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HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

OF THE RUSSIAN WAR.

FROM ITS COMMENCEMENT TO THE PRESENT TIME.

If the most intelligent man moving in common English or French society were suddenly asked to give a brief, a clear, and a connected account of all the transactions of the Russian War—from the beginning of it to its present stage—he would first, perhaps, be surprised that anybody should need such information. But he would immediately be still more surprised, to find how difficult it was for him to furnish it; that, instead of being able to state, off-hand, in their real order and due arrangement, the facts required, he would be obliged to ask time for reflection; and then, even, time to make some references. He would discover that he had, indeed, in his mind an idea of all the events; but that his impressions, though very vivid respecting the principal particulars, were, after all, a mass of anachronous entanglement and historical confusion.

In some degree, this is always the case upon the occurrence of momentous and protracted international changes—until time has been given to the public to free itself from the first excitements, and from the multifarious, but transitory, delusions by which they are attended. Perhaps, indeed, the very facilities which now exist for publishing diurnally every premature version, which may arrive, of affairs interesting to the public, have contributed to heap upon the progressive reports of this great war a burden of crude messages and announcements, which confuse the true chronicle of facts; and, in short, *we have not so much to learn the story as to recall it succinctly, and to unlearn the many successive misstatements of it.* Already, the newspaper records of a single year of stimulating and, to our generation, novel and portentous intelligence—with second versions, and third versions, and corrections and alterations—exceed in bulk the immense history in which Gibbon chronicles the stupendous revolutions, the many memorable conflicts, and the countless European vicissitudes of *fifteen centuries.*

It is time to weed this literary wilderness; to preserve only what is valuable; to put even that in its right place; and to supply a compendious, lucid, and reliable narrative of a conflict which might be said to have been long impending, and yet which virtually took Europe and the world by surprise.

FIRST PERIOD: INVASION OF MOLDO-WALLACHIA; AND STATE OF RUSSIAN TROOPS.

It was towards the end of August, 1853, that the first Vienna Note was declined by the Porte; and not very long afterwards, that the second was preemptorily rejected by the Czar. But nearly three months earlier, orders had been dispatched from St. Petersburg to carry the Russian divisions forcibly across the Pruth into the Turkish territory—thus making war, but not declaring it. On the 3d of July, the order was executed. Those rich corn countries were seized; taxes for the maintenance of eighty thousand troops were imposed by the Czar upon four millions of the subjects of Abdul-Medjid-Khan, and contracts for nine months were based on these new imposts; the Danube, the greatest inland highway of commerce in Europe, was brought under the invader's immediate and stringent control; the Hospodars were deposed; a Provisional Administration, at the head of which Prince Michael Gortschakoff was nominated to represent with supreme powers the undefinable Protectorate of Nicholas, was established; and, in short, the Czar carried into effect the very claims, concerning the admissability of which he was at the same time holding an illusory discussion with all Europe. The movement was made suddenly and rapidly. In the very first instance, fifty thousand troops—of which, perhaps, a third were cavalry, and which were attended with proportionate parks of artillery (seventy-two guns, in fact, of large calibre)—were pushed into Moldavia; and these troops were virtually but the advanced guard of the intended army of occupation. Two immense lines of march—one from the centre of European Russia, and another, equally long, from the very confines of Asia, were all alive with armed men, succeding each other, and pressing forward to a common destination. From Kherson and Kief moved those who were to replace the garrison of Bessarabia; and the vacant and remoter cantonments were, in their turn, supplied by the advancing columns of Taurida and the Don Cossacks of Poltowa and the Ukraine. They came—the children of ancient and barbarous races—various in costume, in stature, in complexion, in manners, in arms; but all gathered and drilled into the one huge system of military tyranny and religious fanaticism. The worst and cheapest troops came first. This method is essentially Asiatic. We picked our men to send the most efficient; and the French have included, in their expeditionary divisions, a part at least, and a large part, of their best soldiery; and if, when these had gone, the army of the Baltic consisted of very young soldiers, they were at least armed, provisioned, accoutred, and trained with even additional liberality and more scrupulous caution. Very different from such troops were the Russian soldiers who now poured into Moldavia. Perhaps there is no armed body in the service of the Czar, which ever derives the full and fair measure of provision, of clothing, and of equipment, represented on paper by their cost. If there be such a body, it is that of the 60,000 or 70,000 Guards. The chief particular in the annual expenses of the State is that of the support of its armaments; and, in theory, the country being considered, sufficient sums are, perhaps, apportioned to the purpose. But in practice, these sums are misappropriated; a great part of the money is intercepted before it can reach the soldier. Corruption and venality corrode all departments of the military administration. The Guards being constantly under the eye of the Sovereign, escape most of the frauds, which, where they can be practised, injure alike the treasury of the State, and the comfort and efficiency of its defenders. In less favoured regiments a gold imperial must be spent, in order to do badly, what a silver rouble ought to have done well. The Colonels grow rich, while the soldiers perish of cold and want.

But when it is the system to select for the first hardships of every enterprise, that part of the soldiery who are the most reduced and damaged by the effect of these practices, it may easily be conceived in what condition some of the half-starved Russian divisions, after a fatiguing march through difficult countries, appeared in the Principalities. We speak not of those who had but to cross the Pruth from the borders of Bessarabia, but of the great masses who were simultaneously hurried from distant points to support the advanced guard. The first *hardships*, in truth, were not for the first comers. These were naturally the nearest. Ostensacken's corps was in movement behind, when Gortschakoff and Luders were entering the Turkish territory.

The Czar had long succeeded in raising a party in his favour in Moldo-Wallachia; but, be it observed, it was only a party; it was not the people, it was such a party as he has in Prussia, or in Baden. That such a party existed in the Principalities, is proved by the fact that, *before* the Russians had sent one soldier across the Pruth, the Divan of Moldavia assembled, on the 14th of June, at Jassy, and there voted an address of sympathy and homage to the Emperor Nicholas. Under the circumstances of the crisis, sympathy and homage amounted to an invitation, which he scarcely needed.

Five days after Prince Gortschakoff had passed the frontier stream (more fatal than the Rubicon), he assisted at a "Te Deum," which was intoned with solemnity at St. Spiridion, the great Greek Church of Jassy.

A week later—that is on the 15th of July—instead of the seventy-two guns with which the Russians had entered the country, they possessed in Jassy alone 144 heavy pieces of artillery; and this great part, and 40,000 men were instantly directed to advance upon the Danube. In another fortnight, having put this formidable column upon the march, Prince Gortschakoff was 160 miles away, at Bucharest, exchanging compliments with the Bishops, who had there assembled to give him welcome. Thus he was solemnly received in the respective chief cities of the two provinces. Between his stay in the first of these capitals and his arrival in the other, Ghika, the Hospodar, had sent to the Sultan a memorial of so equivocal a nature that it was considered a renunciation of the Ottoman allegiance. Under this impression, which was perhaps just, Abdul-Medjid deprived him at once of the title to that office, from the exercise of which he had already been practically excluded. First the Russians robbed him of the possession, and then the Divan deposed him from the dignity. The invaders, with whom he temporized, terminated his jurisdiction *de facto;* and the Suzerain whom he betrayed, abrogated it *de jure.* Ghika shortly afterwards explained his conduct, and was re-admitted into partial confidence at Constantinople.

The Czar felt that he had now taken steps from which he could not recede without incurring humiliations abroad which might impair his authority at home, and, perchance, imperil his dynasty. The armaments of Russia, therefore—to use a favourite term of our diplomatists—proceeded with such activity, that they were apparent to the most casual observation; and, not content with the resources in his hands, the Autocrat decreed, on the 23d of July, a new conscription of seven in the thousand. Meanwhile, a concentric despatch of troops was continued from all the southern provinces of the empire upon Bessarabia. They arrived, diseased, ill-provisioned, exhausted, after a desolating march sometimes thousands of miles, over roadless countries.

MEASURES TAKEN BY THE DIVAN; AND FIRST PROCEEDINGS OF THE INVADER.

On the other side, the Sultan was not inattentive to events, nor unequal to his dangerous and difficult position. He had to provide against attacks in Asia, as well as to guard the European seat of his Government. So early as the 23d June, Selim Pacha, was nominated Seraskier in Anatolia, and a large army was placed under his command. The choice of this officer, was as unfortunate as that of Omer Pacha in Europe was judicious and happy. The first object was to provide against the advance of the Russians from Georgia along the southern shores of the Black Sea—an advance which, unopposed, would place Constantinople in a worse position, than if the invaders, having forced the Balkans, lay encamped in the European province of Roumelia, which corresponds to the home counties of London. In this other position, the capital might still rescue the empire; and, with the allied fleets in the Bosphorus, and off the Golden Horn, might await events with tranquil defiance. More than this, a Russian army in Roumelia might be said to have crossed the Balkans only to perish. A victory near Adrianople, over a fresh and vigorous Anglo-French army, would, to those wearied troops, be a moral impossibility; while retreat over the mountains would offer the alternative of certain annihilation. But, if a large force from the Transcaucasian provinces could succeed in pushing through Erzeroum and Trebizond, and occupying Anatolia, then both the Channel of Constantinople and the Straits of the Dardanelles would be effectually commanded by the enemy; the key of the entrance of the Black Sea would be in his hands; and he could imprison in those waters, or exclude from them, the maritime defenders of the Porte. A favourable moment would then allow the Russian legions to be thrown across into the very metropolis.

This Asiatic danger being averted, Omer Pacha was appointed the Turkish Generalissimo in Europe; and as soon as the news of Prince Gortschakoff's invasion had reached the Divan, Omer was ordered to break down all the bridges over the Danube, and immediately to adopt what strategic measures he deemed advisable for the defence of the State. This was on the 11th July. At that time the French were holding their camp at Helfaut, and we our camp at Chobham. There was a great and unaccustomed activity in all our dockyards and arsenals. The same noise of preparation resounded in France. *But the fleets were still in Besika Bay.* We feared nor that we could be locked out from the future scenes of naval conflict; Woronzoff and his troops were a thousand miles inland to the East, the Turkish levies of the new Seraskier lay between, and the castles of the Dardanelles were in the proper custody. All this was true, and we knew it: but not one great General was in the service of Russia, a fact on which we could not then presume; and one great General aided by fortune, and commanding in Armenia, might have reversed the conditions we have enumerated and made a speedy and disastrous change in all the circumstances of the situation. It was still a time of political suspense; and while Omer Pacha was proceeding to the Danube and Prince Gortschakoff was exercising all the despotic powers of a conqueror in the Turkish territory beyond that river, actually pressing into his service *by forced enlistment the very Boyards* whom he could not induce by persuasion to join the cause of the invaders; while the Grand Duke Constantine was at Odessa, arging forward with vehemence the concentration of troops, the outfit of vessels, and the accumulation of all the means of an immediate and desperate struggle; while Italy and Hungary and Poland displayed new signs of disquietude; while Austria was repairing her financial resources and silently collecting her military strength; while Servia and Bosnia were breaking into insurrection; while the Ottoman Empire was convulsed with its prodigious exertions to use and yet to control the explosive passions which now raged and ravened for a vent—while, for example, *at Aleppo, on the 9th of August, a conspiracy to murder all the Christians* was with difficulty assuaged (rather than supressed); while already the clash of arms began to be heard, and blood to flow, on the banks of the Danube;—while this was the state of Europe, war was yet nowhere declared, *not even by Turkey.* And to show the wonderful delusion of men's minds, we may mention that so late as the 17th of August, the Austrian Consul-General at Bucharest announced in a letter which was at once published, that he had received positive news of the establishment of peace.

Trade was not yet quite suspended, and corn was shipped from Odessa in very considerable quantities, just twelve days before the Austrian Consul's very Austrian announcement. But grass seems began now to sweep the Black Sea, while the presence and the proceedings of the Russians in Greater Wallachia imposed new difficulties on the export of grain from that important cereal outlet and emporium. On the 25th, it was known that one thousand vessels would be required at the Sulineh Mouth to ship the arrears. It is, therefore, not surprising, if we take this as but a sample of the difficulties arising, that something very nearly approaching to a dearth was felt at the close of 1853. That year, which had begun, with so fair a promise, ended in gloom and alarm. A scarcity prevailed; a pestilence impended; after forty years of peace, improvement, and civilization, a vast war, to be waged with new and more terrible implements of destruction, was at hand; and none could promise themselves that they should witness its termination.

Darker and darker, by swift gradations, became the color of events. The cholera and the hosts of General Luders were heard of together in Bessarabia, and together they entered Brailow. On the 1st of September the Sultan ordered an immediate levy of 80,000 men, which was answered on the 24th by a ukase of the Czar, calling out a new conscription, though he had, *only two months and a day before,* by a similar measure, torn so many thousands of his wretched serfs (the only wealth of the Muscovite Boyards) from their agricultural labours.

Four days after the Sultan's Hatti Sherif, Prince Gortschakoff, who was at Bucharest, about twenty-five miles from the great river which he had orders to pass, issued a proclamation, concluding with these extraordinary words:—"Russia is called to annihilate Paganism, and those who would oppose her in that sacred mission shall be annihilated with the Pagans! *Long life to the Czar! Long life, to the Deity of the Russians!*" So the expressions have been, and, no doubt, with literal exactitude, translated. But it is quite evident, that the virtual meaning, in Russ, of the words rendered by "long life to," is "*hurrah for,*" and that the mention of the Supreme Being, by a brutal and illiterate soldier, unused to composition, was intended as merely symbolical of the particular religious cause for which he was come to do battle. But, even, with this palliation, a more barbarous manifesto could scarcely be cited; and the precedence given to the cheer for the Czar over the cheer for the Czar's Maker (unless a climax was intended by the accomplished author), indicates the very peculiar nature of Russian fanaticism. In truth, fanatics have always fought well; and these poor slaves fight badly. Therefore they are not real fanatics. We shall find, in addition to this, that they are badly led by their generals; and it is a very curious fact, which the history of the present war seems likely to corroborate, that Russia never yet produced a leader of troops who was of the *highest order.* Every other great military nation can, in its own annals, point to scores of such commanders—except, indeed, Prussia; and Prussia has not, perhaps, been long enough a Power of Europe to have yet produced another Frederick.

Two days after Prince Gortschakoff's proclamation, the sentiments of the Wallachians might be conjectured from the proceedings to which the Russian General was obliged to resort. Several Boyards were arrested *on the charge of corresponding with Omer Pacha.* And what if this were true? War was not declared; Russia herself was at pains to represent the invasion of the Principalities as no invasion at all; but, emphatically, a peaceful occupation, executed without the least breach of amity between the Czar and that Potentate, who, besides, was certainly the Sovereign of these Boyards. Yet they are cast into prison, for being but suspected of writing to a high officer in the service of their own Monarch, the Czar's good friend.

On the 10th, the French Ambassador to the Porte, became so uneasy that, on his own responsibility, he ordered three French frigates; and Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, yielding to his persuasions, ordered, in like manner, three English frigates, to ascend the Sea of Marmora, and to moor at the entrance of the Bosphorus. This was but a slight and scrupulous demonstration. Far more decisive advances of the enemy were progressively occurring; and Giurgevo, on the north bank of the Danube, facing Rustchak, was selected, instead of Fokschani, at the foot of the Crapack hills, to be the scene of the chief Russian camp. The mouths of the river were now filled with corn, which could not be exported. These accumulations, on the 17th of September, amounted to 40,000 kilogrammes of white wheat, 9000 of red, 16,000 of maize, and 25,000 of rye.

The last fruitless diplomatic effort before Turkey declared war—an effort on the one side to come to an understanding, and on the other to overreach Europe—was the conference at Olmutz, where the Czar tried his personal influence over the young Emperor Francis Joseph. Nicholas arrived at Warsaw on the 20th of September, and thence reached Olmutz on the 23d. Seven days later, he was again at Warsaw, disappointed and baffled, as it was commonly imagined, in all the objects of his late visit—a visit which had not been undertaken until Envoy after Envoy (each of higher reputation than his predecessor) had failed at Vienna. We know not, for our part, with what understanding the two Monarchs separated. The subsequent conduct of Austria is, perhaps, the best light by which we can guide our conjectures; and, whatever praise may be due to Francis Joseph, this reflection will occur to everybody, that he might have earned a still higher praise, *for he might have prevented the European conflict altogether.*

As if to alarm England, the exaggerated statements of Russia's power, and of her means of war, were accompanied by the announcement of occasional victories, menacing India in their results. Thus, we now heard how General Perewski, Governor of Orenburgh, had stormed Ahmetzi, *and had laid open the road to Khiva.*

SECOND PERIOD: HOSTILITIES AFTER TURKEY, BUT BEFORE ENGLAND AND FRANCE HAD DECLARED WAR.

It was not till the beginning of October, that the Sultan, who could wait no longer for the Allies, and, indeed, no longer restrain the eagerness of his own people, formally declared war against Russia, and decreed that 150,000 fresh troops should be raised and organized at once, for the defence of Islam. The Czar, when this heroic act of the "sick man" was announced to him, declared that, "from that moment forth *he retracted all his concessions.*" What his concessions had recently been to Turkey, or what concessions he meant, it would have been perplexing to determine.

The declaration of war could not have been further delayed. Even before it was possible for the news to have reached the Danube, about 1300 Redifs suddenly passed the river, and made a foray on the Russian side. They met part of Luder's division, fought their way successfully back to the water's edge, and recrossed in safety with their spoils.

(To be continued.)