaria, including Eastern Roumelia and Macedonia. But since then Bulgaria had shown signs of 'ingratitude'—of an independent spirit not to be encouraged in a country meant to be a strategic outpost of Holy Russia. So Russia denounced the new Bulgarian ambition, stood up for fidelity to the Berlin Treaty, to which she had unwillingly submitted, as an injustice to herself.

This arbitrary act of dissolution was his first mistake. The Russian party in the Chamber, and their allies in St. Petersburg, rather spoiled him with flattering his strength of will. He threatened to dismiss the next assembly, and even to suspend free discussion in the press and on the platform; but he abandoned this Cæsarean project only to improve upon it early in 1881, the third year of his reign, by suspending the Constitution and substituting for it a Septennate, with a small council in place of the dismissed legislature. He was sincere in his belief that his subjects were not ripe for parliamentary government, and that in the seven years of the impartial administration he guaranteed them, they would be able to judge of the sort of constitution which suited them best. There was something to be said for the Prince's view of the situation. The majority of the deputies were countryfolk, more attached to individual agitators than to political programmes of

large and liberal outlook, and without the smallest experience of administration except what they might have picked up, in their respective villages, during the Turkish rule, in the small periodical assemblies at which the Christians were more or less at liberty—generally less—to express their opinions. So in the first stage of their parliamentary education honourable members were almost habitually anarchic and violent in debate. And being of an extremely frugal race, they grudged even necessary expenses—as for the Prince's palace, that to the fastidious Prince Ferdinand would have been no better than a dog-hole. (In fact, it was in a wretched state when he did enter it.) Honestly desirous to serve, to the best of his ability, his adopted country, Prince Alexander, though energetic, made little progress. From Czar Alexander he borrowed war ministers and many other departmental chiefs, and capriciously got rid of them, to deal in like manner with their successors. He played with the Constitution as with a toy, breaking it open to see what was inside. In the end he wore out the imperial patience. The clue to his contradictory conduct is to be found in the attitude of his Russian advisers. Prince Alexander needed a friend, not a master. But the Czar's representatives in Bulgaria performed, without disguise, the part of autocrats. Prince Alexander's eyes were opened. He had become universally, bitterly unpopular, not only because of his *coup d'état*, but even more because of his (supposed) surrender to Russia. Early in the third year of what

was to have been the educational Septennate of the Bulgarian people, Prince Alexander (with his characteristic precipitancy) restored the Constitution. His Russian ministers advised him to take the step. But it is conceivable that they were actuated by a desire to win the popularity which never had been theirs, and which the Prince had forfeited.

But Prince Alexander more than regained his popularity by his bold resolution in the Roumeliote cause. After years of pacific but determined agitation the revolutionists in Philippopolis, the capital of the province, proclaimed the insurrection. 'Remember, sons of Bulgaria,' so the document ran, 'that you are degraded by serving under the crescent, the flag of those who have persecuted us for five centuries.' This was in September 1885. The Prince, taken by surprise, hesitated. But Stambouloff, now President of the Chamber, won him over with the blunt warning, 'The Union is accomplished. There are two roads for you, one to Philippopolis, the other to Darmstadt.' The Prince chose the former. And in a proclamation from historic Tirnovo he signed himself Prince of Northern and Southern Bulgaria—the first rent, and a tremendous one, in the Berlin Treaty. Two Powers to whom he had promised to respect the *status quo* accused him of treachery. But the force of things was too great both for him and for them. In the words of Mr. Beaman,¹ Stambouloff's friend and biographer, Bulgaria, 'that up till then had never

¹ *Life of Stambouloff*, 1895.

been taken *au sérieux*, 'took the plunge': 'before the 18th September Bulgaria was a quantity unknown, and unsuspected except to a very few; from that date she took her place among the pieces on the chessboard with a definite value.' Who should punish the law-breaker? Turkey? But if Turkey stirred, Macedonia would rebel. England, France, Germany? But these were agreed to leave the matter in Russia's hands. And if Russia stirred, so would Austria. And as 'the Chancelleries' feared each other, the Bulgarians were left unmolested. Again the force of things, too strong for verbal logic. Lord Salisbury himself reminded the Turkish Government that in the course of time even 'venerated' treaties must yield to general expediency. Russia's punishment of Prince Alexander was to withdraw all her officers from the newly-formed, half-trained Bulgarian army—a deprivation that seemed to have left the Bulgarians defenceless before the Servians, who now, to preserve the Balkanic equilibrium (by helping themselves to a slice of Turkish territory), declared war upon them. It did not strike the Servians that they themselves were violating the 'venerated' treaty when they made war upon a state tributary (as the Bulgarian Principality was) to Turkey. Alexander's swift victory threw his people into transports of enthusiasm. The Prince was idolised. Russia's desertion and the Servian invasion had the effect of kindling into flame the awakening national sentiment of the Bulgar race. Russia's hatred of the intractable Prince became im-

placable. The Russian party in Sofia, having made themselves masters of the artillery, kidnapped the Prince, sent him out of the country, and set up a provisional government, on the ground that the Bulgarians were unfit for constitutional rule. But the bulk of the army and the nation *en masse* supported Stambouloff, who dispersed the usurping directory, and recalled 'our heroic and well-beloved Prince.' It was now that Prince Alexander committed the irreparable and inexplicable error of his life. On his return to Bulgaria he telegraphed to the Czar (without Stambouloff's knowledge) that he was ready to return his crown to his Imperial Majesty, from whom he had received it. Another violation of the 'venerated' treaty, inasmuch as he owed his crown to Europe and the Porte. The Czar's reply destroyed the last hope of reconciliation. Alexander abdicated. A Regency was established. The Russian party, both in Bulgaria and the Empire, with the Czar's commissioner, Kaulbars, at their head, made a last and desperate effort to secure control of the Bulgarian state. The commissioner had to be protected from popular violence. The Regency, backed by the people and the army, suppressed a series of local conspiracies planned by Russian officers. An offer of the Bulgarian throne made to Prince Vladimir of Denmark was declined. Prince Charles of Roumania was approached. He also refused, not, however, from a sense of the many perils involved in governing the new state, but because he feared lest his consent should

endanger the peace of Europe. Stambouloff, who had cherished the dream of a Balkanic Confederation, regretted Prince Charles's decision. He made his next offer to Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg, of whose ability, intelligence, accomplishments, and high character he had received sundry reports.

XI

THRONE OFFERED TO PRINCE FERDINAND

MAXIMILIAN CHARLES LEOPOLD MARIE FERDINAND, to give him his full name, was in his twenty-sixth year. He was the son of Prince Auguste of Saxe-Coburg and Princess Clementine, daughter of Louis Philippe, King of the French. But though an Austrian German on the father's side, he was 'his mother's son,' a Prince of the true Orleanist stamp. A certain rigidity of manner and a certain quality of dogged tenacity perhaps indicate the Teutonic element in his descent. But in so far as the influences of heredity are concerned, the Czar, whom his subjects proudly recognise as the 'first of good Bulgarians,' is nine-tenths a Frenchman. Being the grandson of the Citizen King, whose democratic sympathies he inherits, the young Orleanist Prince was more or less closely allied to almost every ruling House in Europe. Clearly the young Prince's family connections would have satisfied a people more fastidious than Stambouloff's little nation of rustics. To the Bulgarians it was essential that their future ruler should be a foreigner. In the first place, they had no royalty, no aristocracy of their own. They were a rural democracy levelled down by the Turks. In the second place, the sanguinary contests between the two princely families of Servia

taught the Bulgars that their neighbours would have done more wisely had they chosen a foreigner. In the third place, the foreigner might become a good Bulgar in course of time, and the founder of a really native dynasty whose position nobody would dispute. But would the youthful 'Coburger,' as he was called then and for years after, accept the invitation? To tell the truth, the Bulgarian envoys, already tired of hawking their vacant throne all over Europe, and getting a No-thank-you for reply, were in a despondent mood when they started in search of Prince Ferdinand.

The three envoys—M. Caltcheff, M. Grekoff, and M. Stoiloff, from one of whom the writer received his information of what took place—'ran Prince Ferdinand to earth' (to use the same gentleman's expression) at the Coburg Palace, Vienna, where he was living with his mother. Princess Clementine treated the envoys with the gracious hospitality for which she was famed. Prince Ferdinand was polite and sympathetic, and 'in every way charming'—but said 'No.' To appoint him without the previous consent of 'the Powers' and the Porte would be to violate the Berlin Treaty. 'But we cannot wait,' the envoys pleaded, 'the Powers have left the matter in Russia's hands, and Russia neither approves our choice of Prince Waldemar nor suggests any other.' The Prince could only repeat that, if 'the Powers' were agreeable, he would be disposed to accept the invitation. This was in the

last month of 1886. The envoys, greatly discouraged, resumed their travels. They were in such sore straits that they even applied to Prince Alexander of Battenberg. But the Prince, having been kidnapped once, and next forced by Russia to abdicate, flatly refused. M. Alexandre Hepp, Prince Ferdinand's biographer, is the authority for this statement. The petitioners could have made this excuse for their comical procedure, that His Highness had abdicated in spite of the prayers and remonstrances of Stambouloff, who, in an effusive moment, for he loved the Battenberger, declared that Alexander had in him the makings of a really able ruler ; in spite, also, of the people's tears. He could not have forgotten the weeping crowds that surrounded his carriage as he was taking his last look of the streets of Sofia. But the amiable Prince Alexander was inexorable.

According to some writers, prejudiced, one easily sees, against Czar Ferdinand, it was the Prince himself, and his mother, Princess Clementine, who, through the agency of intimate friends, induced the Bulgarian Regent to apply to the 'Coburg Prince.' From this point of view Prince Ferdinand's refusal was mere pretence. The Princess, we are told, always had the prevision of a glorious destiny for the son whom she worshipped—and who repaid her adoration with a lifelong fervour. The 'shrewdest,' 'most intelligent,' 'most practical' princess in Europe felt confirmed in her faith when a gipsy woman foretold

that the baby Ferdinand in his cradle would wear a royal crown. And Clementine, so the legend goes on, deliberately trained her idolised son with a view to the monarchical career the Fates had in store for him. He was made to study the literature of diplomacy and of statecraft. At the age of twenty he was a regular Machiavelli. Knowledge of languages being a kingly accomplishment of the greatest value—for social as well as for political reasons—the Prince was taught the principal languages of Europe, English included. And as even a gipsy soothsayer could not foresee what particular nation he was ordained to rule over, Her Royal Highness took care that his linguistic acquirements should be exceptionally various. It must be admitted that the Princess was a thorough-going professor. Her adored—and always loving—pupil even learnt the Magyar tongue (one of the most difficult and least euphonious, it is said, in the world). For at some crisis in the dual monarchy Hungary might some day have need of a king. The design was hardly complimentary to the princely pupil's sovereign lords, the Hapsburgs, and it is to be hoped it may have been kept a secret from the statesmen of Vienna. After all this, it seems surprising that in the Prince's curriculum the Bulgarian language was overlooked. For Bulgaria was, of all others, the country in which it was most likely that something should turn up; and Prince Ferdinand was anything but a feckless Micawber. With the fixed idea of coming greatness in their minds, the

Princess and her son—the story goes on—were astonished, indignant, hurt, when Stambouloff's envoys, on their first round through an unsympathetic Europe, passed by without giving them a call. But what else would you expect from a set of rude Scythians?

What slight basis of fact there may have been in this unflattering, but sometimes lively and amusing, description of the Prince's attitude and his mother's, will be presently shown. Meanwhile it may be remarked that the Prince's part in the affair, after his visitors with their Wardour Street regalia resumed their travels, did not at all resemble that of 'a cat watching mice'—three mice in this case, the three Bulgar envoys. On the contrary, it would seem as if he had forgotten all about the affair. He left Vienna, on a trip through Italy. Of all royal trippers, Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg was the most assiduous. It might be said of him that his taste for roaming over the world was insatiable. It was an Orleanist taste. In Italy the Prince had his uncle, the Duc d'Aumale, as his companion. On reaching Naples,¹ it is said, the Prince received the familiar invitation, conveyed by a special messenger. But this second attempt to secure the Prince must have been as abortive as the first. However, a Bulgar is never easily diverted from his set purpose. Dogged tenacity is a prime characteristic of his race. And so, early in 1887, another delegation (the third, accord-

¹ Hepp, *Ferdinand de Bulgarie*, 1910.

ing to the account already cited) arrived at Ebenthal. This time it consisted of one member only—namely, M. Stoïloff, one of the three delegates in the December visit. M. Stambouloff's selection of Dr. Stoïloff only, has been commended as an example of subtlety on the part of a dictator habitually outright in his methods. For M. Stoïloff was a man of singular tact and courtesy, self-possessed, genial in his manner, a good talker and listener, well read, and a lover of Paris, where he had lived for some time.

XII

THE PRINCE'S TASTES AND TEMPERAMENT

No happier choice of an envoy could have been made. In making it, M. Stambouloff proved he had in him something of diplomatic subtlety. The Prince and his visitor had many tastes in common. The mere fact that M. Stoïloff was about as much of a Parisian as any foreigner could be was a recommendation in the eyes of a Prince who has all his life ardently loved the 'capital of civilisation.' In a quiet *tête-à-tête*, with now and then a *bon mot* thrown in (both gentlemen having a pretty knack in that direction), and with an advocate of M. Stoïloff's quality, His Highness was more at home, readier to look patiently into every side of a hard and delicate problem than he had been in presence of the early deputation. Prince Ferdinand the fastidious had still to learn how to suffer imperturbably the palæolithic manners of some of Bulgaria's foremost representatives. No detailed record is available of a conversation which should be historic. The result of it must suffice. At first the Prince stipulated, as he had done before, for the consent of the Great Powers. Then, yielding the point, he proposed that he should proceed to Sofia in the character of a commissioner, to hold office until Turkey and the Powers should either confirm the Regency's choice of him, or select his successor. It

seemed to him that a provisional arrangement of that nature was in no way inconsistent with the sacred Treaty of Berlin. M. Stoïloff, it was said, agreed with the Prince, but argued that a commissioner could not possibly acquire the prestige or wield the authority of a ruler such as Bulgaria needed, and that, by delaying the selection of a head of the state, the temporary expedient would encourage the intrigues of the foes of Bulgaria's freedom. After this argument, it is said, the Prince gave way. He would accept the Regency's offer, on the condition that it should be ratified by the national assembly. The primal objection still remained. The Prince, even at this preliminary stage, was tearing up the 'venerated' Treaty. But he had come to the conclusion that treaties were made for men, and not men for treaties. He would, as he said, 'take the risks.' We shall see that the Powers, by refraining from interference with him, gave him the justification he sought.

It would be difficult to reconcile the foregoing account, based on trustworthy authority, with the assertion sometimes made that Stambouloff's envoys found in Prince Ferdinand a grown-up spoilt child, yet timid, and nervous, and undecided, and even 'neurasthenic': a weakling with whom no business could profitably be transacted. The outer man, according to this description of him, bore the exact impress of the mind within. An unsatisfactory choice, surely, for the most unstable and the most

perilous throne in Europe. Bulgaria was in search of a chief with some grit in him. But we are asked to believe he had none. According to a statement attributed to one of the three delegates, Prince Ferdinand was more 'fit to lie on a sofa than to sit in the saddle.' The supposed delegate certainly could not have been M. Stoïloff. And if the Prince left upon the envoys an impression so incompatible with the lofty ambition attributed to him, an impression which they were bound to communicate to the dictator in Sofia, how came it that the Prince was afterwards and repeatedly begged to reconsider his refusal? It may be replied that M. Stambouloff, bent upon permanent dictatorship, deliberately made choice of the 'weakling.' If that was the case, M. Stambouloff and his envoys wholly misinterpreted Prince Ferdinand's character. The impression one derives from the story of the negotiations is that Prince Ferdinand was a man of resolution, and his supposed timidity a not unreasonable caution, and that once he did make his mind up he would not fear consequences. M. Stoïloff's host in the château of Ebenthal was quite unlike the weakling of the description above mentioned. He was a tall young man, slender, but with sufficient promise of physical vigour. He was altogether in the 'grand style,' though, not unnaturally, somewhat diffident at the commencement of negotiations. His high forehead indicated intelligence, his strongly marked features and the lines of his mouth indicated character. The pose of

the head was described as 'royal.' His hair was very fair, abundant, and wavy. The eyes—steel-blue, steady, penetrating, coldly severe, or 'caressing,' according to the mood and the occasion—were the tell-tale feature. The 'grand seigneur' to the tips of his long, slender, finely-shaped fingers. 'Damn her nose, there's no end to it,' muttered one of the greatest of English artists, while painting the portrait of the illustrious Mrs. Siddons. One may guess how he might have growled at Prince Ferdinand's nose. 'Too copious for one man,' it was said. It so resembled the nose of a renowned ancestor. For the glory of kinship with Francis the First, one might gladly wear the nose of a Cyrano de Bergerac.

Reticence, a different quality from taciturnity, M. Stambouloff's envoys might have read in young Prince Ferdinand's countenance. In this respect the Prince presented a strong contrast to the Battenberger, whom the Bulgars—a people slowly susceptible—loved. The Coburg Prince could keep his own counsel. Prince Alexander never could. Prince Ferdinand, as M. Georges Bousquet writes, had learnt betimes to hide his emotions. He could assume an 'impenetrable mask.' This was in a large measure owing to his intellectual training, and his constant intercourse with the European courts. But when the right occasion came, no man could be more communicative, more frank in the expression of his personal feelings, more genially free-and-easy, in

short, than Prince Ferdinand. He is a compound of German steadiness and French *élan*. 'Froidement résolu, à la fois calculateur et hardi, avisé et intrépide, aussi prompt à discerner et à tourner les difficultés, si elles étaient résolubles, que prêt à affronter le danger s'il était inévitable,' is M. Bousquet's estimate of the Czar, as it might have been of the Prince at the time of his accession to the Bulgarian throne. It was the early manifestation of the diplomatic trait in Prince Ferdinand's character that might have led some of his critics to attribute the education he underwent to dynastic scheming. Princess Clémentine, no doubt, cherished dreams of an illustrious career for her favourite son. But if she had not done so, his training would not have been in any way different. Love of literature, science, and the arts was hereditary in the House of Orleans. The Princess herself was one of the most accomplished, and the 'cleverest,' of all women of her rank and station in Europe. It was her earnest desire that her son should do honour to the traditional culture of the family. As for his study of Machiavelli (which has excited the suspicions of certain critics)—why should not anybody with brains and leisure read him? But the Prince's education was not confined to the study of books. He travelled not only in most countries of Europe, including England, where he visited his exiled grandmother, ex-Queen Amélie, but also in Asia Minor, Brazil, and other South American States. His knowledge of Asiatic Turkey may be useful to him in the next great

Turkish crisis—when the Turk and the Moslem Semite, otherwise the Arab, fall out. Not with an eye to a throne, but with an eye for the picturesque, and a strong bent for observation, did Prince Ferdinand travel over half the world. Science, literature, and travel (and his well-filled note-books thereon) occupied him while some of his illustrious contemporaries, with equal facilities for intellectual pursuits, cultivated the noble art of pigeon-shooting. It was a form of sport which he would have despised. He was and is a sportsman. Certain forms of so-called 'sport' still tolerated in this country would horrify him. He has a constitutional horror of anything savouring of cruelty. M. Alexandre Hepp tells a story about the Prince's prevention of cruelty to a seal captured by a fisherman at a place on the Black Sea coast some miles distant from his residence at Euxinograd. The fisherman exhibited the seal, for money. The Prince, hearing of it, drove all the way to the fisherman's show, bought the seal for six hundred francs, and launched the creature into the sea. His antipathy to the infliction of pain disqualified him, according to some of his critics, for the duties of a War Lord. But the sensitive Prince Ferdinand is the creator, in much more than a titular sense, of the army whose feats have been astonishing Europe. It is related by correspondents on the spot that Czar Ferdinand shed tears when he saw the first wounded soldiers carried into his quar-

ters at Stara Zagora. But tears sometimes trickled down the cheeks of the Iron Duke, and His Grace is known to have 'prayed to God' that he might 'never see another battle.'

For the Prince Ferdinand of this period war had no glamour of romance. He was well read in military history, particularly in the wars of the Revolution and of the Napoleonic era. He had, and always has retained, a keen sense of historical associations; and those connected with some of his beautiful estates in Austria-Hungary possess, for him, a value not to be estimated in money. In Ebenthal, for example, the Austrian château built by one of his ancestors some time in the later part of the eighteenth century, Napoleon slept after the battle of Wagram. Ebenthal, with its memorials of his venerated mother, and of the royal families with which he is allied, is a loved retreat of the Czar's. In his earlier days the associations of Schönbrunn fascinated him, for there the Duke of Reichstadt, the great Napoleon's son, lived his solitary life, virtually a prisoner, abandoned by his family, forgotten of the world, brooding over his father's fate in a lonely island of the Atlantic, following with his books and his maps the great soldier's career. And in Schönbrunn 'Napoleon the Second' died. Young Prince Ferdinand's notion of war at the time of his election to the Bulgarian throne was that of the Czar Ferdinand of fifty-two on the battlefields of Thrace—war was a hateful incident in the evolution of the nations,

not an unavoidable incident, but, on the contrary, one that a wise statesmanship—that is to say, a statesmanship inspired by the idea of the universal weal—can usually avert. Czar Ferdinand's mood on the subject is that of the English statesman who would 'knock down the first man who would disturb the peace of Europe.' He is, as he has sometimes described himself, 'a good European.' But though he abhors war, he considers it his duty to prosecute it, if it be inevitable, with the utmost rapidity and vigour—and that for humane no less than for political reasons. In the Turkish campaigns the Bulgarian Czar has displayed his twofold gift of 'German tenacity and French *élan*.'

It is not the fact—though the contrary has been affirmed—that Prince Ferdinand entered the Austro-Hungarian army with the express purpose—implanted in him, or encouraged, by his mother—of educating himself for the rôle of King and War Lord in some orphaned realm (as yet undiscovered). He entered the Austrian army for the same reasons which prompted the great majority of his fellow-officers, whether born in the purple, or merely commonplace aristocratic youngsters with money in their purse and nothing in particular to do. It was the 'correct thing'—as correct in easy-going Vienna as in go-ahead, grim Berlin. A little 'service' was good for educational discipline. It had social advantages, not to be despised in a Germanic world wherein a nobleman, with nothing of the military halo about him, is

apt to be looked down upon. As far as the practical part of the military life was concerned, the young Orleanist Prince performed his part conscientiously, but without any exceptional ardour. What he did show a lively interest in was military organisation, theories of war, and the progress of mechanical and chemical invention in armaments.

XIII

CZAR FERDINAND THE GOOD BULGAR

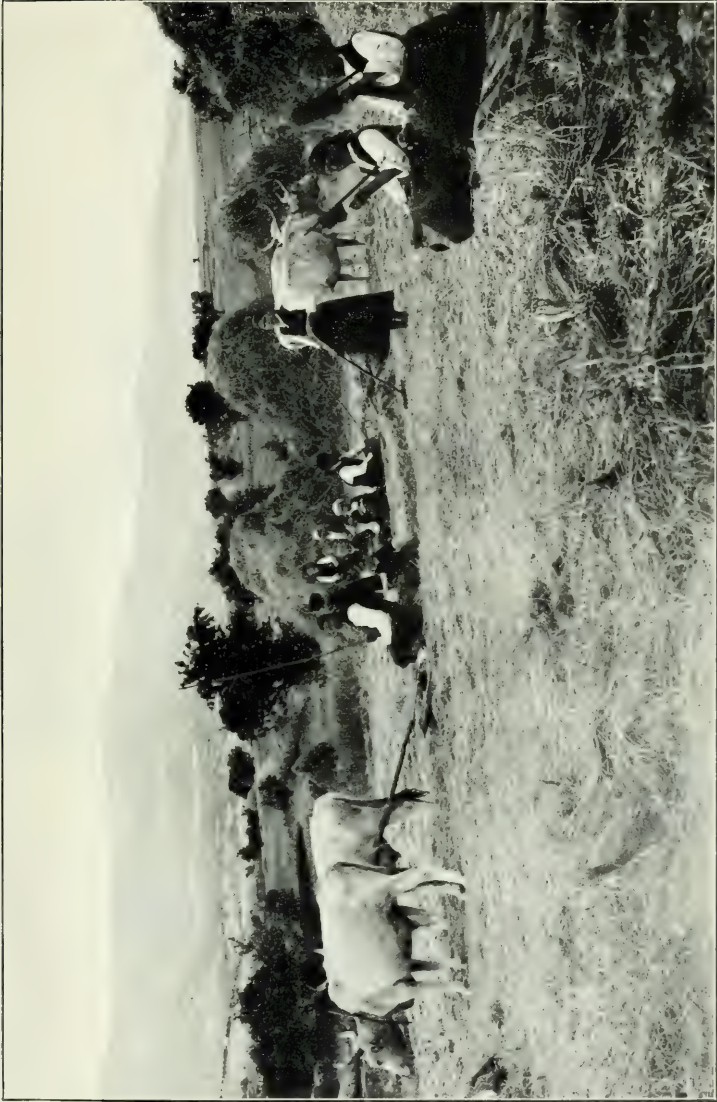
PRINCE FERDINAND'S natural bent was, as it still is, pacific. Like more than one distinguished member of his family he would have been quite content to live a studious life, collecting rare books and works of art, cultivating natural science, patronising scientific institutions, taking a personal, active part in the management of his estates, and varying his placid existence with an occasional trip abroad. In this respect he bore some resemblance to the most popular and the most accomplished of King Louis-Philippe's descendants, his uncle, the Duc d'Aumale; and a resemblance not merely in tastes, but also, one must suppose, in their attitude towards the question of dynastic possibilities. The Duc d'Aumale's popularity in France after the fall of the Second Empire is, or should be, a matter of common knowledge. No one doubted the sincerity, the unselfishness of his patriotism. With the self-assertion of Louis Napoleon—whose superior he was both in character and in intelligence—he might have become the chief of the state. His friends urged him on. One of the most insistent among them was the Countess Castiglione, for a long time the reigning beauty at the Tuileries. To their supplications the Duke's invariable answer was that, if the French people desired to place him at

the head of the state, it remained for them to say it, but that as for himself, he would not move a step. Many years later, when the Bulgarian opportunity presented itself, the nephew took a similar line. He would not seek the Bulgarian crown. Nor would he reject it if offered to him, not by a party, but by the whole nation.

Judged by his character, as it was estimated by his contemporaries a quarter of a century ago, Prince Ferdinand would not have accepted the Bulgarian crown but for the conviction that it signified for him the possibility of a beneficent career. The rôle of a *roi fainéant* had no attractions for him. He must be a strenuous king of men, or remain an Austrian landlord. A newly born nation in a state of anarchy required a second liberator, and the young Orleanist Prince felt confident in his ability to supply the need. Apart from the alluring prospect, he had every inducement to remain content with his already distinguished position. He had all the advantages the world could give, great wealth, familiar intercourse with the highest society in every court and capital. He had cultivated a strong taste for economic subjects, and for agriculture especially. His estates in Austria and Hungary constituted in themselves a little kingdom, with plenty of scope in it for the exercise of a progressive capacity. Besides, as already hinted, the golden-curlèd, slim-waisted, dandified, unattached young Prince of 1887 was a far more fastidious, inaccessible person than the grey-haired, close-cropped, burly Czar of 1913, who is in his element when he

goes strolling about in country places, chatting pleasantly and paternally among the farming and labouring folk, looking into their cowsheds and pig-styes, poking a bullock in the ribs with a hand less femininely delicate than of yore—talking, be it remembered, in the countryfolk's native Bulgarian, or rather in their local patois; for the existent linguistic varieties in Bulgaria are as numerous as her administrative provinces, reminiscent, in that respect, of the secular attempt by Turk and Greek to break up the Bulgarian race, and destroy every means of its reunion. Czar Ferdinand is as perfect a master of Bulgarian as he is of French and German.

Any one acquainted with Czar Ferdinand's tastes and habits may readily divine the pleasure with which, after the wars are over, His Majesty will resume his solitary country rambles. He is the kind of man to appreciate Diocletian (another dandified potentate, by the way, and yet a man of action) in his Nicomedian cabbage garden. With his stout stick, leathern leggings, long overcoat, and slouch hat—or perhaps native *kalpack*—Czar Ferdinand might pass for a prosperous country farmer on his rounds. That the male rustics make deep obeisance before him, with heads uncovered, and the women reverentially kiss his hands is not an indication of his rank. In country places the housewife kisses a visitor's hands, and stands while he sits. Woman's emancipation is a laggard process in the East. In this case, however, it is their King's hand which the village women kiss, and which pats the children's heads. The Czar likes to chat



PEASANTS IN BULGARIA IN SUMMER

with the children about their schoolbooks, with their parents about their corn and tobacco crops, their local markets, their requirements in means of communication. Czar Ferdinand's rural pastimes, his love of solitary rambles, are indications of character not to be overlooked in any estimate of him. It has been said of him that he could dictate straight off, or write, *currente calamo*, a first-rate itinerary of his kingdom, with tempting notes about the 'beauty spots' in it: the northern part of his kingdom, that is to say, for he has not had time just yet to 'do' the many beauties of Macedonia. Czar Ferdinand is as conversant with the customs and traditions of the country-people as he is with their speech, and as interested in them as any of the *savants* who for years have been engaged in their investigation. But to this subject we shall return in a subsequent chapter.

One may now form some guess as to what Prince Ferdinand might have been had not the Fates made him king over a semi-Oriental people, account for the hesitations attributed to him in December 1886 and the following spring, and appreciate Princess Clémentine's influence in bringing him to a decision. According to some authorities, the decision was hers rather than his. But it would be a mistake to eliminate the Prince's own will and calculated forecast. Those who from personal knowledge could speak with authority on this matter, allege that Princess Clémentine would not, in the last resort, have opposed the resolution of the son whose 'every wish' she loved to 'gratify.' On the other hand, these authorities are no less

emphatic in their assertions respecting the son's deep reverence for his mother's judgment and his lifelong eagerness to please her. So it is quite possible that Princess Clémentine's counsel may have turned the scale. She was intensely ambitious, in the lofty sense of the word. She possessed, or was possessed by, the idea of monarchical indispensability even in the modern world. Her sentiment of kingly caste was as confirmed as any German monarch's. She was far less democratic than her easy-going, affable, somewhat commonplace sire, the Citizen King. But her idea of monarchy was a dignified one. For the sake of its realisation she would not have the splendours and the allurements of Vienna, St. Petersburg, and Paris stop her son's road to Sofia, the squalid Bulgar capital, more village than town, which Prince Alexander's reign of seven years had not quite divested of its Turkish character. The Princess Clémentine of the Bulgar negotiations was the same who forty years earlier—in February 1848—obstinately resisted to the last her father's signature to his abdication. In more senses than one, Bulgaria owes her now popular dynasty to Clémentine of Orleans. She lived to see the firm establishment of the Principality and her son's progress in his 'trade,' as he calls it, of kingship, but not long enough¹ to witness the rise—which she had predicted—of a Balkanic Confederation, with Bulgaria as its principal member, and her son at the head of a victorious army.

¹ Princess Clémentine died in September 1907, aged 89.

XIV

POWERS' APPROVAL FIRST, CORONATION NEXT

PRINCE FERDINAND having made up his mind to 'take the risks,' Stambouloff and his co-regents went to work with business-like rapidity. The 'Great Assembly,' counting double the number of representatives in the ordinary Parliament, was summoned to meet at Tirnovo for the purpose of voting on the question of His Highness's election: the total number of delegates present was about four hundred. Multitudes of people from the surrounding country, from Sofia, and the Danubian towns poured into the old capital. Its narrow, crooked, steep streets fluttered with the Bulgarian flag. Triumphal arches bore the inscription, 'Welcome to the Nation's Deputies.'

The deputies assembled on the 3rd of July. Serious business began on the 4th with the election of a chairman. The fact that the chairman was Stambouloff's nominee, and that he was chosen by a sweeping majority, was a sign not only of the Dictator-Regent's increasing influence, but also of the anti-Russian sentiment of the majority of the assembly. Stambouloff was Russia's sworn enemy. About a hundred of the delegates were regarded as Russo-philes. The pro-Russians, though comparatively weak in numbers, were extremely active. There were serious dissensions among the Nationalist

majority, whose motto was 'Bulgaria for the Bulgarians' with or without Russia. Stambouloff was accused of designs to make himself sole regent. The War Minister also, General Nicolaieff, was strongly in favour of the re-election of Prince Alexander of Battenberg, in spite of the Prince's refusals. Alexander kept to his word. 'I shall never see you again,' he exclaimed, turning round in his carriage to look at Sofia as he drove away on the day of his abdication. Alexander was still the popular favourite. There was something pathetic in the national attachment to him, in spite of all the serious mistakes he had made. The deputies on their arrival for the Grand Assembly were greeted with cries of 'Long live Alexander!' In his advocacy of Prince Alexander's re-election the War Minister was believed to have the bulk of the army on his side. At any rate General Nicolaieff was exceedingly popular with his officers and men. And there was a further complication in the fact that there was a third 'candidate'—if the name may be applied to persons who were either reluctant to accept the vacant throne or absolutely resolved to refuse it. There was a great deal of mystery as to the identity of this third candidate. The Regents, though they had him in mind for months—for they were uncertain as to Prince Ferdinand's final decision—would not as much as breathe his name. The mysterious third was Prince Bernard of Saxe-Weimar. He had been officially, though vaguely, described as a candidate 'unobjectionable in

every way,' as 'married,' and as 'allied to the first reigning families in Europe,' and with 'no compromising antecedents.' Russia, it was alleged, would at once agree to his appointment.

Alexander having refused to return, it was suggested that he should be permitted to live abroad, bearing the title of Perpetual Prince of Bulgaria, while the actual government of the country should be carried on in his name by a regent. It is not surprising that the Austrian journals, and in England the *Times*, expressed the opinion that the Bulgarians might do well to dispense with a Prince altogether. No man, it was said, 'will accept the thankless post.' But the election of a Prince was imposed upon the Bulgarians by the Constitution. To dispense with one would, therefore, be to break the constitution, and to further Russia's design—the dismissal of the regents, the dissolution of the national Parliament, and a return to the state of things that existed before the union of the two Bulgarias. A last message from Prince Alexander, declining nomination, on the ground of ill-health and political opposition, was received on the 4th. It was decided to wait a day or so for a reply from the mysterious candidate. But no reply came. And on the 7th July 1887, in a crowded assembly, the President, M. Tontcheff, proposed Prince Ferdinand's election. He read out aloud the Prince's full name, titles, and lineage. The deputies started to their feet, waved their hats, and cheered lustily—'Long live the Prince!' Then they

voted. The Prince was elected without a dissentient voice. Again the deputies sprang to their feet, and acclaimed the successful, though far from self-assertive 'candidate.' It was an impressive scene. The public galleries were thronged. But among the onlookers there was not a single diplomatic agent or foreign representative of any kind. These officials had been directed by their respective governments to refrain from imparting, by their presence, any semblance of approval to the assembly's and the Prince's defiance of the law of nations. Among the multitude of persons present but few knew more about the Prince than his name and titles, as read by the President. A spectator of the scene described how the public and the deputies 'scrambled' to get a sight of a photograph of the Prince, brought, it appeared, by M. Stoïloff on his return from his interview with the Prince at Ebenthal. One could not see it clearly. For a deluge of rain turned day into night, and the few candles procurable were required for the secretaries' table. Bulgaria, on this occasion, owed much to M. Stoïloff's energy and common sense. 'The European Powers,' said he, 'have a duty to discharge to Bulgaria, as well as rights over her. If they fail to perform that duty by agreeing to the selection of a Prince, we shall proclaim our independence and act accordingly.'

A telegram was despatched on the spot to the Prince, announcing his election. The Prince's reply was as follows :—

' I am both proud and grateful on account of the vote of the Great Assembly, which has elected me Prince of Bulgaria, and I hope to prove myself worthy of the confidence of the noble Bulgarian nation. I am ready to respond to the call of the Great Assembly which elected me with a unanimity which has deeply moved me, and through them to the whole Bulgarian nation.'

The Prince's telegram was distributed the same day all over Bulgaria. All the towns and villages hoisted their flags, sent their congratulations to Tirnovo and Sofia, and illuminated their streets. The general expectation was that the Prince would at once proceed to Tirnovo, to take the oath, and be formally installed. But, save the telegram above quoted, there came no sign from the Prince. The Vienna people even lost sight of him. Some said he had disappeared from Ebenthal, others that he was invisible at Ebenthal, and hard at work getting up the Bulgarian language. To Vienna there came reports from Bulgaria to the effect that the people were ' grievously disappointed ' by his dilatoriness. Still, the Prince could hardly start for Bulgaria before the arrival of the delegation that, in accordance with custom, had been despatched to report to him personally. The deputation arrived at Ebenthal on the 15th July—eight days after the election. In the château, an unpretentious country house, they were courteously received by the Prince and his mother. The Princess was seated ' at an old-fashioned writing-table, with one of her ladies-in-waiting. The Prince was standing beside her, in evening dress, decorated

with the Coburg star.' M. Tontcheff who, as already said, was President of the Grand Assembly, read in French the assembly's resolution. The Prince replied *vivá voce* in French, and then read it in Bulgarian. Clearly the Prince had been making the best of his linguistic capacity. The following was the Prince's reply :—

'MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,—I note with gratitude the resolution which you bring me. I remain faithful to my promises and the resolutions which I have from the first declared to the nation that has elected me. If I were free to follow the impulse of my heart, I should hasten to go among you, to place myself at the head of the Bulgarian nation, and take in hand the reins of government. But the Prince-Elect of Bulgaria must respect treaties. This respect will form the strength of his rule, and will assure the greatness and prosperity of the Bulgarian nation. I hope we shall succeed in justifying the confidence of the Sublime Porte, and reconquering after some lapse of time the goodwill of Russia, to whom Bulgaria is indebted for her political emancipation, and to whom she consequently owes a debt of gratitude. I hope also that we may be able to obtain the approval of all the other Great Powers. Trust in me, and believe in my devotion to your country, of which I hope to give the proof when I consider the fitting moment to have arrived. Show courage, prudence, and patriotic union. May God bless Bulgaria and send her a brilliant future !'

The foregoing reply clearly means that the Prince would, before proceeding to Bulgaria and assuming the reins of government, wait for the approbation of the Porte and the Powers. But according to the Russian view the Prince would in that case have to wait for ever. Russia, it was authoritatively explained, had 'no objection to the Prince personally': her objection was that the Great Assembly had acted illegally. The Prince showed in his reply that he was in no hurry. A member of the delegation, M. Tchomakoff, Minister of Public Instruction, pressed the Prince to accompany them to Tirnovo. The Prince politely replied he had nothing to add to, or alter in, what he had already said. Two possible courses had before now been discussed—either that the Prince should go to Tirnovo at once, take the oath, and wait for the Porte and the Powers to 'recognise' him, if he had to wait for years; or, while accepting his nomination by the Grand Assembly, to wait for the Powers' ratification. The second was the course he indicated in his chilly speech to the deputation. It is said that the members of the deputation were 'not very favourably impressed by their host.' His 'nervous demeanour,' his 'pallor,' surprised them—as if they had expected to find in him a stalwart fox-hunter. The day after the Prince's reply to the deputation, the *Times* correspondent had with him a five hours' interview, the record of which is a most interesting and valuable contribution to the history of modern Bulgaria. This is what the Prince said:—

‘ I am quite prepared to hear that my answer to the deputation has caused dissatisfaction in Bulgaria ; but this dissatisfaction will have arisen because strange hopes were raised without any warrant from me. From the first I told M. Stoiloff and others that I would not posture as a revolutionary pretender. My name, the traditions of my family, and my own personal convictions oblige me to take my stand on the principles of order and of absolute respect for treaties. I did not seek the Bulgarian crown ; it was offered me with the assurance that I could do much good in the country. The mission was a noble one which tempted me, and I accepted it, promising to devote my life to its fulfilment ; but this was on the clearly expressed condition that I should go to Bulgaria invested with authority which could not be challenged. Having been elected, I shall now do my best to obtain recognition from the Great Powers ; and it may be that I shall go to St. Petersburg, but this is not yet certain. What Europe may take for certain is that I shall not let myself be enticed into any course which would widen the estrangement between Russia and Bulgaria, and add to the confusion of parties in the latter country.’

The Prince’s second statement is even more pointed than the first. The Prince’s respect for international treaties is ‘ absolute ’ : without the Powers’ previous ratification of the nation’s choice he would not go to Bulgaria ; meanwhile he would strive for recognition, and he might even go to St.

Petersburg to obtain it. In this remarkable interview with the *Times* correspondent, the Prince showed that he was more favourably impressed by his Bulgarian visitors than they by him. They were dignified: they did not 'gush.' He spoke highly of Majors Popoff and Vinaroff, whom he knew to be ardent advocates for a Battenberg re-election, but who, simply as military men bound to obey orders, had come reluctantly with the deputation. It was, he said, the sort of faithful service he himself would expect were he their lawful Prince.

The Prince, says the same authority, was surprised at his not having received a message from Prince Alexander, once his personal friend. The ex-ruler's silence was to him 'inexplicable.' 'If Prince Alexander really feels any interest in Bulgaria, he ought to say so,' Prince Ferdinand argued, 'and to assist his successor in the task which he cannot or will not undertake himself.' The Prince's visitor was struck with the Prince's shrewdness, his wide knowledge of European politics, and the good-humour of his judgment on men and things. Of the Prince's zeal in the cause of Bulgaria, of his fitness for the task he had undertaken, his visitor had no doubt. The Prince appears to have been more at ease, more affable, more confidential in a *tête-à-tête* informal conversation with a visitor or two than with the assembled body of them. For instance, he was reported to have said, in a jocular vein, that Prince Alexander was a greater hindrance to the settlement of the Bulgarian question than the

Powers and the Sublime Porte put together. It was in allusion to Prince Alexander's vague replies (as they sometimes were) to the offers from Sofia. He appeared to be confident that in 'a week or two' Russia would withdraw her opposition to his election. In the course of the five days during which the Bulgarian deputation remained in Vienna, the Prince had several conversations with three of its members on the question supposed to have been settled at the interview of the 15th, namely, his immediate departure to take the oath at Tirnovo. When asked if he would go, in the event of Russia's giving him a personal, categorical refusal, he replied that it was his heartfelt wish to comply with the deputation's request. It was a vague reply, but it showed some sign of relenting from his earlier, *intransigent* position. The military members of the deputation, Majors Vinaroff and Popoff, laid regular siege to His Highness. All three being military officers, they had some feeling of comradeship—while, as yet, the Prince was but the Prince-Elect of an assembly which, instead of first recommending him to the Porte and the Powers, and waiting for their approval, chose him for their ruler, and invited recognition, not minding much whether they received it or not. And so in one of these informal talks, the two Bulgarian officers—partisans of Prince Alexander though they were—assured the Prince that, if he accompanied them to Tirnovo, the Bulgarian people would stand by him to a man, even if the 'national hero'—Alexander of Slivnitza, Dragoman and Pirot

—were to reappear ; that the army, though it loved Alexander, would prove true to the Prince whom the National Assembly had chosen. ‘The Bulgarian army cannot swear by you before it sees you and knows you,’ Major Vinaroff went on, in his countrymen’s outright fashion : ‘Popoff and I have risked our lives in Prince Alexander’s defence, we have fought with him, we have met with constant kindness from him, and we cannot cease to admire and love him ; but as Prince, elected by our nation, you have a right to our obedience, and it shall not fail you.’¹ It will have been seen that the fear of Russia, quite apart from the commendable anxiety to obtain her recognition, obsessed the mind of Prince Ferdinand. The two Bulgarian officers were alive to the fact. They were also violently anti-Russian. And in speaking for themselves on this subject, they spoke for the entire Bulgarian nation. Russia, they declared, was, for her own selfish ends, fomenting discord in Bulgaria ; she was, of set purpose, enslaving the country she had liberated ; she had substituted the *knout* for the *kourbash* ; she would not recognise Prince Ferdinand even if he grovelled in the dust at her feet. It is pretty certain that this appeal determined, in a large measure, the decisive step which the Prince took three weeks later, to the amusement rather than the surprise of the Viennese people, and the wrath and disgust of the Russian press. It is said that Princess Clémentine was present during the impassioned

¹ *Times* correspondent.

pleading of the two Bulgarian officers, and that the effect of her complete concurrence with their reasonings was then manifest in the Prince's demeanour. The Princess was more quick-witted, had more imagination, than her son, and greater daring. It could not be said of her what was at that period often said of the Prince, that she was 'not of heroic mould.' She was a heroine born out of due time. The very danger supposed to exist in Bulgaria during this crisis was, in her estimation, the strongest inducement to undertake the 'risk'; to face it without delay, the surest means of winning immediate and boundless popularity. Courage was one of the virtues indissolubly bound up in Princess Clémentine's idea of kingship. It was Prince Alexander's courage that, in the eyes of his Bulgarian subjects, atoned for all his faults. To the Bulgarian envoys the Prince's hesitation was well-nigh incomprehensible. If he did not know that Russia's opposition was absolutely insuperable, he ought to have known; in other words, he ought either to have refused the offer of the Bulgarian throne, or, having accepted it, to have proceeded forthwith to Tirnovo. A ruler of Bulgaria was elected, a deputy was reported to have said in his and his mother's presence, not for Russia's pleasure, but for Bulgaria's good. A final argument addressed to the Prince was to the effect that a continuance of his deferential attitude to Russia must lower his popularity, render him even suspect, in Bulgaria, where the anti-Russian feeling had grown so strong

that, in the words of a Bulgarian commandant, the intrusion of another Russian officer into the Bulgarian army would provoke a mutiny. Although, as already said, these considerations appeared to have produced an impression upon the Prince, the Tirnovo deputies were in a somewhat crestfallen mood when, on the 20th July, they left Vienna for Tirnovo.

XV

CORONATION FIRST, APPROVAL WHETHER OR NOT

THERE followed eighteen days of journalistic, 'official' and 'semi-official,' and 'officious' babblement, in Austria, Germany, and Russia, on Prince Ferdinand's intentions. Even at this distance of time it is amusing to read. 'Authoritative' announcements that Prince Ferdinand would renounce the Bulgarian throne were contradicted on authority as conclusive. Next it leaked out—in printer's ink, at least—that certain tailors had received orders to get ready without delay Bulgarian uniforms for the Prince and his aide-de-camp, including a general's uniform for His Highness. Clearly, the Prince was about to start for Tirnovo. Reporters went prowling about, in vain search of the tailors. From St. Petersburg came the alarming news that a Russian provisional government for Bulgaria was about to be established, as had been done after the Russo-Turkish War and before Prince Alexander's appointment; and that after the temporary officials had done their work, Prince Imeritinski, a Russian nominee, would be made Prince of Bulgaria. Wild rumours of a Bulgarian plan to set up a republic were spread abroad. But when, at the end of July, it became known that the Bulgarian Foreign Minister was on his way to Vienna, the Austrian press jumped to the conclusion that he

had come by pre-arrangement to fetch the laggard Prince Ferdinand. The reporters lay in ambush about Ebenthal for M. Natchevitch, the said minister, but no M. Natchevitch was to be seen. Yet M. Natchevitch was at Ebenthal, and with him Dr. Strausky, the Bulgarian Minister of the Interior, whose duty it would be to provide for the Prince's journey through his new dominions. There could be no longer any doubt concerning Prince Ferdinand's intentions, when the telegraph announced that the Bulgarian regents and the ministers were assembling at Rustchuk, on the Danube, that they had a yacht there in readiness, and that a company of people, known to be members of the Prince's household, had started for Bulgaria. On the 10th of August Vienna learnt that the Prince himself had left.

The Prince, his mother, and the few persons who were to accompany him took every precaution to keep the hour and circumstances of his departure a dead secret. To say nothing of diplomatic curiosity, and the possibility of sensational incidents on the way—the Prince might be kidnapped, or worse might befall him, for Russia's agents, as he was well aware, were lurking about everywhere—his prospective election had before now subjected him to the persiflage of many of his exalted friends in Vienna. Bismarck's encouragement to Prince Alexander of Battenberg was quoted for his edification: 'Accept it. It will be an interesting reminiscence for your after life.' It is alleged that Prince Ferdinand could not easily

suffer what the English call 'chaff.' So the departure from Vienna had to be made as unostentatiously as possible.

Of the many written accounts of the journey, M. Alexandre Hepp's, though inaccurate in some details, is perhaps the most concise. Before starting, Prince Ferdinand, who is a good Catholic, went to early Mass—four o'clock in the morning. His fellow-travellers to Bulgaria were present at the ceremony: among them were M. Grenaud, his valued and devoted friend; Count Bourboulon, and hofrath Fleischman; his secretary, M. Dimitri Stancioff, and one or two more. M. Stancioff deserves a passing notice. The circumstances of his first connection with Prince Ferdinand were an illustration of His Highness's prompt way of going ahead once his mind was made up. During negotiations with the Regency, the Prince sought for a trustworthy, capable native Bulgarian to assist him in the composition and translation of his correspondence with the Sofia government. At this time the Prince knew not a word of his future subjects' language. He chose a young Bulgarian student, M. Dimitri Stancioff, who had just finished his studies at the Maria Theresa Institute, Vienna. He found in him a most able and devoted servant. M. Stancioff it was who gave the Prince his first lessons in the Bulgarian language. He found in the Prince an amazingly quick pupil. M. Stancioff eventually became his old pupil's Foreign Minister.

To follow M. Alexandre Hepp's account, the

Prince and his followers travelled by a second-class carriage to Orsova, on the Danube. There the Prince and his party went aboard the small steamer, the *Orient*, belonging to an Austrian company. Next the Bulgarian yacht above-named, conveying the regents and their ministers, came up with them. Decorated with the Bulgarian colours, the little craft was the same as that in which Prince Alexander of Battenberg had been carried when kidnapped by the Russian and pro-Russian conspirators—in which, as the Prince himself put it, he was ‘bundled out of the country’ he had been called in to govern. It deserves to be recorded that the yacht was Czar Alexander the Third’s gift to Prince Alexander, then his trusted nominee, but soon to become the object of his unappeasable anger. There were some who surmised that the little craft might some day be employed to ‘bundle’ the ‘Coburger’ himself out of Bulgaria. In fact, no sooner had the Prince reached Orsova than he was apprised of schemes already laid to kidnap him or to murder him. It was said that he was more amused than alarmed at the news. The little yacht should be preserved as a perpetual memorial of Bulgaria’s early struggles for existence. On board the yacht the Prince held his first council, had his first serious conversation with Stambouloff, the rude, arrogant man of genius who was to govern his master through several stormy years.

Prince Ferdinand first touched the soil of his ‘*nouvelle patrie*’ at the Danubian town of Widin, the

headquarters, but nine short years ago, of a Turkish Pashalic, whose Christian population dared not call their souls their own. At Widin the distinguished party were photographed—by authority, not ‘snapshotted’ by an evasive interloper. The whole party—those from Tirnovo, and from Vienna—stood in a row, with the Prince, tallest man among them, erect, calm, and stately, near the middle. They were in uniform—or as nearly, under the circumstances, as they could be; for they had come in a hurry. Some were in frock-coats and white ties (not unlike parsons), others in the regulation ‘swallow-tail,’ with neckties black or white according to the wearer’s luck. Count de Grenaud was conspicuous in a white waistcoat; M. Stambouloff, though he hated ceremonial man-millinery, was impeccably ‘correct,’ but he looked bored; General Moutkouroff, one of the regents, was in full military attire; so was the Prince, with his many decorations, and white astrakhan cap adorned with a tall white shako. Considering the haste in which their wardrobes had been collected, the illustrious group presented a quite respectable appearance.

The moment he landed at Widin the news was flashed to Sofia, the garrison of which, came the reply, proclaimed the event in a salute of ‘a hundred and one guns,’ a sovereign salute, showing at what value the rulers of the Bulgarian nation estimated ‘venerated’ treaties. And yet Prince Ferdinand’s first act—after the formal reception on Bulgarian soil was over

—was to despatch a loyal, courteous message to his ‘suzerain,’ the Sultan, whose approval he hoped to receive. It is related that the Sultan was much gratified by his ‘vassal’s’ submissiveness, and that if His Imperial Majesty’s views alone were in question, the Tirnovo election would soon have been, if not formally ratified, at least acknowledged, by the simple expedient of permission to the diplomatic agents in Sofia to present themselves to the Prince in their official capacity. Prince Ferdinand was touched by the enthusiasm of his welcome to the Bulgarian shores. Multitudes of the peasantry from every part of the province trooped into the town, carrying banners, and singing national songs. A gigantic arch at the entrance to the town bore the legend, ‘Bulgaria joyously greets you. Her happiness is in your hands. The Bulgarian army and people will be with you in your defence of the nation’s independence.’ The religious ceremony, which occupied little more than ten minutes, was deeply impressive. It was conducted by the Exarch of the Bulgarian Church, who at its termination pronounced a solemn benediction upon the Prince. At Widin, Prince Ferdinand issued his first public proclamation. It was read in French and Bulgarian. The following translation of it appeared in the English press :—

‘Having been elected by the representatives of the Bulgarian nation as its sovereign, I regard it as a sacred duty to set foot at the earliest possible moment on the soil of my new country and to consecrate my life to the happiness, greatness,

and prosperity of my dear people. From the bottom of my heart I thank the brave Bulgarian nation for the feelings of confidence in me, and of devotion and fidelity to me with which it is animated. I am fully convinced that it will support me in my efforts to render our country great and flourishing, and to secure a future full of honour and glory.'

It will be noticed that in this, the first of a series of proclamations made in the course of his progress to Tirnovo and Sofia, there is no mention of the Powers, or of the Czar of Russia (for whose consent to his election he had meditated a journey to St. Petersburg), or of the Sultan, to whom he telegraphed his 'homage and devotion.' But the pro-Russian party in Sofia had not forgotten the 'Czar Liberator,' and at the very time when Prince Ferdinand and his ministers were on their way downstream to Rustchuk, the head of the party, the able, eloquent, and not too scrupulous metropolitan, Bishop Clement, in the Cathedral of Sofia, was haranguing a vast congregation on the nation's obligation to Russia. This was at a service of thanksgiving for the new Prince's arrival. The ministers and a large number of parliamentary deputies were present. The Bishop urged the necessity of 'reconciliation' with the Czar. There was more reason in the Bishop's condemnation of tyrannical acts during the Regency. The price of free speech, the penalty even for baseless suspicion, during the Regency, was, said the Bishop, imprisonment, banishment, torture. He himself had been compelled to take flight from the Nationalists. The

Svoboda,¹ anti-Russian Stambouloff's own paper, promptly took the Russophile Bishop to task, though in language less menacing than was habitual with it. The Bishop was advised to leave Prince and people to conduct their own business—which was no concern of Russia's. An ominous little incident, as if a whiff of wind had thrown a tile from the roof, presaging a tempest.

¹ 'Liberty.'

XVI

PRINCE TAKES THE OATH AT TIRNOVO

AT Rustchuk, where his river voyage came to an end, and where a great many deputies from Tirnovo awaited his arrival, the Prince's reception was as cordial as it had been at Widin. And so at Sistovo, the first town of any importance on his way inland. On the 13th of August Prince Ferdinand reached historic Tirnovo. The streets and the entire neighbourhood of the old Bulgarian capital were packed with crowds of enthusiastic spectators. The foreign journalists, who had preceded the Prince or followed him from the port, were struck with the perfect order and good-humour of the populace. The gendarmes simply looked on with the sympathetic composure of the London police at a popular demonstration. There was a garrison at Tirnovo, but the only duty they had to perform was to supply an escort for their future commander-in-chief, while those who were off duty found their places among the onlookers. The Mayor of Tirnovo performed the time-honoured ritual of presenting the Prince-elect with bread and salt. The Prince's brief reply to the Mayor's welcome was delivered in Bulgarian. It was a good beginning. And the people seemed flattered by it.

Next came the ceremony, the taking of the oath, from which Bulgaria dates a new epoch in her eventful

history. The Assembly Hall, in which it took place, was filled to its utmost capacity. But, as on the occasion of the election a few weeks earlier, the representatives of the foreign Powers were conspicuous by their absence. Their places were occupied by the representatives of the European press. In the hall there was a portrait of 'Alexander the beloved.' It was decorated for the occasion. It was remarked that Prince Ferdinand gazed intently at the portrait of 'the Battenberger' (who, as already recorded, had taken no notice of his old friend's adventure, or, as many still regarded it, misadventure).

His Highness having taken the constitutional oath, M. Stoïloff rose, and read the Prince's first proclamation in his capacity of actual ruler. It ran as follows:—

'We Ferdinand I. by the Grace of God and the wish of the people Prince of Bulgaria. On the solemn occasion of our taking oath to the Grand National Assembly we announced to our well-beloved people that we assume the government of the country and that we will rule it in accordance with the Constitution and with the intent to promote its glory, greatness, and development, for which we will use every possible effort, and we shall at all times be ready to sacrifice our life to its happiness. In ascending the throne of the famous Bulgarian Czars we consider it our sacred duty to declare our sincere gratitude to the gallant Bulgarian people for the confidence they have displayed towards us in electing us Prince of Bulgaria, and also to acknowledge their wise and patriotic conduct during the difficult times through which the country has passed. The heroic efforts of the nation to protect its independence, honour, and interests have won for it the

sympathy of the whole civilised world, and have inspired every one with faith in its vital force, which merits a brilliant future.

‘Long live free and independent Bulgaria!’

‘FERDINAND I.’

A proclamation, startling in its boldness, meant for Europe even more than Bulgaria the tearing of another rent in a ‘venerated’ treaty already well tattered. It contained not the slightest allusion to the European Powers. In its praise of the nation’s conduct during the prolonged crisis of Alexander’s reign and the Regency, it was an indirect, yet wholesale, condemnation of Russia’s treatment of Bulgaria. The mere word ‘independence’ spoke volumes. But the proclamation contained one or two inaccuracies. His Highness was not ascending the throne of the Bulgarian czars, but a far less imposing one. To the point at which the history of new Bulgaria had arrived, the chief resemblance between the ancient throne and the modern one lay in their instability. Nor can it be admitted that the Prince was altogether right in declaring that Bulgaria’s fight for independence had won ‘the sympathy of the civilised world.’ Unless, of course, he meant to exclude Russians and Turks from ‘the civilised world’—a point of view for which there was much to be said. But the new ruler hit the nail on the head when he spoke of the ‘vital force’ of the Bulgarian people. From the days of Asparouch, the first Bulgar king, twelve hundred years ago, through the ages of apparent death under the Turk’s

heel to this hour, the Bulgarian question has been a question of that mysterious force, national 'vitality'—the 'vital force' of the mummy wheat, to which illustrative reference has been made in a foregoing page; of the oak sapling which, if you plant it in a tub, and leave it there to its fate, will by and by burst its bonds. The Bulgar tub was secured with a hoop marked 'Berlin Treaty.'

In the Prince's proclamation the 'Czar's throne' and the 'vital force' may be linked together. In 1887 there were Bulgarian patriots who foresaw the restoration of the old czardom. The Prince's description of his new throne was a prophecy, which received its fulfilment, also on the same historic spot, on the 5th October 1908, when he proclaimed the absolute independence of Bulgaria and assumed the royal title.

It seized the imagination of the assembled multitude. So at least it seemed when in a moment of inspiration—the happiest in the course of his progress towards Sofia—he suddenly sprang up and repeated in a loud, resounding voice, in Bulgarian, the last words of the proclamation which M. Stoïloff had just read: 'Long live free and independent Bulgaria!' The effect was instantaneous, tremendous. The audience leaped to their feet. 'Long live free and independent Bulgaria!' they shouted again and again. The ladies in the galleries waved their handkerchiefs and joined in the cry. Many of them wept. Tears ran down the cheeks of many a stalwart member of the assembly. People shook hands and embraced. And

yet Bulgaria was not, in the legal sense, either 'free' or 'independent.' Northern Bulgaria was still a tributary state; she formed part of the Ottoman Empire. And as regards Southern Bulgaria, otherwise Eastern Roumelia, Prince Ferdinand, if he should be recognised by the Porte, would be simply her governor-general—a pasha, in fact. But the logic of things was too strong for the verbiage of indefensible and immoral treaties, in the formation of which this 'vitaly forceful' nation, now wide awake, had had no part. Bulgaria was from that moment virtually 'free and independent.' All that remained for her to do was to extricate herself from the wreck of her extraneous entanglements. But the extrication would require patience and tactful handling.

If not the man of the time (his competence had still to be tested), Prince Ferdinand was certainly the man of the hour. As he left the Assembly Hall a crowd of deputies surrounded him and bore him shoulder-high to his carriage. The people outside, the moment he appeared, knelt before him. The same note of 'freedom and independence' pervaded Prince Ferdinand's various addresses during his two days' halt at the picturesque old capital; for example, at the banquet given to him by the commander and officers of the garrison. As already said, Prince Alexander was beloved in the Bulgarian army. His successor, well aware of this, and generously appreciating his entertainers' regard for the ex-ruler, took the opportunity of expressing his profound

esteem for him, and his desire to perpetuate the remembrance of his services as a soldier and organiser. At the same banquet Prince Ferdinand declared that the Regency deserved the people's gratitude for its victorious guidance through perils that threatened the state from within and from without. His laudation of the Regency was a rebuke to Russia. The idea of 'Bulgaria for the Bulgarians' was again implied in the formal address which, in his capacity of commander-in-chief, he issued to the army. In that address he alluded to the 'foreign' attempts that had been made to 'undermine' the fidelity of the country's defenders, and he expressed his conviction that the nation's 'freedom and honour' would in spite of them remain unimpaired. Prince Ferdinand would have been fairly justified in summing up the results of his achievement at Tirnovo in Cæsar's (pleonastic) message, 'Veni, vidi, vici.'

Notwithstanding the summer heat, the Prince's journey from Tirnovo to Philippopolis was a continuous delight. His company filled a long line of carriages. Two squadrons of cavalry from Tirnovo escorted it. Prince Ferdinand was in a radiant mood. The cavalcade halted at the Shipka Pass for a leisurely inspection of the scene of one of the hardest combats in the War of Liberation. It was remarked that Prince Ferdinand seemed to know the place, and all the incidents of the storming of the position by the Russians, as well as if he had been 'in it.' At every village to the capital of Southern Bulgaria the country-

people were congregated to welcome their new ruler. At last—Philippopolis, the beautiful capital of the province, boasting itself, because of its hills, a Lilliputian Rome or Byzantium. The Philippopolitans allege there are seven, though an impartial stranger's scrutiny would fail to discover as many. The Prince had observed a change in the appearance and character of the people, as well as of the landscape, during his progress from Rustchuk. The northern towns and villages, even after nine years, seemed to have retained traces of the Turkish gloom. But Philippopolis appeared to be as gay and well-conditioned as if no Turk had ever been in it.

Glowing but not exaggerated reports of the Prince's reception at Tirnovo had been circulated in and around Philippopolis. The officers and soldiers of the garrison were jubilant. Deputations from various parts of the province came to wish Prince Ferdinand 'Godspeed.' They carried flags inscribed with the legends, 'Free Bulgaria!' 'Long life to our Prince!' 'Let all the Bulgarians unite!' The last-named inscription had reference either to the scheme, attributed to Russia, of replacing Southern Bulgaria under Turkish rule, or to the liberation of that large portion of the Bulgarian race inhabiting Macedonia and Thrace, and abandoned to the Turks, in accordance with the Berlin Treaty. The European consuls in Philippopolis, inquiring if the Prince would grant them an audience, were informed that he would grant it with pleasure if they presented themselves officially



A PROSPEROUS BULGARIAN PEASANT WOMAN
OF TIRNOVO

—which they were precluded from doing. A curious instance of the international stringency on this point of official recognition came to light in the incident of the Catholic bishop's use of the French flag. The bishop, not considering himself bound by diplomatic law, hoisted the French flag, alleging that he was justified in so doing by the fact that France was the recognised protectress of Christians in the East. Such, however, was not the French consul's view. The consul reluctantly interfered, and the French flag was hauled down.

XVII

THE PRINCE'S CAVALCADE : EUROPEAN HUBBUB

ON the 22nd August Prince Ferdinand left Philippopolis. At Ichtiman, where he was entertained by the civil and military authorities, began the last stage of his journey, a short one, to Sofia. The cavalcade was now drawn up in ceremonial order. A four-horse carriage had arrived from the capital for the Prince's use. Twenty other carriages were placed at the disposal of ministers, deputies, and newspaper correspondents. The cavalcade halted at a spot two and a half miles from the city. There he was received by the military commandant and the Prefect of Sofia. At this point the Prince, leaving his carriage, mounted his horse and rode ahead, preceded by a troop of cavalry and some of the city officials. Another troop with the line of carriages followed in the rear. On one side of the road infantry were drawn up. On the other the townspeople in their thousands, the children occupying a prominent position. At a great arch erected close by the Parliament House the Mayor of Sofia made the traditional offering of bread and salt, followed by a short speech, to which the Prince replied :—

‘I have come to Bulgaria in response to the wishes of its people, and in conformity with my promises. I appeal to the feelings of union and patriotism which animate the Bulgarians



SOFIA : A VIEW OF THE BOULEVARD DONDOUKOFF

for aid in the task which I have undertaken. I shall loyally undertake to conciliate the suzerain court and produce good relations between Turkey and Bulgaria.'

It appeared to be the first occasion on which he had spoken of 'the suzerain court.' There were many Turks—good, loyal citizens—among his hearers.

The streets through which the procession passed were tastefully ornamented with flags, trophies of the Russo-Turkish War (in which, as already mentioned, Bulgar volunteers served in the Russian army), and of the Servian War, the first European war which Bulgaria waged with her own resources and on her own account. Pennons, stretched across the streets high overhead, and adorned with the Bulgarian lion, bore in huge letters patriotic mottoes, chiefly on the 'union' of 'all' the Bulgarias. But it was the variety of physical types and of costume among the applauding crowds that must have arrested a stranger's attention. In the Sofia region alone there are many such varieties, indicated also by some more or less pronounced shade of difference in dialect. It was easy to distinguish the Macedonian citizens of Sofia. For one thing, their features were generally more regular, more European, than the Northern Bulgar's. The native peasant wives and girls, with their elaborately embroidered tunics, their hair falling in numerous thin plaits down to their waists, and ornaments of silver coins, made an appearance more curious and picturesque than graceful. Their husbands and male relatives, in sheepskin jackets, open over their

bronzed chests, were a striking contrast with their soldier fellow-citizens, faultlessly smart in their grey uniforms fashioned on the Russian model. Looking upon the countryfolk, one was reminded of the name which Sofia bore in classical times. And Serdica was so called from the Thracian people, the Serdi, the first known inhabitants of the region. Thracians, early Slavs, Bulgars, each in turn were driven by new invaders into the remote places whence thousands of these peasant-folk, their descendants, had journeyed to Sofia to witness the Prince's entry. But whatever their lineage, they were moved by one overpowering sentiment—the sentiment of a common nationality, crystallised during the nine years since the war into an absolute creed. They had been subjected to no official pressure. They had come of their own accord. 'Long live our Prince!' they shouted, in one voice with the townspeople, when His Highness dismounted at the cathedral steps, where the clergy of all the religious faiths—Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Exarchist, Moslem, Jewish, Protestant—were assembled. At the entrance to the cathedral the Prince was received by the metropolitan, Clement. He took his seat on a throne, placed on a platform raised above the floor level, opposite the bishop's. True to the promise he had made to the officers at Tirnovo respecting his predecessor's memory, Prince Ferdinand wore the Grand Cross of the Order of Bravery, an order instituted by Prince Alexander. The same decoration was worn by those of the military officers

present who had served in the Servian campaign of three years ago. The *Te Deum* concluded, the metropolitan bishop addressed the Prince in the following words :—

‘Welcome, royal Prince! The Bulgarian people thank you for your courage in coming here at this critical moment. The Bulgarians will be grateful, and you may count on their devotion and attachment in fulfilling the heavy task which you have undertaken. This same people is grateful to Russia, who made immense sacrifices for our deliverance, and to whom we owe our liberty and independence. Do not then forget these sacrifices, and use your best efforts to re-establish relations between Russia and Bulgaria—to reconcile the Liberator and the liberated.’

As the Prince’s procession emerged from the cathedral the infantry stationed in the square made a march past. His Highness, with his cavalry escort, rode on horseback slowly through the streets up to the palace, that once upon a time was the residence of the Turkish pasha. This final part of a historic demonstration was marred by a heavy rain shower, which drove many thousands of spectators to seek shelter. At the same time, it was ‘King’s weather,’ of a sort. For there had been for weeks an unbroken drought, and the heat during the day, and throughout the Prince’s journey from the Danubian port, had been terrific. From the ceremonial point of view, a day earlier or a day later would have been more convenient. But, doubtless, to the crowds of small farmers from the country the deluge of rain would

have been welcome at any moment. There was no justification for the statement made in French and Austrian journals, that the Prince was 'disconcerted' by the unfriendly demeanour of the troops arrayed in the streets of Sofia. The reception accorded to the Prince by the troops and the civil population alike was cordial in the extreme. The words with which he followed up his short speech at the triumphal arch by the Assembly Hall—'Long live free Bulgaria!'—were re-echoed throughout the city. At night the town was illuminated. A torchlight procession halted in front of the palace windows, at one of which the Prince appeared and made the last of the series of speeches which he began ten days before at Widin. The inaugural part of the business was over and done with. And Prince Ferdinand woke up next morning to realise the fact that he was Captain of the Ship of State, and must provide himself with a pilot and officers. To his surprise, he discovered that even those of his supporters who were most intimate with him either were reluctant to serve him or refused. There were symptoms of disagreement among them. And the lowering clouds, now on the eastern, now on the northern, horizon, threatened rough weather.

The Turkish Government had already made its protest to the European Powers through their ambassadors in Constantinople. The circular ran as follows :—

'Your Excellency is aware of the circumstances under which the election of Prince Ferdinand of Coburg as Prince

of Bulgaria took place. You are also cognisant of the declarations made by His Highness that he would not leave Vienna until his election should have obtained the sanction of the Suzerain Court, according to the terms of the Treaty of Berlin, and the consent of the other Signatory Powers. At the moment when an exchange of views had commenced between the Imperial Government and the Great Powers on the subject of this election, we learnt that Prince Ferdinand, contrary to his previous declarations, proposed to leave his residence of Ebenthal for Bulgaria; and this inopportune project made it our duty to address to him . . . strong and repeated advice, engaging him not to depart from the course which he had planned for himself, and which, at various intervals, he had announced to us. Notwithstanding the above-mentioned declarations, the Prince has seen fit to abandon his original project, and suddenly to leave his residence to go and take possession of the administration of the Principality where he now is.'

According to the letter of the law, the Turkish Government was in the right. Notwithstanding a certain shade of ambiguity in the Prince's declaration to the deputation from Tirnovo, the final impression one gathers is that before taking the oath and assuming office he would wait for the Signatory Powers to legalise the national choice. And yet the Prince's words seem to betray some hesitation, some confusion of thought. How were the Prince, and the Bulgarian Assembly, to 'justify the confidence' of the Signatory Powers? By waiting, and doing nothing? But the Assembly, on its part, had already done everything by inviting the Prince to swear to the Constitution and ascend the throne with or without the Powers'

approval. Or did the Prince hope to 'win the confidence' he desired by proving, after his accession, that he deserved it? But in that case, why linger at Vienna? And how could he hope, by waiting 'a week or two,' to overcome Russia's initial objection to the act of an assembly the existence of which, by reason of the revolutionary union of Southern with Northern Bulgaria, was in itself illegal? But let it be supposed that the Prince did believe in the possibility of Russia's consent in 'a week or two'; then one may understand that, when undeceived, he may have considered himself justified in waiting no longer. What is beyond doubt is the absolute sincerity of Prince Ferdinand's desire to act in accordance with the letter of the Berlin Treaty. But it is also possible that Prince Ferdinand may have from the very first realised the certainty of Russia's unalterable opposition; in which case he would wait 'a week or two' just for form's sake. The declaration also seems to indicate in the Prince's mind a distinction between legality and what is usually named 'natural justice,' and a secret purpose to take the side of 'natural justice,' should his abstention bring Bulgaria—whose good was, after all, the great point at issue—any nearer 'the edge of the abyss' whither, according to the Russian journalists and politicians, she was rapidly approaching. Full allowance must be made for the effect upon the Prince's mind of the social atmosphere, the sacrosanct formality, the diplomatic tradition, wherein he had been trained. He had not

yet seen his '*nouvelle patrie*.' His hereditary respect for form received scant sympathy from those rough-and-ready Bulgars, who in dealing with treaties cared only for stark realities.

Even after he had taken the irrevocable step, the Prince manifested a tender regard for the diplomatic proprieties. The word 'independence,' in his proclamations to his people, threw the Turk into a fit of irritation. 'The Powers,' as they were bound to do, condoled with the outraged 'suzerain.' Whereupon this 'correct' Prince of Bulgaria and 'vassal' of the Sultan explained that by 'independence' he meant freedom in internal affairs only. As if his oath at Tirnovo had not meant freedom—of the most unmistakable sort—in external affairs also; as if in every step he had taken from the Danube to Sofia he had not trodden upon a shred of that paper-chimera, the Berlin Treaty. As we have observed before, when he did take his plunge Prince Ferdinand struck out manfully.

In the whole history of diplomacy and of nation-making there is nothing more interesting and curious than Prince Ferdinand's career at this period. It is the spectacle of the rise of a new nation through the destruction of the compact and defiance of the guardians to which and to whom it was supposed to owe its existence. In the sublime indifference to treaty obligations with which the Prince and his ministers went touring through the country, there was a strong element of the comic. The furious Turk

implores the Powers to call the illustrious tourist to order. The Muscovite shouts opprobrious names, such as 'insolent interloper,' 'usurper,' 'upstart,' 'prevaricator,' 'promise-breaker,' and so on. Not knowing what he himself is to do, he bullies the Turk, urging him to reoccupy Roumelia—the Christian province from which he had expelled the same Turkish oppressor. Your conduct is 'deplorably irregular,'¹ England remonstrates through her able editors; do you not hear how 'severely' you are 'condemned everywhere'? are you not 'ashamed of yourself'? Losing patience with her co-signatories—especially with England, who points out that the treaty makes no provision for military coercion upon the offender—Russia proposes denunciation of the treaty. But Russia is silenced when she is reminded that the abrogation of the Berlin Treaty must leave Bulgaria free to do whatever she may please. 'The dogs bark, the caravan goes on its way,' says the Turkish proverb. But in this case the caravanners are the rebellious Bulgars and their 'unlawful' Prince. With a rude humour, they apply the adage to themselves. And while the hubbub of remonstrance, the appeal to the proprieties, resounds throughout Europe, Prince Ferdinand and his long tail of a cavalcade traverse the dusty highways of Bulgaria with the placidity of holiday people playing at gipsies.

¹ *Times* articles, August 1887.

XVIII

SCOLDING AND SMILING

BUT meanwhile, pleasant to relate, light was breaking in upon the European mind. The European mind was becoming alive to the realities hidden within their wrappings of verbiage. 'It would certainly be exceedingly odd,' said a German journal, 'if Russia, who, acting on a pretended European mandate, expelled Turkey from Bulgaria, should with another European mandate reinstate her there.' This was in reference to Russia's proposal to expel the Bulgarians from Eastern Roumelia and re-establish a Turkish governor-general with the same powers as those exercised by Aleko Pasha and Gavril Pasha before the 'unlawful' union with Northern Bulgaria. But Turkey and Russia were the only two Powers bent upon military coercion, and the treaty prohibited any but collective action.

The *Fremdenblatt* gave its opinion in the following passage :—

'The Berlin Treaty knows of three phases in the election of a Bulgarian Prince. The first—namely, the nomination by the Sobranje, and the taking of the Constitutional Oath—is now over. It is nowhere said in the Berlin Treaty that before the recognition by the Porte and the Powers the Prince-Elect is not allowed to appear on Bulgarian soil and to take the oath. This is a mere Bulgarian affair. The way in which the Prince

has been received in the country is the most satisfactory conclusion of the first phase. As to the following phases—namely, the recognition of the Sultan and the consent of the Powers—the Prince, supported by the confidence of the entire people, can await the course of events in his country.’

The foregoing estimate of the situation is not quite accurate. According to the letter of the treaty, the oath, without the previous approval of the Powers, was mere waste of breath.

In the following passage the *Cologne Gazette* came still nearer to a grasp of realities :—

‘If the Battenberger was not worth the bones of a Pomeranian grenadier to us, how should the Coburger be worth them? . . . Germany has no reason to be enthusiastic over the Coburger’s adventure. But, from the humane standpoint, it is to be desired that the sorely tried Principality may at last rest from its Russian liberator, yet tormentor, and be left to itself. If no one can help the country, it must in despair seek to help itself.’

Its contemporary, the *Vossische Zeitung*, made the following important declaration :—

‘None of the Powers will be in a hurry to recognise Prince Ferdinand, and even those that wish him well will await the development of events in Bulgaria. But supposing several Powers did declare themselves for the recognition of the Prince, what would the Russian threat then mean? Russia forgets or pretends to forget that the provisions of the Berlin Treaty respecting the election of the Prince of Bulgaria only owed their existence to the fact that the Powers feared the Bulgarians would permanently surrender themselves to Russian influence. Since, however, a strong anti-Russian reaction has

taken place in Bulgaria, no one has any longer any need to stand up for provisions which restrict the Bulgarians in the free choice of their Prince. The same thing holds good of nearly all the other provisions of the Berlin Treaty. The purposes in view have long been attained, and nobody will shed a tear if Russia invalidates the treaty.'

The real spirit of the Berlin Treaty could not have been expressed more forcibly than in the foregoing passage. But if the treaty restrictions upon the method of electing a Prince of Bulgaria were no longer necessary, it might be said that the document still retained at least a negative value, as a prohibition against the assertion of individual ambitions. Such was the view expressed by the *Times* :—

'But Russia's sole denunciation of the treaty would not affect the rights of other Powers, while they cannot agree to denounce it without losing the vantage ground from which they now address the erring Bulgarians and their Prince. The irregularity of the situation is absolutely dependent upon the validity of the Treaty of Berlin. Take that away and no one has the right to address a single reproach to the Bulgarians or to interfere with any of their arrangements. . . . The Great Powers will not rightly relinquish their right of collective control. . . . Their collective control excludes all singular interference, which is in itself a very considerable advantage. . . . As things stand, all that happens is the regulation of Bulgarian affairs by the Bulgarians—a result perhaps not repugnant to the spirit of the Berlin Treaty, although attained by methods not strictly justified by its letter.'

All the world knows how impotent 'the collective control' proved when in 1908 the Austrians annexed

Bosnia-Herzegovina, in which the treaty had installed them as caretakers ; and Prince Ferdinand, casting off his last bond of 'vassalage' to the Turk, was proclaimed, amidst the plaudits of his people, Czar of Bulgaria. But, on the other hand, Bulgarian 'vassalage' to the rotten, utterly incurable, and detestable 'Empire' of the Ottomans was but the frailest make-believe. So was the Austrian 'occupation'—as diplomatically distinguished from annexation. The robbers, as the Turks characterised them, merely appropriated what was already theirs.

It was not, however, the barbarous Turk, with his foul record of crime, no longer capable of pillage and murder on a Ghenghiz Khan's scale, that Austria despoiled. Rather was it the Slav, predominant by numbers in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Dual Monarchy, dreaming over the union of his race, perhaps over a coming struggle for supremacy with the Teuton. Austria's design was subjection. In that respect she was following in the footsteps of the once conquering Turk. But, of course, subjection to Austria differed as widely as the poles from the Christian 'herd's' subjection to their Turkish tyrant. A benevolent subjection it might be, but still subjection to armed force. Bulgaria's aim was far otherwise—the liberation of her kindred long 'struggling to be free.' The proclamation of 1908 was the penultimate, that of 1887 the ante-penultimate, step towards the achievement of a secular purpose.

It remained for the *Svoboda*,¹ King-Maker Stambouloff's own paper, to sum up the moral of Prince Ferdinand's advent. The article might have been written by M. Stambouloff himself. Like the great Dictator's talk on critical themes, it is outright and straight to the point :—

‘The crisis is terminated. We have a reigning Prince, and Bulgaria will know how to resume her normal path. Europe alleges that we violate international treaties. On the contrary, we wish to repair the flagrant violation of treaty which Russia committed in expelling Prince Alexander. If Russia had not driven away our Prince, should we have been compelled to elect a new ruler, to bring him here without the consent of the Powers? The telegram which Prince Ferdinand sent to the Sultan on arriving in Bulgaria is a proof that neither he nor the Bulgarian nation has any intention of breaking treaties. If the Powers propose giving over their rights into the hands of Russia, the consequences of such action should be weighed beforehand, for it would bring about a situation by no means desirable in the interests of Europe. If Europe desires peace, she ought not to drive the Bulgarians to extremities ; she ought not to forget that they will not budge from the position they have taken up.’

There the voice rings of Stephan Stambouloff, the greatest Bulgarian of modern times. That dexterous hit at Russia as the real law-breaker is exactly in the Dictator's manner. The law-breaker *was* Russia. Her paid agents kidnapped the ruler whom the Porte and the Signatory Powers had approved. Her government forced him to abdicate. Alexander had to

¹ Liberty.

choose between abdication and murder. He had to make the choice, because he stood in the way of a Russian ambition which the Berlin Treaty was designed to frustrate. The Dictator is no less explicit in his warning that Bulgaria will fight to maintain the position she has made for herself, even if an armed Europe may attempt to coerce her. There, also, is the Stambouloffian note of defiance. Bulgaria will respect treaties. But how? By interpreting them in her own way—that is to say, in accordance with what people call ‘natural justice.’ As he often said on other occasions, Bulgaria had no voice in the making of the bargain that was supposed to seal her fate for generations to come. It is the slave’s natural right, as soon as he feels himself strong enough, to break his bonds, and, if need be, to break his owner’s head.

Stambouloff’s strong language and Prince Ferdinand’s announcement of ‘freedom’ and ‘independence’ elicited, as we have already said, remonstrances from the European press. Even from England—whose people, lovers of justice, were pro-Bulgarian—some grave scolding was sent forth to the address of Prince Ferdinand and his ministers and people. But perhaps it may not be difficult to perceive that the scolding was administered for form’s sake. This or that eminent writer who emits it, somewhat resembles a model headmaster who, having severely admonished a pupil for some daring escapade, finishes off by calling the culprit a promising young English gentleman and inviting him to tea.

Your behaviour is 'exceedingly irregular,' said the *Times*. Of course it was. The Prince might have given the Powers at least a nod of recognition as he and his cavalcade went past at their easy jog-trot on the road to Sofia. The Powers, the same great journal went on, will be under the painful necessity of drawing up 'an identic note expressing their sense of the impropriety of ignoring the rights of the Sultan and the control of Europe.' What cared those rude Scythians for identic notes—mere bullets of rag or wood pulp? Well, after all, if these Bulgarians 'can manage to consume their own smoke, they are not likely to be meddled with, but if they puff it in the face of their neighbours, it is more difficult to answer for the course of events.' If they 'do well,' Europe will leave them alone. 'If they permit themselves to become a nuisance to their neighbours, they may force Europe to depart from her present attitude of frowning non-interference.' The writer of the *Times*' leading article may have frowned like the rest, but if he did, there was, one imagines, a smile lurking in the corners of his eyes.

XIX

RIGHT IN 'TAKING THE RISKS'

THE only 'contradiction' worth talking about existed not between Prince Ferdinand's first promise and subsequent performance, but between the past and the present. The Slavic movement in Southern Europe was not to be arrested because a company of gentlemen seated round a green table in Berlin had ordained, Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther. *Status quo*. There's no such thing as *status quo* in the universe. Πάντα ῥεῖ. It was not Prince Ferdinand's fault if the logic of facts—*la force des choses*—had stultified the logic of vocables. The gentlemen round the green table had misinterpreted the Bulgarian mind. They imagined that a Bulgaria more free than they were resolved to establish would become the consenting instrument of Russian ambition. And so, having tied up the young Bulgar giant in elaborate red tape, the British envoy-in-chief returned home with his imbecile brag of 'Peace with honour'—the 'peace' turning out to be, in so far as a large portion of the Bulgar land was concerned, a sanguinary episode destined to last thirty-five years. The Prince's scruples in the conflict between the letter of an international compact and what he believed to be its spirit was by no means a sign of weakness. It was all to his credit. In striking out on the independent

path he chose the lesser of two evils. His intimate knowledge of the history of the last seven years proved to him the baselessness of the old fear lest a free Bulgaria should mean a more powerful Russia and a long step towards the realisation of 'Peter's dream.' Nor did his adoption of the independent course signify an abandonment of future efforts to appease Russia. On the contrary, he continued his efforts, patiently, hopefully, in spite of many a rude rebuff, until they were crowned with success, and in a most flattering manner. The very terms of the metropolitan bishop's short address to the Prince in the cathedral might well have encouraged Prince Ferdinand in the hope that Russia might, without much further delay, 'regularise' his position. The bishop, it must be remembered, had long been one of the foremost leaders of the pro-Russian party. He had been implicated in the kidnapping of Prince Alexander and in the intrigues that led to his enforced abdication. Yet this most powerful of the Bulgarian bishops, speaking from his throne in the cathedral, declared that the Bulgarian people were thankful to the Prince for having had 'the courage' to come among them at a moment 'so critical'; that the Prince might count on the people's 'devotion.' The bishop, at the same time, proclaimed the nation's gratitude to Russia, and urged the Prince to strive for reconciliation between the liberator and the liberated nation. But that was precisely what the Prince himself most ardently desired to achieve; while, as for

gratitude to Russia, the Prince has not ceased to avow it to this day.

But a still more remarkable declaration in favour of Prince Ferdinand came about this time from a quarter from which one would least expect it. It has long been the fashion to depreciate King Milan of Servia's intelligence. But those who were supposed to know him best formed a high opinion of his political shrewdness. It was his firm belief that delay in the election of a prince would plunge Bulgaria into anarchy, and relegate her to the position which she occupied after the war, when she was under Russia's provisional administration. It seemed to be his opinion that Prince Ferdinand was well qualified for the hard task he had undertaken, and even that His Highness ought to have started for Tirnovo the moment the news of his election was conveyed to him by the Regents' deputation. There could have been no doubt but that King Milan himself would have done it. It is interesting to recall to mind the fact that King Milan himself had at one time been approached with a view to his election as king of a united Bulgaria and Servia. The scheme was neither more nor less impracticable than the proposal for King Charles of Roumania's election. Underlying it was the idea of a Confederation of the Southern Slavs. That it was not a hopelessly 'wild-cat' scheme the events of 1912-13 have proved. And it may be that the existing military alliance of the Balkanic states is destined to further developments.

From every point of view, therefore, Prince Ferdinand was justified in adopting the bold, and technically illegal, and 'deplorable' course. And none the less because there were risks. The occasion was one worth rising to. *Noblesse oblige*. And if Prince Ferdinand needed any inspiration, there was his mother, the clearly discerning and ambitious, to supply it. The Bulgarians, sharp-eyed people, who conducted the earlier negotiations with the Prince, gathered the impression that Princess Clémentine was a power behind the scene. One may imagine her pride and gratification when, in her quiet retreat at Ebenthal, where she anxiously followed the daily reports of her son's progress, she received from the Regents the telegraphic announcement of her son's accession to the throne of Bulgaria. The following was Princess Clémentine's reply:—

'The devotion and attachment which the noble Bulgarian people show towards my beloved son produce feelings of joy and satisfaction in his mother's heart. I am deeply touched by this, by your kind expressions, and your wish to see me in Bulgaria, whither I shall be very happy to come.'

Their message to Princess Clémentine was, it seems, the Regents' last official act. After the Prince's taking of the oath and the reading of his proclamation the Regency ceased to exist. The Grand Sobranje (Assembly) had done its work. It was dissolved. And the Prince, for the first time, chose his ministers.

XX

THE PRINCE'S FIRST PREMIER : FIRST GENERAL ELECTION

IT might have been expected that Prince Ferdinand would have chosen as his first Prime Minister the first of living Bulgarians, the saviour of the state during some of its most critical years, M. Stambouloff. He chose M. Stoiloff, whose successful negotiations with him in Vienna we have already recorded, dwelling at the same time on the sympathies between the two men. In a system of government under which the Prince shared with his ministers the duties of consultation and discussion, M. Stoiloff's presidency of the council would have been in many ways for the Prince a peculiarly agreeable arrangement. We have already spoken of M. Stoiloff's wide culture. He was the most brilliant of all the students who, up to his time, had been trained at the famous institution on the Bosphorus, Robert College. The Prime Minister-elect had a pleasing presence. His manners were gracious and entirely unaffected. He had a constitutional dislike to the turmoil of politics. Differences that set his comrades in the assembly by the ears left him unmoved. His attitude was rather that of the philosopher-onlooker than of a gladiator in the dusty arena of politics. He was a kind of Bulgar Ernest Renan, but perhaps with a more optimistic outlook upon life than the illustrious Frenchman's. The

rough-and-tumble manners and methods of certain of his colleagues somewhat jarred upon M. Stoïloff's nerves.

Clearly the kind of Prime Minister suited to Prince Ferdinand's fastidious tastes. But when the Tirново ceremonials were over, and the hard work of government had to be undertaken at Sofia, M. Stoïloff failed to form a cabinet. He was pacific, and too much of a Conservative for the Nationalists, who, having already scored so many victories, were in their finest fighting trim, well knowing that their Russian foes were preparing for them fresh troubles. M. Stoïloff resigned, without regret. The Prince offered the post of Prime Minister to M. Tontcheff, also a Conservative. M. Tontcheff declined it. The name Conservative, by the way, does not connote any clearly defined political doctrine. Conservatives such as the two statesmen we have mentioned were Russophile only in the sense of dissent from the extreme form of opposition to Russia assumed by the *intransigent* Nationalists. But the politics of the hour were politics of strong contrasts.

Having failed with the Conservatives, Prince Ferdinand turned to M. Stambouloff. But the ex-Regent also recoiled from the task. It was said at this time that the Prince and M. Stambouloff had already taken stock of each other. One imaginative writer describes the pair, when they met each other for the first time on board the Danubian steamer, as looking straight into each other's souls through

each other's steady eyes, and coming to the mute conclusion that theirs was to be an obstinate fight for mastery. It was also said that the Prince and M. Stambouloff had already had a 'passage of arms' at Tirnovo—which explained, it was added, why M. Stambouloff had not accompanied His Highness to Sofia. It would be strange if two such shrewd observers should fail after a few minutes', or a day or two's, intercourse to read each other. But the true reason for M. Stambouloff's reluctance was given by the ex-Regent himself to his friend, Mr. Beaman, in a conversation which took place soon after the inauguration at Tirnovo.¹ Said M. Stambouloff :—

'No words can picture my delight at the arrival of the Prince. It had been a perpetual nightmare and terror to me that Bulgaria might lose her independence under my Regency, and that my name would be handed down to posterity as a reproach. When the Prince left for Sofia with his new ministry, I spent three days with my friends in fêting my deliverance. They were three of the happiest days of my life.'

M. Stambouloff's special reasons for refusal, his final acceptance, and Prince Ferdinand's persistence in pressing him to yield, were alike creditable. M. Stambouloff felt that the Prince, notwithstanding the sincerity of his offer, might possibly find it irksome to have for Prime Minister a man who but the other day was the autocrat of Bulgaria, and who by force of circumstances might be impelled to carry his auto-

¹ Beaman's *Life of Stambouloff*, 1895.

cratic methods into the subordinate post. M. Stambouloff was quite frank on this point in his talk with the Prince and M. Stoïloff. He was equally frank, and quite good-humoured, when he remarked that he foresaw troubles between himself, were he Prime Minister, and the Prince. He had passed stormy years in Alexander's reign, he was tired, he needed rest ; the political life had not for him the irresistible attraction it once had. There was nothing deceptive in Bulgaria's Representative Man. He was what he appeared to be—truthfulness, courage, patriotism incarnate, the implacable foe of every man whom he suspected of infidelity to his country.

Stambouloff, in a word, was at this period Bulgaria. And Prince Ferdinand, a stranger in the land, knew it. As His Highness himself was known to have said, Stambouloff could much more easily dispense with Prince Ferdinand than the Prince with Stambouloff. He knew it, and he honestly admitted it, thereby proving himself, 'Coburger' and stranger though he was, 'a good Bulgarian.'

There was another reason, but of a purely personal and domestic nature, why M. Stambouloff might have declined office. His pecuniary means were limited. And practice at the bar, where he had before now displayed talents of a high order, would have enriched him. But a salary of about five hundred pounds a year was the wage which a frugal Bulgar Parliament paid its Prime Minister. However, when his country's good was at stake,

M. Stambouloff recked not of money. He yielded to the Prince's insistence. Though Stoïloff was technically the first, Stambouloff was actually the first, of Prince Ferdinand's Prime Ministers. Stambouloff's ministry was, and still is, the most famous in the history of Bulgaria. It lasted nearly seven years—that is to say, until the summer of 1904. There were changes within the Cabinet, but M. Stambouloff remained at its head. The Cabinet was at first constituted with M. Mutkouroff as War Minister, M. Stoïloff as Minister of Justice, M. Girkoff (ex-Regent) as Minister of Public Instruction, and M. Natchevitch, the envoy who accompanied the Prince from Vienna, as Minister of Finance, and M. Stransky, another companion, as Minister of Foreign Affairs. M. Stambouloff, besides being President of the Council (Premier), took charge of the Department of the Interior.

The first business which confronted this Ministry of all the Talents was to prepare for a general election. It had to be ascertained whether Prince Ferdinand's first Cabinet possessed the country's confidence, and whether the Prince's own procedure so far had the nation's approval. In French phrase, the Government had to 'make' the elections. In the past, Bulgarian 'elections' had been 'made' in the literal sense of the word. Until recent years it was the fashion to say that there never had been a free general election in Bulgaria. And in the literal sense of 'free' the assertion was in almost every instance correct. And yet, in spite of intervention by reac-

tionary ministries, either the result at the polls was Nationalist or, if anti-Nationalist, denounced by the spontaneous protest of the people. So that it may be said, with perfect truth, that if Nationalist ministries had refrained from supporting their own nominees, the vote at the urns would nevertheless have been Nationalist. But, on the other hand, the machinations of the reactionary, otherwise pro-Russian, group had to be defeated. To the 'Box-Stuffers,' 'Plug-Uglies,' and 'Blood Tubs' of the United States during the presidential elections of the seventies and eighties, Russia's agents during the contests of Prince Alexander's reign might with justice be compared. At one of these contests only four or five Nationalist candidates were returned. But the 'Box-Stuffers' realised they had gained nothing when they saw the villages of Bulgaria all a-flutter with flags bearing the motto, 'Down with Russia!'—Russia, 'the liberator' to whom Bulgaria, as her foremost sons acknowledged, owed everlasting gratitude. Mechanical manipulation availed naught against the mind, the spirit, the 'vital force,' as Prince Ferdinand happily expressed it, of a people. Vitality of the race, consciously expressing itself in solidarity between all citizens from the Premier to the peasant, from the general to his youngest drummer-boy—such is the summary of Bulgarian history.

As a constitutional ruler Prince Ferdinand manifested his sensitive respect for freedom at the urns. He would not hear of 'making' the elections. There

was to be no interference beyond prevention of reactionary coercion. His Prime Minister was quite in accord with him. And M. Stambouloff, as Minister of the Interior, was in the position to see that every necessary precaution should be taken. The general election was six weeks ahead. Throughout that period the panslavist committees in Constantinople, Bucharest, and St. Petersburg had their agents secretly at work in every Bulgarian constituency. Among the most active members of these secret committees were Bulgarian refugees lately escaped from the Dictator's clutches. M. Stambouloff's police spies and the Prince's agents in Austria and Russia reported that millions of Russian roubles were spent in electoral propagandism. Metropolitan Bishop Clement, who but lately had praised the Prince for his courage in coming to Bulgaria at a time so critical, was labouring indefatigably on the reactionary side. It was said that the Prince had begun to feel his position insecure. General elections cost money. And Prince Ferdinand well knew that, while the Russian roubles were streaming in, Bulgaria had but very few francs to spare. The Prince, however, was rich—more fortunate in that respect than his predecessor, who had little more than the wages of a ruling prince to live upon. So he offered his Minister of the Interior half a million francs from his own pocket for electioneering expenses—of a legitimate character, of course. M. Stambouloff's biographer relates how the minister, in his bluff manner, declined

the gift, remarking that he neither feared Russian roubles nor needed French francs—and also, that Nationalist Bulgaria would do her electioneering on forty pounds, and that His Highness need not distress himself. Unconventional in his manners, and masterful, was this servant of the Prince's! Throughout the whole of the electioneering period the reactionary committees were distributing circulars, abounding in abusive language, against the Prince and his ministers—M. Stambouloff above all. The clerical agitators, with the shifty Bishop Clement at their head, made the ridiculous accusation that 'the Catholic' Prince was deliberately undermining the Orthodox Church. For 'the Coburger' they substituted 'the Catholic.' On the 9th of October 1887 Prince Ferdinand's first Parliament was returned with an overwhelming Nationalist majority. The minister invalidated one or two local Nationalist votes, in which it was said that coercion had been used. But a re-election, in which every precaution against intimidation had been taken, left the Nationalists masters of the situation. The election 'consecrated' the Prince's proclamation—'Bulgaria free and independent,' 'Bulgaria for the Bulgarians.'

XXI

PLOTTING AGAINST PRINCE FERDINAND

It is perhaps needless to say that in this agitated period which, beginning early in Alexander's reign, was destined to last through the first seven years of Ferdinand's, it was the Cause, not the Prince, that the Bulgar cared for. And, of course, Russia was aware of it. And being aware of it, she perceived it would be to her advantage if Ferdinand's anxiety for recognition by the Czar should arouse the hostility of his subjects, already prone, as people liberated from ages of corrupt government would naturally be, to suspicion. The panslavic plotters were well aware of a certain coldness already arising between the Prince and his Prime Minister, and calculated, as they imagined, to land the country once again in a state of anarchy, which would give Russia her opportunity of armed intervention.

There was a rift in the lute, slight as yet. Prince and minister had the same end in view. But they differed in temperament and in the method in which they strove to attain it. The Prince was for conciliation. The minister was all defiance. Before condemning the great minister one should understand him. Stambouloff had passed through a merciless school of adversity such as few leaders of popular movements had had any experience of. His hard-

ships, often amounting to absolute destitution, during his youthful conspiracies against the hated Turk, were a mere nothing in comparison with the desertion and the ingratitude of his comrades, and with the reproaches of others for failures of his that were in reality heroic. That it was that sank into the honest, rude, great soul of him and left there its indelible mark. In moments of bitter depression he despaired of a future for the people of his race: the heart had gone out of them. From such a school of adversity there issued the man of combat, whom one might break but not bend, who would treat with impartial ruthlessness the foe or the friend convicted of infidelity to the nation's cause.

At this time, and in spite of his many acts of arbitrary severity during the Regency, Stambouloff was still the man of the Bulgarian people. So when rumours of the Prince's haughty demeanour towards his minister were spread abroad, the public sympathised with the minister. And the panslavist plotters rejoiced over the prospect of a quarrel. In the army also Prince Ferdinand's distant demeanour was resented—and that in a very marked manner. The enthusiasms of Tirnovo had passed away. And the new commander-in-chief, the Prince, showed nothing of the *camaraderie* which had endeared the soldier-prince, Alexander of Battenberg, to officers and men alike. Whatever qualities Prince Ferdinand might develop in the course of his career, they would not be of the military order. So they said. To this

day the officers of the Bulgarian army maintain a free-and-easy, familiar, jolly-good-fellow style of intercourse not only among their gallant selves, but towards their commanders, such as would throw a ducal martinet of Vienna or Berlin into fits. Yet in no other army is discipline more thorough, does officer or man better 'know his place.' The Bulgarian army is an object-lesson in aristocrat-democracy, where the 'aristocrat' is simply the 'best man,' the right man in the right place, the *ἀριστος* in the one true sense, the only sufferable sense, of the name.

But Prince Ferdinand was new to this style of equalitarianism. Indeed, it is possible that even a certain Philippe Égalité—that doubtful ornament of the House of Orleans—might have been rather taken aback by it. It is true that the Bulgars, a nation of peasants, lacked the graciousness of a Versailles society. But they could appreciate in others what they lacked themselves. And all that they saw in their Prince, now that he was started in business, was an irreproachable politeness. Their Prince was a rigid stickler for the etiquette in which he had been bred from childhood—the etiquette of the Vienna Mandarins. Let them wait a few years.

While the plotters at home were chuckling over the prospect of a quarrel between the Prince and his autocratic minister, their accomplices in Turkey and Russia were preparing a new Bulgarian insurrection. Intriguers professing to know what was going on within the doors of the council chamber in the

Prince's palace, reported that the minister was fast losing patience with his 'headstrong' master. The adjective was said to be Stambouloff's own. It was alleged that the Prince had seriously remonstrated with his minister on account of his 'tyranny.' As was remarked in the foreign press, Prince Ferdinand was somewhat in the position of Louis XIII. with Richelieu, of Louis XIV. with Mazarin, of the two Williams with Thomas Carlyle's 'magnanimous Herr von Bismarck.' But between Bismarck and the first William there existed an affection, unalterable and in many ways touching, of which the relations between Prince Ferdinand and his minister never showed the faintest trace.

In this new agitation, 'engineered' with the express purpose of expelling Prince Ferdinand, the heavenly host lent its powerful aid to the carnal forces that were stealthily mustering under the direction or encouragement of the Russian Ernroths, Hitrovos, Ignatieffs, and Petrovitchs, and the Bulgarian Zankoffs, Naboukoffs, and Panitzas. The ecclesiastical ringleader was, it need hardly be said, the metropolitan, Clement. His war-cry was of a kind once familiar in England, 'The Church is in danger.' The danger was Roman Catholicism, of which the Prince and Princess Clémentine were the agents. The palace was the 'impure source' which was poisoning Orthodox Bulgaria. At Clement's instigation the Bulgarian clergy got up a petition and sent it to the head of the Bulgarian Church, the Exarch, whose official residence was in

Constantinople. It was hoped that the Exarch would excommunicate Ferdinand 'the Catholic.' The following was the petition addressed to 'Your Beatitude,' the Exarch Joseph :—

'In order to dry up this impure spring, which threatens utterly to corrupt all that is holy, pure, and elevated in Bulgaria, and which is sapping the foundation of all grace in this country, it is necessary first of all to cut short the nourishment which it receives from the original foes of our race and faith. Whether this will happen soon is known only to the omniscient God. To us it only remains to join with Your Beatitude, and all our Holy Church, in offering unceasing prayers to Him to hasten that time, in order that these days of moral decay, through which our country is passing, may be shortened as soon as possible : to stay the hands of the sons of darkness and ungodliness, to dry up the veins of the foul spring, to support all true followers of grace, and to crown with success the efforts of those who are devoted to the sanctity of His name and Church.

'Your Beatitude, to you, as high head of the Orthodox Church of the whole Bulgarian nation, we direct our hopes that you will act for the preservation of its ancestral dignity, for in its bosom has been preserved entire our much tried Bulgarian nation, by whom it has been revived politically, and through whom we hope that its life may be strengthened for a brighter and purer future.'

The Exarch Joseph had a livelier sense of reality than the petitioners. He had once upon a time been a Conservative, that is to say, a Russophile, almost as pronounced as Clement himself. But he was also an ardent patriot, and a reflective one. He saw that Russia's real purpose was administrative supremacy

in Bulgaria, and that the attempt would end in sanguinary anarchy. The Exarch therefore took the effective common-sense course.¹ He simply ignored the petition. But M. Stambouloff was less merciful. He clapped the signatories into prison. Some readers might perhaps be misled by the word Orthodox in the petition, the word being usually understood as denoting the Greek Church. But the Orthodox faith is also the faith of the Bulgarian Church—the difference being that the services of that Church are conducted in the Slavic tongue, and that the Church has a national head of its own. Nor was it correct to say that the Bulgarian Church was the mother of the Bulgarian nation. The gradual release of the Bulgar Church from her Orthodox-Greek servitude was itself but a symptom of the advance of the race. The schoolmaster and monk were far more efficient agents in the national revival than the secular clergy. Nevertheless, the petition was a shrewd blow at ‘the Catholic’ and his régime. It has already been explained in what sense, in the East, Church and nation were identical: how the Christian Church was at least as much a political as a religious institution. Upon an ignorant people, brought up in the religious-political tradition of the Turkish era, the appeal ecclesiastic was expected to produce a profound effect.

¹ Mr. Beaman’s *Stambouloff*.

XXII

THE PANITZA PLOT

CONFIDENT in their great prestige, the Bulgarian bishops did not rest content with the issue of a petition. It was in this same period of turmoil that the reactionaries among them plotted an insurrection. The petition to the Exarch was only a move in the game. A meeting of the Holy Synod at Sofia was to be the occasion for proclaiming a revolution. The ringleaders in the affair were Simeon, Bishop of Varna, an old sedition-monger; Constantine, Bishop of Vratza, one of Russia's most active agents; and, of course, the irrepressible Clement. They refused to visit the Prince, and the Premier, and the Minister of Public Worship. In a fiery discourse delivered in Sofia Cathedral, Bishop Simeon accused the Prince of a design to substitute Romanism for Orthodoxy. The bishop's extravagance rather defeated itself. At any rate, Stambouloff contented himself with a contemptuous message to the offending bishops, to the effect that if they did not return to their dioceses within three days he would turn them out and stop their wages (they were paid by the state). The bishops regarded the message as an empty threat, and they took no notice of it. But Stambouloff was as good as his word. The bishops were sound asleep in the small hours, when the minister's policemen

knocked them up and bundled them off to their respective flocks. The wily autocrat, who had an eye, or an ear, at every keyhole in Bulgaria, had unravelled their plot—which was, at High Mass in the cathedral to launch their anathema against ‘the Catholic,’ and summon the faithful people to rebel. M. Stambouloff had stolen a march upon them. He treated them with unwonted leniency—perhaps because of the popular prestige of the Church, perhaps, also, because they had wielded none but ghostly weapons. Quite different was his treatment of the lay conspirators, who at this critical period had recourse to powder and steel.

The military conspiracies for the dethronement or assassination of Prince Ferdinand came to maturity at the end of 1887, four months after his arrival in the country. They were formed before his arrival, as was proved by documents discovered on the dead body of a conspirator. Bulgaria was still smarting under the insult which Russia would have inflicted upon her by establishing a Russian official in the offices of Provisional Governor of Northern Bulgaria and Governor-General of Eastern Roumelia. It is a sordid tale of bloodthirsty intrigue, relieved by a solitary flash of sarcastic humour on the part of the Turk, who, when bullied by Russia to get rid of the ‘Coburg interloper,’ retorted that Russia, with her success in the Battenberg kidnapping exploit, was of the two the better qualified for the job. Ernroth’s very name was offensive even to confirmed pan-

slavists in Bulgaria. As one of the authors of Alexander's *coup d'état*, his arrogant treatment of the Bulgarians, whom he considered unfit for constitutional government, won for him an evil reputation among them. That the Czar's Government should even have dreamt of making a choice of Ernroth was, in Stambouloff's words, an illustration of Russia's 'insolent' disregard for Bulgarian sentiment.

But to come to the December conspiracies. They were quite in the old Ernrothian line. They were at Eski Zagora, and at Bourgas, the Euxine port. Their purpose was to stir up the Bulgarian Government to take such violent measures as would provoke foreign intervention. The men employed in them were for the most part ruffians recruited in Constantinople. One of their bands despatched to surprise Bourgas was defeated by the prefect. Its leader was killed in the fight. The letter which was found upon him, and to which we have already alluded, was written by the Russian panslavist Petrovitch to Count Ignatieff, requesting him to facilitate, through his influence with Prince Nicolas, the recruitment of Montenegrins for the projected rising in Bulgaria.

A brief account must suffice for the Panitza conspiracy, the most serious of Prince Ferdinand's reign. The conspirators had agreed to give Prince Ferdinand his choice between abdication and death. Its ring-leader, Major Panitza, a Macedonian, was one of the most popular officers in the army. He boasted that

the majority of the troops in Sofia garrison were with him. Like some of his accomplices, he bore a grudge against Prince Ferdinand because of (alleged) favouritism in military promotions. A reckless swaggerer—though a genial, amusing one—he talked openly of the fate in store for ‘the Coburger’; so openly that people were deceived, taking it all for bluff. But Stambouloff knew better. Panitza was the bosom friend of his youth, his comrade in many a desperate plot against the Turk.

At this period, and until the day of his downfall, M. Stambouloff kept up a system of espionage as elaborate and widespread as the Turk’s own when he was lord of the land. He speedily mastered Panitza’s secret. And he was seriously alarmed at the extent of the plot. He discovered that both the commandant of the Sofia garrison and the prefect of police were in it, and that Panitza had won over most of the artillery officers. But he bided his time. He knew he had time to spare, and he occupied it quietly in making preparations for replacing such officers as he might think it advisable to dismiss or otherwise punish. He was still more seriously alarmed when, in secret documents unearthed by his spies, he found the names of certain prominent personages whom he would not have suspected of treason. At last M. Stambouloff struck out. He arrested Major Panitza, employing for the purpose two of Panitza’s own accomplices, one of whom, repenting in good time, gave information to the War Minister. Arrests

followed right and left. The conspirators were demoralised. At the trial, which lasted several months, it was proved that the plotters had been looking about them for a successor to 'the Coburger,' and that they had their revolutionary proclamation ready for issue on the day of the insurrection. Mr. Beaman, who knew the details, states that Stambouloff refrained from arresting certain accomplices of Panitza's—fearing, we are to suppose, the effect which the publication of names so respectable might produce upon the public.¹ Once again the great minister almost despaired of his country. It was the general impression that Major Panitza would escape with a sentence of dismissal from the army. It was thought that even Stambouloff of the iron heart would shrink from inflicting the supreme penalty upon the friend of his youth. The tribunal sentenced the conspirator to death. Prince Ferdinand signed the warrant, with a heavy heart; but he had no alternative. Major Panitza was shot. And even those who lamented his untimely fate admitted that he deserved it, and that the success of his treason might have proved an irreparable disaster to his country.

¹ The story of these plots is well summarised in Mr. Beaman's *Stambouloff*.

XXIII

THE PRINCE BIDDING HIS TIME

FROM the birth of M. Stambouloff's great ministry to May 1894, the date of M. Stambouloff's downfall, Prince Ferdinand appeared to lead the life of a *roi fainéant*, the very sort of life he had vowed not to lead. But his supposed indolence was merely apparent. His acquiescence in M. Stambouloff's direction of affairs was in reality an indication of his strength of character. Before the Prince's advent, and during the earlier part of the above-named period, Stambouloff was the incarnation of Bulgaria. He had steered the Ship of State through the breakers. Stambouloff was the man Bulgaria needed during a particular crisis of her career. But the shrewd Prince foresaw a time when Stambouloff would prove a serious hindrance to the solution of the Russo-Bulgar—in other words, the Bulgarian-European question. He would interfere as little as possible with his despotic Prime Minister, and bide his time. But the European press failed to understand the situation. Prince Ferdinand was very generally ridiculed. French journalists twitted the Saviour of Society who 'hid himself in M. Stambouloff's shadow.' The caricaturists were busy with him. It seemed to be the general impression that his reign would not last long. It said much for Mr. Shaw

Lefevre's perspicacity that, as early as 1890, he discerned the Prince's 'ability and conscientiousness,' and the probability of his permanent success. Such was the ridicule and abuse to which the Prince was subjected by a portion of the continental press during the early period of his reign that his mother, Princess Clémentine, shed tears when she read the first complimentary appreciations of him. So M. Alexandre Hepp writes in his biography of the Prince.

Even in his 'prison palace'—to use an expression current at the time—the Prince was by no means an idler. Nor did time hang heavy on his hands. He worked hard at Bulgarian, in which, as we have already recorded, he made his preliminary studies at the time of his first intercourse with Stambouloff's envoys. He spent hours every day in reading histories of South-Eastern Europe, and books and articles on Bulgaria's natural resources, chiefly in agriculture. English, Italian, German, Hungarian, Russian, and French newspaper articles on the Near Eastern question he read regularly. It was said of him that he was as laborious in his studies as the hardest worked secretary in any European cabinet.

And, of course, his 'prison' doors were always open. Numberless were the trips which he made, during those years of waiting, through Bulgaria and to foreign countries. It often happened that the Sofians imagined their Prince to be at his bookworm pastime in the palace (never an attractive residence, by the way), when all the while he was on the Black

Sea coast, planning the development of Varna and Bourgas, or mountain-climbing on the southern frontier, or looking up the abbot and monks of the monastery of St. John of Rilo. It was in those quiet, constant country trips of his that Prince Ferdinand acquired his extraordinarily minute and comprehensive knowledge of Bulgaria and its people. It is by no means an exaggeration to say that Czar Ferdinand knows more about the character and the needs of the Bulgarian country-people, who constitute the bulk and the backbone of the nation, than most of the ministers who have served him.

Nor were his numerous journeys to foreign lands undertaken, as newspaper writers often said they were, for mere pleasure. Austrian statesmen, at least, knew better. It was Count Kalnoky who had said that there remained in Bulgaria certain tasks to accomplish which M. Stambouloff (who always acted as regent during the Prince's absence) was more qualified than any other minister to undertake, and that if Stambouloff were 'removed' (as the panslavist conspirators were always threatening to do), anarchy would follow. The Prince was in communication with his regent. His foreign journeys were designed, as M. Bousquet has expressed it, to 'advertise' the country of his adoption. It needed advertising. To the newspaper-reading public Bulgaria was, and for some few years more continued to be, 'a country where atrocities were perpetrated.' As an 'advertiser,' Prince Ferdinand would have had the

approbation of his grandfather, King Louis-Philippe, who had in him the makings of a shrewd bourgeois business man. While Stambouloff was fighting conspirators and chasing brigand bands at home, the Prince, through his family connections, was trying to win European recognition of the new Bulgarian régime. This was a matter for which the defiant M. Stambouloff cared comparatively little. But to the Prince it was a matter of the first importance. Though the Prince had not yet visited Turkey, his indirect influence upon the Porte was very considerable. Amidst their differences of opinion, the advantage of a reconciliation with Turkey was a subject on which the Prince and his minister were in complete accord. As early as 1889 Turkey would have recognised the new order in Bulgaria, but the Russian ambassador at Constantinople effectually barred the way, and the European Chancelleries took their cue from Russia. In his *Wanderjahren* Prince Ferdinand found much sympathy, of a strictly private nature, at more than one European court. Foreign nations were entering into commercial treaties with the 'vassal state.' The Turk himself was doing it. In other words, Bulgaria was being treated virtually as if she were the 'free and independent' state which the Prince had proclaimed her.

But while welcomed in private, Prince Ferdinand (if certain of his intimate friends be not misinformed) was sometimes given to understand that it would be convenient to his royal sympathisers if he would take leave of them—in the language of the British police-

man, 'Move on.' Panslavist informers were dogging his footsteps. It was said that he sometimes arranged to meet, in the picture-galleries, museums, restaurants of Paris, or in hired lodgings, friends and confidential agents with whom it might be inadvisable to converse elsewhere. Yet all the world knew who 'Monsieur le Comte de Murany' was, who occasionally occupied rooms in one of the hotels in the Rue de Rivoli, opposite the Tuileries Gardens and the site of the palace in which his ancestor had reigned. Like the kindly King George of Greece, whose tragical fate has shocked Europe, the Prince loved to frequent the cafés of the central boulevards and watch the human tide passing by them. King Milan of Servia was another and more constant visitor. 'Le Roi Milan, le Prince Ferdinand. C'est complet. Vous voyez un chapitre des Rois en Exil,' the Prince whispered to his companion one night in a restaurant when he saw King Milan walk in with a melancholy mien. Prince Ferdinand loved, as he always does, Paris. Even the Rue du Bac had its attractions for him, and the Rue du Bac was in the early nineties—the Prince's *Wanderjahren*—what it is to-day, one of the most disagreeable in Europe. The Prince of Bulgaria must often have stepped aside into the gutters to make way for a bare-headed midinette—a pleasure, of course, in the circumstances. The Prince's tours were always a pleasant experience, but all the Powers could do just yet in the way of 'recognition' was to authorise their diplomatic agents in

Sofia to pay him their dutiful respects—in a judicious manner. ‘Ferdinand, c’est toi! Et bien, je suis comme l’Europe: je ne te reconnais pas,’ was the Duc d’Aumale’s exclamation on meeting with his nephew.

During this waiting period of Prince Ferdinand’s, the autocratic minister effected several internal reforms, while at the same time falling out irretrievably with his colleagues, and hastening his own downfall. The most useful and urgent of his internal reforms was the suppression of brigandage—brigandage in the right sense of the word, not in the Turkish sense, according to which insurgent patriots of the highest character and noblest motives were classed with highway thieves. In fact, this sorely needed reform was not exclusively an internal one, for the brigands whom Stambouloff made an end of were, to a large extent, associated with the panslavist agitators. A large band of brigands commanded by a Captain Kessaroff, who had been implicated in the kidnapping of Prince Alexander, had been secretly organised by a committee in Belgrade. Steps had been taken to prepare the Bulgarian peasantry for co-operation with them. The leader was assured that the peasants would welcome them with open arms. There was evidence to show that some members of the band had served in the Russian army. The leader and his men were undeceived: the Bulgarian peasants were not disposed to rebel against the new order of things. For brigand bands nothing remained but to live upon the public.

Rich foreigners, when they could get at them, were their favourite prey. Brigandage had been rife during Prince Alexander's troubled reign. It was an inheritance from the Turkish era. It flourished unchecked during the Regency and the party wranglings and foreign intrigues of Prince Ferdinand's first years. But now that these intrigues were nearly over and done with, the minister was free to deal with it. He did it so effectually that in little more than twelve months Bulgaria became about 'as safe as Hyde Park.'

The country recognised this signal service. But, as Mr. Beaman says in his biography of Stambouloff, the suppression made the minister many enemies—among Macedonian outlaws, for example, who mixed up politics with pillage, and were associated with people of their calling in Bulgaria. Their enmity, writes the same author, 'may possibly terminate one day in his assassination . . . there are dozens of desperate men who can look back on days when Stambouloff was living amongst them, an outlaw like themselves, but who would be ready and pleased to murder him to-day for the stern repression which he exercised throughout the tenure of his premiership.' The passage is interesting because of its bearing upon the question of responsibility for the minister's assassination—a responsibility which in some quarters was attributed to Prince Ferdinand himself. But to this subject we shall return in a later chapter.

In his next conspicuous enterprise M. Stambouloff had again Prince Ferdinand's entire sympathy and

encouragement. This was his journey to Constantinople and remarkable interview with the Sultan: his one great success in foreign policy. The visit took place in the autumn of 1892, shortly after Prince Ferdinand's return from a European tour in search of a wife. The outright Prime Minister had been urging his bachelor master to go and get married. 'Your dilatory habit in this matter,' M. Stambouloff would say in effect, 'is a positive danger to your "*nouvelle patrie*"; we want you to found a dynasty, and the sooner it's done the better. But that is what our enemies do *not* want, and so, you see, as long as you remain a bachelor you run the risk of assassination, and we the risk of anarchy if you are assassinated; whereas, if you give your "*nouvelle patrie*" a son and heir, those rascals would hardly think it worth their trouble to kill you, while we, your subjects, would feel secure—whatever might happen.'

It was during the Prince's absence that M. Stambouloff received from the Grand Vizier, in the Sultan's name, an invitation to Yildiz Kiosk. Acting as he was in the capacity of regent, M. Stambouloff was not, for the time being, in a position to accept it. But Prince Ferdinand on his return gave his cordial assent to the projected journey. Some years had yet to pass before the Prince himself could visit his 'suzerain.' And in the meantime there might be effected a step nearer to the goal which the Prince always had in view—friendship with the Turkish Government. And this was M. Stambouloff's own

sincere desire. It was, perhaps, the only point on which the Prince and his minister were in complete agreement. Stambouloff in his day—especially in the days when the pashas would have given a good round sum for his ‘brigand’ head—had harried and cursed the Turk. But times had changed. And the object of Stambouloff’s implacable hatred was not the Turk but the Russian. Stambouloff would gladly have formed an alliance with the Turk. The Turk was also well aware that neither Prince Ferdinand nor Stambouloff had, then at least, any designs on Macedonia. They had more urgent business on hand at home.

So Prince Ferdinand’s minister was received at Stamboul with extraordinary honours. The bluff, unconventional Bulgar seems to have been captivated by the exquisitely urbane Sultan Abdul Hamid. He was not the first, nor was he the last, to feel the strange charm of the ‘Red Sultan’—Mr. Gladstone’s ‘Assassin’—whose murderous record was perhaps the most awful in Turkish annals. One wonders whether, on the courteous, smiling, affable ‘Red Sultan’s’ part, there may have been any fellow feeling. For the Sultan’s agents in Sofia kept him well informed about Stambouloff’s all-pervading system of espionage, his wholesale arrests on mere suspicion, and, so it was reported, his authorisation of torture in prison. The ‘Red Sultan,’ with his grim sense of humour, may have reflected that, after all, his Christian guest governed pretty much like a Turk.

With one exception, the embassies in Constantinople viewed Stambouloff's visit with sympathy. The exception was Russia's. The Russian ambassador, it was well known, attempted to dissuade the Sultan from receiving the Bulgarian minister. Abdul Hamid, to his credit, stuck to his resolution. He knew that Prince Ferdinand was more trustworthy than the Czar of all the Russias. In perfect sincerity, the Bulgarian minister sought to impress the Sultan with his ideas of an alliance against external aggression. Russia, of course, was the enemy. Stambouloff found in Sultan Abdul Hamid a most willing and flattering listener. When he returned to Sofia he could report truthfully to Prince Ferdinand that the Caliph was in the mood to make friends with his too independent 'vassal.'

Prince Ferdinand was gratified with the result. But whereas the Prince's main purpose in seeking reconciliation with Turkey was to turn it to account in making similar overtures elsewhere, the minister's motive was hostility to Russia, the Power which the Prince most desired to pacify. In Stambouloff's mind Russia was the ubiquitous, unresting foe. It was often said, with some show of plausibility, that the Russian bogey would vanish if Stambouloff would but leave it alone. Such was the explanation given by Sofian Russophiles of the milder sort, when they were reminded of Russia's threat that there could be no peace between Russia and Bulgaria so long as Stambouloff lived—or remained in power. Stambouloff's

unrelenting attitude was easily explicable. He had known in person the treachery, impudence, arrogance, and callous brutality of Russia's agents, whereas the Prince had known them for the most part only by hearsay. This divergence of view was the first great cause of the antagonism, soon to reach its irremediable stage, between Prince Ferdinand and his minister.

Another cause was the ruthlessness of the minister's treatment of offenders, real or imaginary. Whether the fact had ever struck Sultan Abdul Hamid or not, the Bulgarian minister had for years governed to a great extent by Turkish methods. Stambouloff was for severity, Prince Ferdinand for leniency. At the beginning of his reign he commuted to a sentence of imprisonment the sentence of death which Stambouloff would have inflicted upon Major Popoff and his fellow-conspirators.

XXIV

BREACH BETWEEN THE PRINCE AND STAMBOULOFF

To Czar Ferdinand's nervous dread of cruelty in any shape or form allusion has been made in a preceding page. The same trait in his character is remarked in the critical and descriptive articles of the daily press on the fall of Adrianople,¹ in which the prolongation of the siege is in a large measure attributed to his anxiety to save the city from the horrors of capture by assault. The Prince frequently remonstrated with his Prime Minister because of his ruthless severity. Stambouloff would reply almost in the words of the American moralist whose Christian duty to his enemy was to 'Do to him what he would do to you ; only do it first.' And so the minister would excuse himself, in a grim or airy way according to circumstances, that the people whom he was imprisoning would treat him as mercilessly were he in their power. He was unaware how near was the hour of their hideous revenge. His enemies were growing in numbers day by day, and his own methods of dealing with them more autocratic. As Mr. Beaman writes with his habitual impartiality : 'Stambouloff grew more dictatorial with success. He would scarcely brook the expression of contrary opinion even from Prince Ferdinand. It

¹ 25th March 1913.

was partly this superstitious trust in his own star which led to his fall.'

Yet the minister had personal reasons for inflicting the severities that won for the later years of his administration the name of the Reign of Terror! The panslavists in and outside Bulgaria had only changed their tactics. Instead of attacking Prince Ferdinand directly, they attacked his minister. They hoped to frighten the Prince into subservience to Russia (for his mere 'gratitude' to the liberator they cared nothing) by putting him to death. The more hopeful among them expected that the Prince, disgusted and wearied, would abdicate. In March 1891 Stambouloff owed to the trivial accident of his moving from one side to the other of the pavement along which he and his friend and ministerial colleague, M. Belcheff, were walking, his escape from assassination. The murderers, mistaking their victim, who in personal appearance resembled Stambouloff, killed M. Belcheff. The murderers escaped. The Prime Minister arrested numbers of people on suspicion of complicity with the criminals. Among them was his friend and ex-colleague, M. Karavéloff. Stories of prison tortures were spread abroad. Madame Karavéloff, informed—whether rightly or wrongly—that her husband had been subjected to gross treatment, attempted to get the representatives of the foreign Powers in Sofia to interfere on his behalf. A foreign correspondent was expelled for having alleged that evidence against suspects was procured by bribery and terror, and

that prisoners were subjected to torture. The prefect of police was accused of having put at least one of the suspects to torture. But there was nothing to show that M. Stambouloff was in any way responsible for such misdeeds. The next victim during this reign of terror was another personal friend and colleague of the Prime Minister's, and, like him, an implacable foe of Russia—M. Vulkovitch, the Bulgarian diplomatic agent in Constantinople. Though this murder was perpetrated in the Turkish capital, Stambouloff, following his usual practice, made numerous arrests of suspected persons in Sofia. The assassins escaped.

These murders aroused intense indignation in Bulgaria, where the two victims were extremely popular. They also had the effect of arousing sympathy for the minister himself. That is to say, among the country population, who always regarded Stambouloff as their foremost patriot, and who well knew that the assassins, in striking down the Finance Minister and the diplomatic agent, were aiming at the Prime Minister. The effect on the panslavist politicians, civil and military, was, of course, very different. The game of murder had proved a failure. But by causing quarrels in the Cabinet itself and fanning the Prince's growing resentment against Stambouloff, they hoped to get rid of the hated 'tyrant.' At this period, however, Stambouloff was unassailable. His repressive measures had been harsh in the extreme, but they had cleared Bulgaria of its

hired murderers. They gave the country an interval of peace and security.

It was a sign of relief in the Prince's own mind when in March 1893 His Highness invited M. Stambouloff to accompany him on his journey to Pianore, where his marriage with Princess Marie Louise of Parma was to take place. The mere fact that the terrible minister should have absented himself even for so comparatively short a holiday—for holiday it was, in spite of 'dynastic' significance—seemed to indicate that Bulgaria had nothing more to fear from sedition-mongers. The minister's trip to Italy, though less talked about, was as noteworthy as his trip to Constantinople. At Vienna, where Prince Ferdinand halted, and where, of course, he was familiarly known, M. Stambouloff, whom none knew except by hearsay, was 'lionised' even in the most exalted quarters. Count Kalnoky, who had formed a just appreciation of him years before, had long conversations with him. The Emperor Francis Joseph also gave him a flattering reception—not, of course, of the official order, for Prince Ferdinand himself was not yet 'recognised.' Still, the Vienna visit was a step towards the European condonation of Prince Ferdinand's 'freedom and independence.' It has been recorded how the Russian ambassador at Constantinople attempted to prevent the interview between the Sultan and the Bulgarian 'usurper's' chief minister. His colleague in Vienna dared not take a similar liberty with Francis Joseph. But he showed

his displeasure. He sulked. So the good-natured and diplomatic monarch, after his talk with the Bulgarian Premier, called upon His Excellency, and doubtless gave him a satisfactory explanation. In the spring of 1893 all the European Powers, but for Russia, would have recognised Prince Ferdinand.

On the 20th April took place the Prince's marriage with the Princess Marie Louise. And the 'Red Sultan,' with his undoubted talent for doing the courteously right thing at the right moment in the right way, telegraphed his congratulations to the Prince. The Prince had 'strengthened the Bulgarian Principality,' said the Sultan to the 'vassal' who had taken possession without his superior's leave. It is possible that in despatching this gracious message the Sultan may have been influenced by recollection of his talk with Stambouloff.

For Prince Ferdinand and for M. Stambouloff it might have been fortunate if at this turning-point in the history of Bulgaria the minister had definitely retired from office. Had he done so, the frightful crime of July 1894 might not have been perpetrated, and many of Bulgaria's foremost men, now living, might have been spared bitter pangs of remorse. It was the apt moment for resignation. Stambouloff had done his greatest and best work. His perpetual fame in the story of South-Eastern Europe was assured. The country was growing peaceful. And the great minister had no craving for office—never had, except when he knew that his services to his



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country were indispensable. In fact, he did tender his resignation to the Prince in person immediately on his return with the Princess Marie Louise to Sofia, whither Stambouloff had preceded him. The Prince, with a kindliness and cordiality that left nothing to be desired, refused to accept his minister's resignation. He let it clearly be seen that he appreciated Stambouloff's loyalty to himself personally, as well as to his country. And M. Stambouloff consented to remain at his post.

The greatest proof of the minister's loyalty to Prince Ferdinand was the step which he took immediately after the marriage to annul the constitutional article which provided that the heir to the throne must be baptized according to the rites of the Orthodox Bulgarian Church. Though Prince Ferdinand himself was a good Catholic, there was no reason to suppose that he attached any vitally religious importance to a ceremonial distinction. But his father-in-law, the Duke of Parma, had made it a condition of his daughter's marriage that her children should be baptized into the Church of Rome. And the Princess was as rigid a Catholic as her father. On the other hand, the great bulk of the Bulgarian people was ardently Orthodox, not only for religious reasons, but also, as explained in a foregoing chapter, for political reasons, ages of persecution by the monopolising Greek Church having indissolubly associated in their minds the idea of the Church with that of the State. To the trading politicians, the 'arrivists,' the

panslavists, whom the mass of the nation held in small esteem, Stambouloff was the 'tyrant.' To the mass of the people the minister was fast becoming the 'heretic.' Here was another opportunity, and a rare one, for Stambouloff's inveterate foes, the pro-Russian party. Russophiles, with no more religion in them than in a black beetle, turned up their eyes in pious horror at the 'tyrant's' 'insult' to his country's faith. Every pious Russian in the Empire of the Great White Czar would be shocked at the infidelity of a minister who was himself a Slav. For the Prince, no less than for the minister, it was a perplexing situation. The proposed revision of the article would still further widen the breach between the Prince and the Emperor whom he desired to conciliate.

Stambouloff's argument for the revision was purely and simply that of political expediency. For Bulgaria, he argued, it was a matter of life and death that a dynasty should be founded, and the Parma marriage, so desirable in every respect, could not have been arranged without acceptance of the Duke's stipulation. To win the consent of his ministerial colleagues and of the nation's representatives was one of the hardest battles of Stambouloff's life. He did win it. And he told one of his intimate friends that after the affair was over he felt 'as Jacob felt after his wrestling with God.'

Stambouloff's revision of the thirty-eighth article was characterised by his foes as the crowning offence in his autocratic career. But, quite apart from this

daring feat, the great minister had given too many demonstrations of his despotic spirit. He had grown more and more self-willed as the years passed. Some of his most powerful colleagues in the great ministry had not only resigned, but attacked him and his policy constantly and abusively in the journal they had founded for the express purpose. They were violently pro-Russian. They proclaimed *urbi et orbi* that Stambouloff was fast leading the country to perdition. Stambouloff in his own organ paid them back in their own coin. It was not an edifying spectacle. They even accused the minister of aiming at supreme power. And it was the fact that his nominees were predominant in almost every administrative department. He had not shrunk from making the plain confession in the Legislative Chamber that he considered arrest on suspicion an effective method of checking conspiracies. What alarmed his audience was the extent to which he put his dangerous, if occasionally admissible, theory into practice. He was also accused of 'pretorianism' because of certain alleged attempts of his to supersede the Prince (Commander-in-chief by the Constitution) in the control of the army. His own explanation was that his sole purpose was to prevent favouritism. This point of military responsibility was one on which Prince Ferdinand was particularly sensitive. Stambouloff had acquired the habit of treating his ministerial colleagues as if they were departmental clerks. As his apologist, with his habitual candour, remarks,

Stambouloff often provoked the Prince himself 'beyond endurance by his rough and insulting language.' The growing estrangement between the Prince and his minister confirmed the leaders of the pro-Russian opposition in their resolution of war to the knife. They played upon the Prince's feeling of injured pride, and of impatience under his minister's arrogant control. These leaders were the ex-ministers Stoïloff, Natchevitch, Stransky, and Radoslavoff. They had a powerful associate in Major Petroff, Chief of the Staff, a protégé of the Prince's. Stambouloff's quarrel with the Prince over Petroff's appointment to the War Office was one of the immediate causes of Stambouloff's downfall.

Before this particular quarrel, Major Petroff was said to have been implicated with no less a personage than the Prince himself in a plot against Stambouloff! To cut a long and complicated story short, the major and one or two other officers were to meet at the palace late at night, when the town was asleep, and while Stambouloff was in consultation with the Prince. The officers were then to pounce upon him, and force him, at the sword's point, to sign there and then his resignation. Resignation or death, and in the Prince's presence! There must have been some grounds for a story which in its current form was incredible. In the first place, the Prince was the last person in the world to approve of any such act of brutality. As we have elsewhere said, cruelty in any shape or form was abhorrent to his nature. In the

second place, such a plot would have been ridiculously needless, for it was notorious that Stambouloff had repeatedly asked Prince Ferdinand for permission to resign. At the same time, it seems clear that Stambouloff himself believed in the authenticity of the plot, for Mr. Beaman quotes a letter which Stambouloff wrote to the Prince. It runs thus :—

‘Your Highness has not learnt in seven years to know me if you think I could be forced into signing anything. You might cut off my hands and feet, but you could never compel me to do what I do now voluntarily and of my own free will. Here is my resignation signed and undated. Take it and keep it by you, if you think it will help you. From this moment I am no longer your minister, and I warn you, sire, that if you treat your new one as you have treated me, your throne is not worth a louis.’

But the final breach had not yet come. It would seem as if the habit of suspicion had at last warped Stambouloff’s own mind.

More serious was the affair in which Major Petroff and Major Savoff—now the world-famed Commander-in-chief of the Bulgarian army in Thrace—were rivals for the post of War Minister. Major Savoff, a silent, hard-working officer, somewhat grim in manner, keeping aloof from political strife, known to be possessed of a rare talent for organisation, was Stambouloff’s favourite. Petroff, also a man of real ability, was the Prince’s. But the Prime Minister installed his own candidate.

It was at this time that a curious scandal arose, in

which Savoff was the victim—the self-tormentor, as it turned out—and which must be dismissed in a few words. In a fit of marital jealousy, Major Savoff insisted on fighting a duel with the cabinet minister whom he accused. The seconds on both sides, after due inquiry, came to the conclusion that the challenger's suspicions were groundless. Stambouloff agreed with them, but in a manner that angered Savoff, who thereupon sent Stambouloff himself a challenge. The minister took no notice of it. Savoff then accused him of cowardice. And Stambouloff retaliated by publishing in his paper, the *Svoboda*, a private letter, in which Savoff had begged for the Prince's protection against Stambouloff. The Prince at once denounced this as a 'base trick,' which it certainly was. Savoff, in his indignation, resigned office. This time the Prince's favourite, Major Petroff, was installed in place of Stambouloff's new candidate, and in spite of the minister's strenuous opposition. It was Prince Ferdinand's first victory over his despotic minister—won after repeated offers of resignation on one side and of abdication on the other. Stambouloff's star was waning. Prince Ferdinand had made up his mind to be his own master.

XXV

STAMBOULOFF'S ATTACKS ON THE PRINCE

BUT though Prince Ferdinand, in the estimation of all who really knew him, could not be supposed to have sympathised, even in the remotest degree, with Petroff's (alleged) melodramatic plot, he never hesitated to express his opinion in the frankest manner on the tendencies of his Prime Minister's anti-Russian policy. As we have already said, he remonstrated with Stambouloff himself. On the same thorny subject he expressed himself, in the most emphatic manner and quite openly, to M. Stambouloff's ministerial colleagues—to M. Petkoff, for example, Stambouloff's own warmest friend, and President of the Legislative Chamber.

It was not only to M. Stambouloff's unauthorised publication of Savoff's letter to the Prince—a letter of a private character—that the Prince applied the adjective 'base.' He applied it to the minister's general treatment of his opponents. Stambouloff was not the man to submit quietly to criticism of that kind. 'I hope,' he wrote in a letter of protest to the Prince, 'that Your Highness may be more fortunate in your choice of your next adviser; and that you may discover some statesman, of lofty sentiments and refined manners, so that you may not be under the necessity of designating it as "base." It cannot be

to the credit either of the Bulgarian people or of their Prince that a Bulgarian Minister should by his conduct incur any such condemnation.' On the 29th May the Prince, who had been absent for some time, returned to Sofia. According to custom, M. Stambouloff, whose last offer of resignation had not yet been accepted, should have called upon the Prince. He did not. Nor did he present himself the next day, the Prince's fête day, which was celebrated with a military parade. Then the Prince sent for him. M. Stambouloff obeyed the summons. After a few moments of formal, rather constrained, conversation, the Prince—with the cold courtesy which he knows how to assume when he thinks the occasion needs it—**informed** M. Stambouloff that his resignation was accepted. The fallen minister's friends and foes alike alleged that he had been dismissed. But in this case the distinction between resignation and dismissal was shadowy. Co-operation between Prince and minister had become impossible. Their views on the Russian question—which also meant for Bulgaria a European question—were wholly irreconcilable; and the Russian question, now that internal order had been fairly established, was the dominant one. So on the 30th May 1894 Stambouloff's ministry of seven years came to an end, and on the following day M. Stoiloff took office as Premier and Minister of the Interior, with Colonel Petroff as Minister for War, M. Natchevitch at the Foreign Office, M. Gueshoff as Minister of Finance, M. Velitchoff in the Depart-

ment of Public Instruction, and M. Madjaroff in that of Public Works. The majority of them were Russo-philes of a more or less pronounced colour. Gueshoff and Natchevitch, and perhaps Petroff, were popularly regarded as extremely pro-Russian. It was the Prince's desire to proclaim, by the composition of the new Cabinet, a new orientation in Bulgarian foreign policy. Internal peace, reconciliation with Russia—such were the two immediate purposes which Prince Ferdinand was bent upon attaining.

A few days later Prince Ferdinand sent the fallen minister a gracious letter, in which he gratefully acknowledged M. Stambouloff's signal services to the country and its ruler. M. Stambouloff promptly and gladly returned the compliment by calling upon the Prince and thanking him in person. Their conversation lasted some hours, and was reported to have been as cordial on both sides as it had been in the early days at Tirnovo. It took place on the 11th of June. Yet this visit, that might have extinguished old quarrels, became the starting-point of a feud still more bitter, and destined to end tragically. Without venturing to choose between various explanations suggested at the time, we shall state the salient facts. While the Prince and M. Stambouloff were conversing in one of the palace windows overlooking the street, a great crowd gathered in front of it. It was partly made up of Stambouloff's adherents. 'Long live the Prince!' 'Long live Stambouloff!' they shouted. They seemed to be under the impression that the

Prince was about to recall M. Stambouloff to office. But presently a band of students from the Military Academy, accompanied by a large number of soldiers, went rushing in with cries of 'Down with Stambouloff.' A riot followed, in which the dregs of the Sofian populace took the cadets' part. The Prince and his ex-minister watched it all. Stambouloff, who knew no fear, took a friendly leave of the Prince, and walked straight through the howling crowd, uninjured—though spat upon and aimed at with sticks and stones—to his own house.

Stambouloff, on reaching home, was almost beside himself with fury. He rushed impetuously to the conclusion that his assailants had the secret support of the Prince and the new ministry. There were some who surmised that the riots were devised by ministerial agents—not against Stambouloff directly, but against the Prince himself!—for the purpose of deterring him from any further intercourse with the fallen 'tyrant.' However that may have been, it is certain that the only arrests made in this and succeeding riots were those of persons supposed to be 'Stamboulovists,' and guilty, many of them, of nothing more heinous than looking on or protecting their fellow-citizens from ill-treatment.

It is also the fact that from the day of his last interview with Prince Ferdinand (11th of June) to the day of his death, thirteen months later, Stambouloff was almost a prisoner in his own house. The gendarmes who by order of the Minister of the Interior

were posted at his house night and day to protect him from violence, acted as if they were his prison warders. Even the diplomatic agents in Sofia often made the remark that the protection of Stambouloff would be more effective if the notorious scoundrels whom the authorities and the public knew to be on the watch for Stambouloff, who were implicated in previous assassinations and in the kidnapping of Prince Alexander, and who were strolling unmolested about the town, were put under lock and key.

Stambouloff protested in vain against the inquisitorial guardianship to which he was subjected. People were prohibited from visiting him without official permission. But all this while Stambouloff's own paper, edited by his friend, M. Petkoff, was day by day assailing the Government and the Prince's conciliatory attitude towards Russia in the most abusive language. The official organs retorted in the same style. Both sides were lashing each other into a passion of hatred that only blood could assuage. The Prince, said Stambouloff's paper, was leading Bulgaria to her ruin, and all for the sake of a Russian nod of recognition, which it was unlikely that he should ever receive, except at the price of treachery to the country he governed. Stambouloff saw nothing ahead but anarchy.

And yet all the while Bulgaria was forging ahead steadily, though slowly, towards peace and stability. The first month of the year of Stambouloff's downfall saw the birth of Prince Ferdinand's

son and heir, Prince Boris of Tirnovo—now, in his twentieth year, an ardent, intelligent young soldier, whose entry into Adrianople by his father's side is while I write announced in the telegraphic news from 'the front.'¹ By solving the dynastic question, the Prince's birth relieved the Bulgarian mind from a considerable load of anxiety. We have seen how seriously the dynastic question preoccupied M. Stambouloff himself. Some months later Prince Ferdinand recalled his old foe, the ex-Metropolitan Clement, from his exile in Russia. Then there followed a general amnesty. 'Bury the hatchet' was in effect Prince Ferdinand's motto. He would have no Bulgarian for an enemy. On that principle he has acted unswervingly to this day. He has manifested an amazing tact in getting leaders of rival parties to work together for the common weal.

Prince Ferdinand well knew—what Stambouloff apparently did not realise—that the Great Powers were desirous of a reconciliation between Bulgaria and Russia. The Bulgarians themselves were beginning to understand the Prince's point of view. At one time they were as anti-Russian as Stambouloff himself, and they regarded with an uneasy suspicion the Prince's anxiety to come to terms with the Russian autocrat. Now, however, they saw clearly that Ferdinand's spirit of 'independence' was no less resolute than their own.

¹ Czar Ferdinand and his two sons, with the three generals, entered Adrianople on the morning of the 28th of March.

This subversion of the policy which he had enforced throughout his career, coupled with the Government's harsh treatment of him and his belief that his persecutors were acting under Prince Ferdinand's orders, drove Stambouloff, blinded by anger, into the fatal mistake of his life. Refused, as he bitterly complained, a hearing in Bulgaria, he took steps to secure one abroad. In the month of August there appeared in the Frankfort *Gazette* an interview between its correspondent in Sofia and M. Stambouloff. In this interview the ex-minister spoke of the Prince with absolute contempt. He gave his interviewer information about the Prince of a kind which he should have kept scrupulously secret. Mr. Beaman, whose record of these events is very circumstantial, writes that this attempt to 'pillory the Prince in the German press was in the eyes of the Prince an unpardonable sin,' that the mere fact that Stambouloff alone knew 'various little incidents' was a reason why he 'should never have divulged them.' 'Having crossed the Rubicon of decency,' there was no return to the 'amenities' of journalistic discussion. In September M. Stambouloff was prosecuted for criminal libel against Prince Ferdinand. The trial lasted six months, and gave rise to a series of riots, in the precincts of the court and in the streets, such as would have disgraced any country with any pretence to civilisation. As usual, Stambouloff was the victim of these disturbances. As his assailants generally escaped, Stam-

bouloff's suspicions that they were encouraged in the highest quarters became all the more obstinate. But, in truth, it could no longer be said that only the 'dregs' of the Sofian population were hostile to the ex-Dictator. Among all classes, the virulent attacks upon the Prince and the Government published in his paper, the *Svoboda*, were causing profound indignation and disgust. And these attacks were going on simultaneously with the trial. If the abusive articles were not written by M. Stambouloff, he could have stopped them. That is to say, he himself was guilty of the same kind of conduct he attributed to the public authorities when he complained that they refrained from protecting him from the insults of the mob. The Prince would have been more than human had he not bitterly resented his ex-minister's taunt that, in consequence of his own egoistic policy, his throne wasn't worth a day's purchase, that the Bulgarian people would be justified in rising against a Prince who was sacrificing their interests to his own trivial ambition. 'No provocation can excuse such attacks,' M. Stambouloff's biographer wrote, 'and no friend of Stambouloff can do otherwise than regret that he should countenance them in an organ which he controls.' (The sentence just quoted was written before the final catastrophe).

That a profound relief from the tension of the last seven years followed Stambouloff's downfall and the Prince's assumption of a direct, personal part in the government must have been clear to every one

except Stambouloff himself. It was as if the nation were waking up from a nightmare. The reception accorded to the Prince by the Legislative Chamber at its reassembling, some four months after M. Stambouloff's dismissal, was a revelation of the more hopeful mood that had taken possession of the public. This meeting of the Sobranje interested the nation all the more because it was the first under a new régime. Great crowds of people had come even from remote parts of the country to witness the ceremony. It was noticed that the troops drawn up along the route from the palace to the Legislative Chamber displayed no arms. That in itself was a sign of appeasement. Among the huge crowds of spectators there was no sign of unrest. Within the chamber, where the deputies and a large assemblage, including foreign officials, awaited the Prince's arrival, leaders of groups and their followers (parties, in the English sense of the word, can hardly be said to have existed) were fraternising in a manner quite new in Bulgarian parliamentary life.

As has been already recorded, the Prince always was exacting on points of state ceremonial and court etiquette. The moment of his leaving the palace was announced to the expectant assembly by a salute of twenty-one guns. The peasant state must be taught the procedure of Western monarchies. And the thousands of rustics who had travelled to Sofia were duly impressed. At any rate they cheered most lustily, while the Prince, seated in his carriage,

acknowledged their salutations with a truly royal grace. A troop of Hussars escorted the Prince. A line of carriages containing the chief officers of His Highness's civil and military households preceded the Prince's. The cavalcade was almost worthy of Versailles in the days of *le grand Monarque*. The people in the Legislative Chamber could hear the cheering, and the trumpeting, and the trampling of the horse-hoofs. At the entrance to the chamber the ministers received the Prince, and escorted him to his throne.

The throne had no splendours to remind the audience of mediæval Tirnovo and Preslav. It consisted of a large, high-backed, straight-armed, elevated, gilded chair wrought with crimson velvet, placed under a silken canopy. The arrangement was simple, tasteful, effective. And its occupant, in his full military uniform, made an imposing appearance. The semi-regal pomp presented a curious contrast with the rustic simplicity of many of the honourable members, seated or standing by their little desks in the semicircular rows of benches—men in immense baggy breeches of stout, serviceable russet, in close-fitting jerkins with red or blue sleeves. Of the few Turkish deputies, some wore the ordinary fez, others the turban. The Prince's part in the ceremony began and ended with the reading of his very short speech, in which he confided his son and heir-apparent, now in his second year, to the goodwill of the Bulgarian people, foreshadowed a period of administrative reform, and alluded to the 'sister nation' to which

Bulgaria 'owed her freedom,' and with which he hoped the Principality would soon be reconciled. The short speech was enthusiastically applauded. Though the Prince was, as he still is, a master in the art of concealing his emotions, it was easy to perceive that he was deeply gratified by the day's events. A decoration worn by the Foreign and Prime Ministers was a premonition of the general *rapprochement* for which the country was longing. Ministers wore the Grand Cordon, the first decoration granted by the Sultan since Prince Ferdinand's advent to any official of the 'vassal' state.¹

The death of Czar Alexander III. before the end of the year removed the chief obstacle to the success of Prince Ferdinand's Russian policy. The new Czar had not his father's excuse for resentment with the Bulgarians and their 'upstart' Prince. He was more amiable, more accessible, more pacific. He was touched by the unfeigned grief of the entire Bulgarian people at the death of the man whose services in the battlefield for their deliverance from the Turk outweighed all the hectoring and threatenings of later years. Amidst the universal mourning, the Prince and his ministers sent a deputation with a crown and wreath of gold, to attend the Czar's funeral. And the Sobranje voted an address of sympathy and devotion to the new Czar. During the discussion on this matter the Prime Minister took the opportunity of remarking that Prince Ferdinand had never done any-

¹ Hepp, *Ferdinand de Bulgarie*, p. 82.

thing to aggravate the political situation which he found at the time of his election, and for which he was not responsible. Though not technically true, the minister's statement was essentially true. The assembly received it with loud applause, which was renewed when the minister declared that gratitude to Russia was in no wise incompatible with the determination of the Bulgarian people to maintain their 'moral and territorial' independence. The Government's activity in supporting the educational claims of the Bulgar population in 'enslaved' Macedonia enhanced the rapidly growing prestige of Prince Ferdinand's rule, while the meeting for the first time of a Slavic Congress in Sofia dissipated the old enmities between pro-Russians and Nationalists.

XXVI

PRINCE FERDINAND ON STAMBOULOFF

BUT to the desired reconciliation there was one obstacle, a formidable one, to be overcome in one way only—and that was Stambouloff himself. To Stambouloff's mind, every step of the two 'sister nations'—to quote Prince Ferdinand's expression—towards friendship was a step towards the loss of Bulgarian liberty. Nationalists, now turned 'Russophile,' but with the reservation of independence, had lost patience with their old leader. He knew it, and took it as a symptom of decay in the spirit of the race. But he would fight to the end even for the lost cause, believing it to be the just one.

'Victrix causa deis placuit, sed victa Catoni.'

The panslavists in St. Petersburg gave their friends and agents in Sofia to understand that so long as Stambouloff lived there could be no peace between Bulgaria and Russia. It was an incentive to assassination. Even the foreign diplomatic agents in Sofia warned M. Stoïloff that the ex-minister's life was in imminent danger. They urged him to grant M. Stambouloff the permission he had frequently asked for, to be allowed to leave the country. The doctors had reported that the state of M. Stambouloff's health necessitated a change of climate. M. Stoïloff himself

would have granted permission. But the Parliamentary Committee appointed to examine the charges of seditious defamation, repeated breach of the Constitution, malversation of public funds, refused their consent. Why, it is hard to imagine, unless it were their deliberate intent to drive him into his grave. It is said that the Prince, by granting Stambouloff's request, could have saved his life. But it was objected at the time that even the Prince could not, without breaking the Constitution, interfere in a case *sub judice*. Another and less conclusive reason assigned for the Prince's abstention was his fear lest M. Stambouloff, in the security of a foreign residence, might renew his personal attacks upon the Prince. But M. Stambouloff could not speak or write more abusively in a foreign land than he had already done at home. Were the trial ended, and Stambouloff condemned to death, then the Prince could, and certainly would, commute the sentence, or use his prerogative of pardon. But he had not the opportunity.

One day early in July 1895 an article in the *Mir*, an official, or at any rate officious, paper declared that it would be a patriotic deed to tear M. Stambouloff's flesh off his bones. A day or two later—the 15th—M. Stambouloff, driving home from his club with his friend, M. Petkoff, was attacked by three ruffians. In leaping out of their carriage M. Petkoff fell, so that he was unable to give timely help to M. Stambouloff, who having retreated to some distance, and thinking

his friend was following him, turned round to face his assailants. Before he could draw his revolver his murderers were slashing his head, face, chest, and arms with their knives. His hands, raised in self-defence, were 'sliced into ribbons.' But the tale of this most hideous of assassinations will not bear further repetition. Within three days Stephan Stambouloff, the greatest Bulgarian of modern times died in delirium. Prince Ferdinand, then at Carlsbad, telegraphed a sympathetic message to Madame Stambouloff, and gave instructions for the presentation of a floral wreath. Frantic with grief and with indignation at the Government, whom she believed to be morally responsible for the crime, Madame Stambouloff refused to accept either the message or the offering.

It is perfectly true that the highly placed personages accused by Madame Stambouloff and the *Svoboda* detested the fallen minister. He and they had goaded each other into implacable hatred. His death, in the natural order of things, would have left them unmoved. But it did not follow that they desired, much less compassed, his assassination. They had nothing to gain by it. All they won by it was the loathing suspicion of the European press and public. The case against them was one in which a Scottish jury would have given a verdict of 'Not proven.' Even if the Government had been friendly to M. Stambouloff, the ex-Dictator had too many enemies vowed to take his life. From these enemies

only exile, voluntary or compulsory, would have saved him; and the ministers must have been blind indeed if they were unaware of the fact. But, in truth, the people of the European East were, and still are, far less sensitive than the nations of the West to the horror of crimes such as the foregoing. Foreigners who, like the present writer, were in Belgrade at the time of the assassination of King Alexander and Queen Draga must have been as much shocked by the callous indifference of the population as by the actual murder. And yet in the indignities to which the poor Queen was subjected by her assailants—military officers, be it remembered—the Belgrade assassination was more savage and cowardly than even the murder of Stambouloff, perpetrated not by ‘gentlemen’ in gold lace, but by ruffians hired from the dregs of the populace.

At this stage of our narrative Prince Ferdinand’s opinion of Stambouloff and his doctrines and methods, as given in a conversation with his biographer during a holiday excursion, may be given. The conversation took place after M. Stambouloff’s resignation and before his death.¹ The following is an epitome of M. Hepp’s report of it :—

‘Stambouloff resigned of his own free will. I received the notification thereof by telegram, at Tsaribiod, while returning from my sister’s funeral at Munich. He had resigned twice before, feeling confident that he would be reinstated, with his prestige enhanced. His hidden motives

¹ Hepp, *Ferdinand de Bulgarie*.

for his last resignation were characteristic of him. Difficulties in the financial department had arisen, particularly in the collection of taxes. Stambouloff had resolved to employ troops in levying them. But the War Minister, on the ground that tax-collecting was not an army's business, and that an expedient of such a character would be an outrage both upon the Government and the nation, refused to give his consent. Besides, M. Stambouloff divined my own sentiments on the matter. So he broke out into a fit of violent temper, complained of encroachments on his ministerial authority, and launched his telegraphic message. As to irreconcilable opinions between him and me . . . there were none. Stambouloff's services to his country are undeniable, and to myself, also, he rendered devoted, and sometimes even affectionate, services. Despite all our troubles, he was my co-worker for the nation's good. After years of opportunity of estimating his capacities, I have learnt to appreciate his real value. But for me, his influence would have lasted much less long than it did. As for myself, none but reasons the most imperative, reasons superior to trivial motives, would have induced me to part with him. My reasons were my loving devotion to the people who have made me the guardian of their security, liberty, and happiness. With his exaggerated self-esteem, it naturally happened that the soundness of his estimate of men, of public needs, of the real tendencies of things became gradually enfeebled. His sense of the moderation which in our day is the condition of lasting achievement in statesmanship grew enfeebled. How many times have I not tried to make him reflect, lead him to the safe path, choose subordinates less unscrupulous and untrustworthy, ensure a closer supervision over the administrative departments and a more prudent management of finance. I pointed out to him the dangers of all those needless severities, of his system of universal espionage, and of that deplorable *mistrust* which he

propagated among a people still too near its past to be impervious to such contamination. It was all in vain. That state of things could not go on for ever. I had to act. The general satisfaction with which his downfall was viewed, proved that the step I had taken was in accord with the public desire. I have received more than twenty thousand telegrams, in which I am described as the country's second Liberator : the 18th day of May, my name-saint's day, has been celebrated as the inaugural day of a new era. There was a universal clamour against the "detested tyrant," as he was named. The new order of things would have proceeded smoothly, I can assure you, had not Stambouloff, for the sake of an illusory popularity, organised his demonstration of the worst elements in the community. I caused some cavalry to be called out. But I did it under strict precautions, guarding myself from every appearance of hostility to the Minister who but the other day was so powerful, and decided not to look on, even from the palace window, at any display of force such as under these Eastern skies might bear any semblance to a pronunciamiento. Let me tell you all. Stambouloff, coming to the palace to thank me for the rescript I had sent him, was howled at and threatened in the streets ; it was I who supplied the armed guards who now watch his house.'

And more to the same effect, in which Prince Ferdinand made mention of his efforts to recall his minister to 'a sense of constitutional obligation.' It seems clear from the foregoing summary that Prince Ferdinand was not the inappreciative master which M. Stambouloff's apologists have depicted him. Considering the rude and sometimes insulting treatment which the Prince had to endure from his minister, the Prince's judgment may fairly be described as, in some

respects at least, very generous. It will be noticed that the Prince is reported to have said that Stambouloff resigned of his own free will. But it is evident that the Prince had made up his mind to get rid of him. That M. Stambouloff had reached a stage of self-will at which he would brook no opposition was evident to impartial observers.

‘ We find Russian graves scattered all over our country. The men who rest in them shed their blood for us. But where are the Austrian, English, Italian, German graves ? ’ Such was, in the period we have been considering, the Bulgarian peasant’s ordinary answer to strangers questioning him on his devotion to the Great White Czar. It shows how accurately, in his Russian policy, Prince Ferdinand interpreted the popular mind, and how seriously Stambouloff, man of the people though he was, misjudged it. For in their devotion to the Czar the Bulgarian people never diverted their eyes from their goal of complete independence. Take Stambouloff’s apology for himself, as implied in the particulars set forth in the preceding pages, and it will be seen how it has been negatived by events. His forecasts of the fate of Bulgaria under Prince Ferdinand have in every instance been falsified. The army has not been the sole or even the main support of Prince Ferdinand’s rule, except in the roundabout sense that in Bulgaria army and people are one and the same—a sense, however, the truth of which Stambouloff, at certain critical moments in his battle with the Government,

would have denied. Stambouloff at different times, and according to the momentary situation, persuaded himself that the Prince's foreign policy would end in civil war; that panslavism would swamp the country; that it was unlikely that the European Powers and Turkey would 'recognise' Prince Ferdinand even if Russia should yield; that the Prince's rule would not last.

As regards Russia, Prince Ferdinand made some noteworthy statements in the conversation already named. He admitted that the reign of Alexander III. lacked the generous spirit of Alexander the Second's. But he would wait for the inevitable change. Every one should know that Bulgaria was not a country for men of Kaulbars' stamp to play fast and loose with. The Kaulbars to whom the Prince alluded was the Russian agent who in Alexander's time went about the country boasting that he and not the Battenberger, nor the National Parliament, was ruler of the land.¹

'Quant à la Russie, comment serait-il possible de négliger, malgré tout, les regards qu'on lui doit? Comment, si elle semble peut-être s'éloigner de l'esprit des institutions d'Alexandre II., les pourrions-nous méconnaître, nous qui avons dressé au Tsar un monument à Sofia. Nous nous efforcerons de vivre en termes respectueux vis-à-vis de la Russie, mais n'avons-nous pas le droit de rester libres, en dehors de conditions et d'immixtions? La Bulgarie n'est pas un pays où les Kaulbars réussissent; on se trompe sur la qualité du

¹ Hepp's *Ferdinand de Bulgarie*.

patriotisme de ce paysan épris de son sol et de sa jeune indépendance : la Bulgarie aux Bulgares. Avec le sens de ce qui est juste et dû, ce sera toujours là ma politique. Le temps fera le reste.'

In his conversations with his biographer, Prince Ferdinand spoke hopefully of the future relations between Bulgaria and a reformed Turkey. The Prince always has been an optimist. Even in his melancholy moods—and he has had many such—he never swerved from his conviction that his 'Second Fatherland' was destined to fulfil a great, pacific, and beneficent rôle in international polity. 'My people,' he continued, ever a lover of peace,

'is eager for progress. Nothing must be suffered to arrest her path towards prosperity. Such is our nation's desire and resolution. May they be fulfilled. The Bulgarian people and its Chief are inspired by one and the same sentiment. Independent in fact, my country comes into collision, in the course of its normal, peaceful development, with certain regulations the formal abrogation of which would put an end to the strained relations between us and Turkey. The regeneration of Turkey is a source of heartfelt rejoicing to my people and myself. Independent of each other, Turkey and Bulgaria would be in a position to create between themselves enduring ties of friendship, and to devote themselves to their individual tasks of amelioration.'

The Prince wound up his discourse with a declaration of his belief that he had now laid the foundations of a great future for Bulgaria. He had done it, he said, by striving to abolish the unimprovable, by making the best of indifferent material, while often

misunderstood, or thwarted by those who could have assisted him. Henceforth, said he, ' my active powers shall have freer and wider scope . . . disillusion shall not be Bulgaria's reward for what she has conferred upon me.'

Until the eve of the war, Prince Ferdinand shared the fair expectations of the Young Turk revolution that had been formed by a too confiding Europe. It may seem surprising that a man of Prince Ferdinand's perspicacity should have failed to perceive that the ' Young ' Turk of the revolution was simply the old Turk, the incurable Turk—but with a veneer of French polish—fighting his last fight with civilisation. Foreign observers who knew the East, and that not more intimately perhaps than the Prince himself did, saw through the imposture in the first weeks of its disastrous course. One need not suppose that Prince Ferdinand's sanguine hopes of a reformed Turkey were merely a diplomatic affectation. The enthusiastic welcome accorded to the Young Turk delegates everywhere on their way from the frontier to Sofia, with its emblematic groupings of Turkish and Bulgarian flags, proved that the Bulgarians anticipated a Turkish reformation comparable with that of Japan little more than a generation earlier. A Bulgarian, or rather a South Slavic, alliance with a reformed, progressive Turkey had for a long time fascinated Prince Ferdinand's imagination. As a diplomatist Prince, or Czar, Ferdinand is of the Bismarckian order. He has always despised the superstitious notion that lying

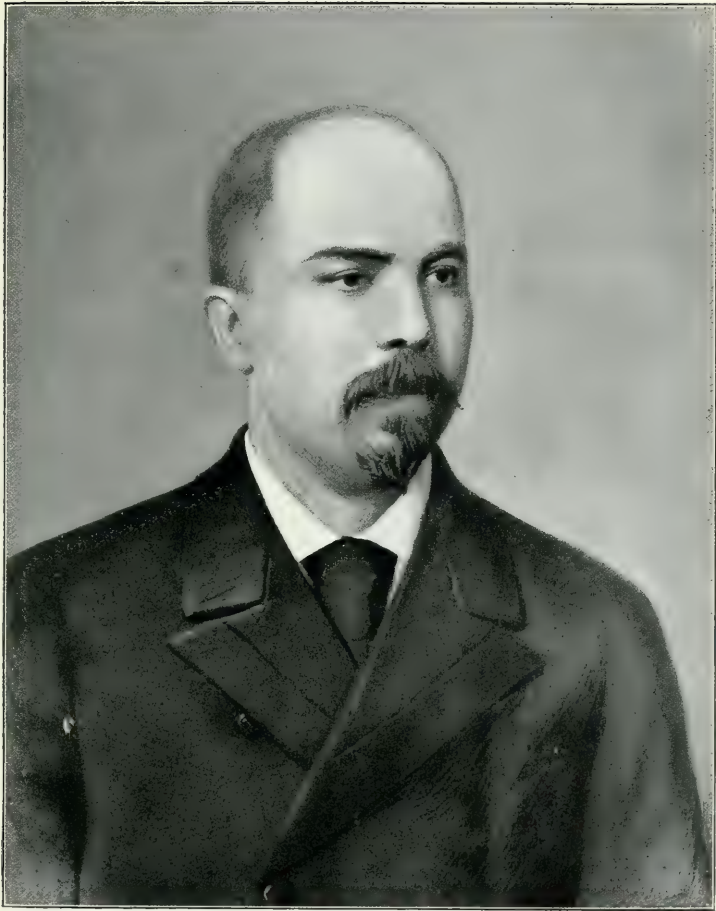
is essential to diplomacy. He either holds his peace or says what he thinks. It may be useful to have recalled Czar Ferdinand's pacific disposition three or four years back, now that the troublesome question of apportioning the Turk's possessions is likely to occupy the Powers and the Allies for a considerable time.

XXVII

THE CONVERSION OF THE INFANT PRINCE

WE have seen with what buoyant hopes of his 'Second Fatherland's' future, and confidence in his own aptitude for the *métier* of a ruler who would not only reign but govern, Prince Ferdinand inaugurated the second epoch of his career. With what success, in his subjects' estimation, was he fulfilling his mission? A typical judgment on this point was given by M. Petkoff himself to European travellers whom a curious interest in the story of the young state had attracted to the capital. Petkoff, Stambouloff's faithful associate, could not be suspected of undue partiality to Prince Ferdinand. His official position and vast experience lent special weight to his opinion. Said M. Petkoff, two years after His Highness had definitely taken his personal and laborious part in the supervision or direction of the various ministries, the Prince

'is a man of great intelligence. He is well informed. He is a man of strong character. It is under his personal influence that we have produced a new Bulgaria. He is constantly travelling about the country. He knows every one in it who is worth knowing. The country-people love him. The Bulgarians know that he labours for the nation's future. The army places absolute confidence in him. It is through Prince Ferdinand that we have gained our prestige among the nations.



M. STAMBULOFF

He is a good European. He is destined to achieve great things.'

Among the steps which, before M. Petkoff delivered this judgment, Prince Ferdinand had taken to conquer this prestige was his personal encouragement to the despatch of a deputation to St. Petersburg, led by the ex-metropolitan, Clement, and representing an important body concerned in social questions of a philanthropic character. The Slavic idea, not, however, in its extreme form, had its apostles in the society. It left for St. Petersburg some weeks after the termination of the first Slavic Congress at Sofia, already mentioned. It received a most enthusiastic reception in the Russian capital, where it fraternised with the Panslavic 'Benevolent Society,' a vast organisation, and powerful politically as well as in other respects. The deputation achieved a striking success. The Slavic 'Idea' in the ordinary Bulgarian mind may be said to bear a remote comparison with the Canadian idea of Our 'Lady of the Snows' being 'mistress in her own house.' For, though Bulgaria is not the 'daughter state' of any Power, her people and the Russian Czar's are near relations. The fate of any one branch of this Slav family of mankind never can be a matter of indifference to the others. Bulgaria, says her frankly speaking king, is Russia's 'sister.' A tiny sister, scarcely eight years of age, when Prince Ferdinand became her guardian.

The mission, which announced itself in the name of the Prince, the ministers, and the nation, appeared

to have dissipated the last remnants of misunderstanding between the Empire and the Principality. It received a flattering welcome from the new Czar, Nicolas II. The mission's home-coming was honoured with a popular ovation. The Sofiotes escorted the bishop with cheers along the streets, as if he were a victorious general returned from the wars. Prince Ferdinand also warmly congratulated Bishop Clement on the results of his journey. His treatment of the bishop was characteristic. In other days, as we have already recorded, he had experienced the bishop's hostility. But Czar Ferdinand knows no personal rancours. Sterile enmities are foreign to his temperament. All men are his friends who serve well their fatherland.

The Prince's next step towards the reconciliation which he deemed essential to his country's interests was the decisive one. It has already been recorded that, according to the constitutional law, the heir-apparent must be a member of the Orthodox Church, but that M. Stambouloff, for reasons of state, altered the law, so that the heir should be baptized in the Catholic Church. But the Bulgarian people, in their silent way, resented the change; so did Orthodox Russia. For these reasons Prince Ferdinand resolved that Article 38 of the Constitution should be restored, and little Prince Boris be rebaptized. He wrote to Czar Nicolas, announcing his resolution. The Bulgarian Parliament had more than once, in an indirect way, advised the Prince to repair what it regarded as

a serious error from the dynastic point of view. Czar Nicolas was delighted with Prince Ferdinand's decision. The Bulgarian people celebrated in every town and hamlet the Prince's proclamation that the Czar had consented to become godfather to 'our beloved son, heir to the Bulgarian throne,' and had 'manifested his goodwill to our nation by renewing with it the political relations that had been interrupted.' The style of the Prince's proclamation might have made Stambouloff turn in his grave. 'Truckling,' he often said while in the land of the living; and again, 'this base truckling,' 'this grovelling in the dust'; 'for the Czar's condescension the Prince will submit to any humiliation.' The autocratic minister would not have 'cared a sou' (to use his own phrase) for those 'sentiments which,' in the language of the proclamation, 'His Imperial Majesty has in so marked a manner manifested to the Bulgarian nation, and which we prize so highly.'

Looked at as a clever move in the diplomatic game, the infant Prince's conversion at this particular time was far more effective for the Prince's conciliatory purpose than an Orthodox baptism at birth would have been. The early rite would have been universally regarded as a matter of course. It would have made no impression on the obdurate Czar Alexander III. But the lost sheep's return to the fold—the lost lamb's—was an impressive event. In this world, as in the other, the repentant sinner excites more joy than he does who has not gone astray.

The 26th of February was the day appointed for the Orthodox rite. The place was historic Tirnovo. The selection of the old capital was another manifestation of the Prince's talent for mastership of the ceremonies. The scene was almost as imposing as Prince Ferdinand's advent there nine years before to inaugurate the rebuilding of the Bulgarian state. Great companies of country-people, singing their old national songs, displaying banners with patriotic mottoes, filled the roads converging on the city. The house fronts of Tirnovo were decorated with trophies of Russian and Bulgarian flags combined. The streets resounded with the Russian and Bulgarian national hymns. It was a Russian festival as much as a national one. The Imperial godfather himself was not, it need hardly be said, present; but his representative was received with sovereign honours.

The illustrious convert himself, though advancing in years—he was tottering on the verge of three—showed scarcely any interest in the solemn ritual. After the first few moments his curiosity vanished. Theological subtleties had no attractions for him. Not did he seem to find much satisfaction in the contemplation of his richly decorated, emblematic uniform. Rather did the hero of the occasion betray symptoms of impatience—all the more alarming because *bonbons* and toys would have been out of place. At last he cried out lustily. But he emerged from the ordeal an Orthodox Christian, and the first

native prince of Bulgaria, purple born, since the days of Schishman, the last Bulgarian czar.

A Russian prince, related to the Imperial family, is said to have described the Tirnovo ceremonial as 'a blasphemous mockery, and exhibition of political legerdemain.' Its 'blasphemous' character was a matter of personal opinion. How many were there among those ministers, deputies, courtiers who believed that the eternal welfare of the baby Prince of Tirnovo, or of those who acted vicariously for him, was affected by a ritualistic variation? It was a Christian of the Orthodox Church—M. Stambouloff himself—who, as already recorded, by his alteration of an article in the Constitution legalised the infant's baptism in the Roman rite. Did M. Stambouloff, did Prince Ferdinand (good Catholic though he was), believe that in the true sense of the word religion the ritualistic difference was worth two straws one way or the other? To M. Stambouloff the alteration was purely one of political utility. If Paris was 'worth a Mass' to Henry of Navarre, a new Bulgarian dynasty was worth a sprinkling of water to Henry's descendant. But Princess Marie Louise became the Prince's wife on the express condition that her first son should be baptized in the Roman Church. The feelings of those to whom the distinction was one of vital import deserved respect. And the severest of know-nothings might have profoundly sympathised with the mother—a Romanist devotee—in her grief over the violation of a sacred contract.‡

But with the domestic sorrows to which the rebaptism gave rise, and the revelation of which tickled the long ear of an idle public, we have here nothing to do. What we have to bear in mind is that a ritualistic performance, however 'hypocritical,' 'superstitious,' 'odious,' 'contemptible' to the emancipated who qualified it in these terms, did affect in a real manner Bulgaria's destiny. One must deal with historical data as impartially as a physicist with his quantities.

From that ceremony in Tirnovo Cathedral there have come, in direct line of inheritance, those wild acclamations in Holy Russia, those embracings between Russians and Bulgars in the streets of Moscow and St. Petersburg, that triumphal hoisting shoulder-high of the Bulgarian envoy, Dr. Daneff, by the crowds on the Neva, with which, according to the newspaper correspondents, the capture of Adrianople has been celebrated.¹ To the hundred and seventy millions of Slavic folk in Russia and the Balkans—to say nothing of the Slavs who constitute the majority of Francis Joseph's subjects, and whose heart-strings have vibrated to the sounds of victory in Macedonia and Thrace—little Boris's rebaptism was a new symbol of their ethnic unity. That was Prince Ferdinand's wider view of the event ; Orthodox baby Boris was made one with his future subjects that these, in their turn, should reaffirm their kinship with the Slavic stock. As we have already had occasion to

¹ Adrianople was taken by storm in the morning of the 26th March 1913.

point out, the religious question in the European East is a political question, to an extent difficult to appreciate in Western Europe. For that reason Prince Ferdinand was for years the object of a religious suspicion, industriously fostered by the enemies of the new régime. Mediæval Bulgaria had for a time chosen for her spiritual head the Roman Pontiff instead of his rival, the Byzantine Patriarch. The great Czar Boris, after whom the infant of Tirnovo was named, hesitated between the two. With him and some of his successors it was merely an affair of business bargaining. In the opinion of certain historians it was a misfortune for Bulgaria that the czars finally threw in their lot with the Eastern Church, thereby severing themselves from intellectual and moral association with Central and Western Europe. So the Bulgarian reactionaries and their panslavic friends in Russia attributed to the Catholic Prince Ferdinand a design to entice the nation from the Orthodox fold. This was hard upon Prince Ferdinand, who had personally done so much to reinstate the Bulgarian Ecclesiastical Synod, which had practically disappeared during the early and troubled years of his government, and to mitigate its internal discord. The Prince's government had also done the Macedonian Bulgarians great service by inducing the Porte to grant them an increase of two episcopal sees. 'These are not the acts of a Catholic propagandist,' said the Prince. The Tirnovo baptism gave the finishing stroke to an unfounded but mischievous slander. In the fulness of

their joy the national deputies, in Parliament assembled, voted a grant of half a million francs to their baby convert—for a frugal people a prodigal gift.

Russia and Bulgaria having been reconciled, the congratulations of the European Powers came in with a rush. The Sultan, no longer terrorised by Russia, issued his *firman*, formally recognising Prince Ferdinand as Prince of Bulgaria, with the title of Royal Highness, and as Governor-General of Eastern Roumelia. In the latter character, the future Ferdinandus Macedonicus and conqueror of Thrace was simply a Turkish Vali, a mixed sort of pasha, bound to sport his Turkish fez should he ever visit his sovereign lord. Prince Ferdinand promptly acknowledged Sultan Abdul Hamid's graciousness by a visit to Yildiz. He always does 'the correct thing.' In Constantinople he aroused the liveliest curiosity. Crowds of people followed him to the Imperial palace. He journeyed to St. Petersburg; then to Paris, where his reception was most flattering. It might have turned a head less cool than Prince Ferdinand's. The Parisians made so much of him, partly, of course, because he was half a Frenchman by birth and more than half by his culture, and partly because of his dexterity and tenacity. At the Élysée the successor of the French kings and emperors royally entertained the Orleanist Prince who was so successfully introducing French culture and manners into a semi-Oriental land; or almost royally, for the Prince was as yet only half a king. And as in the democratic

Élysée the protocol is about as rigidly sacrosanct as it once was in pre-republican Peking, semi-royal honours only could be accorded to the Prince of Bulgaria: half a gala at the Opera, half a military manœuvre, and so on. Luckily, there's no mention of half a dinner in the protocol, and His Royal Highness was entertained with all the splendid, exquisite hospitality for which the Élysée is renowned. The time would soon come when that wonderful protocol would entitle him to the full honours of a military review and an unclipped ballet.

The return of Bulgarian exiles from Russia in 1897 was another step in Prince Ferdinand's policy of 'apaisement.' His great resource in internal administration was to get the leaders of rival parties to combine to do something useful: he could not endure sterile strife. As for foreign affairs, he made them at this period of his career his special, personal charge. And much of his 'F. O.' work was done through the medium of travelling. In 1900, at Prince Ferdinand's request, there took place an inspection of the Bulgarian army by a body of distinguished officers specially appointed by Czar Nicolas. Their report gave deep gratification to the Prince, who had laboured incessantly at his task of military reform. The Russian officers were astonished at the high degree of perfection in training, discipline, and equipment to which the Bulgarian army, with financial means necessarily limited, had attained in twenty years, but especially since Prince

Ferdinand's advent. Men exactly of the type of the rustic volunteers who had fraternised with the Russians in the Shipka Pass and at Plevna were now among the 'smartest' troops in Europe. The Russian generals who had predicted great things of those uncouth warriors of 1877-8 were not mistaken. The Russian verdict, endorsed in complimentary style by Czar Nicolas, made a deep impression on the Bulgarian people, then becoming wide awake to the certainty of coming troubles in Macedonia, and of their own inevitable intervention in them. It is to this period that we must ascribe the definite emergence of the military spirit—quite a different thing from a pugnacious spirit—among this pacific, laborious, fundamentally brave race. After two years a pathetic ceremony at the foot of the Shipka Pass still further stimulated this rising spirit by its appeal to the historic imagination. It was the inauguration of the church dedicated to the memory of those who had fallen there in the 'War of Freedom.' The Grand Duke Nicolas was present as the Emperor's representative. He was accompanied by Count Ignatieff, who thirty years earlier, when residing at Constantinople, had so successfully advocated the Bulgarians' claim to an exarchate of their own. Among the distinguished Russian visitors was M. Bakhmetieff, whose wife a year later organised a system of relief for the thousands of Macedonians, chiefly women and children, who were escaping into Bulgaria from their Turkish persecutors.

Accompanying Prince Ferdinand were the members of his court, his ministers, and commanding officers. The scene of every episode in the desperate fighting of a quarter of a century ago was identified. The venerable Count Ignatieff, with several of his countrymen, then paid a visit to Sofia, whose inhabitants turned out *en masse* to welcome him. The Shipka Pass celebration was the right thing, done at the right moment.

During these years Prince Ferdinand was promoting his country's interests and strengthening her position in Europe in many ways of a more prosaic order. He took an active interest in the establishment of commercial and postal conventions with foreign countries. He was a shrewd counsellor in the matter of public loans; and impecunious Bulgaria must needs borrow, in order to develop her vast natural resources. His constant aim was to keep Bulgaria in full view of the European eye—to advertise her, as we have elsewhere said. And so at Hague conversations she figured side by side with her own suzerain, as if she were an independent Power, no longer his 'vassal.' This singular 'vassal' even made treaties with her overlord. She was a unique illustration of the comic in a legal fiction. As a pushing man of business, Prince Ferdinand might be compared with Cavour: he made his sturdy little state the Piedmont of the Balkans. During his triumphant visit to Paris his national flag floated over his residence, the Foreign Office, at the Quai

d'Orsay, just as if he were an independent sovereign. He conquered Europe by a 'correct' attitude to protocolean shams and imperturbable reliance on the logic of things. President Petkoff's estimate of Prince Ferdinand, already quoted, was in every way justified. And now we may cite a passage from the speech of M. Stancioff, the Bulgarian Foreign Minister, to the Legislative Assembly, before the end of the period under consideration :—

'Honours generally reserved for independent Sovereigns are now rendered to the Prince of Bulgaria. The Great Powers are represented here by their Ministers Plenipotentiary. While our army is esteemed abroad, its Commander-in-Chief (the Prince) holds honorary rank in the armies of foreign states. In its efforts to promote the development of external policy, our Government keeps careful watch over the course of events within and beyond our borders. It seizes every favourable occasion to profit by the experience of nations more advanced than ours. It is faithful to its international engagements, and is desirous of developing intercourse with other peoples. It is devoted to the duty—the importance of which all recognise—of safeguarding the peace of the Balkan Peninsula.'

To secure the peace of the Balkan Peninsula by means of a Balkan Alliance had long been Prince Ferdinand's cherished ambition. In 1899 M. Stoïloff, between whom and the Prince there always had been an identity of view on this subject, approached the Servian Government with proposals for consolidating the commercial and political interests of the two countries. Dr. Daneff continued these negotiations.

They foreshadowed the Confederation of 1912-13. 'Stamboulovist' ministries, as they were called, took office after the Dictator's disappearance. But a ministerial label, the personal composition of a cabinet, affected in no way the course of Bulgarian policy. Under Prince Ferdinand the Conciliator the time of anarchic strife passed away.

XXVIII

THE CZAR AND HIS FAMILY

FOREIGN visitors who had known Bulgaria during the Turkish and Alexander-Stambouloff periods now detected a subtle change in its social atmosphere. Particularly in the towns, and most of all in the capital, one became conscious of a new expansion of the popular spirit. Of the sombre, brooding Sofiote aspect of a few years earlier scarcely a trace remained. A new feeling of civic *camaraderie* had been evoked. One perceived how the range of intellectual and æsthetic interests was widening. Signs of change, such as the adoption of Western fashions in women's attire, and the demand for light, illustrated books and periodicals of foreign origin, especially French, were more significant than they would be in lands more 'advanced.' Clearly the Bulgars were breathing a freer and larger air of the Spirit. It was as if they had emerged from prison for holiday in their sun-steeped fields and in the 'Greenwood' of their rustic poets. And if one talked with the Sofiotes about this altered outlook of the popular mind, one would be told that it must be attributed to 'the palace,' hard by. And yet, if one asked whether the Prince was popular, the reply would be somewhat ambiguous. The present writer often received for answer, 'What do you mean by popular?' If by

popularity one meant a personal affection, Prince Ferdinand was not popular in that sense. He never evoked, probably never will evoke, the personal affection which the Bulgarians felt for their unstable, impulsive, warm-hearted, ebullient, futile Prince Alexander. But if by popularity one meant confidence in Prince Ferdinand as guardian and director of the state, then there could be no denying his universal popularity. Hundreds of times have I heard Nationalists of the most stalwart, jealous sort declare unhesitatingly that the Prince was the maker of a new Bulgaria. He knew the state machine to its minutest detail, the inquirer would be assured. In the words of a French author, the Prince was the 'master mechanician.' M. de Launay in his excellent book¹ remarks that, if the Prince is not popular in the ordinary sense of the word, his subjects 'appreciate' his value as 'president of a crowned republic.' This cautious, unimpassioned, judicial estimate of their ruler by the Bulgarian people is characteristic of the race. It is perhaps the sort of appreciation which a ruler of his temperament would prize the most. 'Prestige' might be substituted for 'popularity.'

But it is not the only appreciation which the nation formed of 'the palace.' Princess Marie Louise, Prince Ferdinand's first wife, was almost literally worshipped by the people. In the expansion of the popular spirit which we have been considering, the influence which she exerted during the six short years

¹ *La Bulgarie*, 1907.

that elapsed between her marriage and her death was in many respects even more potent than her husband's. The Bulgarians were indeed fortunate in their first Princess. And the same must be said of the lady who, eight years after the death of Princess Marie Louise, married Prince Ferdinand, and who in the war of 1912-13 has without intermission devoted her days and nights to the care of the sick and the wounded. A new type of Bulgarian society, it is often said, is in course of evolution. The first Princess and the first Czarina of modern Bulgaria have in a memorable manner and degree contributed to this result.

When married to Prince Ferdinand at Pianore, in the province of Lucca, Princess Marie Louise of Parma was twenty-three years of age—some ten years younger than the Prince. She was slenderly built, under middle height, with chestnut-brown hair, large, radiant blue eyes, and pale complexion. In her attitude and movement graceful and dignified, she was in manner simple, gracious, and unaffected. Like the Prince himself, she was partly of French extraction. She had the reputation of being as witty as her great-grandmother, the Duchess of Berri, the cleverest woman of the French royal house, as the Duchess of Angoulême, according to Henri Heine, was the 'best man' in it.

Like Prince Ferdinand, she was an assiduous reader, a lover of music and the arts, a nature-worshipper; and also, her adoring Bulgar folk would say,

as approachable and fascinatingly free in her talk as the Prince often was the reverse. The Prince and the Princess had another taste in common : they loved travel, and the Princess, being an expert with brush and pencil, filled many a portfolio with sketches and water-colours of numberless places between the Western Pyrenees and the delectable palace the Prince built on the Black Sea coast near Varna. Her love of nature—strong as Prince Ferdinand's, in whom it amounted to a passion—was developed by her residence, during girlhood, in many of the most enchanting spots in the Swiss and Italian Alps, and amidst the vast horizons of Southern France.

The Princess, with her charming frankness and her inquisitiveness respecting the country which she was about to make her own, captivated the Bulgarian gentlemen who, with M. Stambouloff, were privileged to attend the wedding. She had the happy inspiration of arraying herself in Bulgarian costume for her journey from Sistovo to Sofia. At Sistovo the Prince himself had landed and issued a proclamation, eight years before, on his way to his installation at Tirnovo. From Sistovo to the capital the Princess's was a triumphal progress. Her Bulgarian costume was a compliment that won the popular heart : it suggested expectations of her which an immediate future abundantly confirmed.

Students of the popular literature of the Southern Slavs are well aware of the prevalence, even among illiterate rustics, of the poetic, or at any rate the

versifying, faculty. They improvise on any subject that seizes their fancy. So Princess Marie Louise's marriage, her beauty, her Bulgarian costume, her kindliness, her innumerable deeds of charity have been the subjects of hundreds of artless lays, many of which are still repeated.

We know how Prince Ferdinand spoke of his trade—*métier*—of ruling Prince. Princess Marie Louise's idea of her own *métier*, as first lady of the land, was no less sincere and exalted. She too, in her own way, would be a builder of the new Bulgaria. She was an indefatigable organiser of charitable aid. Her admirable example was followed by many women in the rising middle class. Of modern Bulgaria, as of ancient Rome, it may be said that her dearest children are her soldiers. And indeed there's much in common between the two sets of children—a hard life on frugal fare and absolute consecration of one's life to the Patria. Princess Louise shared in full measure her husband's devotion to the welfare of the army. Quick-firers and things of that sort were not in Her Royal Highness's line, but she could test personally the soldiers' rations, and see that they were comfortably nursed whenever they needed any such help. In biographical descriptions of the Princess it is related how the mountaineers of the Rhodope and the Old Balkan, and the sea-farers of the Euxine, loved her. A 'good Bulgarian,' as she had resolved to be, she quickly mastered the Bulgarian language. Gifted with an exquisite voice, she sang



CHILDREN OF THE BULGARIAN CZAR

Princess Eudoxia, Prince Cyril, the Crown Prince and Princess
Nadejda. (Left to right)

Bulgarian lays with all the feeling and the expression she threw into the songs of her native Italy.

Dying in her twenty-ninth year, Princess Marie Louise had the consolation of having given the 'Princely,' now the Royal, 'House of Bulgaria' its first heir. The four children whom she left—two sons and two daughters—are in the full, national sense of the expression 'the children of Bulgaria.' Their names have the scent of the soil. Boris Tirnovski—Boris of Tirnovo—is a name which stirs the imagination of every Bulgar, from the learned professor in the rising University of Sofia to the labourer at his plough. It recalls the glories of an ancient Empire which the first modern Czar has restored as far as the shore of the southern sea, and which the son is destined to rule over. The younger son's name, Cyril, is one of the most famous in the history of the race. Prince Cyril has the title of Prince of Preslav. Preslav was a Bulgarian capital at an earlier date than Tirnovo. As said in a preceding page, Prince Boris is in his twentieth year. Prince Cyril is younger by a year. Princess Eudoxia is fifteen, and her sister, Princess Nadejda, fourteen years of age.

While the heir-apparent's name recalls that of the first great czar, his brother's name recalls that of one of the two saints who first introduced the Christian religion and literature into Bulgaria. The four children inherit between them, and in a remarkable manner, the parental temperaments, tastes, and

characters. Prince Boris Tirnovski inherits his father's studious habits, love of the army, and interest in political and economic subjects. He is a good linguist—and, of course, is as thorough a master of Bulgarian as any native. He is said to be a readier, or at any rate a more willing, talker than his father. Like his father, also, he possesses mechanical aptitudes. Czar Ferdinand has the reputation of being among other things an expert engine-driver: it is related of him that he showed his skill in the art in country trips, during his sojourn in Paris as a 'king in exile.' Prince Cyril, according to the testimony of persons intimate with the life of the palace, bears a strong resemblance in taste and character to his mother, the Princess Louise: as 'agile in intelligence' as 'enamoured of the outdoor life,' and of sketching landscapes and seascapes. With the young Princess Eudoxia's active interest in charitable work, especially in connection with orphanages, the Bulgarian public are familiar.

This admirable, this fine, record of social service in the 'Royal House' of Bulgaria is continued by the Czarina. The kingly *métier* is taken seriously there. The Princess Eleanore of the little German state of Reuss was married to Prince Ferdinand at Géra, the capital of the state, in February 1908. Born in 1860, she is a year younger than Czar Ferdinand. It is an interesting fact that a prince of her house, a near relation, was offered the Bulgarian throne at the time when Prince Alexander of Battenberg was a candidate.

He fought shy of it, and for reasons that spoke less for his valour than for his discretion. He saw no future for the half-barbaric people whom all except a few isolated observers deemed incapable of anything resembling self-government. He was disposed to believe that Russia would swallow up the country, and that his labour as ruler, if he did go, would be thrown away. Besides, without Eastern Roumelia as part of it, a Bulgarian Principality would not be much more imposing than a Principality of Reuss. The German Princelet's calculated refusal is a curious comment on Bulgarian story since then, and a curious contrast with the bold adventure of the Coburg Prince, who undertook what was universally described as 'the most thankless task in Europe.'

Every reader knows in what manner the designation 'Lady of the Lamp' was enshrined for ever in English military history. Some years before she became the first Czarina of the modern Bulgars, the Reuss Princess repeated, on the bloodstained plains of Manchuria, Florence Nightingale's self-devotion in the Crimean days. For her invaluable services as organising 'Sister' with the Red Cross ambulances and hospitals, the Princess, whose name was scarcely known outside a narrow circle, was decorated on the field of war. Like her great prototype—the first of a noble class of women whose mere presence has soothed many an hour of agonised despair—the Princess turned to use in civil life the experience she

had gained on the battlefield. The hospital which she has founded, and directs, in Sofia is in every way a model institution. It admits patients of any nation. In the Balkan War, while the Czar fulfils his part as Head of the Army, the Czarina resumes her old occupation of Red Cross Directress.



THE CZAR AND CZARITSA OF BULGARIA ON THEIR WEDDING DAY

XXIX

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU

SOME years ago, after the Orient Express had reached its majority, Prince Ferdinand caused the event to be celebrated by a fête in Sofia. He was said to have originated the idea. He suggested the programme for the occasion. It was to be a festival in honour of the men who had done, or were doing, the actual work of the railway service—superintendents, engineers, and workmen. His solicitude for men who did things instead of talking about them was characteristic of Prince Ferdinand. Himself a steady worker—with his brains, if not with his hands—in the railway development of Bulgaria, the Prince made at the entertainment a speech, short and to the point, in which he made a modest reference to his own part in the undertaking. ‘Gentlemen,’ said he,

‘your presence here is to me a great delight. It reminds of years of effort which are to me a source of pride. This day of rejoicing has for us a profound significance. The Orient Express is for us a purveyor of life; in uniting our country with Europe, in bringing us into contact with foreign ideas, enabling us to breathe the atmosphere of a larger life, it has vitalised our first efforts towards progress. Those among you who witnessed the beginnings of this great enterprise so intimately associated with the first months of my reign, will remember how formidable the obstacles were which we had to encounter, and with what expectations of a great future

Sofia station, then a little white building, was inaugurated. We have had our reward. How many noble enterprises have there not sprung from that first achievement! You may well be proud, gentlemen, of your work—as, indeed, I myself am for such part as I may have performed in furthering it.’

To the artificer-in-chief of new Bulgaria material progress never has meant more than a means towards an end—an indispensable means—the end being the enlargement of the mind and spirit, which for him constitute civilisation. In a talk about horticulture—one of the arts by which he has for many years been labouring to beautify the capital of his kingdom—he put the case between spiritual and material claims in a somewhat whimsical fashion. He was praising the generous responsiveness of the Bulgarian soil: ‘*Elle ne refuse rien au moindre effort. Vous avez vu toutes ces fleurs qu’elle nous offre paisiblement sans compter. . . . Elles sont incomparables, et je n’en vois pas d’aussi parfaites. . . . Oui, mais pour avoir des fleurs . . . il faut avoir des canons.*’ The little anecdote, related by his biographer M. Hepp, is a remarkably good illustration of Czar Ferdinand’s conception of his ‘trade’ as a king, and of the scope and spirit of his own government. He has had a careful eye, as all the world knows, to the powder and shot, while accomplishing more for the intellectual and æsthetic development of his people than any contemporary monarch.

Visitors who on the day of this celebration might have visited Sofia for the first time since Prince

Ferdinand's advent, or his predecessor's, would not have recognised the town. Much had been done in its development during Alexander's brief reign. But for the small Haussmanns of the first years of liberated Bulgaria, Prince Ferdinand's rule reserved a larger opportunity. While inheriting his predecessor's achievement, Prince Ferdinand amplified it in many directions, bringing to the execution of his task special tastes and capacities wherewith Prince Alexander was not conspicuously gifted. With a big empire instead of a small principality—half of it still a Turkish Pashalic!—for elbow-room, Prince Ferdinand would have been one of the illustrious class of Imperial builders, of whom Hadrian is the chief example in the Occident, and Shah Jehan of Agra and Delhi in the Orient. But let us pause a moment. There's magic in the name of the emperor who, nearly eighteen hundred years ago, founded the great Thracian city, named after himself, Hadrianopolis, now reconquered by Ferdinand's generals, and badly in need of sweeping and cleansing, repairing and rebuilding, after its five or six centuries of Turkish occupation. It would, indeed, be strange if speculation were not already rife among King Ferdinand's people respecting the hierarchical future of Adrianople in the expanded czardom. But for the present we must give our attention to the existing capital, whose reconstruction and embellishment has been one of Czar Ferdinand's chief preoccupations during more than twenty years.

All the documents relating to Sofia, which Czar Ferdinand is known to have gathered, fail to give much information, of a detailed kind, on its more remote past. But they show clearly enough that its vicissitudes were many and most tragical, that it once was populous and rich, and that at least one of the early Byzantine emperors entertained some design of making it his capital—perhaps in alternation with Constantinople. At an earlier period another emperor, Diocletian, made it the capital of Lower Dacia. It must have been an important town even in the pre-Roman epoch. Under its Græco-Roman name Serdica, adapted, it is supposed, from the name of a Thracian tribe, it appears to have been a prosperous Greek town when the pagan Bulgars from the Volga and the Danube overran the peninsula as far as Constantinople. The Bulgar czar, Krum, took possession of it in 809. It was Krum who caused the head of the Greek emperor, Nicephorus, to be carried before him on a pike, and who on feast days drank his wine out of a cup made of the emperor's skull. Krum, it would seem, made Serdica the capital of a kingdom which included Macedonia and a part of Hungary. In 1382 the Turks occupied it for the first time. They were chased out of it by Gourko's troops, hurrying up by forced marches from the Balkans in 1878. It is a remarkable instance of the persistence of ethnic tradition and of race survival that an ancient name of the town, 'Triaditza,' is still heard among the peasantry in the mountainous localities of Sofia

district. It is supposed to be a Thracian name. And the picturesquely costumed rustics who make use of it, and who with their slow bullock carts laden with their farm produce frequent Sofia on market days, may perhaps be regarded as the descendants of the ancient Thracians.

In the heroic lays of the Bulgars there are many references to the Sofia pashas—corrupt despots, cruel, treacherous. Yet the first English letter-writer who visited Sofia and described the state of European Turkey, from Belgrade to Adrianople and Stamboul, greatly admired the Turkish city. The letter-writer was Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Her correspondence—of which the best existing edition is the work of the late Mr. William Moy Thomas—deserves to be read in these days of Turkish collapse. As a special correspondent in the war of 1912-13, her ladyship would have been invaluable. Her delineation of the Turk as she saw him in 1717 is worth a barrowful of 'standard' history. It is as fresh to-day as it was when written a hundred and ninety-six years ago. The present writer has had the privilege of close acquaintance with many a Turk who might have dropped, so to speak, out of her ladyship's lively pages.

Rejoicing in the fact (her belief, at any rate) that she had performed 'a journey not undertaken since the Crusades,' Lady Mary was all the more concerned to acquire a correct impression of the Turk and his doings. 'Sophia,' she wrote, 'is one of the most

beautiful towns in the Turkish Empire.' This was written from Adrianople, and she had seen Belgrade the beautiful, and Nish, and Philippopolis. 'Sophia,' she said, 'is very large and extremely populous.' She admired its 'large and beautiful plain,' its 'agreeable landscape.' Modern travellers, however, might demur a little to the word beautiful, which is quite appropriate to the scenery of Philippopolis, the next town on her route. Lady Mary stopped a day or so in Sofia to visit the natural baths, which are famous in that part of the world, and as yet unknown to Western seekers after health resorts. The baths which Lady Mary visited are those which exist to-day, only reduced in extent, and fallen from the luxurious state in which she found them. The simple contrivances for hot and cold, the steps by which one descends into one's bath, the damp, insinuating sulphurous vapour, the plan of the building, are what the early eighteenth-century letter-writer describes to her friends at home. But the Turkish ladies who frequented them vanished before the rule of the pashas in Sofia came to an end.

Lady Mary's description of the Turkish women bathers is an interesting picture of social custom among the Turkish upper class of the period. She describes how she herself drove to them in a luxurious 'Turkish coach,' richly decorated and lined with silk, and how the two hundred Turkish ladies whom she found there dawdled and gossiped about the

fountains dropping 'into marble basins.' She praises the exquisite manners of the Turkish ladies. None of them, she remarks, appeared to take any notice of her Western dress, though it must have seemed comically barbarous to them; whereas in English society, she moralises, an unconventional attire would have provoked whisperings and titterings. But after the conversational ice was broken the Turkish ladies did manifest curiosity in the fashions of the West. And what amazed them most of all was my Lady Mary's stays. They were shocked. They pitied poor Lady Mary from the bottom of their unsophisticated souls. They were indignant with the barbarous occidental man. 'Come hither,' they called out, 'and see how cruelly the poor English ladies are used by their husbands. You (English women) may boast, indeed, of the superior liberties allowed you, when they lock you up thus in a box.' It is just possible that Lady Mary may have improved the occasion for the purpose of administering a sly hit to the patrons and patronesses of a ridiculous and deleterious custom. At any rate, it was a literary art in which she was proficient. There were Turkish authorities who averred that her description of the Sofia bath was, in some details, over-coloured. She pictures her two hundred Turkish ladies, 'naked,' as they sip their coffee, lounging on their sofas, or walk about, in their 'graceful, majestic' pose. The spectacle, said Lady Mary, confirmed her in her opinion that a beautiful

figure would extinguish artistic interest in a beautiful face.

The Sofian baths where Lady Mary spent a few hours existed, doubtless on the same spot, in Roman times. The bath-loving Romans, who introduced their social customs wherever they went, may have built them. And the Emperor Maximian, born in Serdica, may have turned on the ice-cold tap there, and braced himself up after his hot plunge. Among the minor projects contemplated by the Fathers of Sofia is the development of the bathing resources of their city and district. It is one of the improvements they have in view, largely for the purpose of increasing the attractions of the town as a resort for tourists—a purpose most warmly encouraged by Czar Ferdinand. Natural baths, greatly prized for their ‘medicinal properties,’ are numerous, though ‘undeveloped,’ in Bulgaria and Macedonia. They will be turned to profitable account when the new Bulgaria becomes, as it is certain to become, one of the favourite playgrounds of Europe. Hot and cold natural springs side by side, whereat Bulgarian wives and daughters do their washing, are not unknown in Macedonia. So before the coming of the Greeks did the women of Ilios by the two fountains, one hot, one cold, *πηγαὶ δοιαί*, that spring from the eddying Scamander.¹

¹ ‘ἡ μὲν γὰρ θ’ ὕδατι λιαρῶ ῥέει, ἀμφὶ δὲ καπνὸς
γίγνεται ἐξ αὐτῆς ὡς εἰ πυρὸς αἰθομένοιο·
ἡ δ’ ἐτέρη θέρεϊ προέει εἰκνία χαλάζῃ
ἡ χιόνι ψυχρῇ ἢ ἐξ ὕδατος κρυστάλλω.’—*Iliad*, xxii.

But if Lady Mary found in the Sofia of 1717 a beautiful and populous city, she found little but misery and desolation outside Sofia and the other large towns. Her description of the rural East was as applicable to the Bulgaria of 1877 as to the country which she traversed a hundred and sixty years before. It might stand, word for word—as the present writer, from his experience of the country, can testify—to the condition of Thrace and Macedonia until their deliverance a few months since by the Bulgarian, Servian, and Greek armies. She writes of the Servian ‘desert,’ through which she journeyed painfully with her baggage waggons and janissary escort: and Servia was, naturally, one of the most fertile lands in the East. The pashas, in order to keep their unruly troops in order, permitted them to plunder their neighbours—just as the ‘Red Sultan’ permitted his Arnauts to harry the Macedonians. Sofia was populous, but the country was uninhabited, its people had fled from the Turk. Lady Mary speaks of a month being wasted in the transmission of a passport from one town to another. There you have the vile system by which, in Bulgaria until the Liberation War, and in Macedonia until 1908, when the Young Turks, to their great credit, did away with it, no one could pass from one district to another without a *teskereh*. She tells us how the Turkish authorities requisitioned without payment the waggons and cattle assigned for her use, how the wretched owners wept over their losses, and that

any compensation she herself might give them would be appropriated by the Turk in command. 'I was almost in tears,' she writes, 'to see day by day the insolences of our janissary escort in the poor villages through which we passed.' During the agitation which, after a few years, has ended in the expulsion of the Turk from Macedonia and the greater part of Thrace, travellers in either country must have been familiar with the abuse described by the letter-writer. Lady Mary seems to have been impressed by the beauty and comparative prosperity of Philippopolis. The town was to a large extent Greek. Many rich Greeks lived in it; but, she remarks, 'they are forced to conceal their wealth, with great care, the appearance of poverty, which includes part of its inconveniences, being all their security against feeling it in earnest.' A beautiful land, rich by nature, but blighted by the Turk—such was Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's impression of it nearly two hundred years ago.

A hundred and forty years after our lady traveller passed through Sofia, Mr. Shaw Lefevre, whom we have cited at the beginning of this volume, saw it. The Turk was still in the land. And Lady Mary's 'beautiful and populous' city had dwindled into a 'miserably poor' Turkish village. The Turkish landowners, he wrote, had driven the Bulgar inhabitants into the less fertile localities. It is interesting to compare his remarks on Philippopolis with hers. He found there 'an appearance of activity'; and

Eastern Roumelia, of which Philippopolis was the capital, was 'one of the richest provinces of Turkey.' He observed that it afforded for that reason, 'the best opportunity for plunder on the part of the Pashas sent from Constantinople.'

XXX

SOFIA OLD AND NEW

THE difference between Ferdinandian Sofia and the city as it existed before his arrival may be expressed in three words—joy of life, *joie de vivre*, the outward manifestations of which are the pleasure resorts, the public buildings, the public gardens and parks, the educational and artistic institutions, which since the beginning of Czar Ferdinand's reign have completely transformed the capital. This great change has not merely taken place during his reign, it is to a great extent the result of his personal initiative. As the Sofiotes themselves often say, he has been their 'educator.' We have already recorded how an English statesman found Sofia, in 1860 or 1861, a 'miserably poor' place. Yet the same authority, revisiting the town in 1890, said that 'of all the cities in the East,' it had made 'the greatest improvement.'

Readers who had not personally known Turkish Sofia, or the Macedonian villages as they existed before their liberation in 1912-13, would find it difficult to realise the magnitude of the change we are discussing. The Sofia of the last year of the Turk's domination resembled any Bulgarian village in 'unredeemed Macedonia'—except, that is to say, in point of population, for the town still counted its twenty-five thousand inhabitants. It was as dilapidated, as



TIRNOVO, THE ANCIENT CAPITAL OF BULGARIA



OLD MARKET STALL IN SOFIA



filthy, as terrorised as any Bulgar hamlet in Macedonia. The Christian population wore the depressed, furtive expression of a people helpless against tyranny. The clatter of a troop of mounted gendarmes in a street of Sofia would have sent its people scurrying into their houses like rabbits into their burrows. These were the signs of terror which must have struck every traveller in Macedonia until the day, thirty-five years later, when that land in its turn was liberated. Turkish Sofia on the eve of the liberation was a fortuitous concourse of mean, red-tiled little houses and cabins of wood and plaster. Its crooked, narrow lanes, leading nowhere in particular, were unpaved. In rainy weather they were no better than open sewers. In Turkish Sofia no Christian woman dared venture out of her house after dark, or far from it in the daytime. There were no street lamps. No man went out of doors in the night-time without a lantern. Arrest, perhaps a beating, was the punishment for breach of the regulation. 'In Sofia of the Turks,' to quote from a description written at the time, 'there was next to no business between it and the villages of the district: industry, like a clock run down, had come to a stop: "alush varush," nothing doing, as even the Turks themselves are saying, regretfully, in the Macedonia of the Turks.'

The only way to improve a Turkish town such as Sofia, was to begin by knocking it down. And Czar Ferdinand's predecessors did their work of demolition so rapidly and effectually that, when he first arrived at

his capital, there was scarcely a vestige of the old town left. The ancient baths were there, and a mosque or two, and a rambling, picturesque, old khan, or caravanserai, the only apology for a hotel which the town possessed before the liberation. The khan was well worth preservation, as a relic of the old régime. With its numberless little rooms or cubicles, all unfurnished, it was merely a shelter, where visitors had to provide their own bedding and provide their own food. During the late Macedonian insurrections it was a favourite place of meeting for members of insurrectionary bands.

One of the Turkish mosques was originally an ancient Byzantine church. Prince Ferdinand restored it to its original use. This reconversion must not be supposed to have in any way done violence to the feelings of the Mohammedan residents. For, in the first place, a large number of them abandoned the town and migrated into Turkey while the Russians were advancing. In the second place, the Moslem places of worship had for a long time been falling into disuse. A single mosque suffices at the present day for the needs of the Moslem population in the Bulgarian capital. The restoration of the little Byzantine church, and its decoration, at Prince Ferdinand's expense, was one of his earliest steps in the task which he has uninterruptedly prosecuted since then, the task of raising Sofia to the rank of a great European metropolis. At the beginning of his reign the question was often asked—as, in fact, it had been in Prince

Alexander's time—whether a better choice than that of Sofia might have been made for the national capital. Sofia, it was objected, was, from the geographical point of view, awkwardly situated, being near the extreme western boundary of a country that stretched eastwards, more than three hundred miles, to the Black Sea. Philippopolis, on the other hand, was situated midway between the eastern and western boundaries. It lay on the main railway line, at an easy distance from Adrianople and Constantinople. Its beauty and salubrity, to say nothing of its associations with classical antiquity, should have had considerable weight. Tirnovo, also, had its enthusiastic advocates, for reasons that may be understood from preceding references to it. But these reasons were more sentimental than practical. Besides, its position on the side of a mountain range that intervened between it and the railway line connecting Western Europe with Constantinople, rendered its claims far inferior to those of Philippopolis. Those who justified the choice of Sofia did so on political grounds. They looked forward to a time when the Bulgarian Principality would become Greater Bulgaria, extending westwards and southwards, and annexing Macedonia. Or to the formation of a Balkan League. It was generally known that Czar Ferdinand earnestly desired it, as the best means for securing peace both in the Balkan states and European Turkey, and that he would have regarded his own share in promoting it as the greatest of his diplomatic successes. In that

case, it was said, a short railway would bring Sofia into line, nearly straight, with Salonika. The argument took it for granted that Salonika would become Bulgarian. But Salonika has been taken by the Greeks, and is certain—as it ought to be—to remain in their possession. However, as the larger part of Macedonia is henceforth Bulgarian, the central position of Sofia is a geographical as well as political fact. For though Philippopolis is still nearer the central point, as measured by miles, Sofia has the advantage of speedier access to the interior of the newly acquired territories. There have already been vague suggestions—they can hardly be serious—of the adoption at some indeterminate period of Adrianople as the capital of the Greater Bulgaria. They may be dismissed. Sofia's destiny as the capital of the new Bulgaria may be regarded as settled.

So at the time when Czar Ferdinand was making his speech to the engineers and workmen, and recalling the very modest beginnings of their railway station, the architects were still planning, in all directions, streets without houses, with a view to the needs of a population that had risen, in little more than a quarter of a century, from about twenty-five thousand to more than sixty thousand, and was still increasing. Every detail of their plans underwent Czar Ferdinand's careful scrutiny. Behind a corner window of the palace, overlooking the highway, is the Czar's private study, where he often works till the first hour or two of the morning. Passers-by

know it when they see the light in the window. Piles of street plans, of monumental drawings, of designs for the splendid park and gardens, with their new palace, which Czar Ferdinand has created at Vrana, formerly a mere wilderness, some three or four miles distant from the city, have been examined behind that corner window.

Czar Ferdinand himself was often a curious spectator of the scenes—chiefly on market days—which Sofia presented during the first hurried years of reconstruction. Even until a time comparatively recent, Sofia presented the appearance of a Western American town in process of being ‘run up.’ It reminded some visitors of the growth of Johannesburg or of Coolgardie. The resemblance was no less applicable to the spirit of the Sofiotes than to the work they were accomplishing. They manifested all the go-ahead ardour, all the optimism, of pioneers. They were, in their way, the pioneers of a new state. During the troubles of 1903, when a large portion of the capital was little more than a desert of sand, stone, lime heaps, and house walls barely risen on their foundations, one might have heard the *habitués* of the Hôtel Panakhoff—parliamentary deputies, journalists, and members of the Macedonian internal organisation—predict that in a few years the inhabitants of Monastir, Serres, Bansko, Mekomia, and other towns in the enslaved province, would be emulating their Sofiote kindred. Czar Ferdinand’s collection of photographs depicting street

scenes during the initial period will be invaluable to future historians. The variety, the incongruity of these scenes, exceeded anything in Johannesburg or Coolgardie. 'The barbaric and the civilised,' the present author wrote at the time, 'jostle each other in the streets and market-places of new Sofia. The electric car just misses the long, horizontal horns and the shiny black muzzle of the buffalo, as he drags his creaking wooden cart, the fashion of which has remained unchanged these two thousand years and more.' Close to the cathedral the gipsy horse-dealers—tall, handsome, brown-skinned fellows, wearing the Turkish fez, and long, flowing trousers secured at the waist with a red sash—filled the air with their strident voices. The gipsies, men and women, are perhaps the physically finest race in Bulgaria. Their village, Zigana Mehalla, situated, if it still exists, a mile or two from the town, would have given an artist endless subjects for picturesque portraiture. Czar Ferdinand's ediles would have cleared out the Zigany village. But it was understood that he was opposed to any such drastic measures ; especially as, though its hygienic character left much to be desired, it could be remedied by hygienic pressure. Czar Ferdinand's susceptibility to the picturesque, and his kindliness, often carried to extreme indulgence, was manifested in that matter as in many another.

In those market-day crowds of Vitosh Street—the principal street of the capital—the Tartar type of face was not infrequent. The countrywomen of

the 'Schope' class—a tribal remnant, peculiar to the Sofia district, were conspicuous by their barbaric ornamentation. Even with the poorest, coins—apart from the red flower stuck over the right or left ear—were the favourite ornaments. The well-to-do wore them in profusion. I counted more than eighty coins, gold and silver, on the person of a peasant girl. She wore them in the form of a long rope twisted among the coils of her black hair. Another peasant woman's bust was wholly covered with silver coins as with a breastplate. The Schopes' blocks of unwieldy carts, beside which lay the oxen chewing the cud, suggested the idea of a Boer laager. The Princess Marie Louise, a clever aquarelliste, as already said, was often fascinated by these types of costume and physique, taking her 'notes' of them rapidly as the countryfolk trudged past her palace windows. In a few years more these picturesque varieties in the market-places of Sofia will be civilised beyond recognition. The Sofia crowds are becoming as monotonous in appearance as crowds in London. Even the policeman of Sofia resembles, in his air of civic benignity, his London brother. To old Sofiotes, who remember the evil time, the difference between the era of the pashas and that of Czar Ferdinand is just the difference between the *zaptieh*—the Turkish gendarme—and the modern policeman. The *zaptieh*, as often as not an ex-bashi-bazouk, was an irresponsible tyrant. Those country-people whom we are describing would not have ventured upon any such exhibition

of their possessions as invests the modern town with so much of its colour, life, and movement. They would have run too great a risk—unless they were in sufficient force—of being waylaid on their homeward march and robbed of the proceeds of their sales. Highway robbery by Turkish gendarmes and soldiers—whose pay was usually months, or even years, in arrears—was of frequent occurrence in the Bulgaria of 1877.

XXXI

THE CZAR'S COUNTRY PALACES

BUT in so far as Czar Ferdinand's personal achievement in and about the capital is concerned, the most striking example of it is to be seen at Vrana, the already named suburb of Sofia. Vrana means a crow—perhaps an apt designation for the locality when Czar Ferdinand bought it. It was then a wilderness, exactly as it was a few years earlier when the Turk was still in the land. It was a *terrain vague*, a place for shot rubbish, capable, to all appearance, of producing nothing better than nettles. Czar Ferdinand planned his estate of Vrana, and equipped it, after many years of labour and expense, with a view to making it not only a palace for occasional retreat from the commonplace capital, but also a sort of *pépinière*, as he has expressed it—a nursery, and model for the whole of Bulgaria. For the Turks, in nearly five centuries' occupation, had shown no interest in preserving any of its cultivable beauties, except at their official residences. Mount Vitosh, for example, which rises high over Sofia plain, and from whose peaks some of the finest prospects in Europe are obtainable, was in its lower parts almost stripped of its forests. To reproduce a few words from the present writer's past account of the matter: 'The Turk has no notion whatever of the art of forest conservancy. When he

wants wood he simply butchers a tree and takes of it what he needs. He would say that preservation was "God's business," and that trees were made by God for man's use . . . in saying it he would consider he was doing something religiously meritorious.'

Tree-planting, therefore, was Czar Ferdinand's first care. The slopes of Vitosh, the Plain of the Crows, are a triumph of scientific forestry. His next undertaking was the building of a country house, somewhat in Byzantine style, since superseded by an elaborately constructed, luxurious palace—a sort of Windsor (to compare small things with great) in the neighbourhood of the capital ; as the Czar's palace of Euxinograd, on the shore of the Black Sea, may, with more appropriateness, be compared with Osborne House. The Czar's vast 'paradise' of Vrana is not jealously shut in by high walls and inexorable watchmen from the public. On the contrary, it is, as already implied, a kind of free object-lesson for the public. A whole army of labourers and gardeners is, or lately used to be, constantly employed upon it—Czar Ferdinand himself (occasionally in native Bulgarian garb) often strolling about among them. He had the tastes and the capacities of a gentleman farmer before he became ruler of Bulgaria, and he has cultivated them ever since. Long, winding avenues of birch and pine lead from the open country through the park and gardens to the château. Vrana, besides being an abode of rest and pleasure, is a live museum of the arts of forestry, horticulture, agriculture, and

kitchen-gardening. Prince Ferdinand's cabbages would carry off first prizes at any show. His plantation, a large one, is stocked with a great variety of trees, many of them imported, at the Prince's expense, from foreign lands. Even the shrubberies must have cost a fortune. But the special glory of Vrana is its flower-gardening. Czar Ferdinand is an accomplished botanist. It is said of him that, during his visits to Paris, the corridors of his hotel apartments were often encumbered with boxes of flower seeds and rare flowering plants, collected by his agents for transmission to Sofia. Asia Minor, wherein Czar Ferdinand travelled in his younger days, Algiers, India, China, Japan, South America, tropical Africa, have all contributed to stock the flower plots and hot-houses of Vrana. Without the adjunct of water no landscape is perfect, and Vrana has its little lakes with their swans, lotuses, and water lilies. It might be said that Vrana was devised for the personal gratification of a wealthy ruler, to whom his official salary was a matter of little moment, and to whom his position in the land gave exceptional opportunities for indulging a favourite hobby.

But that would be to take a most narrow, ungenerous, and unjust view of Prince Ferdinand's purpose. Vrana is also meant to exercise an educative influence through the scientific experts, chiefly French and German, whom he has selected, and the assistants and labourers whom they are training. These workers at Vrana are the future superintendents

of horticultural institutions and public gardens in the towns of the new Bulgaria—towns which, in the Turkish days, knew nothing of open-air recreations of a refined order, and in which such recreations as did exist were reserved for men only. And the Bulgarian soil—to cite once more Czar Ferdinand's praise of it—is generously responsive to innovations such as his. The new Czar's territories are in the way to become the Garden of South-Eastern Europe.

To overlook, in the statesman and diplomatist, the missionary of taste would be to form a very inadequate notion of the character and temperament of Czar Ferdinand. It might be said of him, as of Greek philosophers of old, that he identified the beautiful and the good. He loves music, and the recent development (not very advanced as yet) of musical and dramatic art in Bulgaria owes much to his personal influence and encouragement. With the exception of the native airs—very generally plaintive—to which the heroic and festal songs of the people have been sung generation after generation, Bulgarian music has been of a hybrid kind, the Hungarian element (according to the experts) being predominant. But the native spirit is being released in music as in politics. The Sofia Opera House, the first of its kind in Greater Bulgaria, was an enterprise which Czar Ferdinand earnestly encouraged. It was inaugurated by him five years ago. In stirring themes for operatic and dramatic art, Bulgarian story, and above all folk-poetry—in which the history of the race is enshrined—



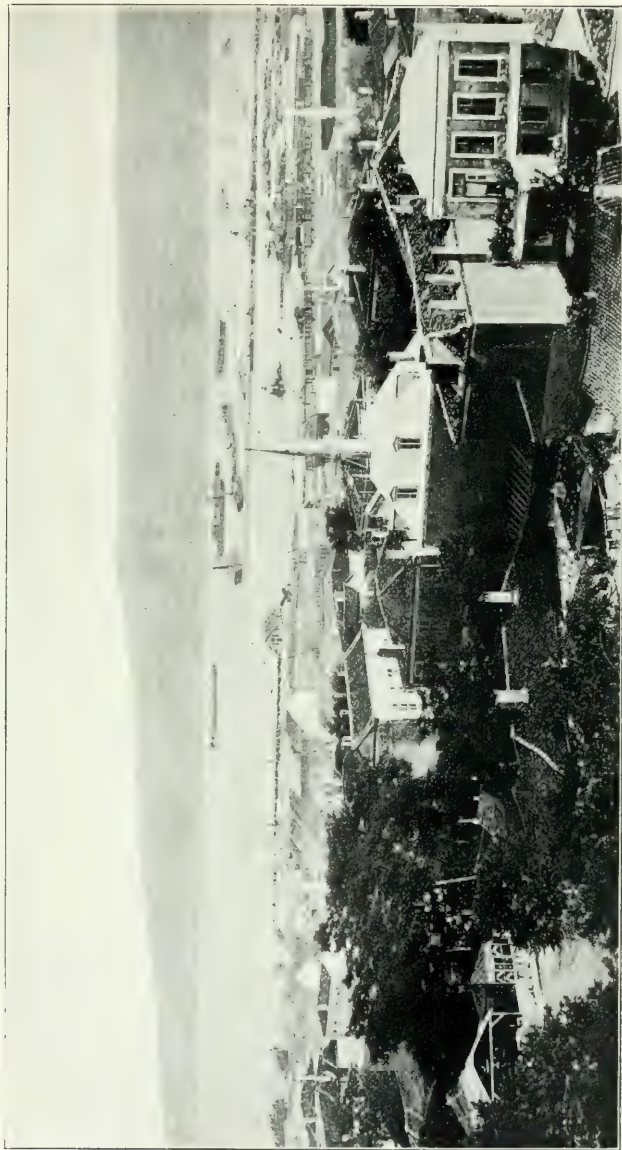
NEW NATIONAL THEATRE, SOFIA

are exceptionally rich. Than the drama, now in its infancy, there is no more alluring field for native Bulgarian genius. And, indeed, it would be surprising if the expansion of the national spirit, to which the world has for the last six months been witness, did not manifest itself in this direction also. Bulgaria, like a certain greater nation, may have its 'spacious time.' 'It may be safely asserted,' wrote the English statesman to whom we have referred more than once, 'that nothing more remarkable has occurred in modern Europe than the resurrection of the Bulgarians, the capacity they have already shown for self-government, and the results they have already achieved.' The truth is that the Bulgarians, although not so *spirituel* as their Greek neighbours, are a remarkably versatile people. In an earlier work¹ the author has cited the judgment of the Principal of Robert College, Constantinople (given to him long ago), on his Bulgarian students: they were, taken all in all, superior to their Greek, Servian, and Armenian comrades.

Though they had not a great war on their hands, Prince Alexander and Stambouloff had more troubles of an irritating character than fell to Czar Ferdinand's lot after the earlier years of his reign. They had less leisure—and less disposition—to foster the 'humanities,' in the wide sense of the word, and on a public scale. *La joie de vivre* was the outcome chiefly of the Ferdinandian period. In these months it is clouded over; nor will it be recovered in a day.

¹ *Turkey and the Eastern Question* (Messrs. Jack), 1913.

But though Czar Ferdinand is at great pains to embellish the capital of his kingdom, his yearly sojourn in it is short. It is said that the Sofian climate is unfavourable to his children's health. A great part of his time is spent at Vrana, or in the delightful chalet which he built many years ago high up on the slope of Mount Rilo, near the famous monastery, or at Euxinograd, perhaps his favourite residence. Czar Ferdinand has created at Euxinograd a retreat as charming as Vrana, but neither so ample nor so variously endowed. The château, with its beautiful park, is situated on the north-east of Varna Bay, about four miles from Bulgaria's most thriving seaport. The château was at first built for Prince Alexander, who did nothing to improve or beautify the estate. The park and gardens are entirely Czar Ferdinand's creation. The building itself possesses but little architectural interest. But its contents, including works of art collected by the Czar on his travels, are varied and valuable. Some of them betray a nostalgic mood, not for the country of his birth, which is Austria, but for France, the home of his royal ancestors. There are one or two imitations of the ponds of Versailles, and a fragment of the Palace of St. Cloud. The park and gardens were designed by the French landscapist, M. André, under the Prince's supervision. M. de Launay describes the residence as somewhat resembling that of a bourgeois grown suddenly rich. But Euxinograd is new. Time, the artist, will impart to it a mellower tone. To visitors



PANORAMA OF VARNA, CHIEF SEAPORT OF BULGARIA

who have been privileged to view the interior, the château seems overcrowded with objects that would be more appropriately housed in a public museum. But all agree, and feel with its owner, that Euxinograd possesses a most subtle, indefinable charm—the charm, especially, of the vast sea horizon, and the charm of solitude, more complete than that of suburban Vrana. The view of Varna seaport, on the southern shore of the bay, is captivating. Euxinograd has become an immense aviary, filled with the songs of birds and the rustle of wings, because of the King's strict regulations against the destruction of bird life. People who are intimate with Czar Ferdinand are familiar with his taste for solitary musing. On a rock by the seashore there's a rustic seat, on which, as his friends say, he sits meditating for hours. It is the fascination of the sea. There also sat, fourteen years ago, with her pencil and brush, the Czar's first wife, Princess Marie Louise. Euxinograd is delightful in the summer months but dreary in the depths of winter. Then the King's pleasure house, 'on its own dark cape reclined,' listens to 'its own wild wind.'

XXXII

CZAR FERDINAND AND THE RILO MONKS

IN the Bulgarian Alps, to which travellers have given the name of Little Switzerland, stands a lofty mountain, named by the Turks Moussa Allah, 'the mountain which gazes upon God.' There are loftier peaks than Moussa Allah, but owing to its situation it commands a view which, for sublimity and beauty, is unequalled in the Rhodope. From its summit, on a clear day, the southern boundary of new Bulgaria, the Ægean Sea, about a hundred miles distant as the crow flies, is faintly visible. The mountain is a favourite haunt of Czar Ferdinand's, not for sport only, but for nature-worship. One of the most pleasant traits in the Czar's character—as those say who have been his guests—is his delight in surprising his friends with some vision of natural beauty. And so it has often happened, we are told, that in the dead of night Czar Ferdinand has waked up his guests from their slumber, for their mountain climb to the top, to watch the first rose of the dawn on the white peak of Rilo—the loftiest in the Bulgarian Alps—and over the vast Macedonian landscape, stretching southwards to the Ægean strand, that for centuries has haunted the dreams of every patriotic Bulgarian.

One may suppose that this last consideration,

among others, may have influenced Czar Ferdinand in his periodical pilgrimages to St. John's Monastery, where a portion of its right wing was set apart and furnished, as it still is, for him and his suite. Next to Mount Athos, this greatest and most renowned of the south-eastern monasteries is situated on a terrace of Mount Rilo, at no great distance from the King's chalet of Tcham-Koria. Perched aloft on its mountain-side, the chalet is a most convenient central point, both for the excursions and the picnics with which the Czar delights to entertain his guests, and for hunting expeditions. All who have had the honour of being the Czar's guests describe him as 'the ideal host,' as keenly impressionable to nature's beauties as he was in his youth, and always ready to play the part of cicerone. For the hunter, the *massif* of Mount Rilo is one of the most attractive in Europe. Deer, chamois, bears, wolves abound in it; and trout in the Rila, and in the Strouma, the classical Strymon. The good monks of St. Ivan Rilsky—St. John of Rilo—have often supplied the Czar's table in his own *appartement* of the monastery with fresh fish from these streams, or from the little lakes that give the finishing touch to the beauty of these solitudes. From one of these lakes—as enchantingly blue as Ruskin's Lake Bourget—springs the Hebrus, the stream of the legendary Orpheus, otherwise the Maritza, a name now familiar to readers of war news.

Czar Ferdinand reveres St. Ivan Rilsky's both

for its religious associations and for the fact that it is the cradle of new Bulgaria. It is, at any rate, more entitled to the designation than any place in the Czar's dominions, even Tirnovo not excepted. During the ages of the Turkish and Græco-Turkish oppression—when the Greek often was a deadlier enemy even than the Turk—the monks of Mount Rilo saved the last spark, as it seemed, of Bulgarian patriotism from extinction. The monks saved it often by force of arms, for they were sturdy warriors, as expert with their bows and arrows, or muskets and swords, and vicious knives (*yataghans*) as with their prayer-books—perhaps even more so, seeing that many of them have at all times been illiterate; but still more by their preservation of the historical records of the race, and their training of the village teachers, who long before the Liberation War of 1877 were the propagandists of the national idea. Many a *daskal* (teacher) from Ivan Rilsky's passed to and fro between his village school and the lair of some insurgent band in the mountains. During his retreats in the monastery, which often lasted for days at a time, Czar Ferdinand heard from the Igoumen (abbot) many a stirring tale of the monks' experiences with Turkish soldiers, Arnaut marauders, and bashi-bazouks.

Czar Ferdinand's periodical journeys to the monastery began early in his reign. To Princess Marie Louise, who always accompanied her husband, these periodical visits to the monastery were a consolation

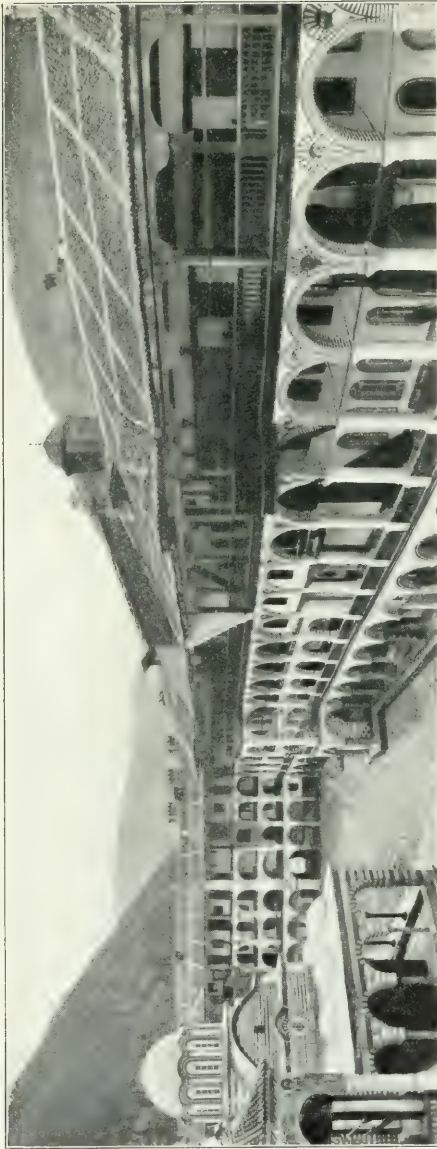
and delight, especially in the last years of her short life, when her health and strength were giving way. Often when the Prince was talking history with the abbot, or exploring some unfrequented nook by a cascade of the Rila, Princess Louise would climb the mountain-side from her quarter of the monastery to the chapel and the grotto over which Father Joseph kept watch and ward. I have had the privilege of a talk with the same kindly old monk and visionary, who had lived there solitarily for well-nigh forty years. In the chapel St. Ivan died nine hundred years ago; in the grotto his life was passed. A later visitor than myself, M. Jules Mancini, reproduced in *La Revue de Paris* Father Joseph's account of the Princess's visits to the chapel. For the old visionary, who delighted in the thought that his prayers for the Princess would all the more readily be heard since Mount Rilo was so near the skies, the Princess entertained feelings of sincere friendship. 'How kindly and beautiful she was,' Father Joseph remarked to his visitor;

'she sat there, quite at home, just where you are, and was so pleased to listen to the talk of such a poor hermit as myself. Seeing how pale she was, exhausted by the steep ascent, but with her resolution undaunted, I sometimes asked her whether she had taken any sustaining refreshment, such as the monastery was provided with. "Father Joseph," she would reply, with a smile, "on penance days I would have none. It is no great merit in me to deprive myself twice in the week, in this place where the holy Ivan, for so many years, lived wholly on herbs." One day I told her how distressed I was, in this my hermitage, at being unable to welcome her

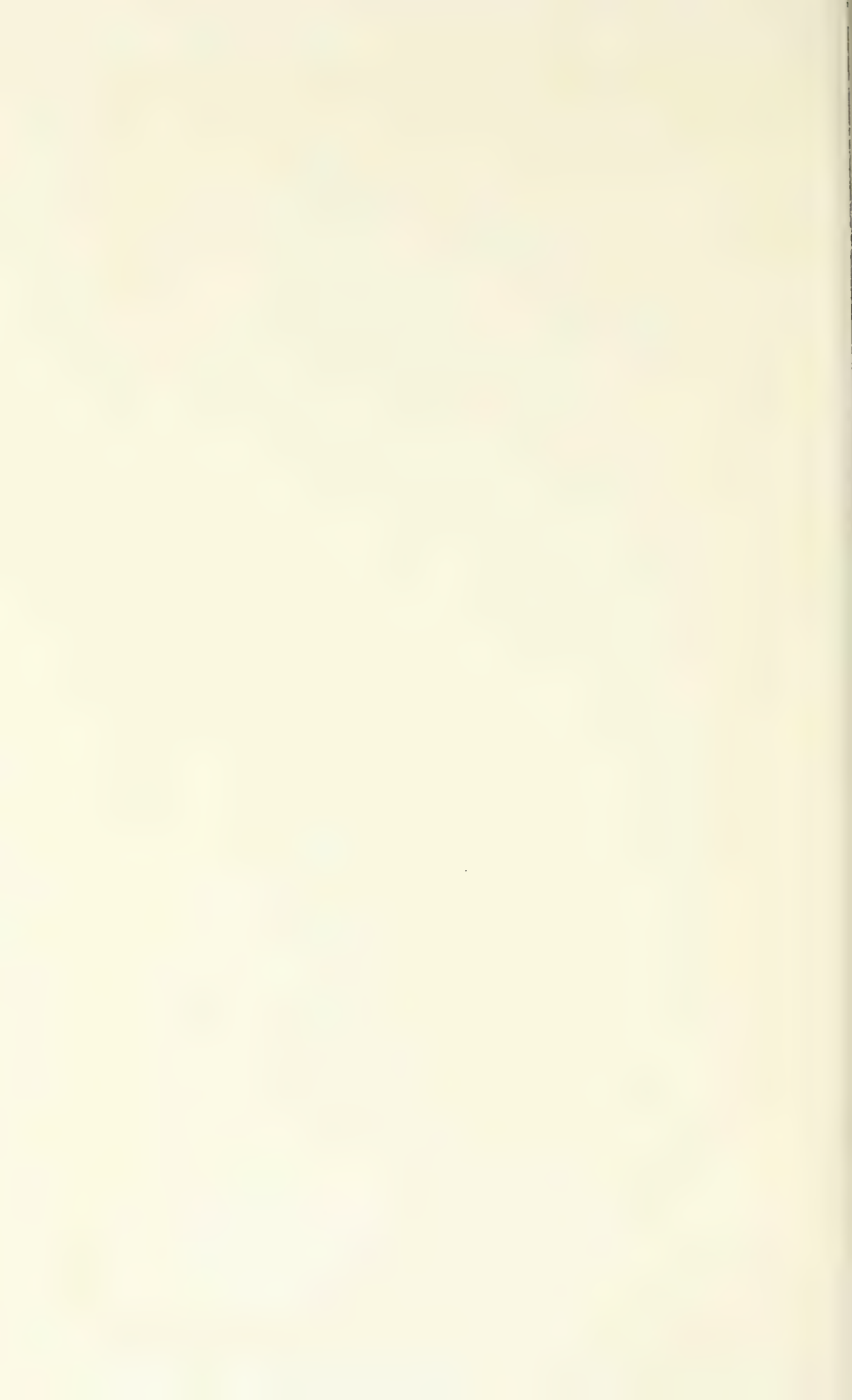
arrival with the sound of bells—as is the custom in our monasteries. Well, the good Queen, some time after, sent me the silver bell which you see there on the chapel wall. I had not the opportunity of thanking my Sovereign lady. She had seen my hermitage for the last time. God, in His goodness, high there in the heavens, sounded for her the golden bells of paradise. Come and I shall show you the spot where so often she knelt in prayer.'

It will be noticed that Father Joseph spoke of the Princess as 'Queen,' though Prince Ferdinand did not become a king until eight years after her death.

Hard by Czar Ferdinand's accustomed corner of the monastery is the fourteenth-century tower built by a Servian notable named Krael, and still bearing his name. It is the only part of the original monastery that survives. The Czar took a particular interest in it; and with good reason: it was the scene of the last tragical deed in the monastery, and one of the last which led to the expulsion of the Turk from Bulgaria. It was on the eve of the war of 1877. The hero of the tale—a tale which, as the monks of Rilo said, almost moved the Prince to tears—was the Pope (priest) Stoyan, whose name is celebrated in many a rustic song, and will long be remembered in Bulgaria. Pope Stoyan, like many another of his sacred profession, was leader of a band of *comitajis* who gave the Turks much trouble on the Macedonian border. He had escaped from them scores of times. He and his band had sent many of them to their graves. Among the members of his band were his two sons. Pope Stoyan



THE FAMOUS MONASTERY OF ST. JOHN OF RIL0



was caught at last. His Turkish captors carried him to the monastery, whose inmates they supposed to be in collusion with him. They thrust him into a subterranean dungeon of the Krael tower—in spite of the monks' prayers and remonstrances—to await his trial, on the following day, for 'brigandage' (the Turkish equivalent for political insurrection) and waging war on the Padishah. Every one knew, and none better than Pope Stoyan, what kind of 'trial' was in store for him. He himself would suffer death—a penalty which had no terrors for him—but not before he had been put to the torture in order to extract from him his comrades' names and the secrets of their organisation. With all his courage, moral and physical, Pope Stoyan dreaded the possible results of the ordeal. Next morning, when his two sons, with some members of their band, arrived at the monastery to attempt his rescue, they learnt that their father had put an end to his life. 'Our father is dead,' said one of the sons; 'it is well. Tortures can wring no secrets from him.' The English reader, whose knowledge of the tragical Near East is derived solely from newspaper articles, which are chiefly concerned with the political question, might consider the son's reflection as brutally callous, or imaginary. But the reader would be greatly mistaken. Torture was the Turk's practice for the purpose of extorting confession. Many have died under it without divulging any secret. And many, like Pope Stoyan, have taken the safer course of suicide. The commonest course for

comitajis driven to an extremity from which there was no escape was to reserve for themselves their last bullet. Betrayal under torture was not, in their leaders' estimation, unpardonable ; but it often happened in desperate times that a leader, before admitting recruits to his band, would warn them what their certain fate would be if they were captured, and then advise them, if they felt the smallest hesitation, to return to their homes and serve the insurgents in some safer way. But voluntary betrayal—real betrayal—was inexorably avenged. Among the lay community, as well as among the rebels in the field, it was regarded as the unpardonable sin. I myself knew a Macedonian woman, a member of a *comitaji* society, who voluntarily bore witness against her own son for his betrayal of secrets to the Turk. Her silent agony had left upon her face its indelible mark.

Czar Ferdinand in Rilo Monastery was a bird of passage in what used to be, to the outbreak of the Macedonian war, 'the serpents' nest'—its Turkish designation. For though the monks saw their last fight in the Russian war, their monastery became the temporary home of refugees from the Turkish side of the frontier. They all were 'serpents'—men, women, and children alike—who took shelter there; and the monks who relieved them were guilty of an offence against international law, for which Czar Ferdinand and his ministers were held by the Turk responsible ! The whole of the Rilo region was, from the Turkish point of view, the haven of 'brigands.' In the

eighteenth century, and part of the nineteenth, the monastery was often besieged by the Turks—irregular troops, for the most part, scarcely distinguishable from bandits. Sometimes they had the good fortune to be relieved by a *comitaji* band—as when the voïvode (captain) İliev, surprising a company of Arnaut assailants, cut their throats and tossed their bodies into the stream down below, exclaiming that he would not waste his precious powder on such ruffians. But usually the monks had to depend on their own resources. In the first place, the monastery might almost be called a fortress. Its lofty walls were loopholed for musket fire. It maintained a small permanent force of ‘pandours,’ a species of armed police. In former times there were about sixty of them; nowadays there are only three or four. They still keep up the practice, as in the fighting era, of challenge at the gate, even when the man outside, seen through the iron bars, is a harmless monk of the establishment. It was quite in accordance with the fierce, barbaric temper of the age that many of the pandours appointed to guard a holy place, such as the monastery of Mount Rilo, were ex-freebooters—accepted not because of repentance for their sins, but because of their fighting powers. But, as already said, the monks also were, many of them, expert with their weapons. Czar Ferdinand has more than once paid a visit to their ‘armoury’—not a large collection, however—in which are preserved specimens of weapons dating from the age of the bow and arrow to that of

the rifle. The 'armoury' is, so to speak, a marginal note to the history of this sanctuary of contemplation and prayer.

But Ivan Rilsky's has a national interest in yet another sense, one of which every 'good Bulgarian'—as Czar Ferdinand likes to describe himself—has a lively appreciation. With the exception of the fourteenth-century tower, the existing monastery dates from 1833. The ancient building was burnt down. The huge modern building, with its Byzantine church, is the production of voluntary, unpaid labour. Masons and carpenters and decorators from all parts of Bulgaria and Macedonia took part in the restoration. The name Bulgaria, just written, was, in the Turkish sense, a misnomer : for the pashas would have said that there was no such country as Bulgaria. At the beginning of this volume we have seen how an eminent English statesman admitted that in 1860 he was unaware of the existence of a Bulgarian people. And the rebuilding of Ivan Rilsky's took place a generation earlier. The builders knew better than the English tourist politician. St. John of Rilo is the patron saint of Bulgaria, and those humble builders of eighty years ago, whose names are as unknown as the authors of the heroic folk-songs which the peasantry have preserved all these centuries, firmly believed in their country's renaissance.

In the library of the monastery is preserved a priceless document, which Prince Ferdinand, the first day of his first pilgrimage to the place, studied long and

silently. It is the only known decree, or document of any kind, bearing the signature of a Bulgarian czar—and the ancient czardom lasted six centuries. The beautifully written and illuminated parchment dates from 1378, and bears the signature of Ivan Schishman, last of the czars. Like his predecessors, Schishman described himself as the Czar of the Bulgars and Greeks. In this document he assigns to St. John's Monastery the perpetual ownership of the lands watered by the Rila and the Strouma (Strymon) onwards through North-Eastern Macedonia; and expresses his desire that, when the 'Eternal Czar' shall 'summon him to himself,' his 'ordinance' shall be respected by his son, or by any member of the royal family who may 'succeed him' on the Bulgarian throne. Eleven years later was fought the battle of Kossovo, which established the supremacy of the Turks over all the countries of the Southern Slavs. Czar Schishman and his son and his brothers vanished for ever from human ken,—and the Bulgarian state for five centuries. Twenty-three years or so after his reading of the MS., and his curious scrutiny of the mediæval czar's sign-manual, Czar Ferdinand, the first czar of the modern epoch, was reconquering Czar Schishman's Macedonian territories.

But the monks' day is over. It has often been said that the Bulgarian is unfitted for the monastic life. And it is a fact that the majority of the monks have been Macedonians. Their day is over, because their work has been done. In its great days the monastery

contained from three to four hundred monks. At the present time there are no more than thirty to forty. In the past many industries were carried on by the monks, such as printing, weaving, carpentry, wood-engraving, wood-carving (especially for religious purposes), besides agriculture. Fugitives from Macedonia no longer people its great quadrangle and its hundreds of cells. But pilgrims from all the lands of the Southern Slavs visit it periodically, in the glorious months of spring and summer, to worship at the shrine, by the altar of its Byzantine church, wherein rests the body of St. Ivan Rilsky. And travellers of another order will find their way to Mount Rilo, when the grandeurs of the Rhodope are made more accessible, by roads and railways and better accommodation than now exists, to European tourists. The monastery itself might very easily be turned to account, in aid of a project which Czar Ferdinand has long had in view, not for the Rhodope alone, but for the entire country.

XXXIII

THE CZAR AND BULGARIAN LITERATURE

DR. ADOLPH STRAUZ, the distinguished Slavic scholar, wrote, many years ago, that in the collection and publication of the folk-lays and legends of the Bulgars, the Ferdinandian régime had raised for itself an 'imperishable monument.' For this great achievement, the doctor continued, the Bulgarian people owe Prince Ferdinand an everlasting debt of gratitude. He made the remark that the Prince was a thorough Bulgarian.¹ This judgment of the Vienna critic's will be endorsed by every educated Slav in Bulgaria and elsewhere. It is sometimes said that the Bulgarian army is Czar Ferdinand's chief achievement. But, in truth, the creation of the army and the flowering of Bulgarian literature and education are co-ordinate aspects of the national evolution. You cannot separate them. Czar Ferdinand, from the earliest days of his principate, grasped that fundamental fact. It occupied many of his studious hours in his somewhat sombre palace of Sofia, during the agitated years of Stambouloff's administration. The consciousness of a national unity, and of a great

¹ '... das Aufzeichnen der Volkslieder . . . und Legenden . . . ein unvergängliches Denkmal für die heutige nationale Regierung bilden wird; und deshalb ist das bulgarische Volk seinem von echtem bulgarischen Geist durchdrungenen Fürsten Ferdinand zu ewige Danke verpflichtet' (Strausz's *Bulgarische Volksdichtungen*, 1895).

destiny for the Bulgarian race, may be said to have reached its mature stage with the publication of the first instalment of heroic lays, legends, lyrical pieces, collected and edited, in the last years of the nineteenth and the beginning of the present century, by Dr. Ivan Schishmanoff, one of the foremost Bulgarian men of letters, and an educational pioneer and authority of the first rank. The Department of Public Instruction, over which Dr. Schishmanoff has presided, does not confine itself to the ordinary routine of primary and secondary schools, and of the university. Its periodical issues of literary and scientific circulars, pamphlets, and reviews are designed for 'public instruction' in the widest sense of the expression: their value as a means of intellectual elevation and expansion is unmistakable. In her organisation of the Department of Public Instruction Bulgaria is an example to nations richer, larger, and more advanced.

Czar Ferdinand's interest in the literary expansion of Bulgaria is, in the first place, historical, political, and ethnical. Himself a master of rustic dialect as well as of literary Bulgarian, Czar Ferdinand takes a keen interest in the philological researches of the department, which reveal the extraordinarily large number of linguistic variations in his dominions. He was prompt to realise the great value of the folk-songs as a demonstration of the fact, constantly denied by Greeks and Turks, that the bulk of the Macedonian population was Bulgar. To Czar Ferdinand, as well

as to the experts who have devoted their lives to the subject, the lays and legends of the Turkish epoch are, even as history, priceless. A close student of the literary movement, and keenly alive to its significance in the upbuilding of his new kingdom, he gives it his unremitting and enthusiastic encouragement.

Czar Ferdinand has been heard to say that he regarded the Miladinov brothers as two of the foremost makers of modern Bulgaria. The Miladinov brothers were collectors and editors of the songs and tales that had passed, orally, from generation to generation in their native Macedonia. They were also schoolmasters. Their first collection was printed and published in 1861, Czar Ferdinand's birth year. The most important production of the kind up to that date, its appearance marked an epoch in the literary history of the Southern Slavs. In order that the reader may appreciate its importance, a brief statement of previous efforts of the like kind may here be made. Until the earliest years of the nineteenth century, the only songs and legends of the Southern Slavs known in Europe were the Servian, then published for the first time. The mere fact of geographical proximity gave the Serbs the first European hearing. The first Bulgarian examples, collected from the peasants by Karadjich, appeared in 1815. Bogorov's, Grigorov's, Jovanovic's publications appeared respectively in 1842, 1845, 1851. Four years later, Slaveikoff, the earliest and greatest poet of modern Bulgaria, published his selection of

folk-songs. About the same date there appeared Beszonov's *Bulgar Songs*, a more comprehensive work than any preceding one. Verkovich's edition, in 1860, was especially valuable as a record of the spirit of the Macedonian Bulgars, whose kinship with the Bulgars on the other side of the Rhodope barrier was always denied by the Macedonian Greeks. In the following year appeared the Miladinov edition already named. It is significant of the obscurity which then enveloped the country soon to be established as an independent nation, and of the Græco-Turkish opposition to any manifestation of the spirit of Bulgarian nationality, that all the works above named were published abroad, some in Moscow, others in St. Petersburg, Belgrade, Agram, Bucharest. The pashas and the Greek bishops would not tolerate any printing of them in the Christian provinces of European Turkey. Verkovich's edition was published at the expense of the Princess Julia, wife of Michael Obrenovitch, Prince of Servia. The Miladinov edition, published at Agram, would have been indefinitely delayed, but for the generosity and the literary and historical acumen of Bishop Strossmayer, who brought it out at his own expense.

The reader will now understand the reason of Czar Ferdinand's high estimate of the brothers Dimitri and Constantine Miladinov, folklorists and village teachers, in the rank of Bulgarian heroes. Their pathetically tragic story is well summarised in Dr. Adolf Strausz's work already named (*Bulgarische*

Volksdichtungen). It was the patriotic spirit of their work that led them to their untimely fate. Their literary researches among the country-people opened their eyes, as nothing else had done, to the ethnic unity of the numerically dominant population north of the Rhodope barrier with that to the south of it. Union in the cause of freedom was the gospel they thenceforth preached. But in the eyes of the Greeks, who always looked upon Macedonia as their own by culture, by race, and by right of inheritance as soon as the Turk's rule should cease, the Miladinov propaganda was an offence to be suppressed at all hazards. The beautiful district of Ochrida, in South-Western Macedonia, was the Miladinovs' birthplace. Its inhabitants were nearly all Bulgarian. But after centuries of spiritual oppression by the Greeks, 'their national consciousness was well-nigh extinct.' Dimitri Miladinov, who remained in Macedonia while his brother Constantine studied at Moscow University, fought single-handed against this spiritual despotism. As a school-teacher in the chief Macedonian towns—Salonika, Monastir, Prilip—Dimitri taught his pupils their country's history, a subject utterly travestied by their Greek pastors and masters. He had the boldness to supersede the Greek liturgy by the Slavic. To the Greek clergy this was the unpardonable sin. The political significance of ecclesiastical organisation in European Turkey has already been set forth in this volume. The Greek Metropolitan had his revenge. At his instigation,

the Turks arrested Dimitri in his native town and sent him a prisoner to Constantinople. According to one of the charges trumped up against him, Dimitri was a Russian spy engaged in planning a rebellion in the Turkish provinces. The only explanation of this charge was his brother's recent residence at Moscow University. Nor was it rebellion against the Sultan that Dimitri was contemplating at this stage of his career; it was rebellion against the spiritual despotism of the Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church.

Hearing of his brother's imprisonment, Constantine hurried from Agram, where he was employed in his literary work, to Constantinople, in order to effect his brother's release. There he too was imprisoned. The Austrian and Russian ambassadors urged the Porte to release the brothers. The Porte consented, but before the receipt of the decree for their liberation, the brothers were found dead on their prison floor. The Phanariotes—so named from the Greek quarter of Constantinople, where the Greek Patriarch resided—had bribed the prison warders.

No estimate of Czar Ferdinand's diplomacy in Græco-Slav affairs can be adequate which overlooks the secular hostility of the Phanar towards the Macedonian Bulgarians. It is the fact that in many respects the Greeks were, as enemies of the Bulgars, more implacable than the Turks. The Turk despised the Bulgar. The Greek had a downright

loathing for him, and for centuries could deal with him in spiritual matters (which, however, affected him in worldly affairs) pretty much as he pleased ; for, as we have seen, the Turk, lumping together all denominations of the Christian 'herd,' consigned them to the care of the head of the historic Church. Abdul Hamid, in the last years of his sanguinary reign, took advantage of this traditional hostility, and goaded both sides against each other, making it appear as if each of them aimed at undivided possession of Macedonia. It was for this reason that so many Greeks, during the rising of 1903, clamoured for support of the Turk against his victims. But the temper of 'the Phanar' in mid-nineteenth century was not that of the gallant Greeks who in alliance with their Serb, Bulgar, and Montenegrin neighbours have expelled the common foe. It is not long since the Bulgarians claimed Salonika for their own. But few educated Bulgarians would now grudge the Greeks their possession of that gem of the Ægean, or repress a feeling of profound satisfaction at the prospect of the prosperity awaiting the historic city, restored to the Hellenic race. In attempting to establish, for the first time in history, feelings of friendship between Greeks and Bulgars, a partnership between them for the advance of civilisation, Czar Ferdinand has won the esteem of the most intelligent men among both nations. Historic considerations, besides the actual facts of the day, have to be taken into account in the partition

of Macedonia. Czar Ferdinand and the men of letters whom he has encouraged have, on their side, done much to elucidate them and give them due weight.

No Prussian statesman has ever held more firmly than Czar Ferdinand has done to the moral, that the most formidable of armed nations is an educated nation—meaning by that, not a mob of people who can read and count and sign their names, but an organised whole, inspired by a high national ideal, intelligently appreciating its past and its responsibilities in the world, ready for sacrifice in a just cause. Every name, however humble, in the story of the intellectual renaissance of the Bulgarian people has for Czar Ferdinand a sacred interest. The names of Monk Païssy of Rilo monastery; the Neophyte Rilsky, for many years the head of the same foundation; Alexander Levsky, hanged by the Turks in 1873 on a spot not far from the Czar's palace in Sofia; Solokov, the friend of the Miladinovs already named, were perhaps as interesting to Prince Ferdinand as the name of the patron saint himself. All of them, at some period of their lives, were school-teachers. And some of them were teacher, priest, and fighter combined. 'Za Viera'—'For the Faith'—was young Levsky's defiant shout when the Turks, having captured him, called him a Christian dog. It is Czar Ferdinand's wish that every Bulgarian boy and girl should be told at school the history of every man who has fought for the emancipation of the

race. Monk Païssy's *History of the Bulgars*, a very elementary production, has long been superseded in the Bulgarian schools, but its author's name endures. It was Païssy, in his solitary cell at Mount Athos, and next on Mount Rilo, who inaugurated the literary and educational movement of modern Bulgaria. Chilandar convent, his abode at Mount Athos, was a Bulgarian establishment subordinate to the great settlement on Mount Rilo. But the intellectual awakening of the Bulgarians was a slow, difficult process—owing chiefly to the Phanariote hostility already described. Païssy's modest but epoch-making book appeared in the latter part of the eighteenth century. A summary record of the origin and heroic characters of the Bulgarian race, it was even read in the churches.

In a most interesting report to Czar Ferdinand, by Dr. Schishmanoff, on the educational organisation of the country, the author shows how the movement originated by Païssy developed into two parallel currents—one revolutionary and political, the other pacific and literary. The first, by assailing the Phanariote ecclesiastical hegemony, led straight to the religious autonomy that finally ended in political autonomy: the cry, 'Za Viera,'—'For the Faith'—had a political meaning. The second, by developing education, in the more comprehensive sense of the word, inflamed in the end the patriotic ardour which resulted in the birth of a free state and the multiform expression of the national genius.

Already there has been some talk of proposing to

Czar Ferdinand that a memorial to the continuator of Païssy's work should be erected at Bansko in North-Eastern Macedonia. Bansko was Neophyte Rilsky's birthplace. He was born in 1793. Bansko, the largest village in the north-east, was a *comitaji* centre during the insurrection of 1903. Neophyte Rilsky was the greatest of the monastic superiors. He 'entered religion' at Rilo, at the age of fifteen. He was an ardent scholar. After some years of study in foreign countries, during which he made himself familiar with the educational systems that had sprung from Rousseau's teachings, he returned to Bulgaria, and did the best thing a patriot then could do—he opened a school. He was the first to adopt the teaching methods of Western reformers. His best pupils became in after-time teachers, following his system, and propagating his patriotic ideas. Even at this late period, the middle of the nineteenth century, a Bulgarian teacher in the towns had to remind those classes of the community that might have been the most helpful to him, that there was such a thing as a Bulgarian language worth cultivating. As has been pointed out in an earlier page of this volume, Bulgarians of the well-to-do classes spoke Greek in preference to their mother-tongue, which they affected to despise. These were the people who some years later drew from young Stambouloff, in his dark moods, the cry that Bulgaria was 'dead.' In the country districts the situation was different. Bulgarian grammars and dictionaries were sorely needed

in Neophyte Rilsky's time, and his own achievement as a compiler in that kind of work was a national service. It might be said of a Bulgarian priest, monk, or *daskal* (teacher) in the Turkish age that, if he had taken no part in carnal warfare against the foe, he could not consider his vocation fulfilled. Abbot Natanael, in Vazoff's great Bulgarian novel, *Under the Yoke*, is a valorous fighter, with a good aim at 'those brutes,' as he quite rightly calls the Turks. The abbot's cell is an armoury. It is not known if the Neophyte Rilsky ever fought in person. But as a protector of the *comitaji* bands that so often took refuge, and found their supplies of provisions and ammunition in Rilo monastery, he did great service to the liberators of 1877-8. Dying in 1881, at the age of eighty-eight, Neophyte Rilsky had the consolation of witnessing the partial realisation of his dream of national independence.

XXXIV

COURT ETIQUETTE

AMONG the many anecdotes current in the Red Crab concerning Czar Ferdinand at home, and the etiquette of the Court, is that of a village schoolmaster, who at a grand levée in the palace upset the conventions, and with them the equanimity of the guards, valets, masters of ceremonies, *et hoc genus omne*. The Red Crab is the chief restaurant and tea-garden of Sofia, where 'the town' is accustomed to congregate of an evening, to dine, smoke, drink, gossip, and hear music. On the evening of the levée, when the vestibule, salons, and galleries of the palace were crowded with military officers and officers of the household in full uniform, ladies in the latest Parisian fashions, and ordinary males in their correct evening attire, a countryman in baggy brown trousers and short jacket appeared at the entrance. He was stopped. But he pushed through. He was stopped again before the grand salon. On no account must he be admitted. The gorgeously clad attendants would, quite politely, reconduct him to the palace gates. But he insisted on presenting himself; there could be no 'mistake'; he had been invited. So there was a scene. The prince, his attention being arrested by the noise, and having walked up to the spot, recognised a village teacher whom he had met

some time before in one of his country rambles, and whom he had invited to visit him at the palace. The Prince at once shook hands heartily with his visitor, led him within, and took him for a walk and a chat through the brilliant assemblage and about the salons. Had the village teacher called on any ordinary occasion and asked for a private audience he would doubtless have received it. Many such stories are, as we have said, told in the Red Crab. I myself have been told how the Prince, in his solitary rambles in country places, has helped a waggoner over a rough bit of road, or a peasant woman with her burden. Such anecdotes are perhaps embellished. But they are founded on fact, and they reveal a homely trait in the character of a ruler so exacting on the point of etiquette and usually so distant in manner. But to the lowly, laborious workers of his kingdom—and these constitute the vast majority—Czar Ferdinand never is the unapproachable sovereign.

Czar Ferdinand is exacting on the point of court ceremonial, though, as his ministers say, he is less so at the age of fifty-two than he was in his thirties. It may be he considers that the rustic democracy which he came to rule twenty-six years ago has learnt its lesson in the pomp and the ritual of courts. No European monarch has a firmer faith in the efficacy of a brilliant, elaborately organised court for the enhancement of the royal prestige. Many of the Czar's visitors, as familiar as he is himself with the showy side of the kingly *métier*, have said that King Fer-

Ferdinand's court is as punctiliously ordered and decorative as any in Europe. In the contrast between the elaborate brilliance of the Bulgarian court and the rude simplicity of the nation of small farmers and labourers there is an element of the comic, but less obvious now, perhaps, than in the earlier years of the Czar's reign. A middle class is in process of evolution. In a generation or two rustic, democratic Bulgaria may evolve a true blue aristocracy to replace the ancient one which the Turks either wiped out or converted to Islam. Besides, the Bulgarian kingdom has been enlarged since October 1912. Its prestige has been increased to a degree even more than commensurate with its territorial acquisitions. So that the pomp and ceremony of the Sofiote palace is not likely to be diminished.

But ' Ferdinand de Bulgarie, intime ' is, however, a subject upon which but few, save members of the King's household, can speak except in the vaguest terms. By far the best and most interesting authority on the subject is the French writer already named, M. Hepp, who has had the privilege so many years of close acquaintance with the Czar, both in the palace and in holiday excursions. One cannot do better than take M. Hepp for one's principal guide. According to M. Hepp, the elaboration of court life in Sofia began with Prince Ferdinand's marriage with the Princess Marie Louise. This was, as already recorded, in 1893, six years after the Prince's accession to the throne. The commonplace, one-storeyed,

rambling Turkish mansion, by courtesy called a palace, to which the new ruler was introduced might suffice for the needs of a bachelor Prince—especially a Prince possessed of so many delightful retreats in Hungary, Austria, and the Rhodope Mountains to go to. Partly an adaptation of the Turk building, and to a larger extent a new construction, the existing palace of Sofia was built and decorated to its minutest detail after the Prince's own plans. In its 'fastidious elegance,' it has been said, the palace is an expression of its royal tenant. Of course, the most impeccably elegant person in it is the King himself. The unsophisticated labourers and shepherds of the interior, among whom their Czar, dressed in rustic Bulgar garb, has often sauntered, and whom he has gossiped with in their own patois—about their pigs and poultry, and their crops, and the village school—would be dumbfounded by his Olympian air and magnificent apparel in Sofia palace on occasions of state ceremony. Czar Ferdinand is master of the art of *mise en scène*. All the elaborate ceremonial with which he has surrounded himself is an expression of his lofty conception of his rôle as a king—an assertion of his prestige.

The royal court of this 'rural democracy,' as the Bulgar nation has been described by one of its historians, has its marshals, its grand almoners, its chamberlains, its commandants of the palace, its chancellors of orders and decorations, its dames and maids of honour, its attachés, equerries, councillors,

readers, its masters of ceremonies, besides physicians and secretaries, etc. etc. The Easter Festival, St. George's Day, family birthdays, the feast of St. Nicolas (the Russian Emperor's also) are celebrated in the palace with great *éclat*, the King appearing at some of them in a gorgeous mantle specially designed. Another glimpse of life in the palace, given by privileged guests, is that of the reception of members of the various orders founded by Prince Alexander and his successor. The St. Nicolas celebration is especially interesting, associated as it is with the reigning descendant of the Czar to whom, to quote King Ferdinand, 'Bulgaria owes her freedom.' Readers who may not care two straws for such details as the foregoing will be touched by Czar Ferdinand's way of celebrating the memory of a faithful member of the household no longer in the land of the living. Such, for example, as Count de Grenaud, the first marshal of the palace, the same intimate friend who accompanied the Prince from Vienna to Tirnovo when the Prince had made up his mind to 'take the risks.' M. Hepp says that the room in which Count de Grenaud died has been preserved by Czar Ferdinand as a memorial chapel, and that on the anniversary of his death Mass is celebrated in it, with the King in attendance. As an indication of Czar Ferdinand's character that touching mark of remembrance is worth all that pomp and show of the regal state. For the remembrance endures, whereas the pomp and show are designed for occasions, so that

when they are done with Czar Ferdinand becomes the 'good Bulgarian' in his most affable mood, simple, unaffected, witty in his talk, and loving a good story. A letter written to a friend by Count de Grenaud from Switzerland, after the Prince had invited him to accompany him to Bulgaria in the capacity of Chief of the Household, is reproduced by M. Hepp. Written nearly a quarter of a century ago, events since then give it a peculiar interest. 'I have accepted,' the Count writes, 'the great honour of accompanying this Prince Charming to the conquest of his new kingdom. His mother and himself have enchanted me. My new Master is twenty-six years old. He has the finest blue eyes you ever saw. He has Francis the First's big nose. He has wit, good nature, and acuteness in abundance. If he reigns, he will do it, if I'm not greatly mistaken, in Henry IV. fashion. Meanwhile, in our future dominions, people are locking up each other, assassinating each other. I wonder if we shall reach Bulgaria safe and sound.' The prospects were, indeed, the reverse of cheerful when young Prince Ferdinand 'took the risks.' So, it seems, did Count de Grenaud. He would, one thinks, have gazed with a look of incredulity at any prophet who should tell him that in less than twenty-five years Prince Ferdinand would be master of Adrianople and King of Greater Bulgaria.

But besides the elaborately ceremonial observances above mentioned there are receptions of a less formal character—'At Homes,' so to speak—at which men

and women who are in any way doing useful service in the community have an opportunity of personal intercourse with their King and Queen. The educative, the social, value of these receptions is well appreciated by the public. Politicians of all parties meet there simply as citizens, 'good Bulgarians.' Conservatives, Radicals, Liberals (names, by the way, which do not mean exactly what they do in England) meet there on an equal footing. Czar Ferdinand makes no distinction between them. A 'Stamboulovist,' no less than a Russophile Conservative, finds in the Czar the most genial of hosts. But, in fact, the name 'Stamboulovist' has lost its signification of eighteen years ago. The adoption of the name Neo-Stamboulovist indicated an abandonment of the old irreconcilable attitude towards Russia for a judicious *rapprochement* with the Power to which, after all, Bulgaria owed her freedom. So that there is but a narrow margin of difference between members of the party and the moderate Conservatives. A hard worker from early morning until midnight—or even later—and compelled to economise his time, Czar Ferdinand finds in these receptions a source of direct information on parliamentary, administrative, and public affairs generally. His words are few, but prompt and searching. His intuition, his comprehensive grasp of a political situation are admired by those who know him best, his ministers. At these receptions certain formalities that hedge in the sacrosanct persons of continental

potentates are dispensed with. No guards intervene between the Czar and his subjects. He moves about the crowd in his character of 'first Bulgarian' in the land. These receptions are occasions for cultivating the social amenities. And the people of Sofia are not slow to admit the effect they have had in that respect since their inception in the time of Princess Marie Louise. In Sofia *le bon ton* is making progress. The Bulgarian manner is like unto the Bulgarian native wine that, sound, and with 'body' in it, mellows with time and judicious treatment.

In the earlier years of his reign many of his subjects were disposed to question Prince Ferdinand's claim to his own designation of a 'good Bulgarian.' They accused him of being far too much of a good Frenchman. This sentimental grievance, such as it was, has long since vanished. It was a townspeople's grievance. The Sofiotes used to complain at his passing by the town, to or from his Austrian estates and Euxinograd or some retreat in the Rhodope, 'without deigning to cast a look at us through his carriage window.' 'He despises Sofia,' I have heard grumblers say in the Red Crab. But the country-people never bore any such grudge, as the above named, against their 'King,' as they used to call him even in the days of the Principate. For them the King was a gentleman farmer, knowing everything about agriculture, tobacco-growing, wine-growing, the state of the markets, and most pleasant to gossip with. Every village on the railway line or country

road along which the King was known to be coming would turn out its crowd of people, reinforced from every quarter of the district, to salute him. If there was no time for a halt, Czar Ferdinand, bareheaded, would lean out of the window or over the rail of his carriage platform, and in military fashion return their salute and then repeatedly wave his hand, looking back at them as they receded in the distance. In an automobile journey across country he would stop to watch or chat with labourers at work in the fields, or at some hamlet, where the *daskal* (teacher) took care to have his young folk ranged up in front of the seniors. A pathetic love for childhood is one of the most distinctive traits of Czar Ferdinand's character.

Instead of making his loyalty to his French traditions and ancestral memories a grievance against Czar Ferdinand, his people have recognised in it a claim to their admiration, and one of the finest traits in his character. They might have some reason for regret nowadays were he instead of 'a Frenchman' an Austrian! The Bulgarians of to-day are grateful to Czar Ferdinand for what he has done and is doing in the propagation of French culture in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian mind will assimilate what it needs of it, and no more. Even during Prince Alexander's reign, for one Bulgarian youth who went to any German country for his education in science and the humanities, ten went to France. So it could hardly be said that Prince



BULGARIAN COUNTRY GIRLS AND CHILDREN

Ferdinand, with all his passionate worship of France, went out of his way to Frenchify his Slavic kingdom. British people imagine that theirs is the foreign nation which the Bulgarians especially love, and for which they have a feeling of gratitude. They are mistaken. The foreign people whom the Bulgarians love are the French. The foreign language they chiefly cultivate is the French. The Bulgarian feeling for the British sprang from Mr. Gladstone's denunciations of the perpetrators of 'the Bulgarian atrocities'—crimes which, frightful though they were, had many a time been surpassed in other quarters of the Turkish Empire. In their traditional sacrifice of the Christian nations of Turkish Europe to British 'interests,' in their protection of the brutal, incurable Turk, British diplomatists were as callously selfish as the statesmen of Vienna. Nor can it be said that, apart from her own spontaneous movement, Bulgaria derived from Britain any help in her effort for freedom. The only foreign inspiration was the 'ray'—as Dr. Schishmanoff in his admirable Report on Education to Czar Ferdinand expressed it—the 'ray from the light of the French Revolution.'

And there is another matter which the people of Bulgaria have not forgotten—the French Government's unobtrusive but not ineffectual advocacy of reconciliation between Russia and Bulgaria, at a time when Russian ministers repelled every advance from Sofia. So his subjects have long since recognised that Czar Ferdinand is perhaps all the more of a

'good Bulgarian' because he is so good a Frenchman. It is possible they might derive satisfaction from the fact that in his early travels through Germany this son of a German prince, born and brought up in and about Vienna, spoke by preference the language of his maternal ancestors. Among the numberless souvenirs and artistic knickknacks of various kinds in the Czar's private apartments is a little toy cart, wrought in silver, and laden with a mixture of French and Bulgarian earth. What more in the way of symbolism could any stalwart Bulgar desire? Czar Ferdinand's principal biographer relates how on a certain occasion the Prince celebrated the French national fête of the 14th July, the anniversary of the capture of the Bastille. The Prince invited a few friends—Frenchmen among them—to an open-air dinner in Vitosh forest, hard by Sofia, as if to an ordinary picnic. In the course of the entertainment, and to the guests' astonishment, the strains of the 'Marseillaise' suddenly broke forth from behind the trees, where the musicians were concealed. The Prince toasted M. Loubet, President of the Republic, cried 'Vive la France!' and cheered the 'Marseillaise'—the tremendous hymn that had 'gone the round of the world.'

XXXV

CZAR FERDINAND, 'CHIEF ARTIFICER'

SIX years ago Czar Ferdinand's ministers celebrated the first twenty years of his reign in a gracefully appropriate and eloquent manner. They presented him with a series of reports on the progress of all the state departments since his accession to the throne. There are constitutionally governed states in which a presentation of the kind would mean no more than an amiably polite formality. But Czar Ferdinand is a constitutional monarch who does something more than shoot game and write his signature when asked. He takes his *métier* of king seriously. He is one of the hardest workers in Bulgaria. He has his eye on every one of the state departments reviewed in the presentation report. He is familiar with every detail of their management. He has more than one of them under his personal supervision. As the record of swift progress of a young state suddenly emerged from servitude—servitude to the barbarian!—the Ferdinandian report is unique. It justifies the statement, so often made, that the rise of modern Bulgaria is the most remarkable phenomenon in the history of latter-day Europe. And it justifies the description of Czar Ferdinand, no less often made by his people, as the chief artificer of this modern state.

Among the various sections of the record two

were particularly prominent—the educational and the military. The education of the people was the first great task to which the newly chosen Prince gave his mind. A beginning had been made before his accession, but only a frail beginning. Prince Alexander's reign was too much absorbed by critical quarrels with Russia and party rivalries at home for firm grappling with the educational problem, so that when Prince Ferdinand came to the throne the mass of the people was but little removed from the state of ignorance in which the Turks had left them. Most of the educational laws of contemporary Bulgaria have been passed in Czar Ferdinand's time and under his scrutiny. It is but the literal truth that in no European country is there such a popular eagerness for education as there is in Bulgaria. For the first few years after the expulsion of the Turk the Bulgar was indifferent. The effects of the Turko-Greek oppression were not quite worn off. In 1891-2, when Prince Ferdinand had been four years on the throne, there was a change for the better. At the time of Prince Ferdinand's accession primary education was entrusted to the communes and municipalities. The result—an intelligible one, considering the extent of the Augean task which Bulgarian ministers had to undertake after the Turks were cleared out—was inadequate attendance, and semi-starvation of a truly heroic teaching class. The communal and municipal authorities, born and brought up under the Turkish régime, were themselves, to a great extent, uneducated. Prince Fer-

Ferdinand saw the urgency of subjecting popular education to the control of the state—in other words, of making it compulsory. Notwithstanding the many difficulties in the way of the new law—difficulties chiefly arising from domestic causes that had to be taken into account, especially in the case of a recently constituted state—the attendance in the primary schools was tripled during the first twenty years of Prince Ferdinand's reign. The state expenditure has been increased six-fold. Considering the cost of living in Bulgaria, the elementary teachers are fairly well paid. Paid by the state, they have the status of civil servants—a point to which Prince Ferdinand from the first, and while the teachers were still in the hands of the communes, attached particular importance. Secondary schools, and high schools for girls—always a pet project of Czar Ferdinand's—have made remarkable progress. An old Sofiote Turk returned from the grave would perhaps be more astonished—and shocked—at the spectacle of the girls' schools than at any other *giaour* freak. A fully manned inspectorate exercises constant supervision over all classes of schools from the lowest to the highest. The normal schools train young men and women for a profession which the Bulgars, to their great credit, hold in the highest esteem and regard. At the summit of the educational structure there was the Superior School, or Academy, of Sofia—now the University, manned by an able staff of professors, whose students in former times would

have had to migrate to Berlin, Munich, Vienna, Geneva, Montpellier, or Paris for their education.

Twenty years ago and more Prince Ferdinand nourished the ambition of making his people the best educated of the Balkan nations. That it now is, by a long way. There is still a large percentage of adult illiterates, but among the rising generation instruction is universal.

The School of Design is an institution in which Czar Ferdinand, himself a connoisseur in the Fine Arts, has always taken a deep personal interest. It was founded in the eighth year of his reign. It has its teachers in sculpture, painting, pottery, and decorative work generally. In its early years Prince Ferdinand often said that his Bulgars possessed artistic capacities that needed no more than an opportunity for their development. He has himself listened to lectures in the School of Design. The distinctions won by Bulgarian art students at foreign exhibitions have proved that Czar Ferdinand's opinion, above given, was well founded.

Two other departments in which the Prince takes an active personal interest, and which he includes in his conception of an all-round educational equipment, are the archæological and the zoological. We have already said that natural history is one of Czar Ferdinand's specialities. The collection of zoological and botanical specimens acquired by him in the course of his travels, or by his agents in foreign countries, and which he has presented to the nation,

has been of the greatest use to students, as well as an attraction to the public. In this as in other respects Czar Ferdinand is the educator of his people. Archæological research, a new departure in the intellectual expansion of Bulgaria, owes much to his personal encouragement. It promises to become an important branch in the course of studies at Sofia University. Before the subject was systematically taken up by Bulgarian scholars, Czar Ferdinand had often spoken of the likelihood that the districts of Sofia, Philippopolis, Tirnovo, as also the sites of ancient towns on the Black Sea coast—such as Odessos and Mesembria—would yield a good harvest to the 'scholars of the spade.' Very many fragments of mediæval and classical sculpture and architecture, coins also, have been recovered. The field for work of this kind will be largely extended after the settlement of Macedonia has been effected by the Allies and the Greeks have settled down comfortably in Epirus. Czar Ferdinand has added to his vast and varied collection of works of art, ancient and modern, many illustrations of archæological discoveries that throw light on the past history of his kingdom. The reconstruction of Bulgarian history is his great aim in these pursuits, just as the encouragement of an original Bulgarian art is his purpose in his frequent purchase of works produced in the School of Design.

XXXVI

CZAR FERDINAND'S ACTIVITY

THE enormous amount of multifarious work Czar Ferdinand gets through in the course of his seventeen waking hours in the twenty-four proves that he is a wonderful economist of his time. There is not—at least there used not to be—any hard and fast system of Cabinet meetings whether there might be any important business on hand or not. The King would waste neither his own time nor his ministers'. Except in cases where a ministerial meeting might be needful—as in an urgent case of general policy—the King's simple and expeditious practice has been to summon for a private interview at the palace the minister whose department the matter concerned. The matter to be discussed, in a quiet, business-like chat, might be some point raised in a report already submitted by the minister, or some project thought out by the Czar himself—about a country road, about a branch railway, about a hospital for deaf-mutes, about the extension of the powers of the Agricultural Bank (a favourite institution of Czar Ferdinand's), about an order for a mountain battery from Krupp or for Creusot quick-firers. In any case the minister, on arriving at the palace, would find Czar Ferdinand ready with his drawings and written or printed documents. And the minister

might be summoned at any hour of the day or night, for, as already recorded, Czar Ferdinand often works until the small hours.

One might be tempted to infer, from the Czar's method of transacting business, that his ministers were simply his office clerks. But the inference would be very wide of the mark. Czar Ferdinand scrupulously respects their position as the responsible ministers of a constitutional monarch. He is their 'co-worker,' as they often have said, open to conviction, and resourceful in a perplexing situation. In the King's transactions with his ministers there is no rigidly invariable form of procedure. So long as business is done, it does not matter much how it is done. This sort of elasticity has always characterised the Czar's attitude towards political parties. He is indifferent to parties. The only party he cares for is the Bulgarian people. If a minister does good service to the nation, it matters nothing to the King whether he calls himself Neo-Stamboulovist or Conservative or Liberal or Radical. And in the gradual cessation of party strife and *arriviste* intrigue, the King's persistent, easy, taking-it-for-granted manner of ignoring rival watchwords, has had its shrewdly calculated result.

So the Bulgarian people have abundant grounds for their attribution of a preponderant influence to Czar Ferdinand in the creation of their modern state. Every department of the state bears his impress. One great department in particular is in

a special sense his own—the Foreign Department. Much of the Czar's foreign work has been achieved in the course of his travels to the European capitals. The bureau of his luxuriously furnished royal train might be described as the Bulgar Foreign Office on wheels. But in this sketch we must confine ourselves to Czar Ferdinand's influence on the country's internal administration, and in particular to its economic development.

People who profess familiarity with the intellectually speculative bent of a ruler otherwise so eminently practical as Czar Ferdinand, ascribe a peculiar significance to his interest in the development of the Black Sea ports. That development, one would think, should have interested the most prosaically commercial mind. But Czar Ferdinand's is not a prosaic mind. And many years ago there were, among his intimates, some who surmised that the Prince—as he then was—dreamt of a time when the re-birth of Greater Bulgaria would signalise itself by a direct connection between the Bulgarian ports of Varna and Bourgas on the Black Sea, with Bulgarian ports to be acquired on the Ægean shore, in a war for the expulsion of the Turk. Since then Czar Ferdinand's troops have reached the Ægean Sea. But the sequel is on the knees of the gods. It was sometimes said that the railway company favoured the Ægean port of Dedeagatch (at which the Bulgarian troops arrived early in the course of the war) to the detriment, real or supposed, of Varna.

But surely the development of the Slavic races in Russia and the Balkans points to a great commercial future for the Euxine, independently of any connection with the Mediterranean. Remains of ancient cities indicate that the Euxine held in ancient epochs a position analogous to that of the Mediterranean in a later age. A civilised and developed Asia Minor, Transcaucasia, Eastern and Southern Russia, Bulgaria and Roumania, may yet turn the Euxine into one of the most thriving trading seas in the world. But however this may be, the Bulgarian port of Varna—the ancient Odessos—has made great progress in Czar Ferdinand's time. His Majesty loves to contemplate it from his Euxinograd terrace, a few miles distant, and constructed, it is said, for the sake of the Varna view. That prosperous towns will spring up on the Euxine shore of Bulgaria, and in his own lifetime, is said to be Czar Ferdinand's hope and belief. The port of Bourgas, of which Prince Ferdinand performed the inaugural ceremony in the spring of 1903, may yet become a great centre of the grain trade.

But in the meanwhile, as in the past, and for a long time to come, Varna eclipses every other, both in beauty and in commercial importance. Czar Ferdinand's presence at Euxinograd counts for much in Varna's prestige. Through his predilection for the locality, Varna may become the Brighton of Bulgaria—unless, of course, some Ægean town may spring up in rivalry. Even if it does, Varna, for

picturesque attractiveness, will be hard to beat. To English readers Varna is known through its Crimean War associations only. They or their parents have read how an English army (to say nothing of its French ally in the same locality) was decimated by cholera in 1854, and that not merely because of the insanitariness of the Turkish town, but still more because of an incompetence and a neglect on the part of the English Government, as flagrant as that of the Turkish Government in the war of 1912-13. The contrast between the foul, impoverished little Varna village of the Turk, and the healthy, large, rapidly expanding and prosperous port of Czar Ferdinand's reign, is the contrast between Turkey and civilisation. Since the expulsion of the Turk from Bulgaria, the population of Varna has been more than doubled. Czar Ferdinand has spent many an hour over the plans and the specifications of the quays, jetties, boulevards, completed or in course of construction at the Euxine seaport. The improvement of Varna was one of the first great undertakings of the earlier period of Prince Ferdinand's reign. The plans were drawn up by the French engineer M. Guerard, the Prince, according to his custom, taking an active personal interest in them. By the way, among Czar Ferdinand's official uniforms is an admiral's. And yet, the small flotilla which Bulgaria maintains on the Danube and the Euxine coast is all that Bulgaria possesses in the shape of a navy. But probably it is prophetic. And Czar Ferdinand's second son, Cyril, Prince of Preslav, who

is said to be a passionate lover of the sea, may yet be his father's admiral of a Euxine fleet.

From the first year of his reign Czar Ferdinand made the economic condition of the peasantry his constant study. In the first year of his reign the population amounted to three and a quarter millions. In 1913 it amounts to nearly four and a half millions—excluding the Macedonian and Thracian territories, which have yet to be delimited, and of which the Turks had never taken any census. The great bulk of the population is agricultural, and if it shows no tendency to follow the fatal example of Western populations by flocking into the towns, the reason lies in the wise legislation devised with the ruling purpose of attaching the cultivators to the soil. 'Our peasants,' to quote the Czar's own words, 'are the backbone of Bulgaria.' From what we have already said of the Czar's love of the country people and his agrarian tastes and aptitudes, the encomium which Ministers of Agriculture and Commerce—themselves chosen for their expert knowledge—have bestowed upon his participation in their labours, will cause no surprise. The fundamental facts upon which Czar Ferdinand based his agrarian policy were, that the agrarian population consisted almost entirely of small holders whose farms rarely exceeded twelve to fifteen acres in extent; that their methods of cultivation were in the main primitive; and that for the development of their industry state aid in some form or other, combined with co-operative agencies, was essential.

A regulation introduced into the military law six or seven years ago by which young soldiers received a certain amount of industrial instruction before returning to their homes, was attributed to the Prince's direct initiative. Another useful measure recommended by the Prince was the exemption from taxation for a number of years of land brought for the first time under cultivation. Again, by means of the parks and gardens founded by himself many years ago at his personal expense, Czar Ferdinand's influence in the agricultural development of Bulgaria has been very considerable. His beautiful estate of Vrana is, as already recorded, a public nursery as well as a delightful retreat. Experiments that have succeeded there have been repeated in hundreds of localities. Many years ago the Prince made a close study of the German system of agricultural banking, and, although he was not the pioneer of the system, its extension owes much to his personal encouragement. The Bulgarian Agricultural Bank has now many hundreds of agencies in communication with the central office in Sofia. It promotes the formation of co-operative societies for the purchase of machinery, seed, cattle, and for transport; it has been of the greatest assistance to the rising industry of wine-growing; its loans to departments, communes, and co-operative societies are granted on the easiest possible terms. There are few institutions in Bulgaria in which Czar Ferdinand takes a kindlier interest than in the agricultural schools at Plevna. Their establishment at that historic spot

might be regarded as a symbol of the essentially pacific spirit of the Bulgarian people, who have no purpose in war save freedom from oppression, and whose one desire is to be left to lead their laborious lives in their own way.

Every institution, economic or educational, which Czar Ferdinand found already existing at the time of his accession, has experienced the benefit of his direct co-operation in one form or another. The forest law, passed eight or nine years ago, superseding a law of Prince Alexander's reign, is one to which Czar Ferdinand attached the utmost importance. The Bulgarian forests, thanks in a great measure to the King's interest in their scientific treatment, will one day become a source of great wealth to the country.

In his insistence on the combination of taste with utility in handicrafts Czar Ferdinand is a Ruskinian. The law of 1908 for the corporate grouping of handicrafts, a measure meant to be temporary only, had his approbation, on the ground that in a few years it would produce a highly trained class of artisans. Pottery, carpet-making, silk-weaving, iron work, wood work, are a few of the chief industries incorporated under this law, which also provides for the training of apprentices, and examination by qualified inspectors of work produced. These workmen's societies are assisted by state loans at a low rate of interest. Czar Ferdinand's principle that peaceful development, through free labour and education, is the *raison d'être* of the modern state, is exemplified by the legislation

of the last few years—such, for example, as the partial exemption from military service granted to certificated young men trained in the State Commercial School (founded in 1906), and the humane laws for the relief and the pensioning of disabled and superannuated work-people; for the prevention of accidents; for the sanitation of workshops and factories; for limiting the working hours of women and children; for the settlement of disputes through the mediation of the Chambers of Commerce. The barest summary of the multiform achievements in which Czar Ferdinand has been an active promoter, and often an initiator, would exceed the limits of this volume. We must conclude this chapter with a brief reference to the Princess Marie Louise's establishment of girls' classes in domestic economy and female handicrafts. Since her death, classes and schools of this kind have sprung up in every quarter of the country.

XXXVII

CZAR FERDINAND AND THE ARMY

GREAT and lasting though Czar Ferdinand's work is in the social and economic development of Bulgaria, there are those who hold that his greatest work is the organisation of the Bulgarian army. His ministers and the public are the best judges ; and their verdict certainly is that the army is his most distinctive achievement. ' His creation,' as I have heard many a Bulgarian officer declare ; for such organisation of the army as had been effected in Prince Alexander's reign was little more than rudimentary. Czar Ferdinand regarded the army question from the point of view of the statesman rather than from that of the heaven-born general with a passion for the ' glorious ' game of war. Czar Ferdinand has no such passion. Those conversant with his inmost thoughts aver that he has a temperamental horror of war : that nothing short of unescapable necessity would force him to move a battalion. Yet, there the fact stands—Czar Ferdinand is the ' prime artificer ' of an army which has no superior in Europe. It was an arduous task, carried through with surprising rapidity. Fifteen years after his accession to the throne, and nine or so after he took his task seriously in hand, Czar Ferdinand had his reward in the admiration and the enthusiastic praise which the new army

evoked from the Grand Duke Nicolas and his brilliant suite of generals at Shipka Pass, on the 29th and 30th September and 1st October 1902.

The locality was, as every reader knows, famous in the history of South-Eastern Europe. The occasion of the great military gathering was significant. So was the date. For in the last months of 1902 there began the series of Macedonian disturbances that led step by step to the hurried revolution of the 'Young' Turks, and through these to the Balkan Alliance and the Turkish collapse. Not that Prince Ferdinand, as he then was, professed discernment of the goal to which the logic of things would drive him. What he looked for at that time and for years later was a peaceable solution of the Balkan question. Yet none the less had he made his military preparations for the unforeseen. And the Russo-Bulgar demonstration at Shipka Pass was the first great test to which the value of his labours was subjected. The original purpose of the gathering was the consecration of a church in memory of the soldiers who had fallen there in August 1877 and January 1878. Czar Ferdinand, with his gift for doing the right thing at the right time, took the opportunity of turning out thirty-four of his infantry battalions, with a complement of engineers and artillery for a series of manœuvres. The Russian War Office cordially approved of the scheme, if it did not originally suggest it. Some twenty generals and other officers of the Russian army accompanied

the Grand Duke to Shipka Pass. Among them was General Kuropatkin, destined two or three years later to disaster in Manchuria ; and also old Count Ignatieff, who, when ambassador at Constantinople, had done many a good service to Bulgaria, then a Turkish province. Prince Ferdinand himself had his brilliant suite of military officers, with several members of the household. All the Russian monuments of the dead at the Pass were draped in crape. The manœuvres took the form of a reproduction of the combats of a quarter of a century before. Every scene in the fighting had been identified beforehand. The first day's manœuvres represented the August combat, which ended in Suleiman Pasha's retreat. The second day's represented the storming of the Turkish camp and the final victory of the Russians.

The mimic battles over, the Grand Duke expressed, in unstinted terms, his admiration at the discipline and efficiency of the young Bulgarian army. He congratulated, with a hearty, repeated hand-shake, Prince Ferdinand, its commander-in-chief. The Russian generals were emphatic in their praises. Young Bulgaria had at last created an army, which the European Powers would thenceforth have to take into account. And more of the like flattering character. The third and last act in the Shipka celebration was the march past, before the Grand Duke, of the entire Bulgarian force, led by Prince Ferdinand in person. Immediately behind the Prince came the veterans of the Bulgarian Legion,

who had fought at the Pass and elsewhere in the War of Liberation. It was an incident that touched every spectator of the scene. During the receptions and entertainments that followed the march past, the Grand Duke and his generals expressed, in greater detail, their appreciation of the Bulgarian army's progress since the days when, for the work of preliminary instruction, only Russian officers were available. Among the Russian officers present at the Grand Duke's reception of their Bulgarian brothers-in-arms there were some who had taken part, more than twenty years before, in the enrolment of the first regular Bulgarian soldiers.

A few hours later Prince Ferdinand gave a banquet to the Grand Duke Nicolas and the Russian officers. He made a capital speech, in which he expressed his gratitude to the original instructors—the Russians—of the Bulgarian forces, and to the Czar Liberator, whose memory would be venerated in Bulgaria as long as the race endured. The Prince gave a rapid, vivid sketch of the progress of his army. He was loudly applauded when he spoke of the fraternisation of the Russian and Bulgarian peoples. On this fraternisation the Grand Duke in his reply laid particular emphasis, also remarking that the Shipka demonstration, being simply an act of grateful remembrance, was entirely pacific.

But no less significant than the foregoing events was the popular reception accorded to the Grand Duke and the other Russian visitors. They were

wildly acclaimed wherever they appeared. There was no sign of an 'ungrateful' Bulgaria. At Stara Zagora—Czar Ferdinand's headquarters ten years later!—thousands of people from far-distant localities came, with their banners and their musical choirs, to welcome the Russian Prince. Old Count Ignatieff's reception in Sofia was a veritable triumph. The population turned out *en masse*. The city was illuminated. There were torchlight processions, and Macedonian deputations—to whom the old diplomatist spoke in encouraging terms that might have alarmed the Stambouli pashas.

Interesting and curious are the comments of some of the leading Russian newspapers on the Shipka Pass fraternisation as they now read after twelve years. The *Novosti* advised the Bulgarians to be reasonable : not to be led astray by a too soaring ambition. Servia and Montenegro, it went on, no less than Bulgaria, have interests in Macedonia. Russia will not help Bulgaria to extend her sway to the Ægean Sea : Bulgaria has done her work : she must not disturb the Balkanic equilibrium for her own advantage. And more to the same effect. The *Novoe Vremya* was much more sympathetic. It praised the tact and patience of Prince Ferdinand and his government through the trials of the past, and in face of rising troubles in Macedonia. It reiterated Prince Ferdinand's words on fraternisation, and rejoiced that the unhappy misunderstandings of the Alexander-Stambouloff era were for ever removed, and that Bulgaria

had established her position as an independent state.

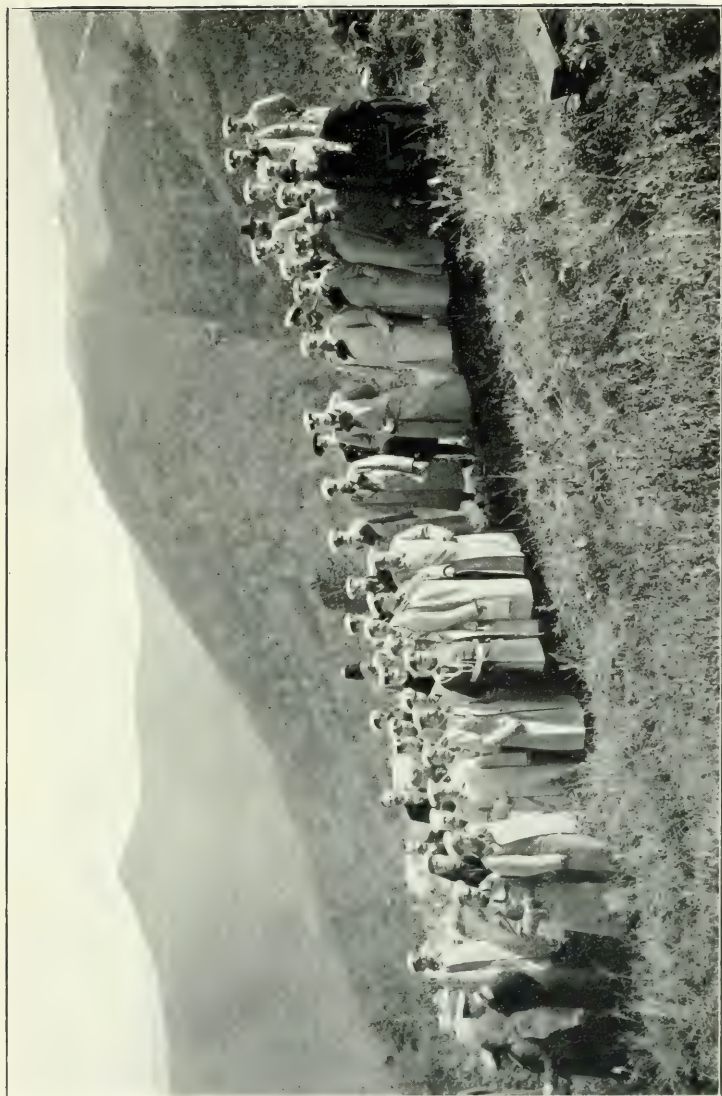
In spite of the *Novosti's* warning the Bulgarians have reached the southern sea, and that, too, without asking any help from Russia, but in partnership with the neighbouring states, between which and Bulgaria the Russian journal deemed any reconciliation of interests to be impracticable. Its contemporary had a clearer vision of the situation. The Shipka Pass commemoration, with its Russian verdict, was a signal tribute to Prince Ferdinand's wisdom, energy, and ability both in foreign diplomacy and internal administration.

In the last year or two of Prince Alexander's reign the Bulgarian officers were, almost without exception, innocent of anything worth calling a professional education. The rank and file had not been efficiently trained, their Russian instructors having been withdrawn in the midst of their labours. They counted considerably less than twenty thousand. As for equipments, there were instances in which different patterns of rifles, old and new, were in use in one and the same battalion. The unprovoked raid of the Servian army in 1885 alarmed the Bulgarians, and Prince Alexander took the task of military reform at once in hand. But little progress had been made at the beginning of the new reign. So poor an opinion had the Servians of their neighbour's military efficiency at the time of the raid that King Milan boasted he would disperse the Bulgarian levies in a single

battle, and then celebrate a *Te Deum* in the cathedral of Sofia. The Sofian satirists alleged that His Majesty had ordered candles for the purpose.

The formation of a large standing army was not contemplated in Prince Ferdinand's plan of military reorganisation. What he aimed at was the maintenance of a force of between forty-five and fifty thousand men, which should serve as a framework within which, in the event of war, 'the armed nation'—that is, the men who had already passed through the ranks—should be marshalled. Military service was universal and obligatory: a duty of citizenship. None but the physically or mentally incapable were wholly exempt. Partial exemptions were granted to certain classes of certificated experts in the trades and professions, and to heads of families. Persons convicted of certain offences against the law were not exempted—they were excluded, as unworthy of the dignity of citizen soldiers. Young men not sufficiently robust for the hard work of the rank and file were to be employed in the subsidiary departments of the army. The standing army—otherwise the military framework of the nation—was to be equipped with munitions of the latest and best pattern, and to be kept up to the highest mark of discipline and efficiency. For this purpose petty officers were encouraged, by special rates of pay, by bounties and pensions, to re-enlist. By this system the military training of the manhood of the nation remained in the hands of experienced instructors, and went on without interruption. Such,

in briefest outline, was the system which Prince Ferdinand laboured at during the most strenuous years of his reign. What the Grand Duke Nicolas and his generals looked upon when the Prince led his three splendid divisions past the flagstaff at Shipka Pass was not merely a section of a standing army but of an armed people. Prince Ferdinand had solved his problem. Nothing remained to be done except to adhere to the system which had stood its test so successfully, and to be on the alert for any ordeal to which some crisis in the Balkans might subject it.



PRINCE FERDINAND AND KUROPATKIN DURING MANOEUVRES AT THE SHIPKA PASS

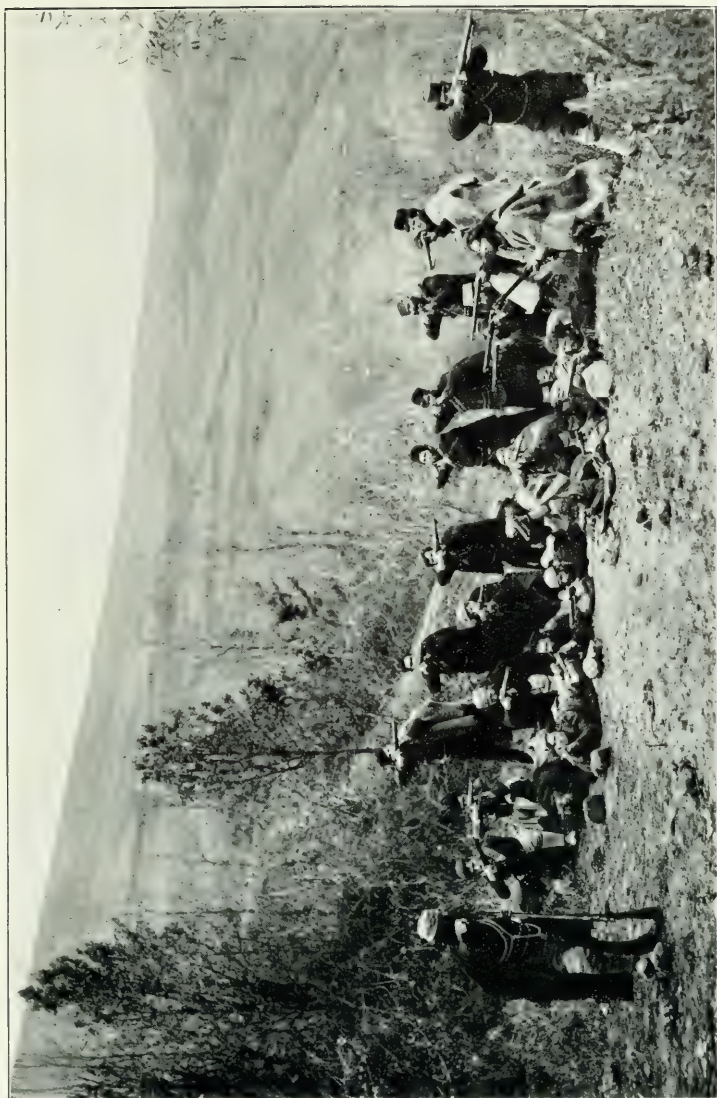
XXXVIII

PROCLAMATION OF THE CZARDOM

SCARCELY had Prince Ferdinand led his three divisions in the march past at Shipka than there began the inevitable crisis that, with one or two interludes of a pseudo-reformatory character, ended twelve years later in the expulsion of the Turk from Adrianople. Fortunately a soldier and organiser whose name will rank for ever among the foremost in the annals of war—General Savoff, Chief of the Military College—resumed his old post of War Minister ; and forthwith the head of the state and his trusted minister laboured with redoubled activity at their joint task of perfecting their ‘fighting machine’ to its minutest detail. It does not follow that the Prince at this date contemplated a conquest of Macedonia or regarded a war as unavoidable. There were, indeed, among his own advisers those who held that, without war, the lot of the Macedonian and Thracian Christians—Bulgarian by a great majority—never would be bettered. This also was the general opinion among the officers and rank and file of the army. Only on one point was there absolute unanimity among the Bulgarian people—from the Prince to the day labourer, from the general to the youngest recruit—their kindred in Thrace and Macedonia must be given a ‘bearable life.’ The many, as I have already indicated,

believed that the 'bearable life' could only be secured by war; the few, that the needful reforms could be secured by diplomatic pressure. But of these few, some would trust to diplomacy alone; while others, a majority, held that the diplomatists must be compelled to interfere. Hence the Macedonian rising of 1902-3, and the frequent outbreaks in subsequent years; in other words, the *comitaji* insurrection—the 'brigand' insurrection, as the Turk named it—designed to 'compel' the 'European intervention' without which the 'bearable life,' never would be extorted from the Turk. Until the last spark of hope of the 'bearable life,' either under Turkish or Turko-European supervision, had vanished, 'Macedonia for the Macedonians' was the cry of a large section of the Bulgar population in the 'enslaved' province. That any considerable section of Prince Ferdinand's subjects or of the Macedonian Christians should have regarded autonomy as anything but a temporary expedient, and one of unstable equilibrium, must have astonished foreign residents familiar with the Turk and his neighbours and observing the course of events with an unprejudiced eye. Unless the Macedonian Serbs, Greeks, and Bulgars were to be subjected indefinitely to European tutelage, their rivalries would sooner or later lead to annexation, either by one or two great empires or by the states to which they were respectively attached by race.

Yet during the whole of this period—the period of broken calm before the storm—Prince Ferdinand



MACEDONIAN REBELS DURING THE TURKISH PERIOD

professed faith in the possibility of a Turkish reformation, bringing with it the boon of a 'bearable life' for his subjects' kindred. He professed it—he, the student of history—in spite of the frightful lessons of five hundred years. Yes; but at the same time he was making ceaseless preparations for the worst—he and War Minister Savoff—just as if he had not the smallest faith in the Turk's desire or capacity for improvement. His was an exceptionally difficult and delicate position, needing the constant exercise of his great diplomatic ability. He had to soothe the Turk; to disarm the suspicions of foreign Powers; to pacify his own subjects, the army in particular, eager to fall upon the Turk; to persuade the Macedonians that he would not leave them in the lurch; to restrain the Macedonian committees in Bulgaria itself, for whose partnership with the 'brigand' bands the Turkish Government held the Prince and his ministers responsible. While grappling with realities, he had to profess respect for the hollowest, most miserable imposture that has ever afflicted the European East—our old acquaintance, 'Status Quo.' The Powers warned him that, should he make war upon the Turks and beat them, he would gain nothing, for 'Status Quo' would have to be respected. The same warning was repeated nine years later, in 1912. At neither crisis did it occur to 'the Chancelleries' that Ferdinand might be in a position to create a new 'Status Quo.' And when the Prince, always impeccably 'correct,' would bow to

the Powers' assurances that diplomatic intervention would speedily give the Macedonians all the satisfaction they demanded, the Macedonian insurgent leaders would protest (as the present writer has often heard them do) that 'diplomacy had never done' them 'any good,' and his own subjects murmur at his 'subservience' to foreign governments.

During this critical period there were a hundred insurgent bands in Macedonia. They had the prayers, and a good many of the pence, of Czar Ferdinand's subjects. 'Why don't you Bulgars watch your frontiers?' the Turk exclaimed, threatening invasion; while Prince Ferdinand had on his side of the border line nine sentries to every single sentry on the Turkish side. The Prince and his ever vigilant War Minister saw to it. The Bulgarian Government caught and 'interned' numbers of insurgents crossing from Macedonia, but there is no record of Turkish captures of men from Bulgaria. It was in a great measure owing to Czar Ferdinand's rare diplomatic tact, to his patience, to his intuition of the fitting moment, that war was staved off in 1903. For one thing, the army was not quite ready.

While General Savoff was perfecting his 'fighting machine,' the wide-awake Prince was busy in another direction. Foreseeing the great risk he must run if compelled to fight single-handed in the struggle which he hoped might be for ever averted, he began to look out for allies. Some years earlier he took his first steps in this direction, in certain

tentative negotiations between M. Stoïloff and the Servian Foreign Minister. These were continued by Dr. Daneff (the chief Bulgarian delegate at the London Conference of 1912). In 1906 a Customs Union was formed between Bulgaria and Servia. Austria retaliated. The 'pork war' followed; but Prince Ferdinand and his ministers, by giving the Servian pig-rearers exceptional facilities at the port of Varna, opened for them a profitable trade with France. The Customs Union, though spoiled by the 'Young' Turks, was prophetic. It may be interesting to recall M. de Launay's reflections on this subject two years later. An alliance, said he, would be 'a happy event'; there was no real ground for jealousy between Servia and Bulgaria, so a union between them and their 'common foe,' the Turk, would be formed some day; and it was to be hoped that Greece 'would join,' but this was 'rather improbable.' M. de Launay admired Prince Ferdinand's ability.

But in July 1908 the 'Young' Turks, in order to wrest the task of reforming Macedonia from the European Powers, whose selected officers had already been at work in the province (and thwarted by the Turkish authorities), precipitated their revolution. The Golden Age for Macedonia has arrived, said the 'Young' Turk; Prince Ferdinand need no longer pose as the Liberator of Macedonia. But a few months' experience proved that the 'Young' Turk was just the old Turk under a new label. The massacres of the Christians began again. And so the

Macedonian insurgents, who had returned to their homes, were 'out' again. And Prince Ferdinand's subjects murmured and growled again at his exaggerated caution. And the army became fretful. Any slight incident might cause a torrent of indignation which even Prince Ferdinand might find it impossible to resist. The incident did come, in September 1908, a silly, trivial incident, from one point of view; but from the Bulgarian people's a gross insult to the nation and its ruler, to be avenged by casting off the last flimsy remnants of 'vassalage' to the Sultan and proclaiming Bulgaria an independent kingdom. On the childish pretence that Bulgaria was a 'vassal' state, the 'Young' Turk minister refused to invite to a diplomatic dinner the Bulgarian agent at Constantinople, who for many years had been received at the Porte as his country's accredited representative, and treated on a footing of equality with his colleagues of the Diplomatic Corps. The news of the insult threw the entire country into a state of excitement. The Prince was abroad. What would he do? The ministers agreed to resign should the Prince refuse to proclaim the nation's independence. But the Prince who twenty-one years ago had made a huge rent in the Berlin Treaty, and taken 'the risks,' was not the man to shrink from the act of retaliation his people expected of him.

It was announced that the Prince was about to land at Rustchuk. The ministers hurried to the



H.M. THE QUEEN OF BULGARIA IN THE DRESS OF A RED
CROSS SISTER

port. At a Cabinet Council held on board the Prince's yacht, he agreed at once to proclaim the nation's independence. The ceremony was to take place at Tirnovo on the 5th October. Universal rejoicing. Multitudes of people journeyed to the ancient capital, whose citizens, with their municipal officers, worked all night at erecting arches and decorating the streets. They paraded round the statue of the Czar Liberator, and of Levsky, the young patriot whom the Turks hanged at Sofia in 1873. They danced their national dances before the hall where the national representatives meet on special occasions. The Prince walked from the station through the streets to the Church of the Forty Martyrs, where he was received by the Archimandrite and the clergy. After an interval of silence which followed the religious service, the Prince rose and read the following proclamation:—

‘By the will of our never-to-be-forgotten Liberator and the great kindred Russian nation, aided by our good friends and neighbours the subjects of the King of Roumania, by the Bulgarian heroes on February 18, 1878, chains of slavery were broken by which for so many centuries Bulgaria, once a great and glorious Power, was bound. From that time till to-day for full thirty years the Bulgarian nation, preserving the memory of those who had laboured for its freedom and inspired by their tradition, has worked incessantly for the development of its beautiful country, and under my guidance and that of the departed Prince Alexander has made it a nation fit to take an equal place in the family of civilised peoples and endowed with gifts of cultural and economic progress. While proceeding

on this path nothing should arrest the progress of Bulgaria, nothing should hinder her success. Such is the desire of the nation, such its will. Let that desire be fulfilled. The Bulgarian nation and its chief can have but one sentiment, one desire. Practically independent, the nation was impeded in its normal and peaceful development by certain illusions and formal limitations, which resulted in a coldness of relations between Turkey and Bulgaria. I and the nation desire to rejoice in the political development of Turkey. Turkey and Bulgaria free and independent of each other may exist under conditions which will allow them to strengthen their friendly relations and to devote themselves to peaceful internal development. Inspired by the sacred purpose of satisfying national requirements, and fulfilling the national desire, I proclaim, with the blessing of the Almighty, Bulgaria—united since September 6, 1885—an independent kingdom. Together with the nation I firmly believe that this act will meet with the approbation of the Great Powers.'

Independence having been proclaimed, the President of the Chamber of Deputies spoke as follows :—

'Your Majesty, the proclamation of the independence of Bulgaria fulfils one of the dearest wishes of the nation. This act is emphatically approved by the people, and in the name of the national representatives I beg you to accept the laurel of glory as Bulgarian King.'

Then the Prime Minister :—

'Your Majesty, the national interests and the national dignity have imposed upon you a sacred resolve to declare in this historic and holy place Bulgaria as an independent kingdom. Allow me in the name of the Government to request you to accept the title of the first Bulgarian King.'

The Prince replied :—

‘ With pride and thanksgiving I accept the title of Bulgarian King offered me by the nation and government.’¹

Prince Ferdinand, now King Ferdinand I. of Bulgaria, then walked from the church, amidst the thunderous applause of his people, to the ancient Hissar, or castle, on a steep cliff, at the foot of which flows the Yantra. The Hissar was for a long period the fortified residence of the old Bulgarian czars. Here the proclamation was read a second time by the first of the modern czars—separated from them by hundreds of years, during which it seemed to the nations of Europe that the Bulgarian race had vanished from the world.

¹ *Times* Special Correspondent.

XXXIX

CZAR FERDINAND AND THE WAR

IN its friendly reference to Turkey, its generous recognition of Roumania's help in the Liberation War and of his predecessor's services, its allusion to the beauty of Bulgaria and the versatile talents of its people, the proclamation was characteristic of the Czar. Curious it is to note the expression of the hope—so often repeated since the day when the Czar first touched Bulgarian soil—of an era of peace and progress for Turkey, and of co-operation between her and her formal 'vassal.' However, private convictions apart, it was the 'correct' thing to say. He soon became aware—if he was not aware of it before, which to ordinary mortals will seem incredible—that there was a worse 'illusion' than the old bond of vassalage: faith in the 'Young' Turk. Year after year atrocities of the traditional stamp went on in Macedonia, culminating in the summer of 1912 in the massacre of Kochana, a Macedonian town close to the Bulgarian frontier, and facing the Bulgarian town and garrison of Kustendil.

From end to end of the kingdom arose the cry for war, this time irresistible. In 1903 the Czar had set his face against war because the army was unready; in 1908 because there was no Balkan League. But

the League now existed, and was ready to mobilise. It was, chiefly, Czar Ferdinand's achievement. He had planned it patiently for years. A complex task it was to reconcile the interests and ambitions of four states, even though the Turk was the common foe. Czar Ferdinand was the artificer of the League, as he had been the artificer of the modern Bulgarian state. His army was the main body of the Balkanic host. For years he had been quietly, steadily adding millions of francs to his war chest. One of the finest strokes of his diplomacy was his procuring King Peter's consent to the employment of a Servian contingent with the Bulgarian army in Thrace.

The 5th of October is a notable date in Bulgarian history. On that day the czardom was proclaimed at Tirnovo four years before. On the 5th October 1912 the mobilisation of the army was ordained at the meeting of an Extraordinary Session of the Legislative Assembly at Sofia. The procedure was eloquently simple. Czar Ferdinand's opening of the parliamentary sessions had always been marked by pomp and ceremony. But on this occasion there were no gilded carriages, no military escorts. The Czar drove to the assembly in a motor car. He was dressed simply in general's uniform. The population, well knowing what serious business he had on hand, crowded the streets and cheered him enthusiastically. Instead of reading his speech seated, according to custom, he read it standing: a very short speech, stating his reasons for mobilisation. He then left. The House

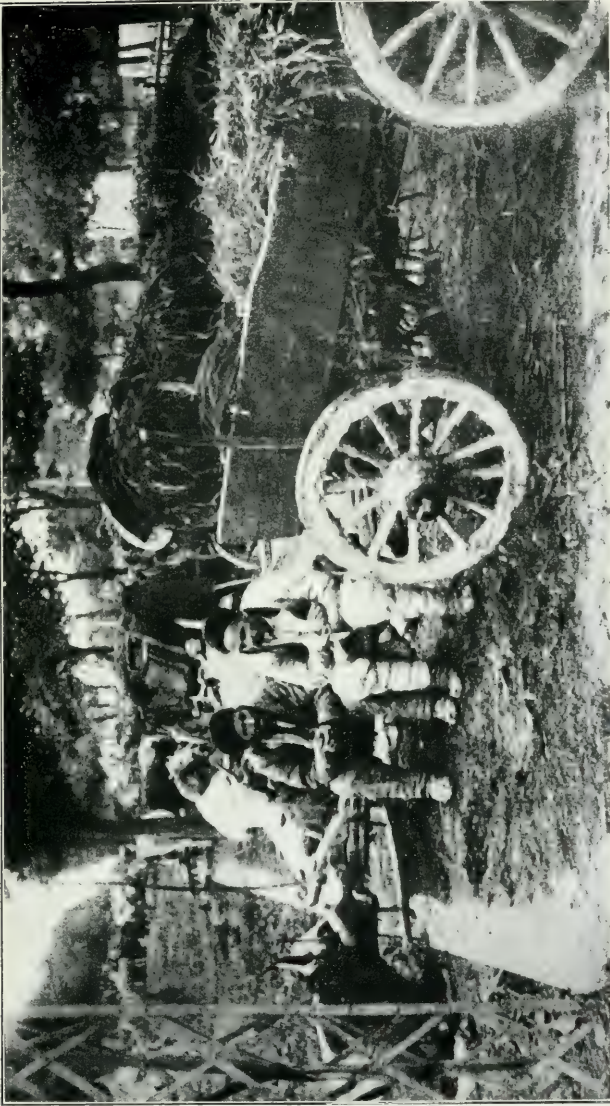
then voted, with loud cheers, for mobilisation, the deputies for the Turkish constituencies voting with their Christian colleagues. There was only one dissentient; nor was he a Turk. The Prime Minister declared that the Government had exhausted all its means of securing humane treatment for the Macedonians, and that it had reason to believe that the Turks were planning an invasion of Bulgaria. A little later in the day the troops of the Sofia garrison were on the march to Philippopolis. They sang their national songs as they marched out. Two or three days later the Powers warned the Bulgarian Government that the territorial integrity of Turkey would remain the same after a war as before it. Turkey mobilised on the 12th. Two days later Queen Eleanore instituted a system of relief for the families of reservists called out for active service. On the night of the 16th Czar Ferdinand left Sofia for his headquarters at Stara Zagora, overlooking the Thracian frontier. A few hours later Turkey declared war. On the 18th Czar Ferdinand did likewise. The religious ceremony at which his proclamation took place was most impressive. The old Archbishop Methodius, who conducted it, had borne his part in the agitation that led, twenty-seven years ago, to the union of Eastern Roumelia with the Principality. Czar Ferdinand was deeply moved as the venerable archbishop pronounced his blessing on the Bulgarian army. In a clear, steady, resonant voice he read out his eloquent proclamation :—

‘Bulgarians! in the course of my reign of twenty-five years I have always sought, in the peaceful work of civilisation, the progress, welfare, and glory of Bulgaria, and it was in this direction that I wished to see the Bulgarian nation constantly advance, but Providence has judged otherwise. The moment has come when the Bulgarian race is called upon to renounce the benefits of peace and have recourse to arms for the solution of a great problem. Beyond the Rila and the Rhodope Mountains our brothers in blood and religion have not been able until this day, thirty-five years after our liberation, to obtain a bearable life. All the efforts made to attain this object, both by the Great Powers and by the Bulgarian Government, have failed to create conditions permitting these Christians to enjoy human rights and liberties. The tears of the Balkan Slave and the groaning of millions of Christians could not but stir our hearts, the hearts of their kinsmen and co-religionists, who are indebted for our peaceful life to a great Christian Liberator, and the Bulgarian nation has often remembered the prophetic words of the Czar Liberator, “The work is begun, it must be carried through.” Our love of peace is exhausted. To succour the Christian population in Turkey there remains to us no other means than to turn to arms. We see that it is only by this means that we can assure them protection of life and property. The anarchy in the Turkish provinces has even menaced our national life. After the massacres of Ishtib and Kochana, instead of according justice and satisfaction as we demanded, the Turkish Government ordered the mobilisation of its military forces. Our long patience was thus put to a rude test. The humanitarian sentiments of Christians, the sacred duty of succouring their brothers when they are menaced with extermination, and the honour and dignity of Bulgaria, imposed on me the imperative duty of calling to the colours Bulgaria’s sons who are prepared for the defence of the Fatherland. Our work is a just, great, and

sacred one. . . . I bring to the cognisance of the Bulgarian nation that war for the human rights of the Christians is declared. I order the brave Bulgarian army to march on the Turkish territory ; at our sides, and with us will fight, for the same object against a common enemy, the armies of the Balkan States allied to Bulgaria—Servia, Greece, and Montenegro. And in this struggle of the Cross against the Crescent, of liberty against tyranny, we shall have the sympathy of all those who love justice and progress. . . . Forward, may God be with you.’¹

When on the morning of the 18th the people of Sofia went forth from their homes for their labours of the day, they found their King’s proclamation already posted up in all the public places. They read it, not in a state of boisterous excitement, but of restrained elation. Amidst their cheers, that rose and died away, and rose again all over the city, was heard the sound of the cathedral bells. In front of the cathedral and in its immediate environs at least fifteen thousand people were congregated, awaiting the return of their Czarina—the first Czarina of modern Bulgaria—then attending the solemn religious service within. The moment she reappeared a shout of acclamation burst forth from the spectators, with cries of ‘Long live our Queen!’ ‘Long live our heroic Czar!’ Queen Eleanore, in the four years since her marriage, had by a thousand deeds of truest, unostentatious charity to the poor and the suffering won the hearts of the people. They knew their Queen was about to leave them on her errand of mercy for her destination by

¹ Translation published in the *Times*.



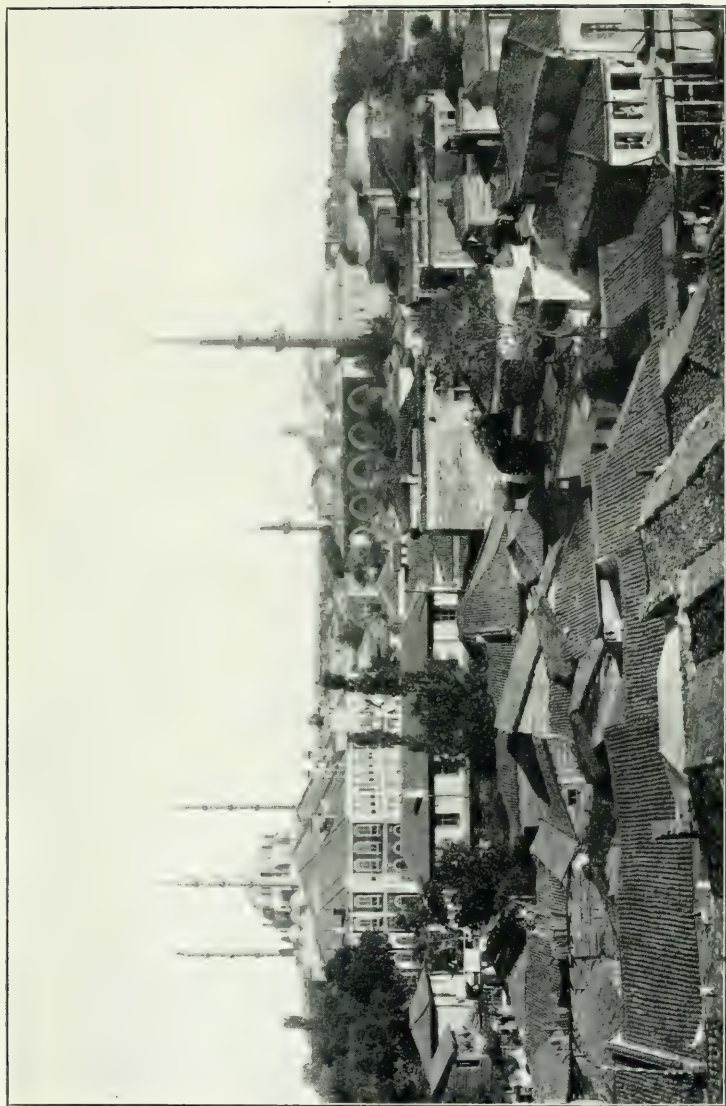
BULGARIANS' MAKESHIFT TRANSPORT WAGGONS

the Turkish border, where her husband and her two sons were already at their posts. Except for the cheers that greeted the Queen and the issue of the King's appeal to his people there was no sign of excitement. The demeanour of those great crowds was calm, orderly, dignified, serious. Not a soldier was to be seen among them. All the soldiers of the Sofia garrison, with the reservists of Sofia and its district, from all classes of the people—the University professors, for example, with their older pupils, and teachers of the elementary schools—were already far away on the march, singing the heroic songs of their race, knowing that their hour had come to liberate their enslaved kindred. A little nation, the very existence of which was unknown to educated Englishmen less than sixty years before, and to which a frightful massacre in the later seventies had for the first time attracted the general attention of Europe—this little nation sallying forth to shatter one of the most formidable military Powers in history: truly a dramatic, an astonishing spectacle. And all this without the faintest trace of the vulgar sensationalism familiar to certain communities on either shore of the Atlantic.

In his address to his people Czar Ferdinand described the war as just and sacred. Not only was the appellation justified, but it is perhaps the only war to which it can be applied. Some English witnesses of this war—men of high distinction in public life, whose character and intelligence give

great weight to their opinions—have expressed a doubt whether any war can be justified which brings with it such horrors as those of Macedonia and Thrace. But if the question were put to those most interested in it—to the Bulgarian nation, the only member of the League with which the present volume is concerned—the answer would be short, unanimous, and decisive. The Bulgarian people consider the liberation of their kindred from the bloodstained despotism of the barbarous Turk worth all their self-sacrifice. They have deliberately sacrificed themselves for a moral ideal. And they have achieved their great purpose. The end of an epoch in the story of the European East, the beginning of a happier one, was signalised when on the 28th of March 1913 King Ferdinand in Adrianople received Shukri Pasha's sword, and 'returned it,' as the telegraphic despatches say, 'with a few complimentary words.' It is now well known that, but for Czar Ferdinand's revulsion from the horrors of capture by assault, Adrianople would have fallen long ago, and that only the urgent entreaties and remonstrances of his generals induced him to yield. He came at last frankly to recognise the fact that any further delay would lead to miseries even greater, and to international complications of a serious character.

Twenty-six years ago Czar Ferdinand began his eventful reign—'took the risks'—with the load of the Berlin Treaty round his neck, and with a faith, that seemed like intuition, in the capacities (then latent for



ADRIANOPE : SHOWING THE MOSQUE OF SULTAN SELIM (ON THE LEFT) AND THE
OLD MOSQUE ON THE RIGHT

the most part) of the Bulgarian people, and in his own ability to lead the race to a high destiny. He has made his way by shaking off his load, one part after the other, and patiently waiting for the Powers' 'ratification' of his illegality. He could have said, with perfect truth, to the 'Young' Turks that his plans for Macedonian reform by the Turkish Government itself were in exact accordance with the programme they themselves proclaimed when they inaugurated their revolution, and that if they had been put in force in the summer of 1912 war would have been averted.

In the story of Turko-Slavic Europe there are now two 'Czar Liberators': Alexander II., who with the help of the Roumanians liberated Bulgaria; and Ferdinand the First, who with the help of the Servians and Greeks has liberated Thrace and Macedonia. It was said many years ago that the Prince of Bulgaria cherished the ambition of being remembered in history as Ferdinand 'Macedonicus.' Czar Ferdinand, at that little ceremony of surrender at Adrianople (following the capture of the 26th), saw his just ambition fulfilled. But is it quite fulfilled? some critics of this great drama are asking. Czar Ferdinand's ambition, it is said, is to make Constantinople the capital of a South Slavic Empire. Why not? Better the Slav than the Turk. The Turkish possession of Constantinople is one of the darkest blots on civilisation, the *reductio ad absurdum* of Christian diplomacy in the European East, the

moral condemnation of the Christian Powers, inasmuch as it is the symbol of their mutually jealous complicity in what the late Professor Freeman stigmatised as 'the rule of the barbarian over the civilised man.'¹ So long as the Turk retains possession of a yard of European soil the task of liberation remains unfinished. But Czar Ferdinand is not the man to throw away the substance for the shadow. He is in no hurry to 'hoist the cross,' as a distinguished publicist expresses it, on the dome of St. Sophia. The first capital of the Turks in Europe, Adrianople, is at this moment the object of his vigilant care. The men of the Bulgarian transport service are distributing bread among the starving citizens, Moslem and Christian, without any distinction. Czar Ferdinand has inspected every quarter of the historic city. Bulgarian administrators began the organisation of its future government the very day after the surrender. Turkish secretaries and assistants of all sorts serve their Bulgarian employers in the public offices where lately they served their Turkish masters; nor do they seem to regret the change. The Turkish populace, that hid itself when the victors swarmed into the city, has long since emerged into the open street, astonished at the conqueror's humanity, unable to grasp the fact of its absolute freedom in the new order. We know that the half million Turkish citizens of Bulgaria were in nowise shocked by the Czar's declaration of war against their Caliph, that their deputies

¹ Freeman, *The Ottoman Power in Europe*, 1877.

in the National Legislature voted for it. A like conversion of Turkish sentiment is already manifesting itself in the conquered territories. In a short time the Turkish voters of Adrianople, of Kirk Kilsse, Lule Burgas, and other places whose names are familiar to every newspaper reader, will be sending their delegates to the National Legislature at Sofia—which Legislature will have to be enlarged commensurately with the needs of Greater Bulgaria, and in accordance with the legal procedure for the revision of the Constitution, at a ‘Great Assembly,’ summoned, as of old, to Tirnovo. And Czar Ferdinand will, as often before in the course of his extraordinary and romantic career, be the central figure in it—the ‘Chief Artificer’ of a new Slavic Power, whose mission is intellectual, moral, and economic progress through peace. But the mere restoration of a Greater Bulgaria will leave unfulfilled his alleged ambition,—the realisation of which will subject his diplomatic abilities to a test far more severe than they have ever undergone. For the League, which, it was hoped, would develop into a permanent, pacific Confederation, shows symptoms of a revival of the race hatreds and antagonisms that in the past made the Serbs and the Bulgars the Turk’s easy prey.

THE END

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