# WAR & REVOLUTION IN ASIATIC RUSSIA

BY

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saw, and sent frequent dispatches to my newspaper. Part II of this volume is made up out of my diary and out of articles which appeared during these months in the *Manchester Guardian*. During the summer and autumn of 1916 I was doing relief work among refugees in the Trans-Caucasus and the neighbouring regions of Turkey. While on this work I travelled through a large part of the province of Fars and Lazistan, both of which little-known regions I describe in Chapters VI and VII. Part I is a short history of the Caucasus campaign which I compiled during the winter of 1916, while living in Tiflis. In the Introduction I try to connect the great events that were taking place in the Middle East with the past history of Central Asia, and to sketch the lines along which an international settlement might be made. I was just completing this when the Russian Revolution broke out, and I became a witness of its effects in the Asiatic provinces. In Part III, I lead up to this theme. I show in Chapter IX the real state of Asiatic Russia, as I saw it in the months preceding the Revolution. In Chapter VIII I show how the Russian reaction was in part responsible for the disastrous state of affairs in Armenia, and was contributing with the Turkish Government to bring that unhappy country to the verge of ruin. In the last Chapter, I describe the Revolution in Asia and the dawn of the new era which Russia has now made for the people of that continent.

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PETROGRAD.
*May* 19, 1917.

NOTE.—*A chapter on "Persia and her Future" will be included in later editions after the war or when there is no Censor to be consulted.*

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# INTRODUCTION

# WAR AND REVOLUTION IN ASIATIC RUSSIA

## INTRODUCTION

If we look at a map of the old hemisphere, we shall be struck with two important facts. We shall first observe that what is known as Europe is a westerly projection of the much greater continent of Asia; and secondly that there are two passages between these two portions of the continent. One of these passages leads from the deserts of Central Asia across a wide plain into Central Europe and covers what is known politically as Russia; and the other, a narrower one, leads from the plateaux in the heart of Asia across a projecting promontory, known as Asia Minor, into south-eastern Europe. These two passages are separated from each other by a depression filled with water, which is the Black Sea. People in the heart of the continent, if they wish to move west, must cross by one or other of these two passages. For the sake of convenience let us call them the *gateways* between the two portions of the continent.

Now if we think of the great events of human history that have helped to build up modern Europe, such as the rise of Greek civilization, the birth of Christianity, the fall of Constantinople and the invasion of Russia by the Tartars, we shall see that they have all taken

place either in or near these two passages. It would seem in fact as if from the earliest times action and reaction, movements and counter-movements, have been going on between the peoples of Europe and Asia. What has caused this continuous unrest? One may attribute it perhaps to religious impulses, like that which inspired the Arabs, or to abstract ideas, which aimed at giving to mankind a uniform political and legal system, such as those which moved the Romans. This explanation will only suffice if we assume that the impulses which lead man to change his modes of thought and his habits of life, come direct from the "free spirit", untrammelled by the chains of material existence. If that is so, then these spiritual movements cannot be traced to peculiarities of climate or geography. But if on the other hand they are connected with the material side of life, then the structure of continents, their temperature, soil and climates, must influence the human types that live there, and must affect the forms of society and the different political and religious movements that take place there.

Now Central Asia is a huge expanse of alternating high plateau and low plain, divided by great ranges of mountains. The climate of one part of it is widely different from that of another. Physical obstacles have prevented the people of Asia from uniting in one common political system. The history of Central Asia from the Islamic renaissance to the Mongol Empire may be regarded as an attempt to create this unity. But the caprices of nature have always frustrated the ideals of man. The rulers of the Bactrian oases could subject their own neighbours, but they could not make their influence felt beyond the Pamirs or the Tian-shan. The Bedouin

shepherds of Arabia, inspired with the simple faith of Islam, were ignorant teachers and but transitory rulers of the refined Persians of Isfahan. Two separate types of humanity can be observed in Central Asia from the earliest times down to this day. There are the inhabitants of the oases, who live a sedentary life, and are able with little labour to satisfy their material needs. On the other hand the nomads of the mountains and deserts are obliged to resort in years of drought to raids on their neighbours' territory, or else to go hungry. Such extremes of severity and luxury have produced these two types of men; one the submissive peoples of the oases, prone to abstract thought, with their schools of philosophy and their mystic sects; the other, predatory by instinct, and from time to time sending forth hordes of invaders with their tyrant emperors.

For these reasons a stable political system in Central Asia has been hitherto impossible. Hungry nomads to this day periodically invade the fertile oases; and in earlier times they often banded together and pushed their migrations far into the West. The Mongols, Tartars and Osmanlis, whose movements had such a profound effect upon Eastern Europe, are all examples of this process. Following the lines of least resistance, they passed through the two gateways between Europe and Asia, the Russian plain and the Asia Minor plateau.

The reverse movement from West to East has also been taking place. Europe for the last hundred years has slowly, but systematically, penetrated western Asia and established its economic influence there. Now the western peninsula of the Europeo-Asiatic continent has to a large degree acquired a common standard of culture

and ideals, and has been saved from the instability which results when fierce nomads live, as in Asia, beside defenceless oasis-dwellers. Protected from these hordes in the middle ages by the races which inhabited the Russian plain and the Asia Minor plateau, European man commenced his political and cultural development as soon as the Reformation had cast off the shackles of ecclesiasticism, and set free the spirit of reason and enquiry. Assisted by an even climate and a soil of moderate fertility, he learnt early to develop the material side of civilization, and to conquer nature by the arts and crafts. Accumulations of energy stored up in the form of capital were then exported abroad. The tide of human movement turned to Asia once more, and Europe began to swing back the pendulum, which the Turanian hordes had pushed towards her in the middle ages. Again the "gateways" between the two halves of the continent became the scene of race-movement and political struggle. The first move was made by the Slavs, who began their migrations eastwards as far back as the 11th century. They took as their sphere the northern gateway, or the Russian plain. To the lot of the Western Powers, some centuries later, after the decline of the Ottoman Empire, fell the southern gateway. Then began the competition between the Powers of Europe over the Balkans, and over railway concessions in Asiatic Turkey. All these movements and conflicts were indications of Europe's "Drang nach Osten".

Besides the eastern and western movements through the two "gateways" of Europe and Asia, one can also trace all along the centuries a movement from North to South. For many centuries the nomad races from the

Russian plain have passed across the narrow isthmus of the Caucasus, which connects the northern with the southern gateways. In very early times the Parthians invaded Persia by this route, and established their dynasty there. So also in the middle ages did the Scythians and Alans. In recent times the Russians have done the same, penetrating North Persia and Armenia by way of the Trans-Caucasus. These movements may be attributed to the natural tendency of a people, living in a temperate or sub-arctic region, to establish commercial relations with the peoples of sub-tropical countries.

Thus we observe three principal trends of race movement in the regions that lie between Europe and Asia. There is first the movement from Asia to Europe (now at an end); then there is the movement from Europe to Asia, which is taking place at the present day; and, thirdly, there is the movement from the Russian plain into the southern gateway across the isthmus of the Trans-Caucasus. In all these we can trace the effect of economic necessity. The exchange of sub-arctic timber and cereals for southern cotton and fruit establishes a close relation between the Russians and the people of the Middle East. The existence also of undeveloped regions in the southern "gateway" gives the financial interests of Europe the opportunity to export capital and acquire spheres of exclusive economic rights. As a result the financial groups of Europe have contended with each other for this Eastern booty, while the proletariat, not yet organized sufficiently to control the production of wealth and the application of capital, has become the victim of wars for "spheres of influence". It is no accident, therefore, that this great war has been fought

not only on European battlefields, but far away in Mesopotamian deserts, Armenian plateaux, and Persian oases. For in these regions lie the prizes for the financial "interests" of London, Paris and Berlin. In these Eastern *dominions* also the now vanished Court of the Romanoffs hoped to find governorships and vice-royalties for Grand Dukes. Thus in that region of Asia lying in a triangle between the Caspian Sea, the Black Sea and the Persian Gulf, all the conflicting interests of East and West meet to-day, just as they met during the migrations of the nomads in the middle ages. In the struggle that has ensued, the Caucasus campaign has played no mean part.

In order more clearly to understand the political problems of the Middle East, let us consider a little more in detail the geographical and ethnological characters of these regions. Asia in its main physical features consists of a system of mountain chains and parallel plateaux running from the Far East of the Chinese Empire to the threshold of South-East Europe. In its most westerly limit this great plateau is narrowed down to the area between the Black Sea and the Persian Gulf: but owing to compression in this comparatively small space, the plateau is puckered and folded into a number of regions varying greatly in altitude and consequently in climate. Each climatic zone and geographical region possesses its corresponding human type, and hence we find between the Caucasus mountains and the Levant a most varied assortment of human beings, each type with its own culture and social habits. The region with the lowest altitude of all is found along the coast of the Black Sea and the Levant. The whole of this region

has a uniform sub-tropical climate, producing the same kind of vegetation and the same human type all along its sea-board. Shut in by high ranges of mountains, this narrow strip of coast-line is protected from the cold plateau winds, and moistened by the soft sea breezes. The produce of the tiny maize-fields, perched up amid forested slopes, and the fruit of the terraced vineyards, which surround the red-tiled houses, are brought along narrow by-ways to the cool bazaar towns, from which they are transported by ship to the West. Thus the inhabitants of this coast are by nature a race of small cultivators of sub-tropical produce, merchants and mariners. From the earliest times the waves of Greek civilization have lapped along these shores, and the people, though their racial origins are various, have turned their eyes in each successive generation to the mother-cities of Athens and Constantinople. Their commercial life brings them into constant contact with the maritime peoples of the West, and tends to make them keen business men. Their great historic past, and their position on a sea highway, have made them politicians with imperialist leanings. The sub-tropical climate also in which they live, and the moderate degree of leisure which most of them can enjoy, have been favourable conditions for controversial and speculative thought.

Behind the ranges bordering the sea-coast the country opens out into the wide table-land of Anatolia,[1] varying from 2,500 to 4,000 feet above sea-level. The tempera-

[1] The Greek name for Asia Minor, corresponding to the "Levant" of the Italians—the "Orient," or "Land of the Rising Sun." *Anatolia* is by the Greeks strictly limited to Asia Minor; *Levante* is by the Italians extended to all the lands lying East of the Mediterranean, and *Orient* is applied to the East in general.

ture of this region is continental and extreme, ranging from the heat of the sub-tropical zone in summer to the cold of the sub-arctic zone in winter. Irrigated oases are found in many parts of the plain, and grazing areas in the mountains. But the difference between life in the mountains and life in the plateau plains is not so sharp as it is in the regions farther to the east, in Armenia and Persia. This is largely due to the more broken structure of the table-land, the pastoral country being interspersed among the land suitable for oasis cultivation. Thus the people of Anatolia are roughly speaking of one type. They are village-dwellers and corn-growers at one time of the year, and tent-dwellers and cattle-grazers at another. There is not that strong permanent distinction between shepherd and agriculturist which is found farther to the east. The political history of Anatolia has been largely determined by the fact that it is situated at the converging points of all the land routes between Central Asia and South-East Europe. It has thus become the channel for race movements of all kinds. Invading hordes of nomads shook the foundations of its society at one time, while at another wandering bands of Dervishes inspired it with the ideas and thoughts of the Madrasas (colleges) of Isfahan and Tabriz. Periods of disturbance alternated with periods of reconstruction, during which the invading elements became modified by the native elements of the plateau. Fierce Tartars were tamed by a few generations of life on the quiet upland pastures of Angora; the human driftwood that crossed the plateau has been gradually converted by agricultural pursuits into materials for a military Empire. Anatolia has received

from the earliest times the outpourings of Europe and Asia; but she has always reduced them to her one single type of humanity—agricultural, pastoral and military.

Coming to the regions to the east of Anatolia, we observe a considerable rise in the table-land. Here the table-lands lie at an average height of from 4,000 to 6,000 feet, and the mountain ranges from 7,000 to 10,000 feet. The cause of these high altitudes is the large outpourings of volcanic detritus, which has raised the level of the land by some 1,000 to 2,000 feet, leaving on either side, to the east and west, the lower levels of the Persian and Anatolian table-lands.[1] The climate of Armenia is in the main sub-arctic. The long cold winters render wheat and barley the only cereals that will endure the atmospheric conditions. Irrigation is less necessary than in Anatolia, for the rains of the short summer months generally provide for the needs of vegetation. The severe climate of the plateau breeds a hard and vigorous race of agriculturists and shepherds. But, unlike Anatolia, Armenia has never been able to unite her nomad and settled populations. The regions suitable for pastoral pursuits are geographically quite distinct from the agricultural regions, and so two economic types have been formed and have become quite stereotyped.

The great mountain system of the eastern Taurus from Diarbekr to the Persian frontier is generally known as Khurdistan.[1] It consists of parallel ranges and rugged valleys between 7,000 and 10,000 feet high, where the rigorous climate permits only sheep and cattle-grazing. In favoured spots barley can be grown;

[1] See Map.

and those that occupy themselves with this, hibernate during the winter in underground houses. But over the greater part of these regions the natives live in tents and migrate to the lowlands in the winter. In the parallel range of the Ala-Dag, farther to the north, although this is not, strictly speaking, Khurdistan, the same conditions as those in the Taurus are repeated on a smaller scale. Throughout these two mountain regions the predominant population are of Iranian extraction and are known as Khurds. The climatic conditions under which they live are very severe. A great struggle for existence is necessary, to enable them to wring sustenance for their families from the land. Thus there is created a hardy and virile race, always ready for expansion, to relieve the pressure of population. Hence also its tendency to restlessness and to turbulent encroachments on its neighbours, which is so frequently observed among the Khurds.

The other region of the Armenian plateau lies at the lower levels of from 4,000 to 5,000 feet, where the country opens out into wide, sweeping downs, covered with layers of volcanic soil. Here the Armenians are found in numbers varying from 25 per cent. to 75 per cent. of the population. It is often imagined that the Armenians are a commercial people like the Greeks; but this idea is far from accurate. The Armenians are essentially agricultural, and their ancestors, from the dawn of history, have cultivated corn in the basin of Lake Van and the plain of Mush. In these regions life can only be sustained by hard work, and the Armenian peasant is forced to be more practical and industrious than his neighbours in the fertile oases of Persia. On the other hand Nature

is not so hard upon him as she is upon the Khurd, whom she almost overwhelms in the struggle for existence. The soil of the Van and Mush plains can even produce sufficient to enable the people to support a leisured class and develop a culture of their own. There is no exuberance of luxury, such as in the Persian oases tends to produce all kinds of hot-house culture. But the numerous monasteries of the Van basin and the Mush plain testify to the cult of art and letters among the Armenians at a very early date. The Armenian's ideas of life have settled down into a simple creed—a practical form of Christianity. He has brought reason and logic to bear upon the problems of life, and in this respect he is not unlike the Bulgarian, whose mode of existence is very similar. Both these peoples differ markedly from the Greeks and Georgians with their acute intellect and passion for controversy. The separate development of the Armenian Church, and its steady refusal to unite with the Greek and Georgian Churches, is undoubtedly connected with the difference in temperament of the two peoples.

In the region to the east of Armenia and Khurdistan the land sinks into the lower levels of Persia. The mountain ranges that run across Anatolia from west to east, and are covered in part by the volcanic eruptions of Armenia, reappear with a slight south-easterly bend in Western Persia. The Iranian plateau is less sharply divided than Armenia by great ranges of mountains. True, the Elburz range on the southern shores of the Caspian Sea, and the Bakhtiari mountains along the northern shores of the Persian Gulf, form barriers against movements from north and south. But apart

from these impediments, movements along the plateau are easy, and roads lead travellers south-east to India, north-east to Turkestan, west to Armenia, and south-west to Mesopotamia. Persia therefore, not less than Armenia, has been the track for races moving from the farther parts of Asia through the southern "gateway" into Europe. But while Armenia has been the scene of passing hordes, destroying and enslaving, Persia has succeeded in assimilating the invaders to herself, and passing the newly formed humanity on to the West. It has therefore played a very important part in the history of the peoples inhabiting the southern "gateway", and it is necessary to see what circumstances have brought this about. The climate of the Iranian plateau presents a marked contrast to that of Anatolia, and an even greater contrast to that of Armenia. The Central Asian table-land east of Armenia, as I mentioned above, tilts slightly south-east, causing the mountains and plains of Western Persia to lie between latitudes 30 and 39, i.e. some three or four degrees south of the latitude of Armenia and Anatolia. The levels of the plateaux lie from 4,000 to 5,000 feet above the sea, i.e., from 1,500 to 2,000 feet higher than those of the Anatolian plains, and 1,000 to 1,500 feet lower than those of Armenia. On the assumption therefore that altitude compensates for latitude, one would expect that the climate of Western Persia would be similar to that of Anatolia. But here another factor comes in. The farther one goes east across the Central Asian plateau, the less one feels the moistening influences of sea breezes. Thus the rainfall coming from the sea, which is precarious in Anatolia, is entirely absent over

the greater part of Persia, while, owing to the more southerly latitudes, tremendous dry heat is experienced in the summer months. The little rivers flowing from the low mountain ranges of the plateau trickle down on to the plain, and would dry up in the parching desert, were they not instantly caught up by the thousand irrigation canals built by the natives to water their vineyards, melon-gardens and rice-fields. Conditions exist for intensive cultivation unknown in Anatolia and Armenia, and thus the cultivation of fruit and rice has become the great industry of the Persian oases. The unsurpassed excellence of Persia's sub-tropical produce has given rise to a great trade with the inhabitants of the Russian plain to the north. This has materially enriched its people and has enabled them, in spite of invasions and disturbances, to develop a high culture. Throughout all the ages, in spite of Mongol, Tartar and Arab invasions and devastations, Nature through the agency of the fertile oases has restored to Iran the damage inflicted on her by man, and has given the Persian that material wealth which has enabled him to build up a culture of undying fame. Every foreign race that has subdued Persia politically, has within a short period become culturally assimilated to her. The barbarian Hulagu Khan who overran her in the 13th century was the founder of the Ilkhan dynasty, which within a generation had accepted Islam and acquired Persian names. Iran has always been the creator of abstract ideas, philosophies, mysteries, and schools of thought, which she has sent forth to the East and to the West.

But the oasis-dwellers do not form the only element in the population. Like Armenia, Persia has been afflicted

by race questions, though the results have been different. Both countries contain two races living side by side, one a settled, and the other a nomad population. What the Khurds in the upper Tigris valley are to the Armenians, the Lurs and Bakhtiaris on the edge of the Iranian table-land are to the Persians of the oases. But while in Armenia the nomad and settled populations maintain each its separate existence, in Persia there is continually going on a fusion of the one type with the other. The mountain tribes are constantly descending and raiding the plain; but instead of being resisted, as in Armenia, numbers of them adopt Persian customs and culture, and finally become absorbed as natives of the oasis. The Armenian climate on the other hand creates a stub-born people, that resists nomad invasions; hence the continual conflict between Khurd and Armenian, and the sufferings of the settled population. But living in the luxury of the oases, the Persian has lost all desire to fight invaders: he welcomes all, and conquers them by other means than force. The atmosphere of the isolated bazaar-town, with its cool Mosques and dignified Madrasas, calls forth the spirit of compromise in dealing with hungry tribes camped outside the gate. In Persia there has never been a government in the European sense of the word. Some tribal chief among the nomads, or some caravan-thief, collects followers and proclaims himself governor of a province. He becomes governor and per-haps Shah, and founds a dynasty. The people of the oases submit, and go on with their fruit-growing and mysticism. The Persian is always being conquered by the sword, but in turn always subdues the conqueror by his intellect.

# Introduction

North of the Persian and Armenian table-land we come to the isthmus between the Caspian and Black Seas. Along this isthmus runs the great Caucasus range, which rises like a wall out of the Russian plain on the north, and is bordered on the south by the rolling downlands of Georgia. The whole of this region forms the land-communication between the Russian plain on the one side, and the Armenian and Iranian table-land on the other. It is thus a sort of corridor or side-passage between the northern and southern gateways of Europe and Asia. The Caucasian isthmus is, geographically, very complex. The main range contains rocky valleys and secluded corners, where the racial drift of ages has been stranded, and can be seen to this day. A northern spur of the volcanic Armenian highlands, known as the Kars plateau, comes at one point (a little south of Tiflis) within a short distance of the main Caucasus range.[1] South-east of the range also the land rises in the Kara Dag uplift on to the Iranian plateau. Between the Armenian and Iranian plateaux and the main range of the Caucasus there is an expanse of open plain and downland lying at levels of 1,500 to 2,500 feet. Protected by the great Caucasus range on the north from the winds of the steppes, and by the Kars plateau on the south from the cold of Armenia, this region, known as Georgia, is favoured with a mild winter and a hot summer. It has, moreover, an abundant rainfall, thanks to the proximity of the Black Sea and the absence of any large mountains to catch the rain-bearing winds from this quarter. The climate of Georgia is thus between the sub-tropical conditions of

[1] See Map.

the Black Sea coast and the sub-arctic conditions of the Armenian plateau. The vine flourishes, along with cereals, without irrigation, on a rich and easily tilled soil. Forests on the hill-sides assist the husbandry of man. The Georgians, who are the most important representatives of the native races of the isthmus, are thus favoured by nature with an even climate and a good soil. They have in times past reached a high degree of wealth and culture. The absence of the unmeasured luxury of the oases of Persia has prevented them from developing an excessive æsthetic tendency. The comparative ease with which they can gather the produce of their cornfields and vineyards contrasts with the difficulties besetting the Armenian peasants on the Van plateau. They are therefore a more easygoing people, with a gentler and more pleasant nature than the Armenians. A temperate climate and a condition of moderate ease, together with intercourse with the West, makes the Georgian very similar in type to the Roumanian, the Servian and the Little Russian. Some, however, of the Western Georgians (Imeretians, Gurians and Mingrelians) show a marked resemblance to the Greek cultural type. Living on the sea-board in constant contact with the Greeks, these people have developed the commercial instinct, and the political, controversial type of mind. But the inhabitants of the rolling hill-country between Kutais and Tiflis are more quiescent in temper. The impressions of nature around them, the sight of waving cornfields, shady vineyards, forested hills and distant snow-mountains, have become woven into their lives, and have given them the strain of mysticism characteristic of the

Slav. In some parts of Georgia, especially in the valley of the Rion, malaria is prevalent, and tends to weaken the vitality of the natives. The country inhabited by the Georgians is therefore very varied, and the human types are numerous. Nevertheless they are all united by one common tie, the Greek tradition of Christianity, which has made them look to the West for culture, and to the North for protection. The mutual sympathy between Slav and Georgian has played no small part in uniting these two peoples politically; and the Russian advance into the Caucasus was very materially assisted by the presence beyond the mountain ranges of a race of co-religionists. Thanks to the sympathy of Georgia, a voluntary union with the Russian Empire became possible, enabling the latter to extend its influence into the Trans-Caucasus and on to the Armenian plateau. The Georgians have always been a people in Asiatic surroundings, looking wistfully towards Europe. In earlier days they looked to Greece for their culture and religion; more lately they have become the political allies of the Eastern Slavs.

We thus see that the region lying in the triangle between the Caucasus mountains, the Black Sea, and the Persian Gulf, generally known as the Middle East, contains very diverse physical and climatic zones. Each zone produces its special human type with its own mode of life and industry. Each of these types correspondingly affects the political systems of these regions. Thus the sea-board has created a mariner and trading race with a restless character and a capacity for politics. The inhabitants of the highest plateaux are hard-working, but their country is broken into rugged mountain masses,

where live simple and hungry nomads. Between these two elements political fusion has been impossible. The oasis regions on the other hand have created the most cultured types of humanity, ever absorbing the raw nomads from the mountain and desert. All of these human types have played their part in the history of the Eastern Question to a greater or a less extent. Their countries have become bones of contention between the Western Powers, competing for political and economic influence there. For with the development of capitalism and industrialism in the last century, the raw material wealth of these regions has become valuable. It is possible, therefore, to interpret the political controversies that have affected this southern gateway between Europe and Asia, as a struggle of outside influences for the possession of trade routes and spheres of influence.

The material instincts of man, which have always urged him to increase the products of nature to his advantage, have led him from earliest times to look beyond his own valley, and to exchange what he has for something belonging to his neighbour. The exchange, if it took place voluntarily, became trade; if involuntarily, and under the influence of superior force, imperial exploitation. In early times, when man's power over nature was not yet strengthened by science, the relations between peoples generally took the form of exchange of raw materials. The temperate regions of Europe and the sub-arctic Russian plain produced hides, tallows and furs, which were readily exchanged for the sub-tropical products of the Levant, the Persian and Mesopotamian oases. Thus there sprang up across the southern gateway a

whole series of trade routes along which this traffic used to pass. Imperial Powers like Rome and Byzantium, and armed Merchant Guilds like Genoa and Venice, used to struggle for the possession of these great trade routes, six of which can be discerned crossing the southern "gateway" during the middle ages. The most southerly one was controlled by the Greek mariners, who, starting from Hellas, visited in their ships every bay and natural harbour of the Levant. This important sea-route was continued overland from the Syrian coast to the Mesopotamian oases by way of Palmyra. Farther north came the great land route across Asia Minor, which led from the coast of Lydia to Mesopotamia. The control of the trade that passed this way frequently changed hands, as the imperial power of Byzantium or the Caliphate waxed or waned. In the 14th century the invasion of Turkish nomads and the fall of the Greek Empire caused the exchange between East and West along this line to dwindle. It was only renewed when the Western Powers in the 19th century commenced their colonial expansion.

Across Armenia during the middle ages went a third route, which, starting from the Greek sea-board at Trebizond, passed through the city of Ani and ended in the fertile oases of northern and central Persia. There were many suzerain powers along this route—Byzantium, the Armenian kings, the Caliphate and the Shahs. The fortunes of each varied, but with the decline of the influence of the Armenian kings, who were squeezed between the Eastern and Western Powers, most of the authority along this route after the 12th century passed to the Greek Empire and Tartar Khans, who divided the tribute and royalties between them.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth trade routes passed across the southern "gateway" from the Russian plain. Very early in their history the Slavs began to exchange the produce of their northern forests for that of the sub-tropical oases, and to carry on this trade along definite routes. The first of these came from the South of the Dnieper and passed across the Black Sea to Constantinople. The second left the steppes north of the Sea of Azov, and connected with the shores of the Caspian, whence merchandise passed either by land or water to the Persian oases. The third came down the Volga from the northern part of the Russian plain, and reached the north shores of Persia through the Caspian. The desire to control these three important trade routes led the Tzars of Moscow to embark upon their eastern campaigns. From these times dates the expansion of the Russian Empire in Asia, the conquest of the Caucasus, and the penetration of Turkestan and Persia.

Looking at the directions in which trade between Europe and Western Asia flowed during the 19th century and the early years of the 20th, we observe that they are almost identical with those in the middle ages. The maritime trade of the eastern Mediterranean, formerly controlled by the Greeks, is now under the sea power of the British Empire. One important change, however, has been made. The opening of the Suez Canal has diverted the trade that once went overland to Persia and India via Syria, and sends it now direct by sea. The second route, passing from the West by land across Asia Minor, follows to-day almost exactly the same line as in the middle ages. The only difference is that the merchandise is carried by the German Bagdad

railway instead of by Arab camel caravans. Of the third route across Armenia little remains. Before the European war some Western goods were carried from Trebizond to north Persia via Erzerum and Bayazid; but the importance of this trade was fast declining as the economic exchange between the Russian plain and the Persian oases developed. This trade is carried by the railways from Central Russia to Baku, and thence by sea to the north Persian coast. Another branch of it comes down the Volga. In both these cases the trade takes exactly the same line as was taken in the middle ages. On account of the valuable natural resources tapped by this route, (resources only now made realizable under modern industry,) the trade from the Russian plain to Persia is likely to become one of the principal exchanges between the East and West in the future. Along this route will flow the cereal products of the Cossack steppes, North Caucasus oil and the rice and dried fruits of Persia. The construction, therefore, of a Trans-Persian railway is one of the most important enterprises of the future. The fifth great trade route of the present day across the southern "gateway" follows the line taken by the ancient Greeks from the Sea of Azov and the mouth of the Dnieper through the Turkish Straits. Along it will pass the corn exports of Russia to the Western world.

Thus we see that with some modifications the exchange between the productive regions of East and West across the southern "gateway" passes along the same routes as it did in the middle ages. Each route is controlled by one of the European Powers, which competes with its neighbouring Power for these channels of communi-

cation. Formerly Byzantium, Rome and the Caliphate used to collect imperial tribute from the merchandise that passed by, but to-day the prizes are sought in exclusive mining and irrigation rights along the course of the railways, and preferential rates in favour of the trade of one or other Power. We have seen how this competition for spheres of influence is a fertile cause of war ; and the danger will not be eliminated until the proletariat of the western countries unites and takes the control of the export of capital into its own hands. When that day arrives the whole face of the Eastern Question will be changed. But until that time, international settlements will always be endangered by the imperial "financial interests", that seek to carve out for themselves monopoly "rights" in undeveloped regions of the earth. If these "rights" are not controlled, the settlement of the Eastern Question will probably be made on the lines of the abortive agreement over the future of Asiatic Turkey negotiated by the European Powers in 1913 and 1914. Thus instead of an international agreement between the proletariat of all lands to distribute and apply all the surplus capital of Europe for the development of these regions on a common plan, we shall have the old form of agreement between the capitalists of the Powers to divide the spoils among themselves. The ideal solution can only be obtained if the proletariat of the whole world develops sufficient class-consciousness to realize its true interest and act accordingly. Failing this, we can at any rate hope that even among the propertied and ruling classes of Europe there will at last be some recognition of the signs of the times, and that they will begin to survey

the Eastern Question from the point of view of "world economics". For the common interests of mankind cannot much longer be thwarted by the parasitical few. A revolution of ideas is no less the interest of the European bourgeoisie than of the proletariat.

In the last hundred years European sciences have conquered distances, made hitherto remote regions of the earth accessible, and have tended to cosmopolitanize industries of public utility. If they have not overcome the financial groups that work for private profit, they have at least made great enterprises matters of world interest. Across the trunk lines and through the great ports will go, if allowed, the goods of all nations. It will not be such an easy thing in future to establish a trade monopoly in far-off seas, or claim, as special preserves, points where land and sea routes meet. The municipal commercial unit of the middle ages expanded, till in the course of time it became the national unit. In the 19th century the national has become the Imperial trading unit. It is therefore in keeping with the evolution of things that the Imperial unit should develop into the International right. Now how does this affect that vital point in the southern "gateway" where land and sea routes cross each other—that is, Constantinople and the Straits? There has now come into being a great trunk line, the shortest and most direct route between Europe and the Middle East, which goes straight across this point. Under modern industrial conditions, railways can successfully compete with sea routes for the carriage of all but the bulkiest materials. The Bagdad railway and the land route between Europe and the Persian Gulf is therefore

a great economic world-factor. The unhindered passage of trade through this point is to the interest of all, not merely proletarian, Europe. With Constantinople a free port under an international commission, on which all the world Powers and the smaller States are represented, neither the manufacturing export firms of the Central Powers nor the financial interests of London or Paris will be adversely affected. Through-traffic from America, France and England will pass through Germany and Austria on its way to Asia Minor and Mesopotamia, and the rates along the line will not discriminate in favour of the manufacturers of the Central Powers. If it is impossible as yet to obtain a settlement on the basis of internationalizing all the undeveloped areas of Western Asia, the next best thing is to internationalize those points where great trunk lines meet, or where important trade routes cross. The unhindered flow of merchandise at the vital points of the world's economy would then be secured. It would remain to control the flow of capital. In the meantime, the intervening spaces between these vital points could be handed over as special spheres of influence for the capitalist groups of the Western Powers. The irrigation and mining works of Anatolia could go to the Central Powers, those of Lower Mesopotamia to Great Britain. Beyond these regions would come the territories traversed by the future Trans-Persian railway. As a great highway of world importance, this should be brought under the same kind of international control as the Turkish Straits.

We have now looked at this region of the Middle East from many points of view. We have examined its geographical and climatic features, its human types and their

methods of living. We have seen how its different regions have been the object of competition between the Imperialist governments of Europe; how the trunk routes, along which economic exchange passes, have developed throughout the centuries, and how contention for the control of these routes has been an important factor in the circumstances leading up to the great war. We have even ventured to forecast a possible solution of these problems on an international basis. But enough has been said to show that the region between the Caucasus, Black Sea and Persian Gulf has played a great part in international politics before the war, and will be of no less importance in the economic development of the world's resources after it. In the following chapter we shall see what part Russia's military forces played in the Eastern campaign that followed the outbreak of the great war, and what effect this campaign is likely to have on the final settlement of those regions.

# PART I

# MILITARY HISTORY OF THE CAUCASUS CAMPAIGN (1914–16)

# CHAPTER I

## EARLY STAGES OF THE CAMPAIGN

### (1914-1915)

CONTEMPORARY writers on the history of the war are inclined to turn the whole of their attention to Europe, as though they were unaware of any events of importance outside Belgium, France, or Poland. The idea of hurling masses of men against Germany's West flank got such a firm hold upon the public mind from the first days of the war, that two very weighty considerations were almost entirely ignored. First, it was forgotten that the mere hurling of raw masses in overwhelming numbers does not decide the fate of a modern campaign. This has been proved by the Germans themselves, who by organization and technical skill have largely succeeded, in spite of inferior numbers, in holding their West front, while they were advancing victoriously against Russia's millions. Secondly, it was forgotten that very important victories might be won without crushing Germany's military forces in Europe at all. For instance, the professed object of the war would have been attained if, as the result of intelligent political propaganda on the part of the Allies, the German masses had learnt that their real enemy was in their own country. But even if the war be considered less in terms of ideas than of more material

aims, such as the conquest of Eastern markets, spheres of influence for financial interests, control over trunk railways, etc., we shall see that substantial victories could have been gained without this hurling of millions against Germany's lines in Belgium and France. The war, in fact, on its purely strategical side, ought to have been regarded as extending far beyond the confines of Europe. For by occupying parts of the Middle East, and by driving the Turks out of Mesopotamia, Syria, and Persia, the Allies would have completely eliminated the influence of the Central Powers from these Eastern markets and areas of exploitation. The capture of Constantinople, indeed, would have put the solution of the whole Eastern Question entirely into the hands of the Allies, and Germany would have been definitely confined to Europe, as a State with no colonial future. Thus the theatre of warfare both in Europe and Asia should have been regarded from the outset as a fiery ring surrounding the peoples of Central Europe, and the task of a united Allied Staff, if such could ever have been obtained, would have been to close this ring ever tighter round the prisoners.

Now the Caucasus campaign, when looked at from this point of view, becomes no mere insignificant skirmish in a third-rate area of war, but an important link in this chain surrounding the Central Powers. Along with the Mesopotamian and Egyptian campaigns, it has helped to decide which of the economic world-states is to control the southern "gateway" between Europe and Asia. There have been three competitors for this prize: the Central land Empires, the Western maritime Empire of Great Britain, and, before the Revolution, the land

Empire of Russia. The fortune of war might give to any one of these the control of the southern "gateway", or else it might decide, as up to the present it has decided, in favour of a political Balance of Power in the Middle East, part of Mesopotamia and Arabia coming under Great Britain's influence, Anatolia and Upper Mesopotamia under Germany's, and Armenia under Russia's. Now all these territorial gains are cards which at the Peace Conference will play no insignificant rôle in the settlement of the Eastern Question. In so far, therefore, as military events affect the ultimate world-settlement, the Caucasus campaign of 1914–16 has its place in history.

In the period preceding the Russo-Turkish war of 1877, Russia had been engaged in consolidating the position in the Trans-Caucasus, which she had acquired by her voluntary union with the ancient kingdom of Georgia. This had given her a hold over the lowlands lying immediately South of the main range of the Caucasus, and had established her upon the first step of the ladder leading onto the Central Asian plateau. But after 1877, by the occupation of Kars, Russia acquired a footing upon the next step of the ladder in Greater Armenia. This region is, as it were, a bridge connecting Asia Minor and the Iranian plateau. The Central Asian plateau in its western extremity is founded upon two main ranges of mountains which are the spines of the continent; these are the Taurus to the South, and the Anti-Taurus to the North, both running in a parallel direction East and West from Anatolia to Persia.[1] The Taurus, starting along the south coast of Asia Minor, curves North-

[1] See Map.

east in Cilicia, and then East in the Assyrian highlands as far as the Persian frontier, where it bends South-east, and is continued along the shores of the Persian Gulf in the Bakhtiari highlands. The Anti-Taurus commences East of Kaisarieh in Anatolia, and running in a North-easterly direction passes Sivas on the South and Erzinjan and Erzerum on the North, finally joining up with the Azairbijan mountain system East of Mount Ararat in the basin of the Middle Araxes. But this chain is broken in one place by the volcanic plateau of Kars and Erzerum, which is piled upon the Anti-Taurus chain, burying it under a mass of detritus. The whole of this plateau is a great volcanic bed composed of layers of lava and dykes, which were erupted here at a comparatively recent date in the earth's history. This volcanic activity has completely altered the original structure of the plateau, and has raised the level of the land some two thousand feet above the surrounding regions. Thus to the North of this great volcanic uplift lies the relative depression of the Chorokh Basin and the Upper Kura valley, so that the upper table-land is laid upon the older table-land of Georgia and Lazistan, while both of these two regions are one step higher than the coast of the Black Sea. On the highest volcanic table-land stand the two fortresses of Kars and Erzerum. It was natural that after Russia had established herself upon the northern strip of this volcanic plateau, she should make Kars her base, facing the Turkish base at Erzerum. These two fortresses were the pivots upon which the Russian Caucasus army and the Turkish Armenian army hinged their operations, since they were the commanding positions on the highest of the plateaux. But it is clear

that no operations were possible here with safety, unless both sides had secured themselves against flanking movements of the enemy in the depressions on each side of the plateau.[1] To the North lay the depression of the Chorokh valleys, through which a Turkish army could pass by a short cut into the valleys of the upper Kura and the fertile lands of Georgia, thus cutting off the Caucasian army at Kars from Tiflis. To the South lay the broken country of the Mush and Bitlis vilayets, across which a low range runs parallel with the Taurus and Anti-Taurus. This South Armenian volcanic plateau is much broken up by dykes and irregular outpourings of lava to the North and West of Lake Van.[1] To the South rises the great barrier of the Taurus, passage through which is only possible by the defiles caused by faults and fractures. But a Turkish army, once established in this South Armenian plateau, would be able to break through into the depression of the lower Araxes, and so outflank from the south-east the Russian base on the high plateau at Kars. On the other hand, it is clear that both these depressions, the Chorokh and the South Armenian plateau, could be used by the Russians (as they actually were) to turn the left and right flanks of the Turkish army, based on the highest plateau at Erzerum. The outflanking of the fortress-bases of their enemies was therefore the main problem before the Russian and Turkish Staffs in Greater Armenia.

Farther to the East, on the extreme Russian left and Turkish right, is the relative depression of the north-west Iranian table-land. Azairbijan extends between the basin of the lower Kura in Eastern Trans-Caucasus,

[1] See Map.

and the lowlands of the Tigris and Euphrates. The basin of the Kura is of the utmost importance to Russia, as it is the railway and oil centre of the whole Caucasus ; while Mesopotamia is the region where the Bagdad railway is to end, and the scene of the great future development of European enterprise. The occupation of Azairbijan by Turkey would therefore threaten the industrial heart of the Caucasus, while its occupation by Russia would open the road to Mesopotamia, and forge the link between the British and Russian Empires in Asia, so as to surround the Central Powers and Turkey on the East. Azairbijan could be occupied by the Turks coming in from the West by the South Armenian plateau. Between the basins of Lake Van and Lake Urumiah there is no natural obstruction, for the ranges of Taurus and Anti-Taurus here run East and West, parallel with each other ; so that once a Turkish force is in Van, it can easily drop down to Khoy, by the valley of the Kotur Chai. In the same way a Russian occupation of the road-centre at Khoy, and of the Dilman and Urumiah plains, would make the whole Turkish position upon the South Armenian plateau insecure. Thus we see that the outer wing of the front in Persia was of great importance to the main Russian and Turkish positions.

When on October 31st, 1914, the war between the Central Powers and the Allies spread to the Asiatic fronts, the Caucasus army, which had been already mobilized, took the initiative at once. The 2nd and 3rd Army Corps had been previously transferred to the European front, leaving only the 1st and the 4th Caucasian Army Corps, and some frontier guards,

to hold the 3rd Turkish Army. This consisted of the 10th, 11th and 12th Army Corps, which, with the Khurdish Hamidiehs and the gendarme regiments, numbered about 120,000 men. But the slowness of mobilization, and the lack of railways and good roads in Turkey, caused a delay of at least six weeks in bringing these forces into the field. The Russians meanwhile began to form a fresh force, which became the 2nd Turkestan Army Corps.

During the first days of November the Russian frontier troops advanced from Sary-Kamish and Kagisman in the Kars plateau over the hills into Turkish territory. Here they occupied a part of the Passan plain to the East of Erzerum in the Araxes valley. From Kagisman they occupied the Alasgert valley, while from Igdir on the Araxes they occupied Bayazid, just South of Mount Ararat. For the moment Russia was content with this success in occupying a small strip of Turkish territory parallel with the old frontier. The attention of the highest Russian command was at this moment chiefly occupied with the problems of the Polish and Galician fronts, where the plan of seriously invading Austria was still thought possible. For the Turks, on the other hand, the Caucasus front was the main interest. A conference had taken place at Erzerum during October between the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress and the Turkish Armenians (described elsewhere, see Chapter VIII) in which a great plan was unfolded for invading the Caucasus, driving the Russians back to the Cossack steppes, and forming three autonomous provinces under Ottoman suzerainty between the Black Sea and the Caspian. With this political object

in view, the Turkish military plans were laid for a grand offensive. As soon as the mobilization of the whole 3rd Army of the "Armenian Inspection Area" was completed, Enver Pasha himself came to take charge of the campaign. He was assisted by a German officer, von Schellendorf, as Chief of his Staff. It soon came to their knowledge that the Russian preparations in the Caucasus were not making very rapid progress, and that there were some weak spots in the long line across the plateau, stretching from the Black Sea to north-west Persia, particularly in the Olti region (middle Chorokh basin),[1] where only a regiment of frontier troops had been put to guard the fortress of Kars and the supply-base of Sary-Kamish from flanking movements on the North. Some years before a Georgian officer, Amiradjibi, on the Russian General Staff for the Caucasian Army, had warned his colleagues of the danger of a flanking movement on Kars viâ the Olti depression. Little attention was paid to his warnings, because it was thought that the Bardus Pass, leading up from this depression on to the Kars plateau, was impassable for an army, especially during the winter, when it was known to be covered with snow. But the Caucasus Staff had not reckoned on the endurance of the Turkish soldier. Sending the 9th and 10th Army Corps into the Olti depression, and holding the main force of the Russians on the Passan plain with the 11th Corps, Enver Pasha took the field in spite of frost and deep snow, which on December 3rd was falling fast all over the plateau. He was warned of the rashness of his plan by one of his Staff officers, who saw the danger of leading two Army

[1] See Map.

Corps into a roadless country in mid-winter with only horse and mule transport. But Enver Pasha hoped by initial success to find supplies to guarantee his further progress through the Caucasus. Up to a certain point his confidence was justified, for on December 15th he had entered Olti, driving the small Russian force out, and capturing prisoners and booty; after which he and the 10th Army Corps crossed the Bardus Pass in the rear of the Russian army on the Passan plain, and on December 26th were within a few hours of Sary-Kamish, the Russian supply base. The Caucasus army was now literally surrounded. It was held in front by the 11th Army Corps, while the 9th and 10th had suddenly appeared between them and their bases at Kars and Sary-Kamish. The Turks, however, had not yet occupied these two points. Their advanced posts were within 20 versts of the fortress of Kars; and their extreme left, which had come up from the Olti depression, was east of Ardahan and within two days' march of Tiflis. But their main force was still on the wooded heights above Sary-Kamish. A terrific snow-storm had hampered the movements of its commander, Ishkhan Pasha, and prevented him from keeping in touch with his rear. In the valley below him lay Sary-Kamish, the Russian supply centre, where he would be safe, and from which he could demolish the Caucasus army at leisure, if he could only get there. But now the little Russian garrison in Sary-Kamish began to direct a vigorous artillery fire upon the hills above the little town. They had only one battery, and ammunition which would not last twelve hours against the force that was opposing them. But with the energy of despair they poured out all the shot they had, in the hope that relief

might come to them from Kars. Ishkhan Pasha, thinking that he was confronted by a division instead of by one battalion, feared to advance. But now *his* ammunition was giving out, the snow-storm showed no signs of abating, and his men were being frozen and were suffering from hunger. Moreover by this time the Russian army on the Passan plain had somewhat recovered, and a successful regrouping of their forces had been undertaken by General Eudenitch (the Commander, General Meshlaefsky, having in the meantime run away to Tiflis). On January 2nd the left wing of the Russians, now facing north in the valley of Mezhingert, advanced to attack the half-frozen Turks on the heights above Sary-Kamish. In twenty-four hours the danger was over, and the Caucasus army was safe. Ishkhan Pasha with the 9th Army Corps was taken prisoner, while of the 10th Army Corps half was captured, and the rest escaped over the Bardus Pass into Turkish territory. The Russians had passed through a serious crisis. Apart from the material losses, the effect of this blow on the morale of the native races in the Caucasus was not small. The Caucasus had been invaded, and whispers began to go round in the bazaars of Tiflis, Erivan and Kars, that a new Shamyl Beg would appear to welcome the Turks. The rest of the Winter of 1914-15 was spent, both by the Russians and by the Turks, who had suffered very heavily in men and guns, if perhaps they had gained in prestige, in strengthening their old positions and organizing their rear.

In the Spring the offensive again rested with the Turks, who decided now to pay attention to their extreme right wing in the Azairbijan province of Persia. During the Winter there had been some intriguing between Djevdet

Pasha, the commander at Van, and the Khan of Maku, a powerful Persian chief living in the corner of Azairbijan, where the Persian, Turkish and Russian Empires meet. The Sirdar Khan was believed by the Russians to have come to an understanding with the Turks to help them, if they invaded his corner of Persia. He was therefore removed, and his cousin put in his place. This somewhat arbitrary violation of Persian neutrality was the result of a policy pursued for many years before the war. Persia had been rendered so weak by her revolution in 1909, that she had become unable to protect her own frontiers from violation, and the country had been reverting to the tribal state, in which any mountain brigand or caravan-thief, if he had sufficient support from the Russian consular and military authorities, could set himself up as a local ruler. Both Russian and Turkish forces had been roaming about the territory between Mount Ararat and Lake Urumiah for at least four years before the war; so the temptation was now too strong, and Persia too weak, to prevent a considerable development here of military activity on both sides. During November a small Russian detachment, with a battalion of Armenian volunteers under Andranik, had advanced from Khoy, and in an engagement with the Turks west of Kotur had entered Turkish territory and occupied Serai. During the crisis at Sary-Kamish this force had retreated to the Persian frontier at Djulfa, whence it advanced again to Khoy in January 1915. At the same time the Turks were preparing a new division of Nizam troops under the command of the able Turkish general Halil Bey. This division left Mosul in March, and crossing the extreme eastern Taurus by the defiles of

the Great Zab, reached the Urumiah plateau about the middle of April. Halil Bey's plan was the same as Enver Pasha's at the Sary-Kamish battle, namely, to advance into the enemy country, and trust to getting supplies on the way. He had to be very sparing in his use of ammunition, for unless he could capture large amounts, he could not be sure of replenishing his stock. Once his army had crossed the Taurus to the Persian plateau, he was absolutely cut off from all communication with his base. Such were the primitive methods employed by the Turks in their campaigns upon their extreme flanks. But no less remarkable was the daring of their commanders, and the endurance of the *askers* in carrying out movements and attacking with vigour in these remote regions.

In occupying the rich Urumiah plain, and pushing up to the eastern shores of the lake to the plain of Dilman, Halil Bey was aiming at the Russian railhead at Djulfa, whence he hoped to cut across the plains of the lower Araxes to Baku. On the morning of May 1st, 15,000 of his Nizams with 3,000 Khurdish cavalry were drawn up on the Dilman plain, facing a small Russian force numbering about 5,000, with 1,000 Armenian volunteers. The Russians had entrenched themselves very hastily, and were waiting for reinforcements from Djulfa. During the day the Turks attacked the village of Muganjik, but the Russians managed to hold their own by an effective use of artillery. On the second day Halil Bey sent his cavalry to get round the Russians in the hills on each side of Muganjik. With the greatest difficulty the Russians held out until dark, and then decided to retreat during the night, fearing that they could

not hold their positions for another day without help. Strange as it may seem, Halil Bey on the night of the 2nd also decided to evacuate the Dilman plain and retire into Turkish territory. His ammunition was running very low, and he saw no means of replenishing his stock even if he forced the Russians to retire. He had no wish to be left isolated in Azairbijan to face probable Russian reinforcements: he knew also that the Armenians at Van had risen in revolt on April 20th against Djevdet Pasha; so he decided that it was wisest to retreat. The astonished Russians, just as they were evacuating the plain of Dilman, suddenly found themselves alone in possession of the field. Halil Bey retired by an unfrequented route to the south-west across the Baradost and Gawar plateau into the upper waters of the Great Zab. From thence he passed by Bashkale to Nordus, where he entered the head-waters of the Tigris. Marching westwards parallel with the Taurus, he traversed the wild country bordering the Assyrian highlands, and finally reached Bitlis. This retreat is characteristic of this wonderful Turkish general, for he succeeded in keeping the Russians off his track the whole way. They did not dare to follow him into the country through which he passed, for fear of being trapped, or dying of starvation. But Halil Bey did not get through without very heavy losses from exhaustion and hunger, and he arrived at Bitlis with a greatly reduced division.

In the meantime the Russians had begun an advance with a view to occupying the basin of Lake Van, and putting an end to further danger of the Turks invading Persia and threatening their flanks in the Caucasus. They advanced in three columns. One, starting from

Khoy in Persia, approached Van by way of Serai from the East. Another, starting from the Alashgert, crossed the Ala-dag range and approached Van from the North. A third column, from the 4th Russian Army Corps, went by the Eastern Euphrates valley to Melashgert and to the Mush plain. The advance was highly successful. Djevdet Pasha, seeing himself threatened from the North, and knowing that Halil Bey had retired from Persia, evacuated Van; and so the besieged Armenians were relieved on May 19th. Melashgert was occupied, and advanced Russian patrols reached the plain of Mush. Thus the second Turkish offensive ended unsuccessfully, and the Russians came into possession of the eastern portion of the Van basin.

But the Turkish command was not inactive for long. Again the energetic Halil Bey organized a fresh force at Bitlis of two divisions, and by July 20th was advancing up the valley of the Eastern Euphrates into the Alashgert again. The Russians speedily evacuated Melashgert, and, owing to a misunderstanding, they also retired from Van, though its communications with Persia were secure. When the Turks reached Karakilisse on July 30th, the Russian command thought that Van would have to be abandoned; but before long a Russian counter-manœuvre from the Passan plain brought Halil Bey's advance to a standstill. A Russian division, formed from the 1st Army Corps in the Passan plain between Sary-Kamish and Erzerum, crossed the Sharian-dag into the valley of the Eastern Euphrates, and so threatened Halil Bey's rear, causing him to retire quickly to the Mush plain. The effect of this Turkish move was very disastrous for the Armenian population of the

eastern Van basin. Large numbers of them perished, and their villages were burned wholesale by the retreating forces. By the Autumn of 1915, after the third Turkish attempt, the situation was the same as it had been in the Spring. The Russians had cleared the Turks definitely out of North-west Persia, and were in occupation of the eastern end of the South Armenian plateau. Thus the campaign which had begun badly for the Russian Caucasus Army at Sary-Kamish, had during the Summer of 1915 turned in its favour, and the first successes were obtained on the Russian left in Azairbijan and the Van basin.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ERZERUM OFFENSIVE
(February 1916)

WE have seen in the last chapter that the war on the Asiatic front began unsuccessfully for Russia with the big Turkish advance at Sary-Kamish. Even after the defeat and capture of Ishkhan Pasha, the threat of Turkish invasion of the Caucasus was still imminent. But towards the Spring of 1915 the Caucasus army was strengthened by bringing the 2nd Caucasus Army Corps from the European front, where it had been sent on the first day of mobilization. Also by this time the formation of the 2nd Turkestan Army was completed; and this brought up the numbers of the Russians to about 70,000. But the Turks with their three Corps of the Armenian Army (9th, 10th, and 11th) numbering 80,000, and with 40,000 irregulars in the Van basin and near the Black Sea, were still in superior strength, and in a position to assume the offensive at any moment. This was done, as we have seen, by Halil Bey with his Constantinople division in North-west Persia during May, and later in the Van basin in July. Fear of an invasion of the Caucasus, and of the serious effect which this might produce in Asiatic Russia, was undoubtedly one of the motives which inspired the Anglo-French expedition to

the Dardanelles in April 1915. This move certainly had the effect of preventing the Turks from sending any further reinforcements to the Armenian front, since now for the first time they were occupied with two fronts instead of with only one. Moreover the defence of the Dardanelles was vital to the safety of the capital, and placed a special strain on their reserves. In those days the Turks had to rely chiefly upon their own efforts, since the German road to the East had not yet been opened by the adhesion of Bulgaria to the Central Powers. It is now clear that the Western Allies had at that time a great opportunity, if they had but known it, to strike Turkey in her weakest spot. But if the Dardanelles campaign is generally regarded as a failure, it must not be forgotten that its indirect effects on the eastern theatres of war were far-reaching. The holding up of large Turkish forces for the defence of Constantinople without doubt saved the situation in the Caucasus, and gave the necessary time to Russia, who is always slow to develop her full military strength. Russia's other occupations in Poland and Galicia had drawn away much of her energy. She could not mobilize her forces at all more quickly than Turkey, who had only the Caucasus front to attend to. Both Empires are equally badly supplied with railways, and both are in a primitive industrial state.

The indirect value of the Dardanelles campaign was perhaps even more clearly felt in Russia during the Summer and Autumn of 1915 than it was in the Spring, for in May the Germans commenced their great Galician drive, and continued during the summer months their victorious advance through Poland. The 2nd Caucasus

Army Corps, which had been brought back to the Caucasus front in March to act as a reinforcement in case of a second Turkish invasion, was after a short stay on the Black Sea coast region hurriedly sent back again to Galicia. Every shell that could be scraped up was sent off to the European front, to stop the oncoming German and Austrian tide. The Turks would therefore once more have been in a position of great superiority on the Caucasus front, if the Anglo-French expedition to the Dardanelles had not drawn away their attention. Nor was the Caucasus the only place where danger threatened. The situation in Persia became more and more unsatisfactory as the Summer advanced. In July a Germanophile Cabinet was in power at Teheran, and was supported by a large section of the Persian people. Tribal chiefs, Persian magnates, and the Europeanized intellectuals of the chief towns, remembering the Tabriz hangings and the suppression of their revolution by the Cossacks, were only too ready to avail themselves of Russia's difficulties, by joining the Turkish bands and co-operating with German agents. Also, the failure of England and Russia during the first half of 1915 to relieve in any way the financial difficulties of the Persian Government, or to make any statement to assure the Persians that the Allies were genuinely fighting for the small nationalities, and were ready to apply their principles to Asia as well as to Europe, all this did much to alienate a small nation, whose moral support at a time like this would have been invaluable.

During the Autumn the pressure of the Anglo-French expedition on the Dardanelles was felt as far off as Armenia and the Caucasus, and when it was abandoned

after the entry of Bulgaria, then the British expedition in Mesopotamia, which by November had almost reached the walls of Bagdad, took up the task of relieving the Russians in the Caucasus. After this, however, the rôles were changed. Russia with her strength mobilized on the Asiatic front for the first time, and with a new and active commander at Tiflis in the Grand Duke Nicolas, was able not only to assume the offensive in Armenia, but by so doing to relieve the British force in Mesopotamia, which had now got into difficulties.

During December 1915 the Caucasus Army was considerably reinforced. Up to this time it had been composed as follows: the 1st Army Corps based on Sary-Kamish in the upper Araxes valley; part of the yet unformed 2nd Turkestan Army in the Olti depression; the 4th Army Corps (only up to half strength) in the Alashgert region; small detachments on the Black Sea coast, in North-west Persia and the Van vilayet. By Christmas, however, the 2nd Turkestans and the 4th Army Corps had been brought up to strength, the 4th Rifle Division had been added to operate in special regions, wherever needed, the Azairbijan detachment had been strengthened, and a new expeditionary force had been sent under General Baratoff to clear Central Persia of the Turks. Russia had had time to recuperate after the blows delivered against her the previous Summer, and had succeeded in equipping her Caucasian Army, and increasing it to 170,000 men. The Turks, on the other hand, were now at a considerable disadvantage. At the end of October there had been a re-grouping of their forces in Armenia. The British threat to Bagdad, and the increasing importance of Persia, caused the Turks

to strengthen themselves in these regions. From Mush and Erzerum the 3rd and 5th Composite Divisions were withdrawn and sent to Bagdad. Three batteries of artillery were also sent from Erzerum to the South. Evidently at this time the Turks did not feel insecure in Armenia, and were ready to take risks to save Bagdad. They must have been ill-informed as to the nature of the Russian reinforcements, for in December they gave leave of absence to a number of officers in the Erzerum garrison, while they made no haste to send back to Erzerum the heavy artillery from the Dardanelles. Instead, they concentrated all their efforts on Mesopotamia, where they succeeded in surrounding General Townsend in Kut, and in threatening the whole British expedition with break-down. Thus it was clear that a Russian offensive on the Caucasus front would not only relieve the situation in Mesopotamia, but would stand a good chance of driving the Turks back on their last line of defence round the fortress of Erzerum, and possibly even of taking it. The Russians were now superior by about 50,000 men along the whole of the Asiatic front from the Black Sea to Persia. This enabled them to undertake flanking movements, which always count for so much in Asiatic warfare. In Asia, with its wide expanses, the chances of an enemy digging himself into positions which cannot be outflanked are very much less than in Europe. Everything, therefore, favoured an offensive in the direction of Erzerum, and a series of manœuvres and flanking movements in the mountains and valleys at the head-waters of the Araxes and the Euphrates. The eastern approach to Erzerum lies along the Passan plain.[1]

[1] For Erzerum region, see Map.

Its outer chain of forts lies on the Deve-Boyun, a range of rolling hills from 7,000 to 8,000 feet high, dividing the head-waters of the Araxes from those of the western Euphrates. Bounding the Passan and upper Euphrates plain on the South is the great range of the Palân-teken, rising to 10,000 feet, and running east and west like most of the ridges of Armenia outside the volcanic zone. To the North of the plain lies a confused area, where volcanic effusions have overlaid the original plateau ranges. To the East, not far from the Russo-Turkish frontier, lie the masses of the Djelli-Gel and Kodjut-Dag, which to the West merge into the great uplift of the Kargar-bazar. Further West still rise the Giaur and Dumlu Dags, between which and the Kargar-bazar is the only gap in the whole length of the mountain-wall that shields Erzerum on the North. This gap is the defile of Gurji-Bogaz,[1] and the road through it, at the height of 7,000 feet, is the only approach to Erzerum from this side. Coming up from the South and passing through this defile, one enters the valley of the Tortum river and descends into the relative depression of Olti Chai and the middle Chorokh. The problem for the Turks was to hold the approaches to Erzerum along the Passan plain on the East (this was effected by the 9th and part of the 10th Army Corps), and to block the narrow gap in the mountains on the North-east (this was done by the 11th Army Corps, which had entrenched itself some months previously on the mountain mass of the Gey Dag, just South-west of Olti). To the South of Erzerum, across the Palan-teken, lay a part of the 10th Army Corps, protecting the road leading into the Van basin and on to Mesopotamia.

[1] Turkish for "Georgian Gates."

The Russian plan, worked out by General Eudenitch, the Grand Duke Nicolas's commander in the field, was to attack the Turkish positions in three columns.[1] The 2nd Turkestan Army Corps at Olti in the Chorokh depression was to attack the Turks guarding the Gurji-Bogaz defiles in the positions on the Gey Dag, and by this demonstration to draw off their strength from the Passan plain, where the main blow was to be struck by the 1st Army Corps, which was to make a frontal attack on the Azap Keui positions between Hassan Kaleh and the old Russo-Turkish frontier. These positions had been carefully prepared for some months, and had all the signs of permanent field-fortifications. To make them untenable, a third force, the 4th Rifle Division, was to be sent into the mountain country of the Djelli-Gel, to hold the line between the 1st Army Corps and the Turkestans, and to threaten the flanks of the Turks at Azap Keui and on the Gey Dag. It is interesting to note that this was the same sort of plan as that which Enver Pasha adopted, when he attacked the Russians just twelve months before. He, however, demonstrated on the Passan plain, and made his main attack on the Olti and Chorokh basins. His plan ultimately failed, because he could not guarantee supplies to his advanced forces in the country that they had occupied. But the Russians were brilliantly successful, because they had given the necessary attention to roads and transport for their main advance along the Passan plain.

On January 13th the Russian advance began. The 2nd Turkestan Army Corps attacked the Turkish 11th Army Corps, which was strongly entrenched on the Gey

[1] See Map.

Dag west of Olti.[1] The Russian losses were heavy, and they did not succeed in dislodging the Turks; but the real object of the attack was obtained by causing the Turks to draw off forces for the defence of the north-east (Gurji-Bogaz) gateway to Erzerum, and by masking the main blow, which was delivered on the Passan plain. Information brought by airmen, who flew over Erzerum during these days, showed that Abdulla Kerim Pasha, the Turkish commander, had withdrawn one regiment to the North to protect his left flank in the defiles. This gave the necessary opportunity for the Russian 1st Army Corps to carry the main Turkish position, and on January 13th the Azap Keui line was attacked. In spite of the withdrawal of a regiment, the Turks made a very stubborn resistance, and for three days there was severe fighting with great losses on both sides. But on January 15th the 4th Composite Division, which had been given the task of connecting the 2nd Turkestans with the 1st Army Corps, crossed the high rugged country of the Djelli Gel at a level of 9,000 feet, and joined up with the Turkestans in the valleys of the upper Olti Chai.[1] The Turkish 11th Army Corps on the Gey Dag, and the 9th and 10th in the Passan plain, were thus in danger of being outflanked. Moreover, the Russians had so severely pounded the Azap Keui positions, that they were now practically untenable. So on January 16th Abdulla Kerim Pasha ordered a general retreat to the last line of defence on the Erzerum forts. Then followed what is frequently met with in Turkish retreats, and is very characteristic of that race. The Turk has all the stubbornness and endurance of a highlander and an agricul-

[1] See Map.

turist. He does not see at once when he is outmastered: but when he does, then the untrained Oriental comes out strong in him; he throws everything away and bolts in a general *sauve qui peut.* In this case he just ran till he reached Erzerum. The Russians reached Kupri Keui on the 18th, and the next day were in Hassan Kaleh, thus getting into their hands the whole of the east Passan plain and the basin of the Araxes right up to the outer forts of Erzerum. On January 19th the last Turkish column was seen disappearing behind the rolling banks of the Deve-Boyun. The Cossacks pursued right up to the outer chain of forts under cover of darkness, and cut off 1,000 prisoners. Next day field artillery shelled the outer forts, and so after thirty-nine years Erzerum saw a Russian shell again within its precincts.

Up to this time it was not really part of the Russian plan to attack Erzerum. The original plan was to break the Turkish line on the Passan plain, and to put such pressure on the Turks along the whole line from the Chorokh to Bitlis, that the pressure on the English at Bagdad would be relieved. The extraordinary success of the advance in the second week of January took no one more by surprise than the Russians themselves. The Grand Duke Nicolas would not believe the news, when he heard that Hassan Kaleh and Kupri Keui had fallen. Indeed, it was not until January 23rd that General Eudenitch informed him that he thought it possible to take Erzerum, and asked for permission to work out a plan. This was done in the next few days by himself, General Tomiloff, one of his Staff officers, and General Prejvalsky, the commander of the 2nd Turkestans, who for many years had been Russian military attaché at

Erzerum and knew the forts and their surroundings. Meanwhile, information which strengthened this decision came to hand in the shape of a wireless telegram, intercepted between Abdulla Kerim Pasha and Enver Pasha, in which it was stated that "the condition of the 3rd Army is serious; reinforcements must be sent at once, or else Erzerum cannot be held." On January 31st a demonstration was made from Hassan Kaleh by the Russians against the outer forts of the Deve-Boyun to test the strength of the Turks. The bombardment continued all day, and by evening it was seen that the Turks had poured water down the slopes in front of the forts, which on freezing covered the mountain sides with icy sheets. According to accounts given me by some officers, as the sun was setting that evening the sign of a cross appeared in the clouds of white smoke that accompanied the bombardment and lay over the forts.

During the first week of February heavy artillery was brought up, and the Russian dispositions were made and developed with extraordinary skill. General Paskevitch, when he captured Erzerum in 1828, confined his attentions solely to the approach from the Passan plain. Meeting with slight Turkish resistance and with primitive forts, he had no great difficulty in breaking through the Deve-Boyun. He had not to trouble about the defiles and the northern approaches to Erzerum, nor had he to force a passage across immense mountainous tracts of snowy wastes in order to keep his line of advance intact. But in these days the methods of modern warfare have to some degree overcome nature. The Gurji-Bogaz defiles were now passable for artillery, and moreover the Turks had built two forts there. On their

extreme left wing a whole Turkish Army Corps held positions far away in the isolated valleys of the Upper Chorokh Su, where it had before been impossible to keep and feed a battalion. The devices of the engineer and transport services had made all this possible. The Russians therefore were threatened with the danger that, if they should make a frontal attack on the Deve-Boyun forts and carry them, the Turks in the upper Chorokh might suddenly make a great counter-move, break into the Olti depression, reach the Kars plateau, and so get into the rear of the whole Russian army, as they did in December 1914. This in fact is exactly what Abdulla Kerim Pasha tried to do. He ordered Halid Bey (the exceedingly brave, if somewhat rash, commander of the frontier regiment which had retreated from before Artvin through Southern Lazistan when the Azap Keui positions were captured) to call up reinforcements from Baiburt, break through the narrow Tortum valley and cut off the 2nd Turkestan Army Corps at Olti. During the first ten days of February severe fighting took place on the passes of the Kabak-tepè east of Igdir,[1] and on more than one occasion Halid Bey seemed on the point of outflanking General Prejvalsky. By February 10th, however, the Russian Turkestans had succeeded in repulsing him and were secure in the Tortum valley, and it was safe for General Eudenitch to begin his advance on Erzerum.

The plan was to form the whole of the Russian forces in this part of Armenia into a great semicircular line stretching from the Upper Chorokh Su across the great volcanic chains of the Dumlu and Giaur Dags and the

[1] See Map.

Kargar-bazar, across the Passan plain, and the heights of the Palan-teken to the valley of Khunus.[1] The line was some 130 miles long, and it had to be covered by two Army Corps and some detached forces. All the different sections of the line had to keep in touch with each other, and to advance over snow-bound plateau or icy mountain skree, whichever fell to their lot, thus gradually converging upon the great fortress, and threatening to surround it. The object of General Eudenitch, in this most ably conceived and brilliantly executed plan, was to force Abdulla Kerim Pasha either to evacuate Erzerum, or else to be locked up in it with no hope of relief. It is safe to say that the struggle was much greater in this operation with the natural enemies, cold and hunger, than it was with the Turks. The Russian troops had to cross mountain ranges with deep snow-drifts at 10,000 feet, and to go for at least three days cut off from supplies of food, with nothing but the few crusts of bread they could carry with them. No other race of human beings, except those accustomed to the cold of sub-arctic climates like that of Russia, could have performed this feat. The Anatolian Turk is in no degree inferior to the Russian in physical endurance, but he lacks the habit of husbanding his resources. The Russian, whenever he gets the smallest chance, sets himself down in some little hollow, and somehow or other makes himself a cup of tea by burning bits of grass or moss. But the Turkish soldier literally goes without anything for two or three days, and then eats a whole sheep or a perfect mountain of " pilaff," so that he cannot move for hours. Moreover, the Turkish army has in

[1] See Map.

it Arabs and Syrians, who can ill endure a winter campaign in Armenia.

The Russian dispositions by February 10th were as follows[1]: The 38th Division of the 1st Army Corps on the Passan plain was to demonstrate on the left wing before forts Kaburgar and Uzun Ahmet, while the 39th Division was to deliver the main attack on the right against forts Dolan-gyoz and Chaban-dede. The 4th Division of the 2nd Turkestan Army Corps was to hold Halid Bey before Igdir in the Upper Chorokh Su, and the 5th Division was to advance southward from the valley of the Tortum Chai. One of its columns was to cross the Dumlu Dag and break into the Euphrates plain in the rear of Erzerum, and the other column on the left was to pass through the defiles of the Gurji-Bogaz and join up with the 4th Composite Division,[2] thus surrounding forts Kara-gyubek and Tufta, which guarded Erzerum from the North-east. The task of the 4th Composite Division was one of extreme difficulty, for it had to cross the snow-bound ridge of the Kargar-bazar at the height of 10,000 feet, in order to hold the line between the 1st Army Corps and the Turkestans, and so forge the link in the chain that was to close in on fort Chaban-dede from the North and fort Tufta from the South. The artillery of the 4th Composite Division had to be hauled up the mountain-side to positions whence the Turkish lines connecting forts Tufta and Chaban-dede could be shelled. The snow lay six feet deep in drifts, and the rocks were covered with icy sheets. At first the attempt

[1] See Map.

[2] This was made up partly from Tiflis drafts and partly from 4th Army Corps reserves.

was made to haul the artillery up by hand; but this proved impossible. Then each gun was taken to pieces, and the wheels, the fittings, and the body of the gun were carried on their shoulders by parties of men. This almost superhuman task was accomplished in twelve days.

The Turkish dispositions were as follows[1]: The 9th Army Corps with the Erzerum garrison held the Deve-Boyun forts, while the 11th Army Corps, greatly diminished by the retreat from Azap Keui, was kept in the rear as a reserve. The 10th Army Corps was in the northern sector, holding forts Kara-gyubek and Tufta, and the Gurji-Bogaz defiles.

On February 11th the order for the general Russian advance was given. The Elizabetopol and Baku regiments attacked forts Chaban-dede and Dolan-gyoz respectively. The latter fort is situated on a little knoll which juts out into the Passan plain, and is, as it were, the advanced guard of the outer chain. By 5 a.m. on the 12th Dolan-gyoz was surrounded, but the battalion of Turks holding the fort managed to retreat to the Uzun Ahmet fort, a powerful redoubt which rests upon a trapeze-like rocky mass with cliffs on three sides. At the same time the 2nd Turkestans, advancing through the defiles of the Gurji-Bogaz, surrounded the advanced fort of Kara-gyubek. Two outposts were already in the hands of the Russians; but the main struggle was yet to come.

On the Kargar-bazar heights to the North all through the day and night of the 10th and 11th of February the 4th Composite Division attacked the Turks across snow-fields and skrees of rock. The summit of the range

[1] See Map.

was in the hands of the Russians, but the Turks held stubbornly on to the snow-fields to the West of the summit which connected forts Chaban-dede and Tufta. Here they had made snow-trenches, which were invisible to the naked eye at a distance of more than a hundred yards. On the night of the 12th the right wing of the 39th Division was ordered to attack fort Chaban-dede, which, with Tufta, was the key to Erzerum. The Baku regiment, which had taken Dolan-gyoz, now joined the Elizabetopols, and together they advanced from the village of Buyuk Tuy on the Passan plain up the rocky valley of the Tuy towards the towering cliffs, on which fort Chaban-dede rested.[1] The Russian soldiers were clad in white coats, so that in the darkness and against the snow they were invisible. Silently creeping up the rocky slopes to the fort, they got to within 250 yards of it before the Turkish searchlights discovered them. At once from the Uzun Ahmet and Chaban-dede forts a murderous cross-fire was poured upon them, which in two hours caused them to lose one third of their number. However, one battalion of the Elizabetopols pushed right up, till they got underneath the cliffs of fort Chaban-dede. Here the guns from the fort could not fire at them, the angle being too high: but the guns from Uzun Ahmet could still rake their lines. At this moment also the 108th regiment of the 11th Turkish Army Corps on the Olugli heights at the head of the Tuy defile began a flanking movement. The right wing of the Elizabetopol regiment was exposed, and as there was no sign of the 4th Division, whose appearance alone could fill the gap, the position was critical. The 4th Division was in fact

[1] See Map.

at this moment struggling under almost more terrible conditions at the height of 10,000 feet on the Kargar-bazar. The men were engaged not with the Turks, but with the frost and snow. During the nights of the 12th and 13th they lost 2,000 of their number from frost-bite alone. In addition to their sufferings from cold, they had the Herculean task of carrying their artillery across the snow and rocks, which alone was enough to account for their delay. Accordingly, there was nothing for the Elizabetopol and Bakintsi regiments to do but to retreat to the bottom of the Tuy valley, where respite could be obtained, and this they did on the morning of the 13th. All that day they waited in vain for the 4th Division; but when evening came and no one appeared, it was seen to be useless to wait any longer, for time only aided the Turks, whose reinforcements were being hurried up from Erzerum. So it was decided that the Derbent regiment, which had hitherto been held in reserve, should come up on the right wing and try to turn the flank of the 108th Turkish regiment, which was now occupying the heights of the Sergy-kaya, a desolate knoll on the rocky mass of Olugli.[1] At 7 p.m. the advance began. The Derbent regiment left its position in the rear, and crossing in the darkness the head of the Tuy valley, ascended a defile and reached the snow-fields round the Olugli mass. Immense difficulty was experienced in the advance. The snow lay in drifts often five to six feet deep, and in places the soldiers in order to move had to take off their coats and

[1] These names are given to the south-westerly projecting parts of the Kargar-bazar range, and are only marked on the large scale Turkish military map.

walk on them in the snow, throwing them forward every three feet to avoid sinking in up to their necks. In this way they advanced painfully all night. The Turks, suspecting nothing, were lying in their snow trenches, their attention chiefly concentrated on how to prevent themselves from freezing to death. At last daylight began to break upon this arctic scene, and through scuds of snow broken by the icy wind, the Turks saw a chain of dark forms slowing closing in on them. They could hardly believe their eyes, for it seemed to them impossible that a human army with rifles and ammunition could cross the country that lay in front of them. By 5.30 a.m. the Turks saw that their trenches on the Sergy-Kaya were being surrounded from the North-east and East, and only a narrow neck of snow-field to the South connected them with the fort of Chaban-dede. So they hastily left their trenches and retreated as fast as the drifts would allow them across the Olugli snow-field till they reached the fort. Chaban-dede was now surrounded on the North-east, but the retreat of the Turkish garrison was not cut off on the South and West, and the Turks with characteristic stubbornness and bravery continued their deadly cross-fire from forts Uzun Ahmet and Chaban-dede, as if nothing had happened. Thus the Derbent regiment had by this manœuvre gained important ground; but the Russians had not yet broken the Turkish cordon that united the forts, nor did the three regiments of the 39th Division dare to advance farther for fear of becoming separated from the Russians to the right and left of them, and so giving the Turks a chance to break through in a counter-attack.

But what had happened meanwhile to the 4th Com-

posite Division and the 2nd Turkestans? They alone could save the situation by piercing the plateau between forts Chaban-dede and Tufta, and so joining up with the Derbent regiment on the heights of Olugli.[1] The critical question was whether they had been equal to their stupendous task of penetrating the 50 miles of rugged snow-bound ridges and plateau. The morning of February the 14th showed that they had accomplished this task, and so sealed the fate of Erzerum.

During the previous day the 4th Composite Division had been finishing the transport of their artillery to the summit of the Kargar-bazar ridge. The guns had again been dismembered, and carried to positions whence they could drop shells on the Turks defending the right flank of fort Tufta. The Turkestans had also prepared their artillery to sweep the fort from the North. On the morning of February the 14th the infantry of the 4th Division descended the north-western slopes of the Kargar-bazar, sliding down the snow on their coats to the open plateau, out of which the Tuy river rises. From here they moved on to the north-west and reached the foot of the Grobovoye heights, which form the eastern side of the Gurji-Bogaz defile.[1] This is the north-eastern "gateway" to Erzerum through which the 2nd Turkestans were to advance, and which the Turkish 10th Army Corps was defending from forts Kara-gyubek and Tufta. The plan was that the Turkish positions on the Grobovoye heights, connecting forts Kara-gyubek and Tufta, should be attacked simultaneously by the Turkestans coming through the northern defiles, and by the 4th Division coming down from the Kargar-bazar on the South. The

[1] See Map.

critical moment for the Russians had arrived. Would these forces unite and press their attack together, or had one of them failed and been overwhelmed in the snow-fields or defiles? About midday the artillery of the 4th Division began to drop shells on the Turkish snow-trenches on the Grobovoye heights. The bombardment went on for half an hour and then stopped, the commanders waiting in suspense to hear whether there was any reply from their comrades, the Turkestans who should by this time be attacking from the North. Hope was beginning to wane, and they were faced by the prospect either of a single-handed encounter with a greatly superior enemy or of a disastrous retreat. But about one o'clock a faint rumble was heard, and a few minutes later shells were seen dropping on the Grobovoye heights. They were Russian shells, yet not fired by the 4th Division. The situation was saved, for the Turkestans had forced their way through the Gurji-Bogaz defile capturing fort Kara-gyubek, and pressing on to the Grobovoye heights and towards fort Tufta. The Turks now on the Grobovoye heights were in danger of being surrounded from the North, South and East. They could see that Kara-gyubek was already in Russian hands. The left wing of the 4th Division, moreover, was pressing on to the heights of Kuni-tepe, a mass lying North of the Olugli and commanding fort Tufta from the South. This they occupied at three o'clock and the Turks on the Grobovoye heights retired at once on fort Tufta. In another half-hour the Turkestans appeared upon the sky-line; and here, on this desolate Grobovoye height, at this historic moment, they greeted their brothers of the 4th Division. The gap in the Russian

line was now filled; the mountains and the snow-fields had been overcome, and it was now only a question of a few hours before the Turks would be overcome too.

Just as this memorable meeting was taking place, the Russian artillery observation posts at Ketchk noticed a great stir in the Turkish lines surrounding fort Tufta. The Staff of the 10th Army Corps knew that the game was up, and, to escape being surrounded, at once began the evacuation of fort Tufta. That night also Abdulla Kerim Pasha ordered the evacuation of all the forts of the Deve-Boyun. The reserves of the 11th Army Corps were the first to leave, followed by those of the 9th. Then explosions in forts Kaburgar, Ortayuk, Uzun Ahmet and Sivishli were observed from the Russian lines. The evacuation of fort Chaban-dede was begun at 2 p.m., and by four o'clock the Russians were in possession of all the forts of the Deve-Boyun, while the 4th Composite Division and the Turkestans were pouring into the Erzerum plain, in the hope of cutting off the Turkish retreat. But here they met with less success. The 4th Division, with orders to advance South, were ten miles ahead of the Turkestans, who had orders to advance West. The confusion caused by columns crossing on the march gave a good start to the Turks, who had speedily evacuated the forts, as soon as danger was imminent. Yet one of their Divisions, the 34th, was captured at Ilidja, and a large part of their artillery was lost. But the 9th and 10th Army Corps lost little in men or ammunition, and thus the 3rd Turkish Army was able to retire on Erzinjan to await reinforcements and continue the struggle. It is curious that the Russians

lost much less in the operations before Erzerum than they did in the fighting before the Azap Keui positions in the previous month, when they lost not less than 30,000 killed and wounded in four days' fighting. But in the five days' fighting along the whole length of the Erzerum forts from the Deve-Boyun to the Gurji-Bogaz defiles their losses were not more than 12,000, a large part of which were deaths or injuries due to frostbite and exposure.

The capture of the great fortress, hitherto considered impregnable, sent a thrill through the whole continent. Every bazaar from Shiraz to Samarkand, from Konia to Kuldja, began talking of the great Urus, who had taken Erzerum from the Osmanli. Russian military prestige in the East had fallen very low since the Sary-Kamish battle and Enver Pasha's advance into the Caucasus in December 1914. But the Dardanelles expedition had given the Turks something else to think of than conquering the Caucasus, and had thus afforded the Russians the necessary respite to prepare for their attack on Erzerum, which in its turn saved the British from being driven completely out of Mesopotamia.

The capture of Erzerum was the first great success that came to the Allies in Asia. It might be regarded as the turning-point of the war in the East. Till then it was not clear who were going to be masters of the great road from Central Europe to Central Asia. Germany had done well in Europe at the end of 1915; she had held the lines in France, occupied Poland, broken through Servia, and joined up with Bulgaria and Turkey. In fact the Central Powers had established themselves as masters of Central Europe, and were dominating the

road into the Middle East. But could they drive their wedge further, and realize their great plan, Berlin to Bagdad, and so prepare the way for the downfall of the Russian and British Empires in Asia? The answer came on February 16th, 1916: the thunder of the Russian guns before Erzerum told the Central Powers that whatever they were or might be in Europe, they could never be masters in Asia; for their centre of gravity was too far to the West to allow them to be lords of two continents. But England and Russia, both by nature and position Asiatic Powers, began to organize their Eastern dominions during the early months of 1916. From that time forth their success in these areas of the war has developed and increased.

The political importance also to Russia of the capture of Erzerum was immense. It established her finally on the Armenian plateau, and completed a process which had begun in the Trans-Caucasus more than a century before. Once in possession of the great routes that converge at Erzerum from Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Persia and the Caucasus, the conquest of the rest of the Armenian plateau, Mush, Bitlis and Erzinjan, followed as a matter of course. Regarded as tactics the Erzerum operations were perhaps not of great importance. The Turkish counter-attack at Ognut in August 1916 was certainly more important from this point of view, because there for the first time European methods of warfare, close columns of infantry and concentrated artillery fire, were used in Asia. But, in its moral and political effect, there is nothing in the whole course of the war in the East more important than the capture of Erzerum and the establishment of the Russians on the Armenian plateau.

It means also that the Armenian and Khurdish races will in future years be guided and influenced largely by their great Northern neighbour, and that the road to the East across Persia and Armenia will not fall to the exclusive political influence of the Central Powers of Europe.

# PART II

# DIARY OF AUTHOR'S JOURNEYS

## CHAPTER III

## WITH THE RUSSIAN EXPEDITION IN NORTH-WEST PERSIA AND KHURDISTAN

AFTER the evacuation of Galicia by the Russian armies in June 1915, I decided to leave the European and come to the Asiatic fronts. I travelled by Vladikavkas and the Georgian military road, and reached Tiflis in the first week of July. I presented my letters of introduction from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Viceroy's diplomatic attaché, and after spending a few days in making myself acquainted with the Caucasus capital, decided to leave for North-west Persia in order to study the conditions on the extreme Russian left. On my way by train to the Persian frontier I stopped at Alexandropol, and drove to the ruins of the ancient Armenian city of Ani, where I found Professor Marr, the famous archæologist of Petrograd University, engaged in his summer research work. The Professor invited me to stay with him in his little house among the ruins, and I spent two days watching him at work. One evening Colonel Schmerling, the Vice-Governor of Kars, arrived on horseback with a retinue of servants to visit the ruins. I was presented to him, and he kindly procured me a horse so that I could ride across country to

Echmiadzin. I passed Talish and Talin on the way, following roughly the line taken by Mr. Lynch, as described in the first volume of his "Armenia." From Talish I made a side excursion for two days to the high country that surrounds Mount Alagyoz. I reached an encampment of Yezidis late in the evening, and next day set out with a native to ascend the snow slopes of the extinct volcano. I reached one of the three peaks at midday, but the mist came up and obscured the view. On the way down, however, it lifted, and I obtained a magnificent view of the volcanic plateau of Kars, the lowlands of the Araxes, and Mount Ararat, capped with eternal snow and sheathed in mystery. In the far distance to the south lay the South Armenian plateau and the basin of Lake Van, amid which the snowy cone of Mount Zipandar was just discernible. Amid this scenery of solemn grandeur I could not help reflecting how, while Nature was at peace, contemplating and regenerating, mankind was now engaged in murdering and destroying. But perhaps, after all, the war had no greater significance than the thunderstorm which just then was passing over the valley of the Araxes below me. It thundered and looked terrible for a while; then slowly dispersed. The sun came out, and the world went on as before.

I found that there are three villages and summer encampments of Yezidis on the slopes of Mount Alagyos. While staying with them I tried to find out about their beliefs, for I knew that they were supposed to reverence the Devil, whom they regard as a fallen angel. All I could discover was that they dress and speak like Khurds, but are less friendly to them than to the Christians.

Their belief is probably a slightly corrupted form of the ancient Persian cult, which conceived of the universe as controlled by the two gods of good and evil, continually warring with each other.

On July 25th I reached Echmiadzin, where the Catholicos of the Armenians kindly gave me a room in the hostel. Next morning I had an interview with his Holiness, who was much perturbed about the news which had come through from Turkey, where the deportations were just then beginning. I made the acquaintance of Archdeacon Haloust, one of the most intellectual of the Armenians at Echmiadzin. He showed me the ancient Armenian book, "The Key of Truth," which is supposed to prove that the Armenians before the 3rd century came under the influence of the earliest forms of Christianity. But it must be borne in mind that the conversion of the Armenians is generally attributed to Gregory the Illuminator in the 4th century. On July 27th I left by train for the Persian frontier at Djulfa, where I was passed over the river by the frontier guards into Persian territory. The heat of Djulfa is very great at this time of year, and I accepted with much pleasure the kind invitation of M. le Jeune, the Belgian chief of the Persian customs, to rest and sup with him in his cool house. At midnight I set out in a phaeton, which M. le Jeune had hired for me from a Persian, and in the early hours of the morning I was on the road for Tabriz. The Russians were constructing the Djulfa-Tabriz railway, and gangs of Persians were hard at work making deep cuttings in the hills that run east and west across the Tabriz table-land. After Marand I passed Sofian, where the Russians defeated a

small force of Turks and Khurds, who had occupied Tabriz during January 1915. On the afternoon of July 29th I reached Tabriz, and went straight to the British Consulate, where I found the Consul, Mr. Shipley, who kindly asked me to stay with him, and gave me a room in his spacious Consulate.

My object in coming to Tabriz was to learn how the educated Persians of this important border province felt about the war, and what their attitude was towards the contending Powers in Europe. With Amir Ali Khan, the dragoman at the Consulate, I went to visit some of the prominent merchants and teachers in Mahommedan schools. I found a feeling of scepticism on all political matters, the result of disillusionment after the failure of the Constitutional movement. But they all agreed that, but for outside interference, the movement would have been a success. I was interested to find a marked cleavage in the ranks of the once united Constitutionalists. Like so many such movements, it had at first gained the support of many conflicting interests, which after a time were bound to show signs of divergence and discord. The Persian Constitutional movement began as a revolt of the Mahommedan clergy and the intellectual classes against the corrupt government at Teheran. The clergy wished to retain their religious privileges and ecclesiastical emoluments, which the Shah was threatening; and the intellectual classes, under the influence of Western education and the Russian revolution of 1905, had determined to put an end to Oriental despotism. When the Constitution was promulgated, the Mahommedan clergy at once attempted to get a clause inserted, which would give to a commission of five Mujtahids (ecclesiastical dignitaries

among the Shiahs [1]) the right to reject all laws not in accordance with the Sheriat (the religious canon of Islam). Hitherto the civil and religious law had been kept apart in Persia. The more free-thinking section of the Constitutionalists were not of course in sympathy with this clause, and only agreed to its insertion in order to avoid an open breach with the Mollahs. Thus, as with most revolutions, the forces that brought it about did so for different and conflicting reasons; and this became clear as soon as the common enemy had been removed. The Mollahs were of course joined by the powerful land-owning khans, and by many of the chieftains of the non-Persian tribes on the northern and western fringe of Persia, especially the Khurds and Lurs. In the subsequent disorders Russian influence supported the latter, with the result that the whole movement came to grief. Shortly before my arrival in Tabriz there had died a well-known character, whose career gives a typical picture of what went on in Persia after the Revolution. Sujar-ed-Dowleh had started life as a caravan-thief on the road between Tabriz and Maragha. Having acquired enough in the first few months to bribe off all the gendarmes and police that were sent to bring him to justice, he then developed a desire to become a Governor-General. The disorders during the siege of Tabriz and its occupation by the Russians had left it without a Governor. The appointment of Sujar-ed-Dowleh was convenient to the reactionary Russian Government, and in due course he was installed, although another Governor had already been appointed

[1] That is, *followers* of Ali, first cousin of Mahomet, and the husband of his daughter Fātimah. The Shiahs regard themselves as the orthodox Muslims.

by the Persian Government. The combined caravan-thief, arch-briber, and Governor-General then proceeded to rule the greatest province of Persia for upwards of four years. This is only an example of what has gone on in Persia since the dawn of history. In the centuries before Christ the nomad Parthians descended from the Scythian steppes and became rulers of Persian cities. The Sassanians, also nomads, and probably freebooters, came and overthrew the Parthians. The present Qajar dynasty in Persia was founded by Turcoman shepherds from the Trans-Caspian. In more recent times caravan-thieves like Sujar-ed-Dowleh descend and rule the cities of Azairbijan. To-morrow Russian engineers and revolutionary committees may prove to be the element which will lead to the regeneration of Persia.

But the most effectual and lasting agent of progress was to be seen at Tabriz in the schools. Since the Constitutional movement began, fourteen schools have been opened there, entirely by the efforts of the intellectuals and merchants, by whom they are supported voluntarily. I visited several, and found that in spite of the war and the Russo-Turkish invasion of the province, they were showing remarkable results. There were 5,089 boys and 400 girls at these schools. Persian and Arabic were taught by *Hoddjas*, and History, Geography, Arithmetic and Algebra from Persian text-books. I questioned the pupils, and found that some of them had learnt a little French. The chief difficulty seemed to be the absence of a training-place for teachers. These were mostly Armenians, who, as may so frequently be observed in the East, are the first to become influenced by the new culture penetrating from the West. The Persian popu-

lation of Tabriz is about 100,000, and the number of Persian children attending schools is 5,489. Small as this figure may seem, it is an immense improvement on what there was before the Revolution, when there was nothing in Tabriz but old schools kept in the mosques by Mollahs, where the boys learned to mutter the Koran. Such has been the effect of two years of the Constitutional movement, inspired by Western civilization, upon the population of Tabriz. I could not help feeling, however, what a pity it was that Europe had not confined the culture it transmitted to spiritual things, and had not left behind its guns and militarism for home consumption. As it was, the wretched inhabitants of Azairbijan were compelled to watch two of the latest converts to the culture of Europe, Russia and Turkey, brawling over their beautiful plains and turning their rice-fields and oases into deserts.

On August 20th I left Tabriz and the hospitality of Mr. Shipley. I had for some days previously been making up a caravan, and had purchased two horses, a riding-saddle and a pack-saddle, string, rope, food, leather, and all other appurtenances of travel in Asia. I also took with me Solomon Melikiants, the son of an Armenian merchant, to look after the horses.

I set out across the Tabriz plain towards the northern shores of Lake Urumiah, passing the fertile oases of Gunai, where the peaceful Persian peasants cultivate rice and the vine under the cool shade of sombre poplars. The summer heat was great, and I could only travel from 6 to 10 a.m., and from 4 to 8 p.m.: but the wonderful dryness of the air tempered the fierce rays of the sun. Several times I bathed in Lake Urumiah,

which is more salty than the Dead Sea and in whose waters it is impossible to sink. The beaches of the lake are covered with barren shingle. Not a sign of life is seen in its waters, except for a tiny crustacean, like a minute sea-horse. But some of the lagoons were alive with wild duck and geese. Away across the lake to the South lay the great wall of the Assyrian highlands, glowing with red and gold in the August sun. The waters of the lake were deep blue, heaving in limpid waves. I thought of the lines of the famous Persian Sufi, Jalālu 'ddīn Rūmī, which Mr. Nicholson has translated:

The vessel of my being was completely hidden in the sea.
The sea broke into waves, and again Wisdom rose
And cast abroad a voice; so it happened and thus it befell.
Foamed the sea, and at every foam-fleck
Something took figure and something was bodied forth.
Every foam-fleck of body, which received a sign from that sea,
Melted straightway and turned to spirit in this ocean.

It was while I was waiting, I had almost said dreaming, by the shores of the lake, that I met Dr. Shedd, the well-known American missionary, who was passing on the road from Urumiah. We sat for an hour in the shade of an olive-tree, while he related to me the terrible experiences that he and his brother missionaries had undergone during the siege of Urumiah the previous winter. His sufferings had been great; and to crown all his wife had died. He and his girls were on their way back to America for a rest.

On the evening of August 22nd I reached the plain of Salmas, which runs out in a long oblong form from the north-west corner of Lake Urumiah. I made my way at once to the city of Dilman, which is surrounded by

an old mud wall, now crumbling to decay. I rode into the bazaar and enquired for the Persian Governor. I was told he had gone to Tabriz. I then asked for the Assistant Governor, but he, they said, had gone off on a hunting journey into the mountains. Then I asked if there were any officials, police, gendarmes, or perhaps a new caravan-thief who might be aspiring to any of these posts. No. There were none of these as yet, though they were to be expected. "Who is in authority, then?" I asked. "There is no one", they said. "Every one is the authority." And it was true. The city had no government, and to all appearance required none. The merchants were going about their business in the bazaar as usual; the peasants were coming in to sell their produce; the Governor's house was empty, and there were no officials or police. Here indeed was a people, who had got as near as seems practicable to a state of passive anarchy. Again I saw Persian history written in these people. A town has no governor, and wants none, for he is an expense. A Khurdish shepherd from the mountains sees a town without a governor, so he appoints himself, becomes Viceroy, and finally Shah.

I spent the night in a caravanserai with a large company of Persian merchants, and an even larger company of vermin, and next morning went out to the Armenian village of Havtvan, where lived the Armenian bishop, Nerses. He kindly gave me a room to stay in while I was in Salmas. Next day I rode off to visit the Russian general in command of the Russian forces in North-west Persia. He was living in a little village at the edge of the plain. I arrived at the small Persian village after

a hot, dusty journey across the desert. An endless maze of mud walls surrounded the houses. Before several doors dust-covered sentries lounged, while down the narrow streets Cossacks on shaggy ponies dashed on errands. By the wall surrounding a leafy orchard, on the outskirts of the village, I halted and handed in my papers to the sentry. In a few minutes I was enjoying the shade of the apricot-trees, while a sparkling stream watered the dusty grass at my feet. In the orchard stood a round felt tent, like a great bee-hive, which I recognized at once as the abode of a Central Asian nomad, a Tartar or Turkoman from Trans-Caspia. But instead of a Mongol face in a long cloak and shaggy cap, I beheld the face and uniform of General Chernozubof, sitting at the edge of his tent, glancing over the telegrams and orders for the day. I was at once cordially welcome in this ingenious army head-quarters, so much in keeping with its Asiatic surroundings. We were soon joined by the Cossack commander, and the generals related to me with the aid of a map the recent operations of their troops against the Khurds and Turks. A cup of Russian tea was served, as we squatted on the ground; and before I took my leave I was furnished with passes to enable me to travel in the region occupied by the Russian army in North-western Persia.

On August 25th I left the Salmas plain for Urumiah, passing down the western shore of the lake. In the hills to the east of the plain, a little off the road, I went to see a bas-relief carved in the rock. A king is receiving two persons, who are apparently requesting something from him. In view of the fact that north of this point in the plain of Salmas and Khoy there are old Armenian churches,

and an Armenian population to this day, while to the south there are none, it is probable that this bas-relief represents a Persian, probably a Sassanian king, receiving tribute from some Armenian princes of this district, which perhaps he had lately conquered.

As I proceeded southward towards the Urumiah plain, I became more and more aware of the disturbances caused by the war. All along the road I met bands of refugees coming northward, bringing terrible tidings of oncoming Turks and retreating Russians. The wayside inns were full of emaciated people, some among them dying or dead. Most were in rags, with nothing to subsist on but a few melons picked up on the roadside. They were all Assyrian Christians from the Urumiah plains, with a sprinkling of their kinsmen from the mountains at the head-waters of the Tigris. Knowing how to discount the Eastern imagination in war-time, I decided to push on to Urumiah to see if there really was a serious danger of a Turkish invasion. It was true that the Russians, hearing of Halil Bey's second advance into the Alashgert in Armenia, had ordered the withdrawal of their infantry from Urumiah. Such was the fright of the Assyrian Christians, after their experience of the Turkish invasion the previous winter, that they fled in panic. When I arrived at the gates of Urumiah on August 26th I found no Russians, nor even Cossacks; but neither had any Turks arrived, as the refugees had asserted. But this time I found a Persian Governor, and best of all, Dr. Packard, of the American Presbyterian Mission, living in the mission-compound surrounded by a beautiful grove of lime-trees about a mile from the city. He and his wife welcomed me with open arms, for they were q[illegible]

alone, the last missionary, Dr. Shedd, having left. They were clinging on devotedly to their noble work of saving life, and relieving sufferings, in this unhappy land that lay between the two armies which advanced and retreated over it in turn. Dr. Packard is six feet tall, with the eye of an eagle and the courage of a lion. He has travelled during the last thirteen years in every remote valley of this wild Turco-Persian borderland; he is intimately acquainted with every tribal chief of the Khurds, and can go among the fiercest and most intractable of them, such is his moral hold over these men, his medical skill, and the confidence which they place in a man who is not engaged in political intrigue.

All through the winter of 1914–15 there had been terrible disorders in Urumiah. First a small Turkish force came in and drove the Russians out in December. Instantly all the Khurdish tribes of the mountain swooped into the plain of Urumiah like vultures on a carcase, and began to plunder the Assyrian Christians and even the Moslems themselves. The Turkish civil officials, Neri Bey and Raoub Bey, took part in the pillage, and it was not till the army of Halil Bey arrived that anything like public security existed. This part of Persia was in fact witnessing one of those incursions of nomad tribes from the mountains into the peaceful oases of the plains, which have been going on all through her history. The same thing occurred in 1880, when Sheikh Obeidulla, the great Khurdish chief of Neri, invaded Azairbijan right up to the walls of Tabriz. On the present occasion the Khurds of the Turco-Persian borderland, profiting by the political disturbances created by the Great War, invaded the plains of Urumiah, partly with a view to loot, but also,

as far as the tribal chiefs were concerned, with the idea of creating a large Khurdish kingdom, with themselves as the rulers. It was undoubtedly a quite spontaneous movement, called forth by the steady growth of nationalism among the Khurds during the last thirty years; but it is curious that it coincided with the plan of Enver Pasha and the Young Turks, set forth at the Erzerum Conference of September 1914, to create a chain of buffer States under Ottoman suzerainty between Russia and Turkey. Religious fanaticism probably played a much smaller part in the movement than in previous years. The governing factor throughout seems to have been nationality. It was in fact the desire on the part of the Khurds to realize themselves as a unit in human affairs; and that idea was far more powerful than the idea of Jihad (Holy War). The Khurds of the Turco-Persian borderland had for many years past seen Russian influence creeping slowly down from the north. They had also watched the rise of the Ottoman imperialism of the Young Turks, so that their attitude towards both Ottoman and Russian imperialism was one of hostility. Frequent conflicts between Khurds and Turks took place in the Bitlis region before the war, and even after its outbreak many of the Khurds merely observed a sullen neutrality towards both sides. But the Khurds of the Persian borders, being farther away from Ottoman influences, feared Russian imperialism more, and hence their readiness to join the Turks, from whose imperialism they had less to apprehend. Dr. Packard showed me a letter which Karini Agha, the head of the Mamush Khurds of Sulduz, wrote to the Russian Consul at Urumiah just before he entered the city. The letter showed that his chief

concern was to establish himself and his house as the ruling dynasty of this part of Azairbijan. "I am Karini Agha", the note began. "I am not Khurdu Bey, nor Bedr Khan Bey, nor even Sheikh Mahommed. These are my servants; and when I speak the mountains tremble. Your Cossacks shall be my hewers of wood, and their wives shall be my delight. As for you, you shall accept the faith of Islam or perish as a giaour."

The scenes that followed the Russian evacuation were indescribable. Thirty thousand Khurds poured down into the plain, and for two days the whole place was given over to plunder. Karini Agha and Rashid Bey set themselves up as dictators with a puppet of a Persian Governor. During the next week 800 Assyrian Christians were massacred, and 5,000 families robbed of all they possessed. About this time Dr. Packard did a courageous piece of work. At the risk of his life he went to Geok-tepe, a village in the plain, whither some 2,000 Christians had retired to make their last desperate stand in the church buildings against a host of Khurds. The doctor went straight to the Khurdish chief commanding the besiegers, and begged him in the name of humanity to spare the Christians, telling him that Mahommed had never countenanced cruelty, and had always taught his disciples to be kind and merciful. The effect of a personal appeal for mercy from one who inspires confidence even in a wild mountaineer was instantaneous. The Christians were liberated on condition of giving up their arms.

The reign of terror in Urumiah lasted for three months; then after the retreat of Halil Bey's army from Dilman, the Russians occupied the city and plain. The Persian Khurds retired with them, and Karini Agha soon became a Pasha

with high Ottoman military rank. Whether he still imagines that he will some day establish an independent Khurdistan may perhaps be doubted. But at any rate he looks to Ottoman protection for his national ideals, whatever form they may take.

The territory inhabited by the Khurds may be said to cover almost exactly the region of the Taurus chain, beginning from Cilicia, and passing the region between Kharput and Diarbekr, through Bohtan and the head-waters of the Tigris to the Turco-Persian borderland. Here the Taurus bends south-east, and Khurdish tribes are found over its whole length, and in the plains bordering it as far south as Kasr-i-Shirim. Their chief mode of life is cattle and horse-raising, for which abundant mountain pasturage is necessary: so a very large part of them live as nomads, taking their flocks up to the alpine meadows for the Summer, and retiring in Winter to sheltered valleys in the foothills. Being a strong and very virile race, their numbers are continually increasing, the pressure of population and the insufficiency of pasturage thus making it necessary for them to expand. The deserts of Mesopotamia do not attract them, owing to the absence under Turkish rule of any development of irrigation in the basins of the lower Tigris and Euphrates. On the other hand, to the north in Armenia they find upland plateaux, where industrious Armenian peasants grow corn, while on the Persian table-land fertile oases abound, where rice and the vine flourish. Everything attracts them northward, and this is one of the prime causes of political disorders in Greater Armenia and North-west Persia, and can only be dealt with by development of the irrigated lands of Mesopo-

tamia, so as to give the Khurds a chance to migrate south. The Khurds are quite capable of acclimatizing themselves, and of taking to agriculture, as is shown by the colonies of Sunni Moslems on the plains of Urumiah. These people are really Khurds, who have come north from the Taurus range, and settled in the plain among the Persians, learning from them to cultivate the land, and forgetting their former nomad existence. There are also Khurds in the transitional stage between nomad and settled life. Thus the Harkai tribe winters on the Mosul plains, and in the Summer comes up to the Turco-Persian border near Nochia, Gawar and upper Mergawer. Many of these Harkai families have begun during the last ten years to settle in lower Mergawer, and to intermarry with the Khurds whom they find there. They even go to the length of dispossessing some of the local Persian landlords of their barley-fields on the northern slopes of the hills overlooking the Urumiah plains. While I was in Urumiah, I more than once heard Persians speaking of the encroachments of the Khurds, as bitterly as the Armenian peasants of the Van district. This necessity of the Khurds for expansion is one of the most potent causes of their national unrest. It is the absence of a guiding and controlling hand that has turned this natural movement into undesirable channels. Unfortunately, good influences from outside have been conspicuously absent on the Turco-Persian borderland during the last decade.

As an example of border politics, the story of the well-known Khurdish chief Simko of the Kotur region will suffice. In 1904 Jaffar Agha, the head of the Avdois Khurds of Somai and Chiari, rebelled against the Vice-

roy of Azairbijan, who sent troops to arrest him. Jaffar escaped into Turkey, where he was well treated by the Governor of Van. In time he obtained Turkish money and some rifles, and, returning to Chiari, again defied the Viceroy, who now tried the usual Oriental game. Messengers were dispatched with presents and a hearty invitation to come as an honoured guest to Tabriz. Jaffar was deceived, and went, only to be received not with hospitality but with bullets, one of which passed through his head and finished him. His house was then burnt, his lands were seized and given to the chief of the Shikoik tribe of Baradost. Thereupon the murdered man's brother, Simko, fled into the hills, and established himself at Kotur, an old castle in a narrow valley, some two days' journey south of Mount Ararat. Now this Kotur valley was an important strategic point, for it guarded the passage between the Van vilayet and the Khoy plain, through which a Russian army might invade Armenia, or a Turkish army might invade the Caucasus. Simko was therefore worth a price. Caravans began to arrive at his castle from the north early in the year 1912 with guns and rouble notes. He suddenly became very rich and powerful, and acquired control over all the Khurds of the borderland, from Mount Ararat down to the Baradost plateau. Meanwhile the Turks, profiting by the disorders, had sent troops into Persian territory, and were claiming a rectification of the frontier, so as to bring it down to the south-west corner of Lake Urumiah. The ostensible reason was to protect the Sunni Moslems of the Urumiah plains, formerly nomadic Khurds, but now settled. But the real reason was that the Turks wished to get control of the important strategic points

of the Urumiah and Sulduz plains in the event of war with Russia. Simko, the Russian stalking-horse, meanwhile began raiding the Van vilayet, and carrying off Armenian cattle and women. The Turks could not touch him, because he always managed to escape across the Persian frontier to his castle, where it was dangerous to follow him. Moreover, he had the protection of Russia. The Armenians of Van began to complain loudly of Simko and his depredations, and next year, the disorder created by this Khurd having reached the desired proportions, Russia came out with the Armenian Reform Scheme, declaring that the disorders in the Van vilayet were no longer endurable to her. The history of the Armenian Reform Scheme I deal with in Chapter VIII. When war broke out in August 1914, Turkey, before she had joined the war, sent guns and ammunition to the Sunnis and Shikoik Khurds of Somai and Baradost, while Russia strengthened Simko. In November 1914 Simko, assisted by Russian troops, advanced southwards, and occupied his former home at Chiari, while the Turks with the Shikoiks captured Somai. Then came Enver Pasha's great Sary-Kamish advance in December, and Djevdet Pasha's Van army of 10,000 men occupied Salmas. The Russians retired to Khoy, and their protégé, Simko, who had cost them so dear the last three years,—stayed behind! After the arrival of Halil Bey's army in April, while Djevdet Pasha was busy with the Armenians at Van, an attempt was made to win Simko back, and by a secret messenger he was offered untold wealth, if he would only assassinate Halil Bey. Simko was in his old castle at Chiari entertaining some Turkish officers when he received this secret

message. Halil Bey was on the plain of Dilman, some ten miles to the east, while the Russians were in the hills to the south of the Khoy plain. Hearing of the Armenian rebellion at Van, and thinking that probably the Turks would not see the business through, Simko decided to try the Russians again. He set out one night with all his Khurds, and ordered his Turkish guests to follow him. They rode through the darkness all night, and at dawn they saw the camp-fires of the Russians. "Here," said Simko to the Russian commander, "behold my loyalty! I have delivered your enemies into your hands." But the Russians were not quite so much impressed as he had hoped; and for the next six months Simko, chief of Kotur and Chiari, retired to the Caucasus accompanied by an ever-watchful Russian policeman. Now that Russia has undisputed control of this corner of Azairbijan, Simko has been allowed to return, having duly served the purpose of puppet, intriguer, assassin, and spy, meanwhile changing sides at least twice. This is a typical story of Turco-Persian border-politics, as they have been going on for 2,000 years, right up till yesterday.

It is customary in Europe to look upon the Khurd as cruel and bloodthirsty by nature, and given to creating disturbances for sheer devilry's sake. But when a race is situated in a country lying between two greedy Empires, both continually intriguing, bribing, threatening, invading, and always thinking more of their own selfish imperial interests than of the interests of the people they are dealing with, is it likely that such a race will fail to develop the character of fickleness towards foreigners? There is only one way to secure the peace

and development of Khurdistan, and that is by the exercise of a little honesty, that quality so rare in diplomacy. If the governing power deals fairly with the natives, improves roads, irrigates the land, and builds schools, the object of which is not merely to teach the children garbled history about their own country, the natives will then become confident, and turn their activities to works of production rather than of destruction. Khurdish unrest is very largely a symptom of dissatisfaction with the neighbouring Powers, that are trying to gain control of the country by dubious methods.

The Khurds are probably the descendants of that race which at the dawn of history occupied the highlands of the Taurus range. Periodically descending into the rich lands at their feet, and founding dynasties over the lazy inhabitants of the oases, they have in times past acquired powerful influence over Persian affairs. The ancient kingdom of Media was probably formed by one of these Khurdish incursions. They have in turn fallen greatly under Persian cultural influences, and their language is distinctly Iranian. But since the rise of the Ottoman Empire, part of them have fallen under Turkish influence. Setting aside the Kizil Bashis, who are probably the relics of another partially Khurdicized highland race, and the Jaff Khurds in Mesopotamia, there are two main cultural groups. The western group, inhabiting eastern Asia Minor up to the Turco-Persian border, speaks a Kirmandji dialect of Khurdish, containing a certain admixture of Turkish words. The eastern group in north-western Persia speaks Mukri, which shows strong traces of Persian influence.

Socially, the Khurds are divided into two castes. The

military Asshirets are the rulers, and comprise the chiefs with their horsemen and retinue. They are the landowners, exacting tribute and holding every privilege. Beneath them are the Rayats, the hewers of wood and drawers of water for the Asshirets. They do not as a rule bear arms, and confine themselves in the main to cultivating the land on the edge of the Taurus highlands. I am inclined to think that the Rayat Khurds are tending more and more to settled habits, while the Asshirets cling more stubbornly than ever to nomad life, and to their habits of raiding, in order to find grazing-lands for their flocks.

A few days after my arrival in Urumiah, Russian infantry began to come in from the north, and with them the Russian Consul, M. Basil Nikitine. There had been no military authority here for two weeks, since the Russians had left at the beginning of August, and, fortunately, the Turks, who only had a company of *askers* at Sujbulak in the Sulduz plain, judged it unwise to venture up to Urumiah. Their main force lay on the southern slopes of the Taurus to the north of Mosul. So a large strip of territory, including the eastern end of the Taurus, was entirely unoccupied. In this no-man's-land were living all the Khurdish tribes with their chiefs, who at the outbreak of war had made the great raid upon Urumiah and Sulduz. At the advent of the Russians they had retired to the mountains, and were now left high and dry between the two armies.

Shortly after his arrival in Urumiah, M. Nikitine wisely decided upon a policy of conciliation towards these Khurds. He thereupon announced a general amnesty, if they would come in and make their peace with

Russia. The situation was serious. In the mountains were large forces of Khurds, who at any time might receive reinforcements from the Turks, and descend upon Urumiah again. They had with them large numbers of Assyrian Christians, whom they had made slaves in their first raid. They were also occupying the uplands, where the Persians and Christians of the plain had their barley crops; the season was advancing, and these crops ought to be gathered or famine would threaten the plain. But the Khurds were too frightened to come in and make peace. Knowing that Dr. Packard had great influence among them as a disinterested medical man, the Russian Consul proposed to him that he should visit them in order to explain the conditions of the amnesty and tell them not to be afraid. I accompanied him; and in case we should meet any Turks, I arranged beforehand with the doctor that I should pose as his medical assistant. When travelling in the East you must always impress yourself in some way or other upon the natives. If you have come for the purpose of political propaganda, you should represent yourself as at least the Ambassador of an Emperor. If you have come with the intention of converting souls, you should pose as a religious fanatic, preferably a Dervish. If on the other hand you are a student of racial questions, or are anxious to act as a mediator or pacificator, the best rôle that you can adopt is that of a doctor; whether real or quack depends upon your medical knowledge. In Dr. Packard's case it was the former; in mine, unfortunately, it could only be the latter.

On September 8th we started off on our horses from the Mission-compound at Urumiah to visit the Khurds upon

the foothills of the Taurus. We heard that there were a number of Assyrian Christians, whom Abdulla Agha, the head of the Begzadi tribe of Mergawer, was holding up from returning to their homes in Urumiah. Our road lay along the plain parallel with the mountains in a south-easterly direction. We passed the Cossack outpost, stationed on a little knoll to guard the way to the city, and reached large open spaces covered with drooping wheat and barley, for the war had stopped all the work of harvesting here. Burnt villages and ruined vineyards were seen on every side. A little farther on an over-powering stench was wafted to our nostrils. By the side of a stream lay the bodies of two dead Khurds, blackened and twisted by the sun. They had been killed a few days before in a skirmish with a Cossack patrol. We crossed the Dizerteke river by an old bridge, and after resting our horses in the cool shade of the willows by its banks, we pushed on. An hour later we reached an encampment on an open flat, where we found a large party of Assyrian Christians, who were afraid to move lest the Khurds should attack them and prevent them from reaching Urumiah. They were in a pitiable plight, clad in rags, and with no means of support except a few rapidly emptying bags of maize. They welcomed us with joy, for their situation was becoming desperate. The Khurds, they said, were only a short distance beyond. We told them to pack up their tents and go north, as there was no one in their way in that direction. We now set out to find the Khurds, and crossing the low hills that overlook Dize, reached the borders of Dole. Suddenly there sprang out of the ground all round us the figures of men who came running towards us calling

out, "Hakkim Sahib! Hakkim Sahib!" The Khurdish outposts had recognized Dr. Packard, and were running to him with salutations. We had no military escort with us, and we carried not a single rifle or revolver; our sole protection was a medicine-bottle and some presents of silk and sugar. Yet not only were we not harmed, but these rough Khurds actually started fighting among themselves as to who was to escort us to their chief. Some had horses; others had not; and those who had none, stole the horses of those who had. So for the rest of the way we were accompanied by a group of superb horsemen all glittering with Oriental trappings, while behind us followed on foot a bawling, screaming, cursing crowd, threatening the most appalling death, destruction, mutilation, and finally utter damnation in hell, if their fellow-warriors did not instantly give up their horses. In this triumphal procession we entered Dize, where in the large caravanserai Abdulla Agha was residing. Hearing the noise, the chief ordered some of his bodyguard to go and find out what it was all about, and on being told, ordered the insubordinate soldiers to be driven out with thongs. What happened we never saw, but from the sound of the whackings and squealings it would appear that dire punishment was meted out. When we entered, Abdulla Agha was squatting on a carpet in the upper storey of the caravanserai. He rose instantly and treated us with all the civility and hospitality that Oriental manners prescribe, even if it is the intention of the host to put strychnine in your coffee that evening, or smother you with pillows during the night. The Agha was a picturesque middle-aged man, with baggy trousers, short tunic and peaked head-dress. After the evacuation of

the Turks he had, like many European Powers, persuaded himself that it was in the interests of civilization to plant himself down on his neighbour's property, and gather all the fruits he could lay his hands on. Dize, being the road-centre between the Urumiah plain and Sulduz, was a convenient spot in which to set himself up as dictator of the countryside, and levy tribute from the surrounding villages and from any passers-by upon the roads. It was in the hope of putting a stop to this state of affairs, as well as of passing the Christians on to Urumiah, that we had come to visit the Agha; and the conversation of Dr. Packard with him during the evening turned upon these subjects. As a result the Christians were told to accompany us back to their homes next morning, and promises were given that not quite every cow and chicken should be taken from the village of Dole. I then asked the Agha about the history of his tribe, and he confirmed my idea that many of these Khurdish tribes have been moving in a northerly direction for the last fifty years. His father, he said, used to live near Mosul, and came up to the Persian frontier for the summer pasture; but after some years he remained where he brought his flocks in summer, because he found he could get on better there. The Agha himself had been born within the boundaries of Persia, and had evidently acquired a certain degree of Persian culture. I asked him about the Persian classics, and found him acquainted with them "The words of Saadi", he said, "bring light to the eye and warmth to the heart". He had even learnt to speak, like a Persian, in metaphors. Like all his ancestors who had invaded this land before him, he was himself being slowly invaded by its culture.

On the evening of September 9th we were back again in Urumiah, having brought some two hundred Assyrian Christians back to their homes. On September 12th Dr. Packard heard that Bedr Khan Bey, the chief of the Begzadi tribe of Dasht, was on the hills above the city, wanting to come in and make peace. A Khurdish horseman with a white flag had come down the river-valley to announce his master's approach. We set out on our horses at once, but on reaching the appointed spot, we could see nothing. We then lay down among a grove of poplars and sent forward a native Assyrian to scout. Presently we saw a large body of horsemen coming towards us, and recognized the Khurdish chief among them. There are few more picturesque sights in Asia than a cavalcade of Khurds surrounding their chiefs. Their quaint head-dresses, brilliant tunics and baggy trousers, all combine to tone down the ferocity with which they display their arms and ammunition, and are indeed an echo of the middle ages. Our next problem was how to pass them through the Cossack posts without frightening them, for at the sight of Russian soldiers their first impulse was to take to their heels, or else to get behind a rock and open fire. On being assured of Russia's good intentions, they were persuaded to approach; and, after the necessary explanations with the Cossacks, we passed on into a shaded spot, where under a poplar-tree a conference took place between the chief and the Russian Consul. The Consul began: "Why have you been fighting against us?" "Effendi", was the answer, "I could not help it. My own men compelled me to do so; and they were compelled by Karini Agha." "Don't you see the uselessness of fighting against Russia,

who has been successful in every war that she has ever waged with Turkey? There are twenty million Moslem subjects in the Russian Empire, and all of them are loyal and contented." These words had their effect. The chief agreed to make peace and keep it. But on the next Turkish invasion some two months later, he bolted with all his men, and has not been seen again.

On September 18th Dr. Packard and I decided to visit an important and powerful chief, Khurdu Bey, the head of the Begzadi tribe of Tergawer. He had refused to make peace, and was holding in his encampment on the mountains about forty Assyrian Christians, whom he had carried off from Urumiah and enslaved the previous winter. Early in the morning we rode off in a westerly direction over the Urumiah plain till we reached the Naslu river. Here we turned sharp to the south, and mounted onto a high plateau. This was Tergawer, the summer grazing ground of the Khurds, where many of the Assyrians and Persians used to grow their barley before the war. We passed over wide sweeps of down, and occasionally through barren stony defiles. The atmosphere became oppressive, and the silence weird and uncanny. Suddenly we saw against the sky-line the gaunt figure of a gigantic man, armed to the teeth, and standing with his arms folded. We recognized the forbidding outline of a Khurd, one of the outposts guarding the encampment of Khurdu Bey, an apparition of a kind to freeze a man's blood. But Dr. Packard made straight for him in a bee-line. About a hundred yards from him he called out at the top of his voice, "Ho! my brother! The Hakkim Sahib has come to see you. Greeting and peace be to you!" Instantly the forbidding demon on

the rock became a child-like slave, and rushing down, fell before the doctor and kissed his hands and feet. We had stormed the outpost of the enemy, and our only ammunition was a pill which the doctor gave him, as he complained of a stomach-ache. Soon this Khurdish brave was leading us along a narrow path to where his chief lived. At last we reached the camp of Khurdu Bey in an alpine meadow under a great rock, from which fell a picturesque cascade. The spot marked the frontier between Persia and Turkey. To the east lay the whole plateau of Tergawer covered with grassy downs, and away beyond we could see the plain of Urumiah glowing with the golden light of distant corn-fields. The dark patches in the gold denoted poplar groves and leafy vineyards, and away beyond lay Lake Urumiah, blue as a slab of lapis lazuli. A Persian proverb says, "Azairbijan is the eye of Persia; Urumiah is the eye of Azairbijan". Behind us stood tier upon tier of rugged and forbidding mountain-ranges, with their dark, windy valleys in which the Turks were waiting. From this spot Khurdu Bey could run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. If a patrol of Cossacks came up across Tergawer towards him, he could see them and bolt to the Turks. If the Turks came up these dark valleys from Neri, he could see them in time to bolt over to the Russians.

Dr. Packard and I rode up to a great tent of horse-hair matting stretched on poles. Round it stood picturesque bands of Khurds with curved daggers and scimitars. Khurdu Bey came out to meet us, and after many salaams and much bowing, led us into his tent. Here we sat down on mats, with rows of armed warriors all round us. Khurdu was a comparatively young

man, small but well built, and with the sly eye of a fox. He had eleven wives and ten thousand sheep—a sign of wealth in Khurdistan. He was surrounded as he sat with us by a large retinue of relations, friends, advisers, and counsellors. Soon we became aware that some emissaries from the Turks were present. A small group of clean-shaven young men with fezzes kept to themselves and talked in whispers. They had evidently come up to induce Khurdu to come over to their side. Dr. Packard began by suggesting that the Urumiah plains were pleasant and healthy at this time of the year, and that the grapes were now ripe. Khurdu replied that he did not want to stay up on the cold mountains, for the winter would soon be coming on; but he did not know if it was safe to come to the Urumiah plains. He had the idea of going down to the Mosul plains in Mesopotamia for the winter. The Turkish emissaries had got there before us, and had the first say. Seeing that it was impossible to do anything unless we could be alone with him, when we should be able to appeal to his personal feelings, Dr. Packard suggested that we should go into his private tent. To this he agreed, and so we entered a tent in which we found a large and varied assortment of things: china vases, silk embroideries, carved book-shelves, an inlaid table, a wardrobe, a four-post bed, and a piano,—all of them last winter's loot from Urumiah. Now we understood the very potent reason why their owner was not anxious to visit Urumiah. We squatted down on the floor, and Dr. Packard began to talk to him about the Assyrians, whom he held in slavery. Could he not release them? It was written in the Koran that he who shows justice and mercy will be rewarded with Paradise. The

families of these poor Christians were pining for those whom they loved, and the women were starving in the absence of the breadwinners. Those who did a kind deed would be rewarded by the Lord. So spoke the doctor. Outside the tent a fanatical "sheikh" in a green turban walked up and down. He was trying to influence Khurdu Bey not to give up the Christians, and kept quoting from the Koran in a sing-song voice: "Kill those who join other gods." But the magic of the doctor's words prevailed upon Khurdu. He nodded thoughtfully and said nothing; but much was passing through his brain.

Early next morning the Christians were there, and as soon as they saw the Hakkim Sahib, they fell down and kissed his feet. We said good-bye to Khurdu Bey, and said that we hoped to see him in Urumiah. Then we started back for the plain with the forty Assyrians, yelling and running ahead of us in their joy. For five months they had been kept on the mountains as slaves and camel-herdsmen for the chief, living from hand to mouth and half starving. All hopes of ever seeing their families had been abandoned by them, and they were sinking into a melancholy of despair. Now by a few simple healing words the doctor had cut the cord and set them free. Such is the power of a strong character, protected only by honesty, even among the untutored border-raiders of Khurdistan. We never saw Khurdu again; he left with the Turks a month later, and during the winter died of a disease. On the evening of the next day we reached the Mission-compound at Urumiah with our delivered Assyrians, who speedily dispersed to their families.

In the last week in September I was laid low by the hand of fate. Jumping out of a carriage when the horse had

run away, as we were driving back from the city to the Mission-compound on the evening of September 23rd, I suffered concussion of the brain, and was laid up for two weeks. When I got well it was nearly time for me to get on my way again, for I intended to visit Van. Before I left, however, I learned something about the American Presbyterian Mission at Urumiah and its history.

In 1834 the Rev. Dr. Perkins went out from America to Urumiah under the Presbyterian Board to work among the Nestorians, or Assyrian Christians of the ancient church of the Patriarch Mar Shimon. The object at first was to educate the people, but to leave the church alone. In 1855 however a misunderstanding arose. The adherents of the old church, thinking there was a tendency on the part of the missionaries to establish an Evangelical church in competition with that of the Patriarch, broke away and refused to have anything more to do with the missionaries. From that time forward both the reformed Evangelical church and the unreformed Nestorian existed side by side on the Urumiah plain, until the Nestorian disappeared within the last ten years, owing to the Russian Orthodox propaganda. The Orthodox church, being largely a political organization, became a useful instrument for Russian influence in Azairbijan. All the old Nestorians had found it convenient to go over to Orthodoxy in response to bribes, and the offer of political privileges. In 1879 the Urumiah college was founded, consisting at present of the boys' section in the compound outside the city, which, when I was there, had about eighty boarders, and of the girls' school for Moslems and Christians (sixty boarders) within the city. A general education with elementary science and industrial handiwork is given,

and Bible teaching is obligatory for both Christians and Moslems. The pupils are of course mainly Christians; but of late years Moslems have begun more and more to send their children to these schools. The excellent influence of the education given by the American colleges is unfortunately marred by the fact that it tends to touch only the Christian section of the community, leaving the Moslems until recently almost unaffected. The result is that the Christians tend to absorb Western ideas very rapidly but too often superficially, while the bulk of the Moslems remain in the apathy of the old school of Islam The Constitutional movement among the intellectual Moslems, while dominating large centres like Tabriz, Teheran, Isfahan, and Kermanshah, hardly affected border cities like Urumiah. Hence the Assyrians and Persians of these regions have shown a tendency to drift apart in educational and political thought. Dr. Shedd, the head of the college, is however fully alive to these facts, and is doing all he can to deal with this aspect of the education problem.

It is not too much to say that the American Mission schools in Asia have been far better ambassadors of European culture than the whole of the diplomacy and military force of the Powers. They are the only institutions in all this land, with the exception of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Anglican Mission, which are absolutely disinterested and exist solely for the welfare of the people of the country. Every time that I have met with Armenians, Assyrians or Greeks, or sometimes a Persian or a Turk, who have been through one of the great American Mission-colleges of Asia Minor or Persia, I have always found that they have been perceptibly drawn towards Western Europe, and

are thinking on much the same lines as young Americans Englishmen, Frenchmen, or even Germans. If a youn man has been for a few years to America, he generall returns a keen man of business, interpreting the phrase "getting on", in terms of the dollar. If he has been t Paris, he is perhaps too much inclined to dally wit decadent art and literature; but is also probably strongl imbued with some Western form of Socialism. Germa educational influence is extremely small, and Russia non-existent outside the frontiers of the Empire. Th American and Anglican Evangelical Missions in the Nea and Middle East can therefore be said, without an exaggeration, to be the chief agents of Western Europea culture among the people.

## CHAPTER IV

### WITH THE ARMENIAN VOLUNTEERS ROUND LAKE VAN

On October 14th I said farewell to my friends in Urumiah, and with my little caravan of two horses set out for the Armenian highlands. I returned the same way that I came as far as Dilman, which I reached on the 16th, having spent the night in a Russian military post at Jellalabad. In Dilman I found hospitality in the house of an Assyrian doctor, David Johanan, and during the four days I was with him, he gave me the benefit of his great knowledge of this part of Persia. Soon after my arrival at Dilman, the whole plain of Salmas, in which the city lies, was flooded with Assyrian refugees. Thirty thousand starving and ragged human beings, headed by their Patriarch Mar Shimon, came pouring down from the mountains at the head-waters of the Tigris. Every day along the road to Bashkale, I met with streams of them in a terrible state of emaciation and exhaustion. On the arrival of the Patriarch I went at once to see him. He was a young man of little more than thirty, and had been elected at his birth from the patriarchal family by general agreement among the people. He and an old trusted adviser of his, Kashi Daniel, had a pitiful tale to tell.

The Assyrians of the Nestorian Church, acknowledging the Patriarch Mar Shimon, live in the wildest and most inaccessible parts of the Taurus at the headwaters of the Great Zab, a tributary of the Tigris. I had looked into some of this country, when I went with Dr. Packard to visit Khurdu Bey, and had seen from a distance those steep precipitous valley slopes, where little villages, half dug in the rocks, are connected with each other by almost impassable tracks. One of the most ancient Churches in all Christendom still survives in this region. The Assyrians claim that they accepted Christianity directly from Simon Peter. At any rate, it is recorded in the 3rd century A.D. that they acknowledged a Patriarch in Syria. In time their form of Christianity spread all over Asia. Circumstances seemed to be favourable to them. The Roman Empire and its culture was decaying, and Persia was undergoing one of its usual revolutions and disorders, while the Sassanians were driving out the Arsakids. From the 5th to the 8th century the Nestorian Church had spread its influence right through Central Asia into China and India. According to Dr. Wigram, in his interesting book on the Assyrian church, the Assyrian Nestorians resisted union with the Greek Church largely from political motives. They themselves were mostly subjects of the kings of Persia, who were at constant war with the Romans, so it was naturally safer for them to have an entirely separate ecclesiastical organization from the Greeks, in order to escape persecution from the Persians.

A considerable degree of tolerance, broken by occasional fits of persecution, was accorded the Assyrians till the rise of Islam. Then, just as fire-worship fell before the

wave of Arab culture, the Nestorian form of Christianity also began to wane. Apathy, corruption and superstition had for centuries been creeping into both these religions, so that the Arabs with their simple faith from the desert could easily make converts. All that is left of this ancient Church has for the last three hundred years been clustering in those inaccessible valleys of the Upper Zab. Living in the same regions and under the same conditions as the Khurds, the Assyrians may possibly be derived from the same primitive mountain stock, which is found all through the Taurus. They are divided into six tribes or Asshirets, named after the valleys they occupy: Thuma, Tiari, Baz, Gelu, Heriki, and Girdi. Each have their hereditary chiefs, or Meliks, and all acknowledge the Patriarch Mar Shimon. Before the war, they numbered 79,000 persons, according to Lalayan (vide "Assyrians of the Van Vilayet," published Tiflis 1914). Now, in October 1915, barely 30,000 of them were retreating from their abandoned homes.

The story of the disaster which had befallen them is the same as that of every little people sandwiched in between two Empires. The relations between the Khurds and Assyrians at the commencement of the war were friendly. They were neighbours who grazed their flocks together on the mountains and traded with each other, while their children played together over the dirt-heaps outside their underground villages. Turkey joined the war, and still nothing happened to disturb the peace of these mountain valleys. All through the Winter of 1914–15 there was peace in the Taurus, while Russians and Turks were battering each other at Sary-Kamish. Then, in March, two Assyrians arrived

with news from Russia at Kochanes, the village of the Patriarch. Russia, they said, would come and take the Assyrian highlands, and liberate the Christians groaning under the tyranny of the Turk. The Cossacks would be here any time now ; guns, ammunition, money, all would be forthcoming ; only let them rise up now against the common enemy of Christendom. Hasty counsels took place in dark underground rooms ; young men jabbered, and old grey-beards shook their heads. Some wanted to go at once to join the Russians ; others, seeing danger if the Russians should after all fail to come, counselled delay. All feared that if something were not done, and sides were not taken, the victors, whoever they might be, would turn on them and say, " He that was not with us was against us ". While this was going on among the Assyrians, Turkish emissaries came to the Khurds. " The Giaour is coming ", they said. " Rise up and smite him. Your fellow Khurds are serving in the Hamidian regiments. We shall soon have all the Caucasus at our feet. Then the Empire of Islam will be great, and all its sons will be sure of Paradise and its houris." But amongst the Khurds also there were dissensions ; some would go, and some would not. " If we go to the Turks ", some argued, " they will take us and make us serve in Europe or at Gallipoli. Let us rather stay in our homes, or if we must fight, then let us fight our neighbours and get all the loot we can. If we fight elsewhere, there will be no loot for us, but only for the Padishah." While they were still discussing, news came that some of the more warlike among the Assyrian Meliks (chiefs) had gone to join the Russians. At once the more hot-headed among the Khurds saw a chance of plunder,

and also the possibility of escaping service with the Turks in Europe. They jumped on their horses, raised the war-cry, and fired a few shots into the air. So war began in the Assyrian highlands. At the beginning of June a division of Turkish soldiers under Haider Pasha arrived at Tiari from Mosul. The Khurds in the meantime attacked Baz and Heriki, and the Assyrians retired to the passes north of Julemerk. But there were no signs of the Russians. Haider Pasha kept his division in Tiari, and made no serious attempt till August. Then some Turkish *askers* that had been left behind in Halil Bey's retreat from Dilman, joined with the Khurds, and in great force attacked the Assyrians, whose plight was now desperate. There was no help coming from Russia, and their ammunition was rapidly becoming exhausted. They abandoned Julemerk and Kochanes, and retreated as fast as they could to the plateau of Gawer. They found nothing but ruined villages and trampled crops on the way, for this was the line of Halil Bey's retreat three months before. They began to drop from starvation and exhaustion. The rear-guards were cut off, and killed or captured by the Khurds. All through September they withdrew northward, headed by their Patriarch, and at last reached the plain of Dilman, where they found the Russians.

This is the story told me by the leaders of these Assyrians just after their arrival in Dilman. Seeing the tragic plight of this ancient race, I sent a messenger at once to Mr. Shipley, the British Consul at Tabriz, and asked him to appeal for help to England. The American missionaries, foremost among whom was Mr. McDowall, set to work to find food and shelter for the refugees. The money sent out from England was of very great assistance

to the Patriarch in his efforts to save the remnants of his people.

On October 24th I started out from Dilman, the last Persian town before reaching the Turco-Persian frontier. I said farewell to the fertile plains of Iran and the warm shores of Lake Urumiah, where I had been basking in the sunshine for the last two months. In front of me lay Armenia, wild and grim, cold and hungry. I followed the road taken by the Russian army-transport, which wound up the mountains forming the watershed between lakes Van and Urumiah. The road lay through the desolate rolling hill-country north of the Chiari valley, leading up to the Khan-Sor pass. Not a living soul was to be seen anywhere, and all the villages of the district had long ago been burnt. Towards evening a bitter blast from the North came on, so I stopped in a little side-valley to pitch my tent. I tethered the horses in a spot where some coarse grass grew by a stream, while my Armenian servant prepared a dish of hot rice and fat. We squatted down over a fire of camel-dung, and smelt that unforgettable smell which is so typical of Asia. In our tea we soaked Persian *lavash*, thin bread which keeps for two months in the dry. Next morning we rose early and rode up to the top of the pass. Here was the frontier between Turkey and Persia, and the hills dividing the basin of the Zab from that of Lake Urumiah. This is one of the passes over which the nomad hordes from Central Asia used to invade Asia Minor. I could see at once that there was no hindrance to their eastward and westward movement. The hills of the Turco-Persian frontier, although they run north and south, present no insuperable barrier to a passage east and west.

Here then was the main cause of Armenia's misfortunes: there were no mountain barriers to protect her people from invasion from the East. At the same time I could see far away to the South the outline of the Taurus, the natural boundary between the Powers that control Armenia and Mesopotamia. Until modern science pierces those jagged walls of rock with a line of railway, there can be no outlet to the sea that way.

In front of me now was the great Armenian plateau. It looked cold and uninviting after the luxurious warmth and vegetation of Persia. I descended into a small upland meadow in the centre of which was the ruined village of Khan-Sor. My Armenian servant began to tell me tales about a great raid that took place here when he was a boy. Armenian revolutionary bands in 1896 had armed themselves in Persia, and had entered the Van vilayet by this pass. Their object appeared to be to hold the Upper Zab valley, and prevent the Turks from extending the massacre to this district. They do not seem to have been very successful, and my servant gave me full particulars of the torturings, burnings and hangings, with the added imagery of the East. On the afternoon of October 25th I descended into the broad valley of the Upper Zab. On a little hill above the river stood the ancient Armenian monastery of Deer. I found there an old Armenian monk living in the great cold building all by himself. The church was of the 10th century, and was surrounded by massive walls. In a fight between Russian and Turkish soldiers last winter, the Turks had used it as a fort. Much debris and stones lay about; and as I wandered about inside the church I found all the pictures and icons destroyed by the Khurds. The

old monk showed me the grave of St. Bartholomew the Apostle, who was buried here, according to Armenian tradition. It is said that he came up the Tigris after the death of Christ, and found a heathen Armenian king living here. The old monk showed me some stones in the wall of the church with curious signs on them; these, he said, were the signs before which the Armenians worshipped, when they were heathen. St. Bartholomew converted the king, who in return buried the saint here. In the evening we cooked and ate a little food on the cold floor of the church, and then lay down to sleep in company with bats and owls. Such was the life of this old Armenian monk, who had escaped massacre the previous winter by hiding in the roof. Now he was living the life of an ascetic, fasting and praying and living at peace with the world, while all around was wild ruin, the product of war and civilization. How many an Armenian St. Francis may have lived in times past in this ancient monastery, burning his candle, murmuring prayers, and worshipping in quiet that unseen light in the heart of man which teaches him, in solitude and silence, the nature of his being, and the insignificance of his self. Here on the Armenian plateau, amid war, pestilence and famine, that light was burning.

Next day I went on down the Zab valley, and soon came to a Russian camp, where a battalion of infantry was stationed to watch any movement of Turks from the direction of Gawer. I sent in my papers from the General to the Commander, Colonel Ivanoff, who asked me to come in and pitch my tent among the officers Many of them were educated men of the Moscow, Kiev

and Kharkoff intelligentsia, and their thirst for news from the outside world was great. They were particularly interested in the Duma and its relations to the Government. I told them all I knew, which was not much, for I too had not seen a Russian paper for many weeks. Round the camp-fires in the evening we settled down to talk over the relative merits of Tolstoy, Dostoyefsky and Oscar Wilde. The group quickly split up into opposing camps of decadents, lyricists and realists. Other officers from the less educated class kept rather to themselves. They were engaged most of the evening in selling the horse-fodder, which the commissariat supplied, to passers-by on the road from Van. Next day, October 27th, I stayed in the camp, and had occasion to talk to some of the common soldiers. Their first question to me, on hearing that I had come from the outer world, was: "When is the war going to end?" The impression left on my mind after a talk with them was that they were anxious for the war to end, yet were prepared for it to go on for a hundred years if it was so ordered by fate. Their only idea of the causes of the war was that their governments had quarrelled, and therefore they had to fight. Once or twice I heard it remarked, that the cause of the war was that Germany was trying to take all her trade and wealth away from Russia; but this came from some *meschanin*, or town-dweller of the middle class. The others were all peasants, and seemed completely submerged in a passive fatalism which bid them go like sheep whithersoever they were told, and do what they were ordered till the end of time. Centuries of life upon the great Russian plain, struggling hopelessly against nature, Tartars and autocrats, seemed to have made

them the convenient tools of all who care to control them.[1]

On October 28th I continued my journey, and at midday reached the ruins of Bashkale on the slope overlooking the river Zab. In some rock-caves close by I came upon 2,000 Assyrian Christians, who had just escaped from the Thuma regions. They were dressed in rags, and living on raw wheat, which they roasted over fires of grass and straw. Many of the women and children were dead and dying, and disease was rampant. I gave them a letter to Colonel Ivanoff, who, I knew, would give them food, and direct them to Persia and the plains of Salmas. After passing Bashkale, I left the valley of the Great Zab and rode up a side-valley. We ascended steeply for three hours, till we reached the summit of the Chukha-Sadik pass (9,000 feet). From here I saw beneath me the basin of Van, but the lake and city were hidden by long sweeps of rolling hills. I descended into the plateau, and pitched my camp for the night by a little stream where I could pasture my horses. Several caravans of camels and donkeys passed by, led by Russian soldiers and Persians. This was the army-transport working between Dilman and Van.

On the morning of the 29th we continued our journey, passing the town of Hoshab at midday. Here a magnificent castle, Arab or Seljuk, towered over the little town.

[1] This was written before the Revolution 1917; but I think it accurately describes the state of mind of the common Russian soldiers in 1915. Beneath their apparent fatalism lay that other nature, to which I refer in Chapters V and VI. That nature was full of bitterness against the rulers of Russia, and was ready to burst into action when the favourable moment came. The fatalism, which I here observed, was only a psychological shield.

We went on down the Hoshab river all day, and at nightfall reached the Armenian village of Norkeui, where I spent the night with the Russian officer in charge of the transport. On the morning of the 30th we ascended a little pass, and suddenly there was unveiled before me that marvellous picture of beauty—the basin of Lake Van. It was one of those perfect autumn days of clear air, dryness, brilliance and freshness, such as can only be experienced in Asia. Beneath me lay the deep blue sheet of the lake, and near its shores the ancient city of Van, nestling under its famous rock. To the West Mount Zipandar rose as a great snow-capped cone out of the blue sheet of water. To the North a line of dazzling whiteness lay along the horizon, and I recognized from my map the mountain chain of the Ala-Dag. To the North-east, where the snow-line sank down and disappeared in the sombre grey of the plateau hills, there arose another great cone, its brilliant crest of white more faintly struggling through the haze of distance. This was a far-off glimpse of Mount Ararat. I was now in the very heart of Armenia.

On my arrival at Van I found more than two-thirds of the city in ruins. Six weeks before, the Russians had hastily evacuated the place, when Halil Bey threatened their flanks in the Alashgert. During the retreat a large part of the town had been burnt, and untold damage inflicted. Van had recently been occupied again, for the Turks had no force of any consequence on this side of the lake. I passed along the main street of the Armenian quarter. The American missionary buildings were all in ruins, and nothing was standing but the chapel. Cossacks and Russian infantry were quartered in the

garden, and the roofs of the houses were being used as firewood. I went first to call on General Chernozubof, and then on the Commandant, an Armenian, who introduced me to his compatriots, Aram and Armenak Yeganian. From them I was able to gather much information about the events in this part of Armenia during the last twelve months.

On my second day at Van it was suggested to me by the Commandant that I should go out to a camp of Armenian volunteers, who were quartered near the city. We rode out past the Toprak-kaleh to the little village of Shah-Bagi. There we found the 6th Armenian volunteer battalion commanded by Ishkhan Argutinsky, a well-known Caucasus Armenian, who gave me a very hearty welcome, and insisted on my staying with him. That evening the battalion-doctor, Ter Stepanian, came in. He had lived in Boston since childhood, and spoke excellent English. During the course of the evening he suggested that I should come with his little Red Cross detachment, and join them on an expedition to the hill-country south of Lake Van. Having some knowledge of the management of horse-caravans in the East, I offered myself as a member of his little unit, and along with another young Armenian from America, Vahan Totoriantz, took charge of the horses, which were to carry the Red Cross supplies. I then shifted my baggage and effects from the city of Van to the village of Shah-Bagi. For the next five days we stayed here in the camp surrounded by vineyards. The leaves had all turned to autumn tints, and the luscious grapes provided half our daily fare.

While we were waiting, I used often to ride over to

the great rock of Van about three miles distant across the plain. This famous rock preserves the records of the ages since the dawn of human history on the Armenian plateau. Much has been written about its caves and inscriptions, and much still remains to be written, when the soil has been excavated from the northern base of the cliff. Lake Van evidently at one time extended up to this point, but has since retreated, covering the base of the cliff with accumulations of silt. I wandered along the narrow rocky paths of the southern face into the great square chambers with gigantic doorways and curious niches in the wall. Here no doubt the rulers of the ancient Vannic Empire held their courts. On the face of the cliff I looked at the great inscription of Xerxes, which proclaimed the might and glory of his Empire, and numbered the people who owned his suzerainty. There was the Seljuk castle with crenulated walls, the symbol of the Tartar Empires long ago crumbled to decay. Above that was the modern Turkish fort, all littered with empty cartridge cases, abandoned rifles, and a few human bones. That was all that was left of the Ottoman Empire here. I looked from this onto the country at my feet. The plain between Mount Varag and the lake, now lit up by the golden splendour of the autumn sun, had seen days of richness and splendour alternating with days of ruin and misery for 3,000 years, and was a witness to the power of man to create, and of rulers to destroy. When Xerxes inscribed that tablet, in the dim ages 2,500 years ago, he was the great lord who brought civilization and culture from the East. He passed away, and his gifts with him: fire and sword replaced the plough and pen; Chaldean

dynasties rose and fell: Persians brought the delicate plant of their culture from the South; Tartars blasted it from the North. To-day again a storm of destruction was sweeping over the land. The villages of the plain were deserted and in ruins; not a living soul was to be seen except a few black spots, that indicated a patrol of Cossacks. What was recently a paradise of richness and beauty was now a desert. What Xerxes, the Arabs and Persians, and the Armenians had each in turn created, had all in turn been destroyed; and I could feel, as I looked from the inscription of the great Persian king on the rock to the ruined villages around me, how change and movement come and are resisted by what went before. Man may call what is new, good, and what is old, bad; and he is ever trying to enlarge the one and to destroy the other. But I wondered whether he is any nearer his goal now, than he was when Xerxes carved his tablet.

On November 7th the 6th Armenian volunteer battalion moved from Shah-Bagi for the front at Vostan, near the south-east corner of the lake. We had risen early, and packed our Red Cross boxes, and for three hours we were busy loading up the horses with the packs in a crowded village street. Infantry kept on barging into us; cavalry squads got mixed up in our caravan train; horses started kicking and squealing, and my pack-horse, as soon as my baggage had been tied on his back, considerately sat down and began to roll. Then the rope tying the last horse of the caravan got under my horse's belly, while the doctor was having a violent altercation with one of his men, in which a whip enforced the significance of "winged words." At last somehow or other we managed

to get on the move; and when once a caravan is moving, it is remarkable how things begin to adjust themselves. Ropes begin to find their right places, packs to settle down, and horses have more to think about than making a nuisance of themselves. We entered the city of Van, and passed along the main street of Hairistan. A few haggard and wretched-looking Armenian women looked out from door-windows, their eyes full of tears to see the Armenian soldiers. "May God protect you, our sons!" they cried; and, as if to add a Christian blessing to their send-off, they added, "Give them what they have given us". We passed out into the eastern suburbs. Here was the camp of the 1st Armenian volunteers commanded by Andranik. I waited here to see my acquaintance, Dr. Bonapartian, a cheery Armenian who had studied in Beirut. He was now doctor to Andranik's battalion. He introduced me to Andranik, the famous Armenian revolutionary leader, who is worshipped by his fellow Armenians with the same sort of hero worship which used to be practised by the ancient Greeks and Romans. He is indeed a remarkable character. He is moderate in stature, thick-set and hardy; he has a kind, almost benevolent face. A few moments' conversation with him shows you that he is a simple child of the mountains, with all the resourcefulness, keenness, ferocity towards opponents, kindness to strangers, open-heartedness and candour, that revolutionary life in Asiatic Turkey engenders. He had fought the Ottoman Government all his life, and a dozen times a price had been put upon his head. In the course of his revolutionary plots he had disguised himself as a Turkish soldier, and even as a Turkish official. One of his men told me

a story of how he was once in hiding among the Sassun mountains, until the Turks tracked him down to a valley from which there was no way of escape. In the night he crawled up to them, quietly killed a sentry, and dressed himself in his clothes. Next morning he rode into their camp as a Turkish officer, upbraided them for their failure to catch the rebel, and went away without creating any suspicion among the simple Turkish soldiers. I doubt whether that sort of warfare is still possible outside Turkey.

After an hour's rest in Andranik's camp, we went on with our caravan to catch up the infantry. We were joined by Jakub Bey, a Persian Armenian, who was commanding the cavalry attached to the Ishkhan's battalion. He had been a revolutionary fighter all his life. He had been in the thick of the revolution of 1906 in the Caucasus, and had taken part both in the Turkish and Persian revolutions. Now he had heard that there was such a thing as a European war. He neither knew nor cared what it was about; but he knew there was fighting between Turks and Russians in Armenia, and that the Armenians had organized volunteers to help the Russians. So he managed to get out of Turkey either by assassinating, poisoning or bribing; and now here he was. He was a young man with a kindly look, very jolly and fond of sport. He insisted on my galloping off with him across the downs for half an hour to hunt a flock of bustards that had been sighted. He had apparently never been under modern artillery fire in his life, but he had a wonderful sense of direction, and of where to go in a foodless and unknown country. He was invaluable to the Russians as a scout before an advancing

column in mountainous country. For such purposes these Armenian revolutionary soldiers of fortune are very suitable, and it is unfortunate that the Russians did not make more use of them than they did. Of course they were often too apt to look upon the war as a chance for loot; and this no doubt put the more conscientious Russian commanders against them.

By the evening we had reached Ardamet, a lovely village on the lake, surrounded by poplar groves and vineyards. It was now deserted, and the houses were mostly in ruins. We unloaded our horses in an orchard, and pitched our tents. Smoke rose, camp-fires crackled, kettles boiled and fat sizzled. We slept to the sound of passing caravan-bells and the camel's plaintive moan, while the waves of the lake plashed gently on the pebbled beach.

Next day, after a short ride we reached the empty village of Aug in the Timara valley, a short distance behind the front at Vostan. Here we camped in an open space by the side of a regiment of Russian infantry. The doctor and I unloaded our baggage and Red Cross cases under a willow-tree, where we pitched our tents, digging them about a foot deep into the ground, and covering the flaps with earth and straw. The nights were getting cold now, for it was November, and we were at a height of 6,000 feet. At night I crawled into my camel's-hair sack and pulled the cover over my head.

For the next fortnight we lived all together as a happy family, the doctor, Vahan Totoriantz, the Armenian officers and myself. We began to be primitive in our instincts, and to think largely of food and the next meal. The books we had were soon devoured, so we had recourse to telling stories. I related my travels, and they told

me Armenian revolutionary tales. The Armenian officers, the common soldiers, and our men of the little Red Cross detachment, all ate together in a large open place in the centre of the camp. We squatted on the ground, and so took our soup, and ate our crushed wheat and fat. Each received his rations of sugar and tea every week. The atmosphere of the whole camp was very democratic, the difference between officers and men being very much less noticeable than in the Russian regiments. The whole battalion was a sort of communist society, in which things were done after endless talking by the general consent of every one; or if some one did not agree, they were not done at all. This was certainly the case with the sanitary arrangements, and our little unit had the utmost difficulty in keeping the camp clean. Long talks used to take place round camp-fires between officers and men about matters which in a Russian regiment would have been simply dealt with by a plain order from an officer, followed by the reply, "Tak tochna, vashy blagorody" (Exactly so, your honour). I used to see beneath the uniforms of those Armenian officers the spirit of the Asiatic Aksakal (greybeard), whose functions are more to give advice than to command with authority. But there was a much keener "esprit de corps" than with the Russian regiments. Every one seemed to feel a common interest in the task of the war; every one felt the presence of the spirit of Armenia, for which they were fighting. On the other hand, the idea that Armenia was theirs, that the Russians had nothing to do with it, and were indeed intruders, led to a good deal of misunderstanding and friction. It was clear that the Armenians had very ambitious political preten-

sions concerning the future of Armenia. They would take no orders from the Russians. According to them, it was Andranik and the volunteers who had taken Van and saved the situation at Sary-Kamish. Magical feats of bravery, performed by obscure Armenian soldiers in the Russian army, were related to prove that the Armenians had been the sole cause of Russia's successes. Therefore, it was argued, Armenia should be for the Armenians, and for no one else. The day after our arrival at the Ang camp, an order came from the General at Van to the Ishkhan to send a company of his volunteers to dig a series of trenches on the hills south of the Timara valley, so as to prevent any movements of the Turks from this quarter. Loud were the complaints against such an order. This was no work for the Armenian volunteers. Let the Russians do it themselves. If the volunteers had it their own way, they would not be wasting their time building trenches, but would be charging the Turks with loud hurrahs, and driving them out of Bitlis. It seems that quite early in the campaign there developed among the Armenians the same sort of jealousy and fear towards Russia as the Balkan Slavs, particularly the Bulgarians, showed towards their liberators. It was, I suppose, only another manifestation of the national spirit. Sometimes it took a more harmful form. One day I rode out from the camp and came across a little Khurdish village. The inhabitants had most of them fled with the Turks, but on riding down the street I came across the dead bodies of a Khurdish man and two women, with recent wounds in the head and body. Then two Armenians, volunteers from our camp, suddenly appeared carrying things out of a house. I stopped them and

asked who these dead Khurds were. "Oh", they said, "we have just killed them." "Why?" I asked. A look of amazement came into their faces. "Why ask such a question? Why, we kill Khurds at sight. They are our enemies, and we kill them, because if we leave them here they will do us harm." This was all the reply I could get. The mind in this attitude sees absolutely no difference between combatants and non-combatants. Once your race is at war with another, you are at liberty to kill at sight every member of that race, and his property is lawfully yours. This no doubt has been the law of war all through the ages in Armenia, and in fact throughout Asia. Europe, after a short and not very successful period in which she attempted to establish rules for war, and to separate civilians from combatants, has now drifted into the same primitive methods. This shows the impossibility, in Asia at any rate, of making one side alone responsible for damage done in war areas.

In the evenings I used frequently to walk across to the Russian infantry camps and chat with officer friends. In these camps I found a very different atmosphere. Things were more orderly and discipline was better, drill was not neglected, and orders were carried out with promptitude. On the other hand, there was an absence of keenness, amounting almost to stagnation and apathy. "Why are we here in this wilderness?" I seemed to hear them saying. Perhaps they were thinking of the silent northern forests, and pictured to themselves the great white snow-fields and clustering villages, and heard the pine-trees sighing for their return to Russia. About eight o'clock a Cossack bugle would break the still air, and then a voice would be heard, "To prayer,

brothers!" The battalion was gathering for evening service before supper. Presently the swelling note of a Russian hymn would be heard. Then once again would come the silence of night, broken only by the distant lapping of the waves on the shores of Lake Van, and the coughing bark of a starving pariah dog from a ruined village across the valley.

On November 15th General Chernozubof came to inspect the front and visit the camps. The Russian infantry battalions, the Cossack sotnias, and the Armenian volunteers all turned out for a review. It was a gorgeous morning when the troops lined up in an open space in the plain. In the background lay the blue sheet of Lake Van with its golden shores, and behind it the rocky slopes of Mount Ardost rose up glistening with the powdery snow of autumn. The march past took place: the Cossacks first with their long black waving tunics, mounted on shaggy ponies; then the long grey lines of Russian infantry covered with the flashing thread of bayonets; last the companies of dark-eyed, hooked-nosed Armenians in their gigantic sheepskin caps. It was indeed a picturesque assemblage of Asiatics and semi-Asiatics. The Turks meanwhile were looking down on us from the rocky heights to the South of the lake. The white tents of their camps were distinctly visible with the aid of a field-glass.

In November three Armenians came into the camp after a long scouting journey. They were Turkish Armenians, who had escaped from the Turks and come over to the Russians at the beginning of the war. One of them, Yegishey, was a native of Shattakh, and was familiar from his earliest childhood with every inch of

the Van vilayet. He knew where water and pasture were to be found, and what mountain-tracks led to them; what sort of food could be obtained in each district, and whether barley grew there. Best of all, he could speak like a Turk, and dress like one; he knew the workings of their minds, and could guess what a Turkish commander would do in a given situation. He and his two companions had come in from a trip undertaken at the command of the Ishkhan, to find out what the Turks were doing. And very successful they had been. By following devious mountain ways they had penetrated right into the rear of the Turkish force on the south shore of Lake Van, and had got into touch with a friendly Khurd in the Turkish transport service, who had told them the numbers and disposition of the troops. Five days they had been in the mountains dressed as Khurds; they had eaten nothing but some dry bread which they carried, and had drunk the water of the streams. None but native Asiatics could have performed such a feat. The greatest value of the Armenian volunteers to the Russians in my opinion was that they were able to bring out such men, and could get them to work for *them*, whereas they probably would not have worked for the Russians. Yegishey described how the Turks had advanced their outposts from the Bitlis region, and had occupied some rocky heights, a movement which, he considered, was threatening the left wing of the Russian force, and might become serious if they received reinforcements. The news was at once sent to the General commanding at Van, and a council held to decide what measures to take.

Meanwhile I got Yegishey to tell me something about

the recent history of the country to the South of Lake Van, and about the relations of his people with the Turks and Khurds, amongst whom he had lived all his life. He gave me a long story, part of which his father had told him, while part had happened in his own lifetime. It is worth relating, as a first-hand account of the sort of thing that has been going on in the Van vilayet for centuries; and it also throws some light upon the movement of races.

Eighty years ago, said Yegishey, there were no Turks at all in Khurdistan. The only inhabitants were Khurds and Armenians, and the relations between them were very friendly. Both Armenians and Khurds recognized the suzerainty of Bedr-Khan-Bey, the great Khurdish chief who lived in Bohtan. Under him Khurdistan became independent. Armenians and Khurds paid no tribute to the Ottoman Porte, but only to him. There was a Turkish Kazi or magistrate in Van, but his authority did not extend outside the city. The Armenians of Nordus, Shattakh and Mokus were all *rayats*, and did the agricultural work for the Khurds, getting in return sheep, wool, horsehair and fat, while the Khurds protected them from the raids of other Khurds from over the Persian border. The Armenians, being industrious, became rich, and in time began to excite jealousy. At Khizan, about a day's journey to the south of Bitlis, lived Betanir Kyuru, an Armenian trader, who was rich, and had a vessel full of ancient Armenian silver buried in the ground. Knowledge of this money came to the ears of a small Khurdish chief who lived in the Khizan valley. He sent a messenger to the Armenian to say that he had dreamed a dream. The Prophet

had appeared before him and had said: "That money was given to your ancestors by the Caliph of Islam. Rise up and take it, for it is your own". The Armenian at first was unwilling, but at length he agreed to part with some of it, which he sent to the chief as a present. Then the chief demanded a tithe of his silver coin every year, in addition to that which he paid to Bedr-Khan-Bey. The Armenian therefore loaded up his goods and left, going north to Van. The Khurds then took possession of Khizan, and made there a "takia" or resting-place where all travellers could rest for the night on their journey. From the poor the chief took no money; but from the rich he took payment in silver. He built himself a house on the spot where Mahomet had appeared to him and told him to take the Armenian's money. He called himself the Sheikh of Khizan. He was the first Sheikh; and after him his son Jelal-ud-din became Sheikh, and then his son Seyid Ali. The Sheikhs of Khizan had great influence, and the Turkish Government became jealous of them. Towards the middle of last century Bedr-Khan-Bey raised a great force and tried to drive the Turks out of the whole of Armenia. This was the beginning of the Khurdish national movement in these parts of Khurdistan. But Bedr-Khan-Bey only succeeded in establishing his independence in Bohtan; and in this he was assisted by the Sheikh of Khizan, who after driving the Armenians out obtained a sort of politico-religious influence over all Shattakh, Mokus and Nordus. After Bedr-Khan-Bey's death the Turks became more and more powerful in Khurdistan. They began to play one Khurdish chief against another, to isolate, and then attack them separately.

The last Sheikh of Khizan but one, Seyid Ali, was hanged by the Turks at Bitlis in 1914, just before the war, for fomenting rebellion. Naturally, this policy of trying to destroy the power of the Khurdish chiefs and Sheikhs brought the Turks into direct relations with many Armenians, who had up till now acknowledged no overlords except the Khurds. According to Yegishey, the relations between Khurds and Armenians remained good until the Balkan wars. The Armenians of the Shattakh, Mokus and Nordus districts paid taxes in money to the Turkish Vali of Van, and also tribute in corn to the Khurdish chiefs, in return for which they were protected against Turkish extortion. Then came the Balkan wars, and the Armenians said that since the Christians of Turkey were liberating themselves, they could pay no more taxes, nor acknowledge suzerainty. Then followed the events that I describe in Chapter VIII. Yegishey's story shows, first, that the Armenians have been slowly shifting Northward into the Van basin during the last eighty years; secondly, that in response to influences from Europe they have been emancipating themselves from a loose and not very irksome form of feudalism; lastly, that the Turks have succeeded in getting more and more political hold over Khurdistan in recent years, but in so doing have roused the Khurdish national feeling.

On November 23rd orders came for an advance against the Turks. The information that Yegishey had brought had convinced the General that the Turks must be driven out of the positions they had occupied South of the lake. Campaigning on the Caucasus front and in Armenia is very different from that in Europe. Owing to the great distances, a front of fifty miles may be defended

only by a battalion of infantry, whose outposts crouch behind boulders and rocky ridges, and watch for days a party of Khurds or *askers* across a desolate valley of snow and stones. When it is decided by one side to drive the other out of their positions, the methods used are the old ones. There is no violent concentration of artillery and "popping over parapets" to the attack. The old maxim of "making a flank and turning it" has to be followed. And indeed in such a country flanks are easy to make. If only one side can find a way across the mountain-passes by sufficiently devious tracks, and keep well out of sight, it should not be difficult to surprise the enemy in the rear. The attacking party must of course be superior in numbers, and he requires a good transport, so that his supplies may reach him in whatever out-of-the-way valley he finally fetches up. The great danger is that the enemy, unless considerably outnumbered, can often make a countermove and cut off the flanking column from its base. In the operation now decided upon the General's plan was to advance in three columns, each with one battalion or more of infantry, three sotnias of Cossacks, and a mountain- or field-battery. One column was to advance from Vostan along the shores of the lake; the other was to move parallel, but further to the South in the foothills of Mount Ardost, while the third was to make a wide flanking movement further South still. This was to be the task of the Armenian volunteers, accompanied by some Cossacks and a mountain-battery. It was necessary to get to the South of Mount Ardost by a pass, to descend to the headwaters of the Tigris near Shattakh, and then sweep round northwards onto the flank of the Turkish positions near Nareg Vank on

the shores of the lake. This movement would naturally take a few days, for the country to be covered was very difficult to travel in. So the Armenians were given a start, the other columns being timed to move three days later. The little Red Cross detachment of Dr. Ter Stepanian, which I was accompanying, was to keep in the rear of this column.

On the morning of November 23rd we started from the camp at Ang and crossed the rolling hills of Timara southwards. On the march the plaintive Armenian songs about their national heroes echoed through the valleys along which we slowly wound, while the boisterous songs of the Cossacks reminded one of the scene in Riepin's famous picture of the Cossacks addressing a letter to the Sultan. We entered a rocky defile, rested for an hour, and then rose up onto the pass. We now looked into the wild country at the headwaters of the Tigris, which contained both human and natural enemies. In the upland plateau the streams flowed in all directions; but the main one, to which all the others were tributaries, flowed eventually into the Tigris, along whose lower reaches the British were fighting in Mesopotamia. But between us and them lay the impenetrable barrier of the Assyrian highlands, their jagged snow-bound ridges rising formidably before us, and bidding us turn westward along a valley of limestone cliffs, dotted with dark green junipers. Here we reached the deserted Khurdish village of Kiurandasht, where we pitched our camp. All next day we halted, waiting for the food transport, which was late in coming up from Van. When it arrived we each received rations of tea and sugar, one pound of meat, and a large loaf of black bread. On the 24th we set

off down the valley for some distance, and then struck up a side-valley, till at nightfall we reached a great desolate open plateau. We camped in the ruined Armenian village of Arekh-khan. Not a soul was anywhere to be seen. Ruined houses and a few unburied corpses, that had lain about for three months or more, told of fighting between Khurds and Armenians earlier in the Summer. It snowed and froze all night. Our tents were like pieces of sheet iron by morning, and our horses stood sheepishly round the camp, as the wind ruffled their winter coats. Early in the morning of the 25th news came that the outposts on the pass leading over into the basin of Lake Van had sighted the Turks. Camp was struck at once, and a seriousness came over the faces of all. The Armenians became less talkative, and the Cossacks crossed themselves as they mounted their horses. On the summit of the pass a Turkish outpost could be seen, some five miles distant across a great valley on a snowy ridge 10,000 feet above the sea-level. Sending one company of Armenians along a track, which led towards the rocky eminence occupied by the Turks, we descended slowly and painfully into a deep valley, down a terrible slope of ice and snow. Here the pack-horses of the mountain battery kept falling every minute, while we had the utmost difficulty in keeping our little horse-caravan, laden with the Red Cross boxes, from sliding down the abyss to destruction. In pitch darkness we reached the valley-bottom, almost directly under the Turkish positions, but protected from their rifle fire by a cliff. Not far off lay the ancient Armenian church of Ili, and round it a deserted village. That night we lit no camp-fires, but sat shivering under the rocks, listening to the click-click

of the portable wireless telegraph apparatus, by which the Cossack commander and the Ishkhan were trying to communicate with Van, and to the moaning of the icy blast that swept down the valley. At midnight the company, which had been sent along the ridge to reconnoitre, returned, after having floundered about in snow-drifts and on impassable skrees of frozen rock. They reported some seventy Turks on the heights above. Unfortunately, just as they were approaching the camp, our outposts, thinking they were Turks, had opened a sharp fusillade upon them. We rose from our resting-places in the rocks where our Red Cross boxes had been deposited, surprised by hoarse shouts mingled with the whine of bullets. Pitch darkness lay all round us, and we stood half-paralysed, not knowing which way to turn. Suddenly the crackling of rifles ceased. The mistake had been discovered; but one of the volunteers was wounded, and we had to treat him. The Turks perched up on the rock were no doubt wondering what it was all about.

Long before dawn we were on the move. A loaf of black bread was served out, and we knew it was all we should get for at least two days. Slowly the column of Cossacks and Armenian volunteers toiled up a winding track that led to a commanding position. As dawn appeared the crackle of rifles broke the still air. The advanced Armenian company had reached the summit of the ridge, and could be seen deploying along a rocky slope leading to the heights occupied by the Turks, where they had constructed little cairns of rough stones, behind which they could lie and sweep the slopes with rifle fire. The Armenians with difficulty kept their chain formation over the rugged ground. Two of them fell wounded; then

another company was sent on to help them, and one of the mountain guns dropped a shell onto the heights, which ploughed up the snow and sent the boulders flying. A few minutes later we saw dark forms against the sky-line to the North. It was a detachment of Russian infantry from the central column on our right, which had advanced from the lake that day to meet us. They rushed up the slopes, keeping magnificent order in spite of the boulders, amidst the cheers of the Armenians and Cossacks. That was too much for the Turks, who being only seventy in number, sought safety in flight; and within half an hour all the positions were in Russian and Armenian hands. The column of the left had now done its work, for it had cleared the mountain ridges of the watershed between the Tigris and Lake Van. It was now the turn for the other two Russian columns of the right and centre to assume the offensive and drive the Turks back on Bitlis.

From the heights which had been captured we could see, spread out before us like a chess-board, the whole region which was to be the field of battle that day for the other wing of the advance. Could any battlefield in all the European theatres of war equal this one? Every moving piece in the great war-game could be seen with the naked eye. Nature combined with man to make one gigantic panorama. If there is such a thing as a "beautiful battle", what I was now watching was the nearest approach to one. There lay Lake Van before us, a sheet of halcyon blue, deeper even than the cloudless sky above it. Its shores of sand and reed-beds, and the rocky foothills and neglected cornfields that clothed its banks, glowed round it like a necklace of gold. On the horizon rose Mount Zipandar, twin brother of Mount Ararat, its

majestic cone sheathed in snow, and shrouded in the midday mist of blue and grey. Behind us lay the mountains, snow-fields and defiles, through which we had been struggling for four days. The sight of those hungry desolate rocks, and the chilly blasts and snow-flakes that still descended from them, reminded us of our fight against nature there. Suddenly four distant gun-reports told us that the fight with man was now beginning. These were followed by four puffs of woolly smoke, which broke the harmony of colour in the scene at our feet. The Russian batteries of the right and centre were trying to find the positions of the Turks. Soon a more muffled and distant sound told of a Turkish battery somewhere near the lake. It was followed by three loud cracks, and three puffs of woolly smoke that broke over the hills below us. Presently some shrapnel broke over the lake, and mottled its deep blue surface with little snow-white crowns of smoke. Immediately afterwards dark lines could be seen moving slowly along the foothills by the lake. They were the Russian columns of the right and centre led by the Cossacks, whose sotnias pulled up behind some low hills, and formed a black motionless square. The little specks of infantry could be seen deploying in the open spaces on the lake shore, while Turkish shrapnel broke the clear sky over their heads. Next I could discern a battery of Russian field-guns—four black spots out of sight of the enemy. From them issued forth every few minutes faint puffs of smoke, followed by woolly crowns upon the distant hills.

So the great drama of war went on all day in these grand surroundings of nature, every figure acting in it being visible to the naked eye. The beautiful scene of

mountain, lake and plateau was not sullied, but rather embroidered by the sights of war, by the ant-like chains of infantry on the hills, and the white jewels of bursting shrapnel on the azure lake.

Late in the afternoon the artillery duel ceased. The Russians had advanced to a chain of hills facing the positions in which it was now certain that the Turks had entrenched their main forces. As the sun set, we brought our little caravan with the medical supplies down a steep slope into a narrow valley, to a ruined Turkish village. Here we tended some wounded, made our camp for the night, and waited for the dawn.

Before the first sheen of silver had begun to light the eastern sky, the mountain batteries of the Russians, who had joined our left column during the night, were securely lodged under a rocky ledge. From here one could look out over a beautiful valley, where stood the ancient monastery of Nareg, the home of the famous mediæval Armenian poet and mystic. On the right was a field-gun battery, and on the top of the ridge the Armenian infantry took up their positions ready for attack. Across the valley on the other side was a chain of hills which connected the mountains with the lake, and barred the road to Bitlis. Here the Turks had taken up their positions. At eight o'clock the batteries opened fire, and from the artillery observation-post I watched the Russian shells for two hours playing on the hills where the Turks lay concealed. The whole country in front of me looked as if it were not inhabited by any human beings at all, and yet I knew that those grim lifeless knolls were full of hidden *askers*, and those faint, almost imperceptible lines that pencilled the hills just

below their crowns were trenches. Once or twice I saw groups of human forms issuing from the hollows and advancing towards us. They were Turkish attacking parties; but at once the well-aimed Russian shrapnel drove them in again. Time after time the roar of the Russian field-guns was followed by columns of black dust, as the ground was ploughed up all round the faint lines that marked the Turkish trenches. The Turkish batteries also replied by a well-aimed fire upon the advancing Russian infantry, but they were obviously deficient in battery sections, and could not cover with shell fire more than a small area of the valley in front of them.

I walked up to the Armenian infantry who were waiting under a rocky ledge expecting the order to attack at any minute. Several of my friends were there. Seriuniantz, a young lieutenant, was pretending to be very busy with his maps, and could not speak a word; but he seemed to be turning over one map after another, his eyes running over the names of places without taking them in. He was to lead the attack, and upon him much depended. A young Armenian from America, who was going into battle for the first time, came up to me and began to talk very rapidly. He pointed out a white spot far in the distance, and said he thought it was a tent; then suddenly he turned round and looked at Seriuniantz, who was still busy with his maps. Then he asked me if I had any friends in America, but before I could answer he had disappeared among a crowd of soldiers. I walked on and passed by Georg, a young Armenian from Tiflis, who looked away as if the sight of any one was a pain to him. Another friend I met was cursing the transport, which had not brought them any rations of meat that day.

"Never mind", said another; "you will get double rations to-night". But the first man looked away and said no more. Where would he be to-night, if he were still anywhere at all? I passed on to the place where one of the Russian batteries was pounding away at the Turks from under the crest of a hill. Here I found Vahan Totoriantz, who was pretending to be calm and unaffected. We squatted on the ground together, and watched the shells dropping on the distant hills. Presently there was a puff of white smoke followed by a loud crack in front of us. We pretended not to notice it, and went on talking about the Turkish positions. After a minute there was another puff of smoke, rather nearer, and followed by a rather louder crack. We remarked to each other that the Turks were probably sending a few shrapnel our way, and went on looking out across the hills. A little later we saw a flash, and heard a very loud report almost over our heads; and somehow after that we remembered that our horses of the Red Cross caravan needed attention, and set out for that purpose. But on the way we passed the artillery observation-post, whence could be seen a magnificent view of the battle-ground. So we stayed and watched the infantry attack.

It was the task of the Armenian infantry to cross the valley, occupy the Nareg monastery, and scale the heights above it, so as to turn the Turkish right. They were supported across the open space by two companies of Russian reserves. The Armenians were not so well practised as the Russians in advancing in open order on the level, for their strength lay mostly in the mountains, where the Russians could not go. From the artillery positions I could now see them swarming

across the valley, utilizing every now and then the cover of small streams against the Turkish bullets. They appeared as a waving line of black specks moving towards the monastery, one portion now holding back under the cover of shelving banks, while another pushed forward to a grove of poplar-trees. At last the monastery and surrounding village were reached amid a fusillade of Turkish rifle fire. The Armenians were now in their element, for beyond them lay the slopes of the mountains which dominated the Turkish right. A few minutes later they were swarming up the slopes like ants on a mound, while the Russian infantry occupied the Nareg village and kept up a steady fire on the Turks. Meanwhile the Russian infantry detachments of the centre advanced along the open, their columns alternately taking cover in the streams, so as to confuse the range of the Turkish gunners. Surrounded by the Russians and Armenians from both sides, the Turks were obviously in difficulties, and their artillery was inadequate to the task. A single battery was all they had against three columns advancing along an eight-mile front. Nevertheless they held on stubbornly. The measured rattle of their machine guns near the lake produced a temporary wavering of the Russian right, while more than once their shrapnel broke exactly over a Cossack sotnia which was floundering in the marshes behind the infantry. But this was only the last flare of the spark; and as the Armenians reached the summit of the heights on the extreme left, it could be seen that the Turks were in full retreat. Their infantry had already, unseen by us, evacuated their positions; but their artillery remained to the last. In another half-hour the Armenians were

in full possession of the hills that dominated the shores of the lake, and were commencing the pursuit. But the Turks had carefully planned their retreat, and by now were withdrawing in good order along the valley tracks to the next range of hills, some ten miles distant, that guarded the road to Bitlis. The opportunity for cutting off their retreat and of making many prisoners was lost by delay in ordering the Cossacks to pursue. When they did go they were like a flood let loose, long black lines streaming across the open, and raising clouds of dust. When they reached the foot of the hills, the Turks were already in safety, having passed up a narrow valley the entrance of which they could control by artillery fire.

As the afternoon wore on, the weary troops began to assemble in companies near the shore of the lake to wait for the transport and the much-needed food, which, with the exception of black bread, had not been tasted for three days. Meanwhile I inspected more closely the abandoned Turkish positions, and saw the result of the day's fighting. Along the shores of the lake the Turks had made a series of trenches, hacked out of stony ground, the boulders piled up like a sort of barricade. Here I came across three dead horses and a Turk shattered by a shell. They had come up to bring ammunition to a field-gun, when their fate overtook them. A quantity of German-made shells lay strewn all over the ground, and a party of Cossacks was busy carrying them off. A little further on I found a dead Turkish *asker* lying with his face to the sky, the gentle smile of death upon his lips. His sharp pointed beard, jet-black eyes, and kindly features reminded me of many like him that I had met and talked with during the Balkan wars. In his hand was an open

copy of the Koran, which in his dying moments he had taken out to read; but his strength had failed him, and the book lay open at a page headed by the words "In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful". I remembered the time when in Asia Minor before the war I had enjoyed the hospitality of many such as he, and talked with them by their firesides. If he was one of those I had met, he had felt no hatred to any one. And yet he had now been killing, and had in turn been killed by my friends, who also wished no evil to him personally, but were compelled, as he had been, by that unseen evil which works through the ages, and whose force I had realized as I looked on the tablet of Xerxes on the Van rock a few days before. A kindly Russian soldier passing by was moved to say that at least he had gone to a place where he would be happy. We then dug a little grave for him and turned his face towards Mecca.

I then rode back to the Nareg monastery, which had been the scene of such strife earlier in the day. Here I found the Armenian volunteers eating the few morsels of black bread that remained to them. But the food transport was still struggling in the mountains, having lost its way and failed to find us. We all grew morbid under the influence of hunger. I have sometimes heard it said that under these conditions man becomes like a brute and fights only for himself. It is true that like an animal he thinks only of food; but I saw that evening many acts of kindness among those Russian and Armenian soldiers. One perhaps had a little more bread than another, so he cut off a bit and shared it with the one that had less. The spirit of comradeship does not seem to die under the influence of common suffering. On

the contrary, it is probably strengthened. But when the transport did arrive, there was a frightful scramble for food; and then the instinct of hoarding came into play. Men wanted to get all they could for themselves, and store it against bad times. Yet when no one had had more than a crust, and all were feeling hunger, then each was ready to share whatever little pittance he had. But one thing hunger in war-time certainly does: it lessens the feeling of hatred towards the enemy. That feeling is left to well-fed editors of newspapers, or middle-aged civilians at home. When the great enemy is in want of food, human enemies take a back place. When most of the day you are fighting cold and hunger, you have less inclination to fight your brother man. The Turks were no doubt that evening in just the same condition as we were. The one object in life for each was to get something to eat.

Next day, November the 30th, as the General had left his reserves in the captured positions, all the rest of the troops who had taken part in the advance were ordered back to Van. A two days' journey now lay before us. By evening we reached the ruined Turkish village of Vostan; and as we entered, a terrible wind from the mountains began to warn us of a coming blizzard. We had again received no food that day, and I was reduced to a crust of black bread the size of my thumb. To add to our misery, a gale with sleet now began to blow, preventing us from lighting any fires. No cover could be obtained, for every house was in ruins, and no tent could be pitched in the teeth of that terrible blast. We huddled our horses into the ruined houses, tied them to the walls and lay down beside them. But the sleet

and icy blast forbade all sleep. Morning came and showed a scene of desolation. The land, two days ago resplendent in the sun, which embroidered mountain and lake, now lay hard and terrible, hungry and ice-bound. Winter was upon us, and an Armenian Winter is a fearful thing, all the more so when war has ruined every hut, and deprived the land of every particle of food. Fortunately, during the morning the transport arrived, and gave us that nourishment without which many of us could not have held out against the elements for another day.

On December 1st we started back for Van, passing Ang, where our former camp was. After eight hours' riding, the famous rock peered through the snowy mist before us, and so we reached the ancient capital of Armenia, where we found a respite from the terrors of the blizzard, and a chance of recuperating after our late hardships.

On December 8th we left Van. The Armenian volunteers and their Red Cross detachment were going to Persia to winter in the Urumiah plain. I desired to return to the Caucasus. The direct road over the Ala Dag by the Alashgert being closed by snow, I decided to go with the volunteers as far as Khoy. We rode out of Van eastward, and camped the first night in Archak, a large Armenian village on the shores of the lake of that name. Winter was coming on fast, and icy winds cut through us as we made our way across the broad uplands towards the Persian frontier. We found an empty house without doors and windows, but with a roof—a wonderful thing in those days; and having got a blazing fire of sticks going, we lay down beside it for the night. Next day we rode on eastwards, and at midday stopped to make a little fire of dried grass for

a cup of tea. At nightfall on December 9th we reached Serai, the last town before the Persian frontier. The narrow streets were crowded with transport-wagons; grey-coated Russian infantry were camping in the street; chains of Cossack ponies were being led out to water, while crowds of horsemen were struggling to get hay and straw from a fussy commissariat officer, who was weighing out the loads. The air was full of hoarse shouts, the clattering of hoofs, the crackling of burning wood, and the plaintive and melodious songs of Cossacks round the camp-fires. I spent the night in a deserted stable with a Cossack officer and some Armenian volunteers. We made ourselves a tremendous brew of mutton and millet seed, which we boiled into a thick soup in a bucket over a large fire. On December 11th we left Serai, and made towards the hills of the Turco-Persian frontier. We crossed upland valleys and marshy meadows, now all frozen over, and then sank down through a narrow gorge into the valley of the Kotur Chay. The narrow road which had been made by the Russian engineers was soon blocked with large columns of troops. Caravans of complaining camels got mixed up with the pack-horses of artillery batteries. Often we had to wait an hour while some upturned wagons were being put right, or some guns were being got across a difficult piece of road. We reached Kotur by the evening, and found a miserable collection of underground hovels clustering under a rock upon which stood a castle. Here had lived the famous Khurdish chief, Simko, whose exploits in Turco-Persian border politics I have already described. From this castle he used to make his raids westward into Turkey, arming his men with rifles received from Russia. An

Armenian villager took me into his underground house, where I slept by a fire of camel-dung. On December 12th we continued the descent of the Kotur Chay, following the rocky valley, the sides of which were covered with juniper. The next night we spent in an open camp under a rock. We felt we were getting nearer to Persia, for the nights were warmer, and the wind less piercing than on the Armenian plateau. On December 13th at midday the narrow valley suddenly opened out, and we saw in front of us the wide expanse of the plain of Azairbijan. We were in Persia again, the land of warmth and plenty, the land of the Lion and the Sun, of Hafiz and Saadi. Soon the fertile oasis of Khoy came into view, surrounded by groves of poplars and willows, gardens, orchards and vineyards, bazaars and caravanserais. I found a room in one of these caravanserais, and forthwith set out to demolish all the food I could lay hands on in the bazaar.

After resting some days, the Armenian volunteers and the Red Cross detachment left for Urumiah, and I made my way to Djulfa. I crossed the Russo-Persian frontier, and was once more in the Caucasus after an absence of five months.

## CHAPTER V

### MY VISIT TO ERZERUM AFTER ITS CAPTURE BY THE RUSSIANS

On January 6th I travelled up by train to the fortress of Kars, after resting a few days in Tiflis from my long journey in Armenia and Persia. I knew that great things were afoot, and I wanted to be where I could keep in touch with them. I found the streets of the fortress alive with troops hurrying up to the front, which lay away across the table-land to the South. How often in the last hundred years has Kars witnessed such sights! In 1828 and in 1854 the Russian wave swept over this once Turkish outpost only to recoil. In 1878 the wave came again and finally submerged it. Now it was soon to surge round the outposts of Erzerum. The Russian tide sweeps slowly onward, and the Turks themselves with their pensive fatalism seem to feel it to be irresistible. A Turkish Mudir (head of a village) whom I met at Kars, said to me: "I am one of the Turks who did not leave in 1878 for Anatolia when the Russians came here. But many of my brothers left and settled round Erzerum. Fools! They will have to move from there too some day. Better have stayed where they were."

Kars looked bleak and terrible in its winter clothing that first week in January. It was the depth of the

Armenian winter, a foretaste of which I had just experienced in the region of Van. An icy wind blew in violent gusts, and the hills, in which lay buried the great fortress artillery, loomed dark and gloomy through the mist of snow. One envied the Cossacks in their *burkas*, as they swung upon their shaggy ponies. The grey-coated infantrymen looked cold beside them. I walked along the streets to the house of Colonel Schmerling, the Vice-Governor of Kars, whom I had met at Ani earlier in the previous summer. I was welcomed as his guest for so long as I wished to be in Kars. A warm house is indeed something to be thankful for, when the Armenian winter is raging outside, and the more so when friendship is there as well. My host was one of that rare type of bureaucrats, who have not allowed their minds to become crusted over by the routine of office. German by extraction, his father and grandfather had spent the whole of their lives in the service of Russia. The third generation still retained some of the German thoroughness, but had lost the offensive characteristics of Prussian officialdom through contact with the warm-hearted Slav. I spent the next fortnight reading the Russian classics in the Colonel's well-stocked little library, while I awaited events on the front. I rode out often onto the Kars plateau in the direction of Sary-Kamish, returning to the fortress at night. Signs of warfare against winter as well as against the Turks were to be seen on every side. Snug little *zemliankas*, dug into the earth and covered with grass, dotted the plateau and the sheltered hillsides. From the holes, that served as doorways, hairy Cossack faces looked out on wintry scenes of snow and rock. Here the reserves

were waiting to be ordered up to the front. Mankind in this country becomes a troglodyte in winter, and the natives hibernate as well. This of course the soldiers cannot do; so they build themselves huts, half buried in the ground and covered with straw, where they can keep warm and rest for a few days. But the native Tartars, Armenians, Greeks, Karapapachs, Osmanlis and Khurds all live in underground dwellings during winter, and sleep like dormice. Nothing can then be seen of their villages but a few dark lines marking the terraced approaches to the houses, and black spots marking the doorways. A deathly silence reigns over the white expanse of snow; and only the wolfish bark of a miserable pariah dog tells one that there is any life at all.

I would often see moving across the plateau towards the front platoons of grey-coated infantry wrapped in *bashliks* and *papachs*, so that nothing could be seen of their faces but two eyes, a nose, and icicles of frozen breath. Such sights would remind me that preparations were being made for the advance against Erzerum, and I would marvel at the race whose soldiers can fight in such a climate as this, and who in the dead of winter at a height of 6,000 feet, in wind and snow, from frozen trenches and on impassable roads, can attack a great fortress, defended by an enemy as brave as they.

On February 12th news came of the fall of fort Karagyubek to the North-east of Erzerum. This would probably have decisive results along the whole of the Deve-Boyun ridge. I at once left my host's house, and took the train which passes Kars every afternoon for the terminus at Sary-Kamish. The train crawled along the white sea of snow, through the wooded valleys of a little

stream, and pulled up at Sary-Kamish. I went straight to the Commandant of the garrison, showed him my papers, and asked if I could get on to Erzerum. He told me that he had orders not to let any correspondents or civilians go on until the Grand Duke Nicolas had passed; that he was coming up from Tiflis for the front, and would probably pass some time that night. So I hunted about for a place to sleep in, and in so doing came across my three colleagues of the Russian press, Ilia Mikhailovitch Zdanevitch of the *Retch*, Lebedef of the *Russkoye Slov*, and Sukhovich of the *Kiefskay Muysl*. We spent the night together on the floor of a bare room. Next day we looked for some form of transport that would take us up to the front, as soon as the Grand Duke should have passed. We got in with the *nachalnik* of the transport, who told us that a train of wagons was leaving next day in order to reach Erzerum if it should have been taken, or failing that, to get to the nearest point on the front and there deliver supplies. We waited all day, and to our relief the Grand Duke passed through that evening: so early on the morning of February 14th we started out in the transport train. The road followed the windings of little streams, now all frozen and snow-covered. On either side lay the rolling forest-clad hills of Surphatch and Bardus. It was here that Enver Pasha made his famous attempt to surround the Russian army; and it was on one of the knolls to the North that Ishkhan Pasha was taken prisoner. The heavy rumble of our transport wagons was only occasionally broken by the howling of the wind, as some particularly violent gust swept into us and blew the snow-dust into our benumbed faces.

At nightfall we reached the old frontier station of Karaurgan; but there was no customs-post here now. The Russian frontier had shifted far to the South, and nothing now stopped the endless flow of wagons and columns on their way to the front. We spent the night in the little house of the "All Russian Union of Cities", that great institution which, with its brother, the "Union of Zemstvos", did so much to organize the rear of the Russian army. Next morning we continued with our transport train, passed Zivin, a deserted Turkish village, and began the ascent of the downs that divide the Kars plateau from the Passan plain. The road now practically came to an end, and in place of it a dark line of ruts and wheel-tracks could be seen going straight over hill and dale, rock and frozen stream. Wheels began to creak, some of the wagons were overturned, and our rate of progress was reduced to half. Already however the Russians had begun to remedy the situation, and gangs of Persians and Tartars, loudly jabbering, were hard at work under the supervision of Russian soldiers getting these so-called roads into some sort of order. From the top of the downs we descended a long slope, and about midday reached the great Passan plain, over which meanders the frozen Araxes. To the South stretched a long wall of mountains from one end of the horizon to the other. The eastern end of it was the Kisslar-Dag, dividing the Araxes from the Eastern Euphrates, Immediately to the South the range lowered somewhat, and showed the pass which leads from Hassan Kaleh over the Sachkal-Tutan mountains to Khunus, Mush and Mosul. This important road connects the Armenian plateau with Mesopotamia; and its junction here with

the roads coming in from the Caucasus gives the Passan plain and Erzerum their strategic importance. To the North-west lay the confused masses of the Djelli-Gel and the Kodjut-Dag, with passes leading over into the Olti depression. Both mountain and plateau were covered by one great sheet of white, which glowed like embers in the afternoon sun.[1] Between Zanzack and Azap Keui the country was scarred with lines of trenches and barbed wire entanglements. Here had been the heavy fighting of the first week of January. We saw many signs of the Turkish retreat, as we continued our way. Through the snow on the roadside protruded a number of objects, camels' humps, horses' legs, buffaloes' horns, and men's faces, with fezzes and little black beards, smiling at us the smile of death, their countenances frozen as hard as the snow around them. That was all that was left of the "Drang nach Osten" in this part of the world. Darkness came on and we continued our journey along the Passan plain. Towards ten o'clock the outlines of the famous old bridge of Kupri Keui loomed out before us. Across this bridge the armies of the Mongols, Tamerlane, the Arabs and the Osmanlis had passed many hundred years ago. To-day the invaders of Asia Minor came not from the East but from the North, and once again this great highway of nations was resounding with the tramp of armies and the cry of the refugee and of the dying.

Shortly before midnight we turned into the little house of the Commandant of Kupri Keui village, where we could get some tea and bread, and rest for the night. During the night the rumble of artillery far away to the

[1] For this region see Map,

West on the Deve-Boyun told us that the fate of Armenia had not yet been decided. News however arrived in the small hours of the morning of the 16th that the forts Chaban-dede and Tufta had been evacuated by the Turks, and that Erzerum would probably be entered on the morrow. We slept little, and made our transport train hurry away as soon as the horses had had a bite of barley and hay. To the West a great nose of rock jutted out into the Passan plain, and upon its top we could make out the castle of Hassan Kaleh. A little later we could see a great mist hanging over the hills on the horizon. That was the smoke of the bombardment; but the deathly silence told us that it was over now, and Erzerum had been won. Towards afternoon we drew near to the little Turkish town of Hassan Kaleh, lying under the castle on the rock that gives it its name. The town was emptied of Turkish civilians, who appeared to have retreated with the Turkish armies; but the streets were crammed with Russian troops. Here were the Staff-headquarters of General Eudenitch, who, we found, was up at Erzerum, which had been entered by advanced guards of Cossacks at seven o'clock that morning. We could not go forward until we had seen him, and so waited in Hassan Kaleh for the rest of that day. With my friend Zdanevitch I climbed up to the rock of Hassan Kaleh, and looked out over the white snow-field of the upper Passan plain, and on the jagged mountains to the South. The sun was setting, and every living thing that stood above the snow could be seen for miles, silhouetted against the white. Long trains of camels were sailing up from the north-east to the sound of deep-toned bells. Little camps

of round Asiatic tents clustered under some bare willow-trees beside a frozen stream. The smoke of fires rose up, and soldiers could be seen huddling round to keep themselves warm. Bunches of black objects dotted about the plain showed the existence of villages half-smothered in snow. A few black dots languidly moving round their outskirts proved to be the pariah dogs, the sole remaining inhabitants. They were fat and puffy. No wonder, for they had had plenty to eat lately. The sights we had seen earlier in the day, the half-eaten carcases of camels, and the torn bodies of men, had shown us that war means a rich harvest for the Asiatic pariah dog. In the Kars province, amid active human life, the pariah dogs were miserable and starving. Here, with death and destruction on every side, they were contented. Then I remembered that three years before I had passed through this district on a journey from the Black Sea to Persia. But the circumstances were very different then. It was Autumn, and the Passan plain was alive with busy Armenian and Turkish peasants, gathering the golden fruits of their year's labour. Those desolate black dots were then houses, full of grain. Round them were industrious women and playful children. Those bare, leafless willows were a canopy of green, shading a cool spring. Instead of those lines of grey-coated infantry, there were then long trains of bullock-carts, bearing the peasants home from the fruitful fields. Just as the seasons had changed from ripe Autumn to desolate Winter, so had the mind of man abandoned the works of production, and become the prey of destructive passions. But just as the winter snow enriches the land, and brings it warmth and the renewed fertility

of Spring, so perhaps these days of hatred and folly may cleanse the psychology of man, and usher in the Summer of reason and goodwill. But if so, why should it be necessary for man to attain this end by such cruel and painful means? He certainly has always done so since the dawn of history, as was witnessed by the old castle where I stood, the memorial of the Arab, Persian, Tartar and Greek empires, which had introduced with the sword the culture of their own day. But now my friend came up and reminded me that it was time to return, because the General would probably be back from Erzerum by now.

General Eudenitch received us in a large house, the former residence of the Turkish Mudir. A short, bullet-headed man with long moustaches, he sat, surrounded by the statue-like forms of two staff-officers. His voice was sharp and abrupt, his manner that of one who is accustomed to command. The atmosphere was thoroughly military. It suggested that the human mind was manufactured to order and turned out according to specified pattern. The General gave us a very interesting account of the military operations which he had just conducted with such success. He pointed out to us some of the more important positions and movements on the large-scale maps. He then kindly gave us a permit enabling us to visit the forts at Erzerum; we thanked him, congratulated him on his new medal, which the Emperor had just given him by telegraph, and then retired.

Next day, February 17th, we got onto another transport train that was going straight for Erzerum. A fog lay over the plateau all morning, as we rolled along

westward. We passed through a village, outside which stood a row of heavy guns and forbidding-looking howitzers, like gigantic squatting frogs, looking skywards. They were being overhauled after the bombardment by busy engineers. Then through the wintry mists loomed the Deve-Boyun, that famous chain of rounded hills dividing the waters of the Araxes from those of the Euphrates, behind which stands the city of Erzerum. The weather now began to clear. First fort Kaburgar appeared on a little pyramid of rock, on the slopes of which spread little zig-zag trenches and lines of wire entanglements;[1] then further to the South the outlines of fort Ortayuk emerged, and the mounds and terraces of its summit indicated the positions of the abandoned Turkish guns: next Uzun Ahmet unveiled itself on its precipitous trapeze-like mass; then fort Dolangyoz; while far away, perched up on an Olympus of rock and snow-field, stood Chaban-dede. The whole of the outer chain of the Deve-Boyun was now disclosed to us. As our wagons slowly wound up the narrow roads that lead across the chain, we became aware that we were in the rear of an advancing army. Immense quantities of stores and ammunition and columns of infantry reserves were on the road ahead of us, so our pace was slowed down to theirs. As we crossed the last neck of rising ground before sinking down into the Euphrates plain, we heard the rumble of artillery, and far in the distance, with the aid of glasses, we could make out detachments of retreating Turks fighting rear-guard actions. The dark lines moving like worms across the snow-fields were the pursuing Cossack columns. Before

[1] See Map.

long the famous Kars Gate of Erzerum, with its pyramidal Seljuk tomb, became visible. We drove through tunnels and fortress mounds, past rickety old Turkish sentry-boxes with the Star and Crescent painted on them, inhabited now not by black-eyed, thick-nosed *askers*, but by round-faced men with grey eyes and flaxen hair. After passing through the gate we saw on the left hand a Turkish barracks, blown up by an explosion of ammunition, and close by a whole phalanx of captured artillery. Beyond us lay the city of Erzerum, which had been entered by the Russians the day before. In the streets were men wearing baggy trousers, and with fezzes on their heads. The Turks with their characteristic fatalism were going about their business, as if nothing had happened. "Allah had given Erzerum to the Uruss. Allah gives and takes away, and Allah is great." Nowhere could the philosophy of the East be more plainly exhibited than in the calm and dignified faces of those Turks. On the door of a house I saw written up in Russian, "Here we take in prisoners". As an instance of the simple character of the Turkish soldier, a number of them were standing outside this house, asking Russian officers where they could give up their rifles. They had failed to escape with Abdulla Kerim Pasha's army, and had hidden in the houses when the Russians entered. But when they saw that no harm was going to happen to them, they came out and asked to be taken prisoners. "Tufenk vererim. Nerde alajak?" (We give our rifles. Where will they take them?) From here we went on straight to the Staff of the 1st Army Corps, where General Kalitin received us most hospitably in the house that was formerly the British Consulate. I had

stayed here in very different times, when I passed through Erzerum three years before.

Next day the General gave us an escort of Cossacks and sent a Captain of his Staff to accompany us to the forts on the Deve-Boyun. A narrow path led us across the rolling downs of the central chain. We had to pick our way carefully, to avoid falling with our horses into snow-drifts six feet deep. A terrible wind was blowing, a *myatel*, as the Russians call it; and in spite of *bashliks*, noses and ears soon lost all feeling. We suffered agonies when we came into the warmth again, and the numbed portions of our bodies began to thaw. The first fort we visited was Sivishli, on a rounded knoll in the centre of the Deve-Boyun chain. This fort had served as the supply-centre for the Turks, and from it ammunition columns and reserves had been sent out to keep the outer forts going. Everything was in perfect order inside. There were no signs of the explosion of any shells, and it could be seen that the fort had been evacuated without any fighting in or round it. The fort itself was of a very old type. In the days of the Crimean and Russo-Turkish wars they used to make such redoubts. Great stone bastions and parapets were mounted upon hard rock, and the floor of the great inner yard was paved with slabs of limestone. If a modern shell fell here, the splinters and flying stone-work would do more damage than the shell itself. I could see why so much of the fighting in the capture of Erzerum was done in the open on the snow-fields that lay around. As far as safety was concerned it was better to be there than in the forts. Also the guns that the Turks had left behind were of a very old pattern. Some of them were dated 1873, and had

been made in England. Evidently they had been lent, sold, or given by the British Government to the Turkish in the days when the integrity and independence of the Ottoman Empire were considered to be the keystone of British foreign policy, for which seas of blood might be poured out with honour. Now, for the destruction of this same Empire even greater seas of blood were being poured out by the obedient masses of England.

We continued on our way, rising gradually all the time onto the desolate snow-fields that joined on to the Kargar-Bazar. The cold became more and more intense, and the going more and more difficult. Every now and then I would anxiously feel my nose and ears to find out if they were becoming frost-bitten. We traversed a narrow track leading across a slope which fell almost precipitously into the valley below. Beyond this came a wide snow-field scarred with zig-zag lines, which proved to be abandoned Turkish snow-trenches. The snow had been piled up to the height of a man, so that an enemy in front could not see his body. It was no protection of course from bullets, but it was a good method for making the defenders of the forts invisible. The Russians however had gone one better, for some of their battalions had been clothed in white sheep-skins, which enabled them to move about at night unobserved. Beyond the snow-field stood a great mass of jagged rock and cliffs. Up these we toiled by narrow winding paths. Field-gun batteries were here dug into the snow. They had been abandoned by the Turks, and one or two of them had been exploded. These field-guns placed between the forts seem to have been the chief defence of the Deve-Boyun chain, and to have been more effective in kee

the encircling movement of the Russians in check than the batteries of old siege-guns in the antiquated stone forts, which were useful chiefly as centres for ammunition supply.

On a rocky eminence commanding a magnificent view of the plateau was the Turkish artillery observation-post. Here lay the bodies of several young men, in the prime of life, an Arab, a Kizil-Bashi, and two or three Anatolian Turks, mangled by shell-fire, but preserved in the exact death-pose by the frost. Not far from them was a young Russian, who had evidently climbed up the rock on scouting work, and had died the same death as those that lay around him. In their homes in the Caucasus and Anatolia these peasant youths had lived peaceful industrious lives, with no thought of hatred towards each other. Then the war came; they were called, and obeyed like sheep, following the example of others. Now they were lying dead together, and the snow was busy covering up all relics of the struggle, which none of them had wanted.

We reached the top of the rocks, and in front of us was a great platform protected by mounds and snow-trenches all around. This was Chaban-dede, the famous fort, which, with Tufta, was the key to the Deve-Boyun chain. It was now evening; the wind had dropped, and the scuds of snow had cleared away. The sky had a pale-blue arctic tint, and the sun was sinking down behind the dark hills that surrounded the sources of the Euphrates. It struck the landscape at our feet with its slanting rays, turning the rocks into glowing gold and the snow-fields into dazzling silver. To the South was the great wall of the Palan-teken range. On the East

lay the level plain of the Araxes, and on the West the frozen marshes at the head of the Euphrates. Rising up between these two plains lay the rounded hills of the Deve-Boyun, covered with deep snow, like silvery billows of a sea. Each knoll was capped by a black spot, a mound or a circular ring. These were the forts which seemed to connect the billows as it were with a chain of dark beads. I could now see how the capture of these heights around fort Chaban-dede decided the fate of Erzerum. Looking behind me to the North-east, I saw snowy mountain-ranges rising in tiers one above the other. The only way to reach this point, which commanded the Deve-Boyun chain, without being exposed to the terrible fire of the forts and the artillery positions in between, was across this range. It seemed impossible that any human army could cross this country. But that was just what had happened, as our investigations next day showed us.

That night we slept with our Russian officer companion and the Cossacks in a little stone hut in the precincts of fort Chaban-dede. Not three days before Turkish *askers* had been there, and signs of a hasty retreat were evident on every side. An unfinished meal, a mass of blankets, some stores of sugar and coffee, all proved useful to our needs. And so we enjoyed Turkish coffee 10,000 feet up in the highest fort in the world. Next day, February 19th, as we could go no further on horseback, we struggled northward on foot, accompanied by a Georgian officer, who had been the first to enter fort Chaban-dede at the head of the scouting column. Our progress was slow and painful; but at last we reached the head of the Tuy defile, and

looked down upon the country along which the Derbend regiment and the right wing of the 4th Division had advanced on the night of February 14th. Their tracks were still visible in the snow. We could see where the guns had been taken to pieces and carried on the men's shoulders, and where the infantry had struggled in deep snow-drifts. The tracks led us right up to the highest snow-fields on the Olugli, and there debouched into open chains towards the heights of Sergy-Kaya. Away to the North we saw the snow-fields commanding fort Tufta, where the 2nd Turkestan Army Corps had made their wonderful and fateful union with the 4th Division.[1] All round us was a wilderness of rock and snow, 10,000 feet high. The mists of sleet were driving, and the wind howled about the waste. We had reached the goal of our journey. It was here on this desolate plateau, where the Tuy defile breaks out from the Kargar-Bazar, that the fate of the greatest fortress in Asia Minor was decided.

We returned to fort Chaban-dede, and spent the evening listening to our officer friend and the Cossacks telling us tales of the war. Next morning, February 20th, we returned the way we had come, and reached Erzerum by evening. I went to call on Mr. Stapleton, the American missionary, whom I found with his wife and children at their evening meal. They were greatly surprised to see an Englishman, and welcomed me with open arms. They had seen no one from the outer world for months and months, being practically imprisoned here in the fortress of Erzerum. He gave me a long and touching story of the good work he and his wife had done for the

[1] See Chapter II.

cause of humanity in these terrible times; how they had fought against the fever and sickness which had decimated the Turkish soldiers, and had turned their place into a temporary hospital; how they had done all they could to relieve the sufferings of the Armenians, who had been condemned to exile the previous Summer, and had then been treacherously massacred on the road; and how he had pleaded with the Turkish Vali Pasha, and used all his influence with him on their behalf.

On February 22nd my friend Zdanevitch and I rode out, accompanied by two Cossacks, to the Palan-teken pass to visit the fort there. We crossed the Euphrates plain and reached the entrance of a narrow valley, up which we mounted by a small path. Soon we came to the zone where the snow mists began to descend upon us. We had to pick our way with great caution, to avoid falling into ravines and snow-drifts. After two hours we reached a high open country, with rocky peaks rising at various points. This was the head of the Palan-teken pass. Beyond us lay the great mountain complexes which build up the South Armenian volcanic plateau. The forms of dark mountains would appear towards the South-east for one moment, and almost at once be blotted from our sight. The blurred outline of the famous and beautiful Bin-gel Dag, " the mountain of the thousand lakes ", showed itself, only to disappear the next moment. It was like looking at a great panorama across which curtains were continually rising and falling. Weird shapes seemed to emerge from the mist, and the imagination could twist the mountain forms, as they appeared and vanished, into countless fantasies. My friend and I looked on this scene for a time, and then made our way

to fort Palan-teken, which, with Chaban-dede, is the highest fort in the world (10,000 feet). It stood on a rounded knoll, its walls and parapets built of material from the surrounding rocks. There was not a sign of life anywhere, and we could hear nothing but the howling of the wind. We rode into the great courtyard, in the centre of which was an underground ammunition-store. From the hatchway leading down to it some faces looked out on us. They were the Russian guards who had been stationed on the pass; but they had wisely decided that this was no suitable weather either for them or for the enemy to be out in the open. They welcomed us inside, and began to make tea for us. They told us stories of the advance across the Palan-teken pass by the little Russian column to which they had been attached. The Turks had retired without fighting as soon as the news came of the evacuation of the Deve-Boyun forts. Palan-teken fort was built to guard against an advance from the region of the Bin-gel and the Mush plain. Our hosts had spent nearly a week in the open mountains and valleys, as they came up from the Khunus. All the food they ate was taken with them in their pockets. When they reached the Palan-teken pass, the Turks had retired, and had fortunately left something eatable behind them. As the tea was brewing, one of the soldiers said to me: "When is the war going to end?" I replied that I did not know, and asked him if he was tired of it. "Oh no", he said; "I have been wounded twice. I have fought for my country, and with pleasure will fight again." The others were all silent for some minutes, and so were I and my friend. Then I asked the other soldiers what they felt about the war. After a short

hesitation, one of them said: "War is war. I suppose it will end some day. Till then we will fight." Again a long silence. If I had been correspondent for a sensational English paper, or had been sent by the powerful Press Syndicate that manufactures opinion for the English public, I suppose I should have immediately sat down and written an article on the wonderful spirit and keenness of the men of the Russian army, on their readiness to fight to the bitter end and die in the last ditch. But I waited a few minutes; and then, just as one of the soldiers was handing me a nice cup of steaming tea, I remarked, "Don't you think that war is very stupid and wrong? Man kills man, and does not know why he does it. It is fratricide, and no good comes of it; at least not to you or to me." Instantly it was as if a wet blanket had been taken from round us. A new psychological atmosphere was created. "Indeed your words are true", said one. "We have no quarrel with the Turkish peasant." "If Nicolas and the Sultan want to fight", said another, "why can't they fight each other single-handed?" Even the soldier, who just before had said he had been wounded twice and would fight again, now remarked: "This is good for our lords and masters, because it keeps us from getting strong at home"; and then he treated us to a long story of how in his village on the Volga his brother peasants had only so many dessatines of land; how the landlord's land lay all around, and how the peasants worked for a few kopecks a day, the produce all going to the landlords; how all power was in the hands of the *zemsky nachalnik*, who was under the thumb of the landlords. "Is it not likely that they want us to fight?" he added. "If we stay at home,

we think about all this too much." I then turned the conversation onto another subject, thinking that if it became known that I was spreading revolutionary ideas in the army, there might be trouble. I had heard enough to know now what these soldiers were really thinking. But I did not sit down and write an article to my paper; for I knew that that wise controller of news and opinion, the censor, would regard any description of this conversation as "prejudicial to the interests of the State."

About three o'clock we parted with our friends at fort Palan-teken, and began our journey down the steep valleys to the Erzerum plain, which we reached as darkness was coming on. Next day, February 23rd, we said good-bye to General Kalitin, who had entertained us so hospitably, and got onto an automobile transport bound for Sary-Kamish. All that afternoon we jolted along the tracks that led north-east. We passed Hassan Kaleh, and began our journey over the middle Passan plain during the darkness. The morning of the 24th found us on the rolling hills of the old Russo-Turkish frontier. We got a bite of food at Karaurgan, and then passed along through wooded valleys, reaching Sary-Kamish in the evening. On the afternoon of February 25th we took the train for Tiflis, and reached the Caucasus capital after an absence of nearly a month.

## CHAPTER VI

## MY SUMMER JOURNEY ON THE KARS PLATEAU AND IN THE UPPER CHOROKH BASIN (1916)

It was not till May that I returned to the Armenian plateau from Tiflis. This time I had come, not to watch and describe military events, but to investigate the condition of the civil population in the rear of the armies, and to help in the administration of relief to the innocent sufferers, for whose so-called liberation those great military operations were supposed to be necessary. In the meantime the Lord Mayor's Fund had sent out three of its members from England to organize relief work for the Armenians. The Secretary, the Rev. Harold Buxton, himself visited Erzerum to administer the relief. During April I had, in a letter to the English press, called attention to the condition of the Moslem population in the occupied regions of Turkey, while my friend M. Zdanevitch had done the same in the Russian press. The nucleus of a small fund for the relief of Moslems on the Asiatic front was in process of formation by May, so I decided to go up to the Kars plateau to investigate, and see what could be done.

I arrived at Kars on May 29th, and went straight to my friend the Vice-Governor, Colonel Schmerling, who

again extended his hospitality to me. He put me in touch with the local representative of the Baku Moslem Benevolent Society, who had charge of all relief work in the Kars Government. This was Ali Khan Kantimirof, an Ossetine. He lived in a little house off one of the main streets, and with a band of young Tartars from Baku and Dagestan was grappling with a whole swarm of refugees, who kept drifting in from the newly occupied provinces. Not far from him was the headquarters of the Armenian relief committee, run by Armenians from Tiflis, who were doing similar work among their people.

From both the Tartar and Armenian committees I was able to get a fairly clear idea of what had happened to the luckless inhabitants of northern Armenia, when the calamity of war broke upon them. At the beginning of the war the province was inhabited by about 80,000 Armenians, 50,000 Greeks 170,000 Turks, Khurds, Turcomans and Tartars, and perhaps 15,000 Russian colonists (Dissenters). These people had all lived peaceably together ever since the country had been annexed to Russia after the war of 1877. Even the Russian Revolution of 1905 created very little effect among the docile inhabitants. While all around in Erivan, Tiflis, Batum and Elizabetopol, Black Hundreds were organizing pogroms, the people of the Kars plateau were quietly going on with their agriculture and stock-raising. During the years that followed there was nothing to disturb their tranquillity, except perhaps an occasional dispute between the Sunni and Shia Mahommedans as to who was the twelfth Imam, and whether or no Ali was divine by nature. Then came the Turkish invasion of December 1914. Enver Pasha's army swept across a large part of the Kars plateau like

a hurricane. The Greeks, Armenians and Russian colonists mostly fled to the North, abandoning all they had; but the Moslems stayed on, feeling that no harm would come to them from their co-religionists. When the Turks retired, the Greeks and Armenians came back, and found their Moslem neighbours still there. But there was no longer the old relationship, born of friendly daily intercourse. The proximity of war and the march of armies had roused that herald of ill-will, the spirit of Nationalism. The Armenians and Greeks began to accuse their Moslem neighbours of having assisted the Turks in their invasion, and betrayed their suzerain, the Tsar. Armed agents of the Armenian National Societies in Tiflis began to appear in some villages; hooligans from the bazaar towns began to prowl on the look out for disorder and plunder. The Russian authorities paid no attention, and the rural police closed their eyes. Then Christian bands began to be formed, and to march into Moslem villages. There would be some pillaging, a few shots would be fired, and then would begin a general massacre. A large part of the Kars province was laid waste; cattle fled to the mountains and died of want and cold, and the Mahommedan population was reduced by some 30 per cent. through hunger and disease during the following months. This then was the net result of Enver Pasha's attempt to deliver his fellow Moslems in the Caucasus from Russian rule. The Summer of 1915 brought the hour of trial for the Armenians. The Russians and the Armenian volunteers advanced victoriously to Van, but were compelled to retreat. Then followed the exiling and massacre of the Armenian population of the six vilayets. During August of that year 180,000 Armenian

refugees from Van and Bitlis poured into the Kars plateau and the Erivan plain. The 80,000 Armenians of the Kars province had to take in their brethren from Turkey as best they could. Pestilence carried off nearly 50 per cent. of the refugees, besides inflicting untold suffering upon the native Armenians. So this was the net result of the efforts of the Russians and the Armenian volunteers to liberate their Christian brethren from Turkish rule. Then came the Russian advance on Erzerum in February 1916, and this time the country of some 250,000 Moslem Turks was occupied, after it had been duly cleared by the retreating Turks of every sheep, cow and horse, of all hay, barley and wheat, and of all housing accommodation. Thus the inhabitants that remained, about 150,000, were left to bear the pangs of hunger and face the horrors of pestilence. And this sort of thing went on with every glorious advance of the Russian or Turkish army. Yet Armenian and Russian politicians in Tiflis, and Turkish politicians in Constantinople, were all this time writing articles demanding indemnities from their enemies after the war for the losses sustained by their co-religionists in the war areas. To any one who has seen with his own eyes the destruction caused by two years of war on the Caucasus front, it is obvious that it would be impossible to apportion the blame and assess the damage. As far as Armenia is concerned, on the cessation of hostilities an international commission should be appointed, supplied with funds, derived either from all the belligerent Powers, or from Russia and Turkey. This commission should carefully go over the whole of the regions affected by the war, and make good the material losses as far as they are capable of being repaired.

# My Summer Journey on Kars Plateau

After a week in Kars I went with the representative of the Baku Moslem Benevolent Society to the Turkish village of Karahamse on the road between Kars and Sary-Kamish. Here we arranged to open a store, from which flour and sugar could be given out to the destitute Moslems. We stayed here for two days, while the refugees from all the villages round about came to us, and we registered their names, and the numbers in each family, and estimated their losses as far as possible. The Moslems of this western part of the Kars province are of a very mixed type. There are first the typical Osmanli Sunni Turks, the descendants of the Seljuks, or of the Ottoman colonists who have come into these regions from Asia Minor. Next come the Karapapachs or Shia Tartars, who are in every way similar to the East Caucasian Tartars and the Persians of Azairbijan. They speak a Tartar dialect, and are Shias. The boundary between Persian Shia and Turkish Sunni may roughly be regarded as running along the valley of the Arpar Chai from near Alexandropol to a point on the Middle Araxes river near the town of Igdir. The regions that extend for some distance on either side of this line contain a mixture of both these types of Moslems. Next come the Khurds, of whom there are large numbers, chiefly in the Kagisman region and in the upland valleys of the Allah-ak-bar Dag north of Sary-Kamish. They are generally to be found in the higher grounds where the grazing is best in Summer, for they leave the corn-growing for the most part to the Turks, Tartars, Greeks and Armenians. The Khurds of the Kars province and those of the Karabach are the most northerly branch of their race. They belong to the great tribal division, known as the Zilan, which ex-

tends to the South as far as the mountain valleys of the Ala Dag and Alashgert. They used to be divided into the two castes of military *Asshirets* and serf *Rayats*. This social system still prevails in the Ala Dag under Turkish rule, but since the Russian occupation of the Kars province the caste system has broken down, and those Asshirets who did not migrate into Turkey after the Russian occupation have given up being soldiers and plunderers, and have joined the Rayat Khurds in pastoral pursuits. Thus the first and most important effect of the Russian occupation on the natives of the Armenian plateau is to break down the caste system, and to reduce the natives to one level before the law. More than this, the differences between the races and religious sects among the whole Moslem population are beginning to disappear under Russian rule. The oppressive hand of the Russian bureaucracy under the regime of the Tsars has tended during the last twenty years to create a feeling of mutual sympathy between all Moslems, which has been doubly strengthened through the war, and by the abominable policy of the Russian Government in sowing dissensions among the Caucasian races. This was brought home to me very forcibly the second day that I was at Karahamse. I and my Tartar friend were making out the lists of refugees to receive relief. There were a number of Turcomans from a neighbouring village who belonged to the Ali Allahi sect. I asked them how their beliefs differed from those of their Sunni and Shia neighbours. "Ah", said their old head of the village, "before the massacre [1] we used to think about differences of religion,

[1] He was referring to the massacre of Moslems in the Kars province after the battle of Sary-Kamish, mentioned above.

of how we differed from the Sunni, and who was the twelfth Imam. But now we feel that we are all one people." This growth in solidarity of feeling among the Moslems of the Middle East is, I believe, a wide-spread phenomenon, and is likely to be of immense importance in the future. From this national self-consciousness will grow the demand for education; and with the spread of knowledge fanaticism will decay. When this is accomplished, the regeneration of Islam is assured, and a new element in the civilization of Asia will appear.[1]

On June 13th I hired a horse from a Turkish peasant, and with a Khurdish guide rode across the plateau in a north-westerly direction. There had been tempestuous weather and terrific thunderstorms the last few days, as is usual on the Kars plateau in Spring. To-day however was fine and clear. The wide, open sweeps of the plain were like a boundless sea of waving grass and flowers. The heat-waves quivered above the hills; from the marshes by the streams rose the scent of marigolds; the herons stood like marble statues, and the sandpipers with their fluty cry winged across the carpet of green. Nature seemed speaking to Man to-day and saying: "It is springtime, the time for creation and for growth. Leave your works of destruction and imitate me". The Khurd who was with me rejoiced at the scene, for the Khurd is above all a child of Nature, and understands her when she speaks. "Aho!" he cried aloud. "You are my brother. I will go with you to the end of the world. I fear nothing." And so saying he grasped my hand in his. At that moment I had an indescribable feeling, as if I could see into Nature, and in one bright vision

[1] See also Chapter IX.

interpret all that was around me. And my Khurdish companion felt it too, and hence his joyous cry.

We passed along the watery meadows to the foot of a stony ridge, through which a gorge led into an upland valley. The scene changed, and we saw the charred ruins of a burnt village. The timber roofs of the half-underground houses were all destroyed or fallen in. Under canvas sheets some Khurds with their families were trying to live, while they attempted to rebuild what had once been their homes. They were in rags, and their children naked. A few thin sheep were all that remained of their flocks. Yet there had been a prosperous village here before the war. Several of the inhabitants had owned 500 or 800 head of sheep and cattle. They used to wear gaudy dresses and ride on Arab horses, and their underground houses were little palaces of warmth and comfort. And all this disaster had befallen these people for no fault of their own. But it was only one example of the hundreds and thousands of villages, from Mesopotamia and Palestine to the Caucasus and Persia, where the same ruin and disaster had taken place. As I looked upon the scene I kept thinking of the work of restoration that will be required in all these countries, to say nothing of Europe, in the days after the war.

It was still early in the day, and I decided to cross the pass of the Allah-ak-bar Dag, and descend that evening into the valley of the Olti Chai. We rode up by little mountain tracks, rising steadily all the time, till at last after two hours we reached a great open downland at a height of 9,000 feet. From the top of one of the hills on this open space I could see unfolded before me the whole of the Kars plateau, a wide expanse of green, falling

sharply into the lowland plains of the Araxes near Erivan, beyond which I could just make out the distant form of Ararat, clothed in its eternal snow and cloudy wreath. On the green carpet of the plain were countless little dots, which marked the villages surrounded by their patches of corn. Here and there ridges and rounded hills rose up out of the plateau, and among them conical shapes, weirdly suggesting old volcanoes. Where the green grass gave place to countless specks of darker green, I knew were the forests at the head of the Sary-Kamish river. Patches of grey on the open spaces near these forests were the flocks of sheep and cattle feeding on the upland meadows, all that was left after the war and massacre. Far in the distance were the snowy mountains that divide the Kars plateau from the Alashgert, and out of them rose a great pyramidal shape, the extinct volcano of the Kessar Dag (11,262 feet). To the South-west I saw the hills that border the Kars plateau on the side of the Chorokh. Here lay the forested pass of Bardus, where Enver and Ishkhan Pashas brought their army across when they invaded the Trans-Caucasus. Beyond this pass I saw a great drop in the earth's surface. The Kars plateau seemed suddenly to break off. A country of deep valleys and scarred ridges lay to the West of me, into which I was about to descend on my way to Olti. I was standing upon the edge of the volcanic plateau of Kars, and looking down into the Olti and Chorokh depressions,[1] where lay the fundamental rocks, the continuation of the Anti-Taurus range, which, running in one long ridge from eastern Anatolia, passes under the recently erupted lavas of the Kars plateau. I could see at a

[1] See Map.

glance the line followed by Enver Pasha's army. It had come from the Erzerum plateau, and sinking down into this Olti and Chorokh depression had passed along its narrow valleys, unseen and unsuspected by the Russians, till it reached the edge of the Kars plateau, and then, rising up over the Bardus pass and the pass where I now was standing, it arrived within sight of the Kars fortress itself. The whole strategy of the earlier part of the war on the Caucasus front, and also the first part of the operations that led to the fall of Erzerum, became clear to me as I stood on the edge of the Kars plateau and looked down into this Chorokh depression to the North-west. I could see that the weak spot in the Russian defences was this depression, through which an enemy could slip and stab the Russian army in the back, if the passes guarding the entrance to the Kars plateau on the North and West were not securely held.

After gazing on this interesting scene for some time, I proceeded with my Khurdish companion along alpine meadows and grassy slopes to a steep ridge, down which we began to descend. We came to beautiful forests of pine, through the winding paths of which we threaded our way. The evening sun shone through the forest glades and lit up the pine trunks, making them glow like pillars of fire. Where its rays could not reach, the pines stood dark and sombre, as though hiding the mystery of the forest which the sun was trying to disclose. Again my Khurdish friend shouted to me: "The forest is beautiful. Let us make a house and live here always, and become the kings of the valleys". Soon we began to perceive signs of human life. A little Turkish shepherd-boy was grazing sheep in a forest glade, and playing a

tune on a reedy pipe, that echoed through the woodlands. It might have been the pipe of Pan, and the boy himself the spirit of the forest. That same tune I had heard some years before when I had been travelling in Asia Minor. We came to some fields of corn; and beyond us lay the little Turkish village of Arsenek. We entered its narrow street, along both sides of which stood houses built of huge logs. At the door of one of them a group of old Turkish grey-beards were squatting. I addressed myself to them, and on hearing who I was and where I was bound for, they led me to the guest-room which every village in the East keeps prepared for strangers and wayfarers. They took my horse and gave it corn, while others sat beside me on the carpet and brought me coffee and milk, bread and honey. They called me a *Millet Vekil* (the representative of a people), and I think they firmly believed that I was the ambassador of the Emperor of India, who had come to help the stricken Moslems of Armenia and the Caucasus. They themselves had very hazy ideas as to who was their Sovereign Lord. "Where does your Padishah (Emperor) live?" said the old headman of the village. "Far away in Hindustan", I answered. "Does he wish us to become his children?" they asked me. "No", I replied. "You have a Padishah already." "Is your Padishah fighting against ours?" he asked. "No", I said. "Your Padishah and ours are like brothers, and they fight together against the Padishah in Constantinople." "Where does our Padishah live then?" he said. "Yours lives in Petrograd far away in the North", I answered. "Then the Padishah that lives in Constantinople is not our Padishah?" they all asked. "No", I said. "He

used to be, but is not now." "Ah! that is the will of Allah", they all said; and they looked at each other and stroked their beards. This village of Arsenek was of course a particularly remote village, and being shut away from any road or centre of trade, the people were exceptionally isolated, rarely meeting any one who could tell them about the outside world. They told me about the passage through their village of a battalion of Turkish soldiers a year before, evidently a detachment of Enver Pasha's army, when he was invading the Kars plateau. To them this was an event of vast importance. Left thus isolated and forgotten by the outer world, they had themselves forgotten who was the Emperor. The Turkish suzerainty had passed away forty years before, and no Russian had come to tell them of their new allegiance. They only knew that a person called a *strajnik* (rural guard), himself a Tartar who knew no Russian, used to come every now and then to collect a poll tax and a little levy on the land they sowed and on the timber they cut. I have often since then wondered how I would have managed to explain the Russian Revolution to them, and to make them understand what is meant by a Republic.

After enjoying the hospitality of the Turks of Arsenek for one night, I bade farewell and passed on my way down the valley. I reached the Penak river in the course of the afternoon, and spent that night in a Khurdish village. Next day, June 15th, after a long, hot, dusty ride along the valley of the Olti Su, I reached the little town of that name, and went straight to the Russian official in charge of the district.

Olti is the chief town of that administrative district

in the Kars province. Situated on the south-eastern side of the Chorokh depression, it consists of about a hundred houses, of which perhaps half are native shops, and the rest are the dwellings of Russian officials and the garrison. There is a mosque and an old castle on a rock, and the inhabitants are mainly Turkish. M. Kuznetsoff, the administrative chief of the district, was a typical bureaucrat of the petty type. He had no initiative of his own, and could do nothing in the world without official documents from above ordering him to do this or that. However, a letter I carried from the Vice-Governor of Kars satisfied him, and I was quickly given a room in a Turkish house with carpets, a divan, cushions, coffee and a quiet young Turk to wait on me. The next two days I spent looking at the environs of Olti, and waiting for arrangements to be made for going on into the Upper Chorokh valley. It was my purpose to go westwards through Tortum in the direction of Ispir I wanted to explore some of the newly occupied country between Erzerum and the Black Sea, which had been captured after the fall of that fortress. Hitherto no one from the outside world had been here, and we knew nothing of the condition of the inhabitants. Occasionally rumours would come through of starving Moslems; and it was generally known that a considerable population used to live in these regions where the Chorokh rises. The 2nd Turkestan Army Corps, commanded by General Prejvalsky, was somewhere near Ispir; and as M. Kuznetsoff wished to see the General on matters concerning the refugees in his district, we arranged to go together. We left Olti on June the 18th in a little cavalcade accompanied by four *strajniks* We rode

along a narrow valley, the sides of which were covered with bushes and scrubby forest, past the post-house which before the war marked the Russo-Turkish frontier. To the South of us rose the great mountain mass of the Gey Dag (9,500 feet), on the heights of which the Turks had entrenched themselves and had sat facing the Russians in the valleys below for ten months. When the Russians began their advance on Erzerum, these mountain slopes had been the scene of desperate fighting, 9,000 feet high in the dead of winter. Passing along the northern slopes, I could see the heights above scarred with zigzag lines leading up to little knolls, that appeared on the sky-line all along the summit. These were the mountain tracks up which the Turkish soldiers used to climb to reach their positions, overlooking the vast expanse of mountain and valley on each side. We spent the night in a little military halting-place, where a Russian officer provided food and a night's rest for soldiers bound for the front. Next day we crossed the Sivri Dag by a low pass. The road had only recently been constructed by the Russian engineers for the passage of heavy guns. Along the whole of this Olti and Upper Chorokh depression engineers were busy road-making all through the spring of 1916. This rough plateau country, scarred with countless low ridges and narrow valleys, was by May of that year covered with a network of roads. Never before in the history of man had the inhabitants of these regions seen a road. Up till now they had used goat-tracks, and carried their produce to market on the backs of donkeys. The armies of the Kings of Georgia, that used to pass through here in the middle ages to fight the Seljuks, must have used these rocky mountain-tracks

and the little devious paths that wound along the valleys. And when Enver Pasha brought his army through here to invade the Caucasus, he had no transport but horses and donkeys. This indeed was one of the causes of his defeat; for he found himself unable to supply his troops, after they had gained their first success. Now, suddenly, the remote valleys of the Chorokh basin resounded with the blast of dynamite and the blow of the pick-axe. Paths for goats were converted into roads for howitzers, and four-wheeled transport-wagons rumbled along where the tinkle of the donkey-caravan was heard before. Such is the effect of Russian influence in these Asiatic lands. The construction of these roads in the Chorokh valley was of prime importance from the military point of view, for it enabled the Russians to advance on Baiburt and Erzinjan, and so complete their conquest of the north Armenian plateau. The Chorokh basin was a weak spot all through and after the Erzerum operations, until the Turkestan Army Corps was secured in this region by the construction ot these roads. Before this was done there was a danger of the Turks repeating the move which Enver Pasha tried in December of 1914. When the roads were made, it was possible for the Turkestans not only to hold the Chorokh depression, but to continue their advance on Erzinjan and still be sure of supplies. Erzinjan would have been taken long before July 1916, had it not been necessary to wait for the construction of these roads.

By midday we had reached the Tortum valley, where a tributary stream flows northward into the Chorokh. We passed through narrow gorges with barren cliffs on each side. The road was cut into the steep valley-side,

and zigzagged along boulder skrees. Towards afternoon the valley widened out, and we entered an open space where meadows were watered by the rushing Tortum river, and groves of walnuts and apple orchards clustered round a little village. On each side were towering cliffs of limestone, and on a projecting peak rose the outlines of a mediæval castle. The rays of the sun struck its bastions, so that they shone like the halls of Valhalla, and in these surroundings of surpassing grandeur one was made to think of the abode of mediæval knights. We stopped at a little military post, where in the cool shade of walnuts and mulberries we drank tea and listened to the mellow notes of the Golden Oriole piping above our heads. I went to explore the old castle, clambering up over crags by narrow winding paths. I had to creep inside by a narrow portal, and there came upon the ruins of an ancient church. This Tortum castle was evidently a Christian stronghold in the middle ages. It may have been either Armenian or Georgian, but I am inclined to think it was the latter. This side of the Upper Chorokh basin is full of Georgian names, such as Tepkha, Khartkha and Orudjuk, although the inhabitants of these villages are now Turks. Besides, in the mountains of the Dumlu Dag to the South is the defile of the Gurji-Bogaz, which clearly indicates that the Turks once regarded the country North of this defile as Georgian territory. Tortum was probably one of the outposts of the Georgian Empire during the reign of Tamara, when Georgian influence extended furthest.

I found that the native population consisted almost entirely of Moslem Turks. If some families were Georgian by origin, they had long since been completely Turkified in dress, speech and manners. There were three Arme-

nian villages in the Tortum neighbourhood, but the wretched inhabitants had all been exiled in the previous summer, and had probably been massacred. In the whole of the region watered by the Tortum river, from the Dumlu Dag to the point where it flows into the Chorokh, there used to be a population of about 40,000. Since the Turkish retreat in 1916, a portion of these had fled into Asia Minor, a portion had died of cold, hunger and disease after the Turks had for military reasons destroyed all the food and forage, and burnt the villages. I roughly estimated the surviving population at 20,000. I found them in a pitiable plight. Hundreds came to me in the village of Tortum half naked, begging for food. It was more than one could bear to turn them away, yet it was impossible to do anything for them, since we had not got the food with us. After finding out the state of affairs so far as we could, we wrote a short report, and sent a rider back to Olti with a letter requesting the dispatch of flour from the stores of the Moslem Benevolent Society at that place.

On June 20th we continued our journey westwards. All morning we ascended the pass over the great range of the Kabak-tepe (marked in the 10-inch Russian map Kazan Dag). This range is a northerly projection of the volcanic Dumlu Dag, separating the valley of the Tortum from the Ispir region of the Upper Chorokh.[1] On reaching the summit a grand panorama opened out before our eyes. To the East lay the Tortum Chai, with its narrow valleys and steep limestone cliffs. We could see every inch of the road we had come by, and mark each point where we had rested. In the middle

[1] See Map.

distance the Gey Dag stood boldly out against the sky-line, while far away, very faint in the haze of distance, I could make out the outline of the Kars plateau from which I had descended a week before. To the South lay the jagged snowy ranges of the Dumlu Dag; to the South-west a gap in the mountain wall enabled me to catch a glimpse of the plain of the Upper Euphrates near Erzerum. To the West lay the confused table-land of the Upper Chorokh Su, out of which rose irregular masses of rock in the neighbourhood of Baiburt and Ispir. Far away to the North I could see against the skyline the rugged and serrated snow-peaks of the Pontic chain. This was Lazistan; and beyond it lay the Black Sea. From this point of vantage on the Kazan Dag I could see beneath me the whole of the north-western end of the great Armenian plateau. It is a region which has hardly been visited at all by travellers, but it is well worthy of attention. It played no small part in the military operations of the Caucasus campaign, and it is inhabited by a Moslem people which cannot be forgotten in the future political settlement of these countries.

We descended the pass into one of the tributary valleys of the Upper Chorokh, and about eleven o'clock in the darkness reached a little deserted Turkish village. Here was the Staff of General Prejvalsky, the commander of the Russian Turkestan Army Corps. We gave our horses to the Cossacks, and asked the sentry whether the General was still up. To our surprise we were told that he was; and on entering a little room, we found him walking up and down with his hands behind his back. He was dressed in a Cossack tunic, very shabby

and torn ; he wore the rough boots of a common soldier, and had evidently not shaved for a long time. This I subsequently found out was his usual get-up, and by no means due to the conditions of active service. General Prejvalsky is quite one of the characters of the Caucasus campaign, and certainly one of the most able and useful generals in the Russian Asiatic service. For many years before the war he was the Russian military agent at Erzerum. He speaks Turkish quite well, and used to walk about on foot dressed like a Turkish peasant or caravan-driver. In this way he gained access to places where otherwise he would never have been able to go. He had been close up to several of the Erzerum forts. He had tramped over a large part of the Upper Chorokh plateau where we now were, and knew every upland meadow and every pass where guns could be brought. After having been constantly among Turks for many years, and getting to know their minds, and no doubt some of their secrets, he was now commanding one of the Army Corps in the campaign against them. He is a nervous man and sleeps little. All the earlier part of the night he paces up and down in his room, and sometimes goes out, talks to the soldiers and hears what they are saying about their officers. This night he was walking about in his room. He stopped at once, and on hearing who I was, came up and shook hands, and then said : " What has brought you to this unearthly place ? " I told him my mission was to enquire into the condition of the natives, and the possibility of relieving them. He paused, and suddenly asked me : " Who are the happiest people in the world ? " I was too surprised to answer ; but he did so for me. " Why, these

Turks and Khurds here on the mountains", he said; "because when trouble comes, they have less to lose than so-called civilized people. A man with a goat and a sack of barley is happier than a general with 10,000 roubles a year." He then told me how he used to live amongst these natives for weeks on end; and I told him of some of my experiences and travels in Asia. I found him remarkably well-informed on all racial and political matters, besides being a man of deep understanding of the life and spirit of Asia. He is not like the typical general and bureaucrat, who has become dehumanized by monotonous official work. He is in many respects more like the Russian peasant colonist in Turkestan and the Caucasus, who, without losing his Slavonic character, mingles with the natives and learns their ways and customs. Next day, June the 21st, he took me alone into his little room, and we discussed all sorts of questions concerning the races and peoples of these regions. In the afternoon he gave me a horse and a Cossack, and I rode to some villages to see the refugees that had just come in from Ispir. While the army was in these regions they were being well provided for; but I learned that an advance was expected, and then all the Upper Chorokh region would soon be deserted and the natives left to fend for themselves. After taking notes of the number and needs of the peasants who were left here, I returned to the Staff. That evening I dined at a wooden table, sitting on the right of the General, with all the Staff Officers and a number of Divisional Commanders. Next day, June 22nd, M. Kuzetseff and I took leave of this remarkable peasant general, and commenced our journey back to Olti.

We followed another route in order to investigate the state of the population north of the region we had already passed through. We crossed the Kazan Dag by another pass to the North, and descended into a little tributary of the Tortum river. Towards afternoon we struck the road just built by the engineers, running from the Tortum valley to Ispir, and followed it down to its junction with the road we had come by. On the way we passed ruined Turkish villages, and found a population of some 10,000 Moslems living between Lake Tortum and Ispir. We also came across fifteen Armenians, all that was left of five villages in the neighbourhood of Ispir. All their companions had been massacred the previous summer, and they had only escaped by disguising themselves as Turks. We gave them letters to the Commandant of the military stores on the road to Olti, and directed them to the Armenian refugee committee at Kars. On June 24th we reached Olti, where my journey in the Chorokh ended.

On June 26th I set out to return to Kars, riding in a transport-wagon with some Russian soldiers. On the way I talked with them about the war. They were very anxious to know when it would end, and I told them of course that it was very uncertain what would happen. There was certainly none of that keenness to be giving their lives for Holy Russia which sentimental travellers and correspondents from England have been trying to persuade their readers is felt by the Russian soldier. There was none of that mystic patriotism and feeling of sacred duty to country which one sees in the German and French soldier, or of the jolly sporting spirit of the British Tommy. Amongst these soldiers

the war was felt as something terrible that had come, and must be gone through with, because those above had ordered it. But of the least personal interest in the war I could not see a sign. "Ah, fight, fight!" said one of them. "So much suffering, so many dead. But when it will finish, it is not certain." I felt inclined to say, "It will finish when you silly fellows learn where your real enemies are, and turn your rifles behind you instead of in front of you". Perhaps something like that did pass through their minds, for when I called their attention to the fact that war did nothing to help them, and only brought them misery and loss, and was contrary to the moral precept that we should love one another, they responded very readily. It was as if their real subconscious nature was true to everything that is best in man, but that it was inarticulate, and hidden by the more superficial nature which had been artificially imposed upon them by centuries of serfdom and militarism. An unutterable feeling of weariness came over me as the wagons rolled over the dusty road, and I looked on these young fellows prepared for the sacrifice to Mars, and too much overwhelmed with a sense of inexorable fate to understand the truth. But if I had known more, I should have realized the existence of that subconscious better self. One of them indeed began to complain of the evil state into which Russia had fallen, how the police were cruel and corrupt, and how in their village they had not land enough. That was the other self speaking, and drowning the voice of national pride that bade them fight the Turks, the self that brought about the great events of March 1917.

We reached Merdenek on the Kars plateau on June

27th. This was a great transport and supply centre, and from here a light railway went to Kars. I slept in a common room for Russian soldiers, ate some bread and drank some tea with the soldiers, and also acquired some lice from the noisome quarters. The wagons left in the early morning of the 28th, and travelling on them all day I arrived at Kars that evening, where I again put up in the house of Colonel Schmerling. I intended to go on to the Ardahan region of the Kars province to enquire into the state of the refugees there. While I was waiting in Kars for a carriage, I heard of some Russian peasant youths, Baptist sectarians from a village in the Kars province, who had refused military service on conscientious grounds, and had been sentenced to two years' penal servitude. I asked Colonel Schmerling if he could arrange for me to visit them in the prison, and after seeing the Commandant, he obtained leave for me. I went up to the fortress prison, where prisoners were kept before being sent to Tiflis or Siberia or some other large centre. Up a flight of stone stairs I came to an iron door, where I rang a bell and handed my paper to the warder. I was led into a courtyard where there was a little office, and told to wait here, because soon other people from the town would be coming to visit their friends in prison. Gradually the courtyard filled with Tartars, Armenians, Greeks and Russian women, all waiting to get in. A door opened in the main prison wall; every one rushed in, and I accompanied them. On a raised platform, to which wooden steps led up, there was a long wire lattice erected. Beyond this wire was another, leaving a space between. Behind this second wire I could see the prisoners walking about. Then

followed a scene almost exactly like that described in Tolstoy's " Resurrection ", when Nekludof visits Katusha in prison. Every one rushed to the wires, and for the next five minutes there was a ceaseless yelling and shouting, so that not a word could be heard, and my attempt to find the young Baptists was unavailing. When the five minutes was up, the warder ordered the visitors to leave, but I was allowed to stay a few minutes longer. I asked through the wires for the young men, and one of them came forward. He was a pale fair youth, dressed in the grey prison dress. In his eyes was an indescribable look of mental suffering and resignation. All around him were criminals of the coarse type. Many of them had been sent there for murder, and he had been sent there precisely because he had refused to murder: a curious commentary on our so-called civilization. I asked him how he felt. He replied, " All right, thank you. I am at rest in my spirit, and that is the chief thing. I have done my duty ". I told him who I was, and he asked at once what they did with those who renounced military service in England. " They treat them better than they do here, I expect ", he added. I then told him of the conscientious objectors who had been sent to France and condemned to death, and a look of surprise and pain came over his face. " I thought that England was a free country ", he said. " So did I ", I answered, " once upon a time." He then told me that in his village the majority of peasant families were of the Malakan sect,[1] but that some years ago a number of families had become Baptists. Among them there were some who in reading the Gospels had come to the

[1] I describe this sect when dealing with the Ardahan district.

onclusion that it was sin to take life, and this had led hem to refuse military service. It appears that their onversion to this belief was quite spontaneous, and due o no influence from without. Some thirty years ago he Dukhobors had come to the same conviction, had een persecuted, and with Tolstoy's aid had migrated o America. Now once again in the Trans-Caucasus the ame belief was developing among these Baptists, whose ncestors had come as Malokans to the Caucasus a hundred ears before. I wished to stay longer and say more, ut words failed me, and I could not express all that I elt and longed to say. Wishing him and his brothers trength for their heavy spiritual struggle, I gave one ast look through the iron wires at those peaceful suffering yes, and then turned and went out.

On July 1st I left Kars and travelled by posting carriage o Ardahan, passing the village of Djelaus on the way. arrived at Ardahan next day. The town is situated n the extreme northern edge of the Kars plateau, almost t the head-waters of the Kura river. North and West f it the plain suddenly breaks off, and the land falls nto the great depression of the Middle Chorokh and djaria. The plateau in this neighbourhood is inhabited nainly by Moslems of all kinds, but there are a consider- ble number of Greeks, who migrated into the Caucasus rom the Gumush Khaneh region of Turkey after the ar of 1877. The town of Ardahan is surrounded on hree sides by fortified hills, not unlike Erzerum, while n the eastern side is an open plain. The forts have rgely fallen into disuse; but they were of great impor- ance during the Russo-Turkish war, and many bloody attles were fought around them. I found the town

half in ruins. The bazaar had been half-burnt, and all the native quarter by the castle on the north side of the Kura had been completely gutted. In December 1914 a column of Turks had advanced from the Black Sea via Artvin to Ardahan, from which the Russian troops had retired. The Turks pressed on a little further, but on the arrival of the Cossacks they fell back on Artvin. When the Cossacks re-occupied Ardahan, according to the accounts of Russian eye-witnesses who told me themselves, a massacre and pogrom took place. The Cossacks looted the bazaar, burnt the Moslem quarter, and killed at sight all Turks they could see. The town was still in the state in which the Cossacks had left it. I went to see Ali Verdi Bey, a Tartar doctor who had charge of a small hospital and dispensary in the town. He at once invited me to come and stay with him. I readily accepted, and spent the next few days enquiring into the state of the refugees and natives of the district. I found that there was great distress among at least 40,000 of the population, owing to the disorders and band-warfare that followed the retreat of the Turks in December 1914. I visited several villages with the doctor, and on July 5th rode over to Hanach, a Greek village about a day's journey to the north-east. From here we made several excursions to the Moslem villages situated on the edge of the plateau and off the beaten track. On the afternoon of July 6th we arrived at a summer encampment of Turcomans, who had taken their flocks up from the village to the high pastures where it was cool. The spot was so delightful that we decided to stay there for the night. These Turcomans belonged to the Ali-Allahi sect, and by questioning the headman of the encampment

I obtained the following information. The Ali-Allahis, or Turcomans of the Kars plateau, have lived in their present villages for many generations; but according to their own tradition they originally came from the Sivas vilayet of Asiatic Turkey. They regard with special esteem the Kizil Bashi Khurds of the Dersim region, south of Erzinjan, whom they look upon as having the same faith as themselves. Before the war, Mullahs and Sheikhs used to come from the Dersim to visit them and instruct them in their form of worship. Marriages also between the Kizil Bashi Khurds and the Ali-Allahi Turcomans used to be frequent. They did not appear to have any very strong convictions on matters of dogma, except that they seemed to hold the name of Ali in very great reverence. It was the feast of Ramazan while I was among them, but they were not observing it. They told me that on the day before Easter Sunday they make a special kind of soup, which they call *Asshir Chirbassi*, and make a feast with it. Also during the first week of September one of their Sheikhs comes round and performs a ceremony over bowls of water, like a Christian priest. Each family then takes some of the water home and keeps it. What the ceremony actually consisted of I could not gather, but it is clear that there are survivals of Christian customs practised among this sect. In the Kars province there are three Sheikhs among the Ali-Allahis who have come originally from the Dersim, and have studied in the *madrasas* at Constantinople. The language of the sect is Ottoman Turkish, and the men dress like Turks, but the women are got up more in the Khurdish style, with a white kerchief tied round their hair and a network of fine chains hanging down their necks.

In the Hanach valley we visited also many villages of the pure Osmanli Turks. It happened about this time that news was leaking through about the great Arab revolt against the Turks. In almost every village old and young Turks would ask us if it was true that the Arabs had declared war on the Turkish "Padishah". The news seemed to interest them, and they wanted to know why the Arabs were fighting with the Turks, and whether they wanted a separate kingdom of their own. We told them that the Arabs had once been independent, and a very great people; that it was they who had charge of the Holy places, and that a struggle was now beginning between the Sharif of Mecca and the Sultan of Turkey, as to who should become the Caliph of Islam. But the actual question of the Caliphate seemed to concern them very little. It was the national and territorial aspect of the conflict that interested them most.

On July 10th we returned to Ardahan, and next day I rode off alone across the plateau to the west of Ardahan to visit some of the Russian settlements in these regions. In the afternoon I reached the Malakan village of Nikolaefka. It was a typical Russian village, and looked strange in its surroundings. All round were the dirty, disorderly villages of the Turks, Greeks and Khurds, little better than collections of mud hovels. But here I found a wide street with a long row of substantial, well-built wooden houses on either side. In the yards round the houses women of a European type were tending cattle or digging in the little cabbage gardens, and in the fields Russian mujiks were ploughing. I went to the *starshina*, or head of the village, and obtained leave to rest the night with them. My host was a fine old

peasant, with a Tolstoyan face and beard, who showed me about the village and told me the history of their colony. Early in the 19th century their forbears lived in the government of the Kherson in South Russia. They were Little Russian in origin, and used to confess the Orthodox faith, and live like the other peasants around them. Then in the early years of that century there appeared among them some preachers, who began to teach a new mode of living. They read to them the Bible, which had been translated from the German; they told them that the priesthood was bad; that the priests did not follow the teachings of Christ; that it was wrong to smoke, to drink, and to eat pig's-meat. Soon others in the village became affected, and themselves got up and spoke. Meetings were held every Sunday; the Orthodox church was left empty, and the priest without a congregation. In fact, there had arisen in the country north of the Black Sea a religious revival of the same type as that led by John Wesley a generation earlier in England. The Orthodox Church began a campaign of persecution against them; but Alexander the First was too liberal and humane to take any steps against the new Dissenters. On his death, however, the tyrant Nicolas the First commenced a wholesale persecution, and when he could not prevail against them, he exiled them to the Caucasus. Soon after 1830 they settled in the government of Elizabetopol, but in 1881 moved to the Kars plateau. When they arrived here their numbers were only 300, but now they have increased to over 1,000 in less than forty years. On the Ardahan plateau there are five of these settlements

I was taken to see the meeting-place where they assemble every Sunday to read the Bible. One of their number is elected to preside and conduct the service, for they hold that priesthood is strictly forbidden. They do not christen children, but every Saturday all adults wash their whole body. All the people that I met in this village gave me the impression of being remarkably serious and conscientious. I saw several meetings in private houses in the evening after work was over. The men were discussing religious questions, and interpreting the Scripture by reading and judging for themselves. Their whole mental attitude is the outcome of deep religious conviction, and they may be regarded as the most easterly outpost of that rational form of Christianity which has inspired Protestantism and the various Nonconformist Churches of the West. From these early Malakan settlers the Dukhobors broke off, according to the accounts given me in this village. The latter are another product of deep religious conviction, whose particular tenet is the renunciation of military service. In more recent years there has grown up among these Dissenters (also as offshoots from the Malakans) a number of Baptist sects, and Baptist preachers have come to Tiflis, some from Germany, some from Russia. I found also in the village of Nikolaef a sect of Adventists, who observe Saturday like the Jews, and believe in the coming of a Messiah. In fact every Nonconformist sect seems to be represented among these Russian colonists in the Transcaucasus. Their presence, however, does not seem to give any trouble to the authorities. In fact my friend the Vice-Governor of Kars, who was also head of the local Court of Justice, informed me that

he had never had up before him for trial a single Russian Dissenter.

In matters of husbandry and the practical affairs of life these settlers are an example to the Moslems, Armenians and Greeks among whom they live. Their villages are models of industry and thrift. Their whole standard of life is higher than that of the natives: they eat better food, and more of it, and the infantile mortality among them is very much less. They grow barley, potatoes and rye, and all kinds of garden vegetables. They also keep large flocks of cattle and sheep, and hire the Khurds to pasture them on the mountains in the summer. They have introduced co-operative creameries; and in the village of Nikolaefka I saw a fine cheese factory, where large Dutch cheeses were made three times a week and sent every two months from the remote Trans-Caucasus to the towns of Central Russia. The higher standard of living and industry cannot be without its effect upon the natives in their midst. The difference between the types of villages, one Asiatic and the other European, is still very striking; but it seemed to me that the industrious Russian colonists were already beginning to inspire the natives with a desire to imitate them. Their neighbours were constantly coming to this village to buy good horses and cattle, or hire themselves to the Malakan husbandmen, and earn their money. This is an example of the influence which the Eastern Slavs exercise upon the native Asiatics. Instead of coming into the country as rulers and members of a governing class, like the English, French and Germans, they come as simple villagers, settle down among the natives, work hard, give work to others, sell to their neighbours, and let

their children play with the Moslem children; in fact, by a slow process they infuse their culture into their neighbours and modify the original type. They are by far the truest harbingers in the East of what is best in Western civilization, the more so because, under the influence of their strong religious faith, they have left behind them in Europe most of what is bad.

But I could find no evidence that they went so far in their intercourse with the Moslems as to intermarry with them. Here religious barriers are still too strong, and it will probably be a long time yet before they are broken down. But between the native Christians, both Greeks and Armenians, and the Malakans, I found there had been instances of intermarriage in recent years. In the village of Nikolaefka there had been a dearth of young marriageable women, and several of the young men had gone to the Greek and Armenian villages over the plateau, and had asked for and obtained some of the girls for wives. Instances of Russian women marrying native Christians did not exist in this district; but it is common enough in Georgia, where Russian colonists have in some places become completely Georgianized.

I spent two nights in the village of Nikolaefka with the old peasant who was my host. Then I went on to Michaelovka, another similar village, where I stayed a night, and then returned to Ardahan. On July 20th I started northward, travelling in a transport-wagon, and on the 22nd reached Akhalkalak. From here I drove over the beautiful Tsara-Tsara pass, from the top of which I could see the whole of the Caucasus range, and then descended into the lovely fertile valleys of Georgia, through the dense forests of Bakuriani and Tsagver to the luxurious

Borgeom, the haunt of the tourist. My long journey over the North Armenian plateau came to an end on August 13th, when I reached Tiflis. I had been away for nearly two months, and had covered more than 500 miles of little known territory, and I may claim to have been the first to make any investigations as to the effects of the war's ravages upon the native populations of these regions.

## CHAPTER VII

## WORK AMONG THE REFUGEES IN LAZISTAN

DURING the latter half of 1915 and the first six months of 1916 I had covered the greater part of the regions affected by the war on the Asiatic front, from the centre of Western Persia to the plateau of North Armenia. There still remained to be visited the little strip of mountainous country between the Black Sea coast and the Upper Chorokh, known as Lazistan. During the Autumn of 1916 the bitter cry of suffering that had gone out to the Western world from the Christian and Moslem peoples of these Eastern lands was met by liberal donations of money for their relief. Mr. Backhouse had been appointed to administer in Tiflis the Lord Mayor's Fund for the relief of Armenians and Assyrians. The American Missionaries from Van settled during the Autumn of that year in Erivan, and were an untold blessing to thousands of homeless and starving Armenians, thanks to generous financial assistance from the United States. About this time also the Red Crescent Society of the Indian Moslems began to take interest in the fate of the Moslem population of the Caucasus regions. A fund was thus built up for relief work among the Mahommedans, and the management of this little fund fell to my lot. Hearing in October of the terrible condition of the population of

Lazistan, I decided to make a journey there, and organize a method for sending up food and clothing into those remote valleys on the Black Sea coast before the winter set in. In October I had bought warm clothing out of the money sent by the Indian Red Crescent, and the British Consul at Batum, Mr. Patrick Stevens, and his sister prepared and made up the packages. Each one contained for girls five archenes of flannelette, one pair of shoes, a handkerchief, and a needle and thread; for boys a *bashlik*, two and a half archenes of cloth for trousers, three archenes of cotton shirting, one pair of shoes, and a needle and thread. Out of money also assigned by the Lord Mayor's committee, I bought 6,000 pouds of maize from the Government stores, by permission of General Romanofsky, the Governor-General of Batum. On November 7th I came to Batum from Tiflis with Dr. Sultanof, the representative of the Baku Moslem Benevolent Society, to begin the work of transportation and distribution. But what a task lay before us! As I looked from the sea beach at Batum at the towering ranges of Lazistan which rose almost perpendicularly before me, I feared that I was undertaking the impossible, if I tried to transport 6,000 pouds of maize and 300 packages of warm clothing through those yawning defiles and apparently impenetrable mountain-chains.

Lazistan may be geographically divided into three parts. First, there is the thin strip of coast-line comprising the northern slopes of the Pontic chain, where the little rivers flowing from the high watershed fall steeply into the Black Sea between Trebizond and Batum. Then there is the upland plateau where the Chorokh river rises in the country round Baiburt, Ispir and Olti, described

in Chapter VI. This is really the extreme northern end of the Great Armenian plateau, the second step, as it were, up to the high volcanic plateau of Kars and Erzerum.[1] Thirdly, there is the intermediate country lying between the high plateau and the sea coast, an almost impassable maze of rocky valleys, snow-clad chains and defiles, through which the Chorokh river bursts its way to the sea. All these three regions may physically be regarded as Lazistan.

Historically this country played a considerable part in the struggles of Christendom with Islam in the middle ages. It seems from the very earliest times to have been inhabited by the Georgian race, speaking a Japhetic dialect. Their presence here is reported by the ancient Greeks, who visited the coast and founded the colonies of Trebizond, Rize and Atina. They seem in fact to have been the aboriginal inhabitants of this part of Asia, who retired gradually northward towards the sanctuary of the Caucasus before the advance of other races. In the 13th century the kingdom of Georgia rose to great power, and became an Empire extending from the main Caucasus range far into the Armenian plateau. It was the policy of Tamara, the famous Queen of Georgia, to create a chain of allied Christian States along the southern shores of the Black Sea, and thus to link up Georgia with the Byzantine Empire, and bar the advance of the Moslems. For a time her policy was partly successful. The family of the Comneni, who ruled the Greek state of Trebizond, was established by her efforts, while she herself appointed a Georgian Viceroy to rule over Lazistan. But the dream of a chain of Christian States

[1] See Map.

nnecting with Constantinople was never realized, for the 14th century the Seljuk Turks broke through the Black Sea, and occupied the coast where Sinope id Samsun now stand. From that day onward the azis have fallen more and more under Turkish influence id custom; they have adopted Islam, and over the eater part of Lazistan have become completely Turkified. lso a considerable number of purely Turkish people have igrated thither in the last three hundred years. But in ie remoter valleys there are still to be seen many Lazis, ho speak an Imeretian dialect of Georgian, and are fully ware of their Georgian origin. The figures of the popu-tion of Lazistan are incomplete. The Turkish Govern-ent before the war made a census of the Trebizond layet, but they made no attempt to separate the Lazis om the Turks, regarding them all as Moslems. In the asin of the Middle Chorokh, in the Kaimakamliks of kdem and Kishkim, they gave a population of 60,000. urther South in the Tortum region, where I travelled the Summer, I could find no traces of Lazis. On ie Black Sea coast the Lazis are found up to a point etween Kop and Rize, and according to the Turkish ensus there are 50,000 of them in this district.

When the country was occupied by the Russians in the te Winter of 1916, there was an indescribable state of nfusion. The Turks retreating from Erzerum tried to rce the inhabitants to come away with them. All the en between twenty and forty had already been taken for ie Turkish army. Those that remained hid in the moun-ins for a time, and then returned to their homes during ie course of the Summer. They found that their little rms and dwelling-places had been destroyed, especially

in those places through which the Turks had retreated or the Cossacks had passed. But much more serious for them was the fact that the harvest for the year had been lost, and all their cattle and live-stock had been driven away by the Turkish army. Of the population of the Middle Chorokh in the regions of Melo, Okdem and Kishkim, which before the war had numbered 60,000, only 20,000 now remained. The rest had either been pressed into the Turkish army, or had died of hunger and fever during the Winter. These remnants, to 10,000 of whom in the Melo region I distributed food and clothing, were during the remaining months of 1916 trying to re-establish their ruined homes and husbandry. In normal times they live by cultivating grapes, olives, apples and plums, which they dry and take down the Chorokh in boats to Artvin and Batum, and there exchange for maize, which they carry home on their backs across the mountains. Since the war came into their country, the vineyards and orchards on the slopes of the rocky valleys have not been irrigated or tended, and consequently the people had to go for eighteen months without their harvest of dried fruits to exchange for maize.

After my arrival at Batum I arranged to send half the maize in transport-wagons up the road along the Chorokh defile to Morgul and Artvin. From there it was necessary to find other means of sending it further. On November 17th I left Batum with Dr. Sultanof, and drove to Morgul, where the Caucasus Copper Company have their mines and smelting works. The road turned off from the Chorokh valley at Borchkha, and went up a narrow valley, the sides of which were covered with scrubby forest, as far as the copper mine, where it stopped. Beyond rose the

great snow range of Kvahid and Magara. It was impossible to go further with any wheeled vehicle, and of mule or donkey transport there was none, since the whole of this part of Adjaria was now absolutely uninhabited. It was difficult to know what to do, for the villages of the Kevak region, where we wanted to distribute the maize, lay across the frowning ranges ahead of us. The Winter was coming on fast; a bitter wind was blowing; the snow was beginning to fall in downy flakes, and the passes ahead lay at the height of 9,000 feet, and were only fit for foot-travelling in Summer. In the deserted village near the copper mine we found about 300 old men and boys with some women. They had crossed the mountains from the Kevak villages, on hearing that we were coming with maize to Morgul. "We have brought food for you", said Dr. Sultanof to them; "but how shall we get it to your homes?" "Do not fear, effendi", said an old Turk; "we will carry it on our backs." And they meant it too. During the next day we apportioned its share to each village, and then, to our astonishment, these old men and women and boys tied sacks containing three and even four pouds (90 to 120 pounds) of maize on their backs, and proceeded to walk with this terrific weight in the direction of the 9,000 feet pass. They disappeared in a mist of snow and sleet, toiling steadily up the gorges of Morgul Chai. And they accomplished the feat and reached their homes, as we heard afterwards. The people of this mountainous country, where horses and even mules can hardly go, are used to becoming beasts of burden themselves, and scaling tremendous heights with huge weights on their backs. So our difficulty was solved, as far as the Kevak region was concerned.

On November 19th we left for Artvin in a carriage, driving along the defiles of the Chorokh by a road which zigzagged up the most precipitous slopes. We found the whole of the region of lower Adjaria deserted. Not a living soul was to be seen. Before the war it was inhabited by the Adjars, a Georgian race who are Mahommedans, and in every way just like the Lazis. They became Russian subjects when this country was annexed to the Caucasus after the war of 1877. At the beginning of this war Enver Pasha included an expedition for the recapture of Adjaria in his plan for invading the Caucasus. This part of his plan was somewhat more successful than the other part for the invasion of the Kars plateau. He not only occupied the whole of the basin watered by the Chorokh and its tributaries, but approached and for a time practically surrounded the fortress of Batum. His troops remained in Adjaria for three and a half months, thus driving a great wedge into the Russian lines along the Caucasus, and occupying a large strip of Russian territory. The invasion commenced in December 1914, when Halid Bey with a battalion of good Constantinople troops and about 1,500 *Chettahs* (local volunteers), advanced from Kop on the Black Sea coast, occupied the copper mine, and pushed on to Artvin, while the Russians retired on Batum. A Georgian officer in charge of the Russian frontier guards, who was in the confidence of the natives, told me that the Adjars came to him weeks before and warned him that the Turks were coming. They implored him to let them go to Batum and save their wives and families, for some of them had been across the mountains into Turkish territory, and had seen the preparations

he Turks were making. The Georgian officer reported his to his general at Batum, but was given the reply that verything was all right, that the Turks could be resisted f they came, and that the natives were not to be allowed o leave. No preparations, however, were made, no guns vere sent up the Chorokh defiles, and the natives became nore and more uneasy, fearing for their families and homes. Suddenly on December 18th Halid Bey's forces appeared n the heights above the Mergul copper mines. The news pread like wild-fire: the general at Batum ordered a peedy retreat, and there was a general *sauve qui peut*. But the majority of the native Adjars, after being treated n this fashion, felt under no obligation to leave, and so emained behind, feeling that the Russian authorities ad no further interest in them. For over three months hey lived in their homes under Turkish control. In April f 1915 the Russian Caucasus army began to recover and o reorganize. General Liakhoff, with a considerable orce, was sent to retake Adjaria, and commenced his dvance up the Chorokh from Batum. The Turks eing too heavily engaged with the British and French n Gallipoli to send any reinforcements, Halid Bey vas compelled to retire gradually from Adjaria before he Russians. This is another instance of the indirect alue of the Gallipoli expedition from a strategical point f view, when all the Asiatic fronts are taken into con-ideration. But on the return of the Russians some sad vents took place. General Liakhoff, who had acquired ame during the Persian revolution by ordering his Cossacks o fire on the Persian Majlis, and by generally bolstering p the corrupt and abominable government of Mahommed li Shah, was now transferring his activities to Adjaria

and Lazistan. He accused the Moslem natives of treachery, and sent his Cossacks from Batum with orders to kill every native at sight, and burn every village and every mosque. And very efficiently had they performed their task, for as we passed up the Chorokh valley to Artvin not a single habitable dwelling or a single living creature did we see. Yet it was clear that there had been a large population here at one time, judging from the mass of ruined villages and the wide areas of orchards, fields and gardens, all now run wild. According to the Russian official statistics for the Batum government, there were 52,000 Adjars in the Artvin district, but when we passed through it only 7,000 remained, clustering round the Morgul copper mines and Artvin. General Liakhoff could not have been unaware that the Adjars had entreated the general commanding at Batum to be allowed to leave their homes, when they knew the Turks were coming. But, as he told a friend of mine in Tiflis, who told me, "The order came from above". This is just what the Turkish Governor of Adana said after the Armenian massacre in that place in 1908. The whole affair, however, was not creditable to the late Prince Vorontsoff Dashkoff, the Russian Viceroy, and to his chief advisers.

We reached Artvin on the evening of November 19th. The town is remarkably situated on an almost precipitous slope rising from the shores of the Chorokh river for over 1,000 feet. The little zigzagging lanes are cut into the mountain sides, and the wooden houses and patches of orchard are scooped out in level spots all the way up. Above rises an immense slope of rock and forest for another 3,000 feet, leading to the pass

which divides Adjaria from Lazistan. We toiled up the slope to the top, where we reached the fine stone house of the Russian chief of the district, Captain Zacerovitch, who received us with typical Russian cordiality, and invited us to stay with him as long as we liked. He was a great sportsman, and dangled before us all sorts of hunting and shooting expeditions after bears and wolves, in which the mountains abound. From the dining-room in his house we had a magnificent view of Mount Karchkhal, a peak 11,248 feet high, which rose like a giant out of the confused jumble of rocky valleys and jagged ridges that we saw all round us. The town of Artvin itself contains one modern mosque, and the ruins of the residence of the former Mahommedan governor of Adjaria in the days of the Turkish dominion. Here Arslan Bey, of the old Georgian Mahommedan family, used to rule in the name of the Sultan, and the remains of his sumptuous halls, with gardens, fountains, cypress-groves and latticed harems, are still to be seen in an open space near the banks of the Chorokh. But the town of Artvin is chiefly inhabited by Armenians, 9,000 in all, who have an interesting history. They are nearly all Roman Catholics; and according to one of the priests with whom I talked, their forbears came from the Mush and Van region a hundred and fifty years ago, and settled here for the purpose of carrying on trade between the coast and the Armenian plateau along the line of the Chorokh river. There was evidently an old trade route leading up from the Black Sea near Batum, and following the Chorokh past Artvin into the Kars plateau. Enterprising Armenians came down this route, and opened up trade between the Adjars, Lazis and Greeks on the sea coast and the Armenians on the

high plateau. But the religious persecution to which they were subjected by the Turks made their lives a burden, so that a large number of them decided to become Roman Catholics; and missionaries, who had been allowed by the kings of Georgia to work among their own subjects, were invited into Adjaria. It seems that the Turks did not persecute the Roman Catholics to the same extent as they did the Orthodox and Gregorian Christians, whom they feared as having some political influence. Especially during the Napoleonic wars, when Turkey was for a time allied with France against Russia and England, the safest plan for a Christian in these parts of Turkey was to become a Roman Catholic, and so escape suspicion of having any sympathy with Orthodox Russia or with her Gregorian sympathizers. During the Turkish invasion of the Caucasus at the beginning of this war, the Turks themselves, according to Armenian accounts, behaved well. On their arrival at Artvin they appointed an Armenian Catholic to be mayor. But with the Turks came a number of Lazi volunteers, who plundered and pillaged the Armenians, and at Ardanutch, a little distance up the Chorokh, massacred some hundreds. These so-called Lazi volunteers, according to the account of an old Turk who was in Artvin all this time, were not Lazis at all. At the commencement of the war the Turkish Committee of Union and Progress sent some of their hired scoundrels, together with two Germans, who before the war had lived in Batum, to Trebizond, for the purpose of inducing the Lazis and Adjars to form volunteer bands and invade the Caucasus. They hoped to get the Adjars to rebel against their Russian overlords. Their propaganda however met with no success,

because the simple peasants and mountaineers wanted nothing better than to be left alone. So the Turkish Governor of Trebizond had a bright idea. He opened the gaols and let all the inmates out, promising each person a *medjidieh* a day with food, a rifle, unlimited bullets and unlimited loot, when they arrived in the Caucasus. A number of hangers-on, who loiter round every Turkish bazaar town, joined them, and so was formed the famous Lazi Volunteer Corps.

In Artvin I found the 4,000 pouds of maize that had been sent on from Batum, together with the 300 packages of warm clothing. My next task was to get the transport to take them across the mountains into the Melo region of Lazistan, where I was going to distribute them. After some days we succeeded in getting mules and loading them up, and on November 24th set out with a long caravan winding along the little bridle tracks that lead from Artvin up the mountain sides towards the old Russo-Turkish frontier. We mounted slowly through scrubby forests and belts of fir. The range of our vision widened continually. We saw to the North the towering crags of Karchkhal, and the deep valleys of Imerhevi, Shafsheti and Upper Adjaria. In a long grey ridge, with conical mountains standing out boldly on the sky-line, we recognized the Kars plateau. But far away to the North, beyond the rolling wooded ridges of Adjaria, I saw a thin pale streak of white faintly penetrating the haze of distance. I thought at first it was imagination, but I looked again and recognized the main range of the Caucasus. There was mighty Elbruz, and the gigantic fields of snow and ice that divide Georgia from the Cossack steppes and Southern Russia; and there below was the

faint blue of the Euxine. A little further on we reached the summit of the pass. The pine forest opened, and I saw in front of me a no less marvellous scene. The whole of central Lazistan lay before me. From the pass where I stood at the height of 9,000 feet, the ground fell away almost like a precipice into a gigantic abyss, the bottom of which I could not see. Rising out beyond it as precipitously, was another ridge with boulder-skrees and forested crags. Beyond this lay another trough, dark and purple in the distance, and beyond this yet others. Tier upon tier of mountains rose majestically before me as far as the eye could reach. I was looking into the heart of the great Pontic chain, through which the Chorokh river bursts in a series of gorges as magnificent as can be seen anywhere in the world. This country, unknown, unmapped, almost unexplored, has been crossed by only one modern traveller, the Georgian Prince Kazbek, about seventy years ago. And yet here is boundless interest for the geologist and geographer; untouched mineral wealth, and great archæological treasures. It is one of the few places left in the world, where systematic exploration has never yet been undertaken.

We began the descent into the abyss that lay below us. The tiny tracks were often no more than three feet wide, and nothing lay between us and a sheer drop of two thousand feet down the precipices into the raging torrents of the Chorokh. I got off my mule and led it carefully. But what was to become of the caravan with the maize and warm clothing? Each mule had a great pack on each side of him, and as he came up to a projecting ledge of rock, his pack on one side might barge up against it, upset him, and send him hurtling to destruc-

tion. In such places we had to unload the mules and drag the packs round the dangerous corners ourselves Our progress was slow and tedious. We zigzagged down and down, and it seemed as if we should never get to the bottom. At last we saw far down below us an open space of green, where a gash in the mountain-side had formed a great skree of soil and detritus. We could see orchards of apple and olive, through which peeped little wooden houses. This was Melo, a typical village of Lazistan. We reached the valley bottom, crossed a torrential stream and wound along a little path towards the village. We were met by a party of natives, who had heard of our coming and were waiting for us. But what a terrible sight they presented! Their faces were thin and pale; they looked like ghosts and skeletons, and their clothes were simply rags. When Halid Bey's battalions had left Adjaria, they had come along some of these mountain tracks, and carried off all they could lay their hands on. Later a Russian column came, and finished off what the Turks had left. Such was the story they told us. We then saw a Russian officer coming out from the village to meet us, and we found that he was the administrator left here by the column that had passed. He was the only official in this vast isolated region. "Thank heavens, you have come", he said to us. "I have not seen a European for six months. Here I am, exiled without telephone, telegraph, post or paper. It is worse than being in Siberia. I have been here all this time", he added; "but I have not visited half the region that I am supposed to look after, because I can't get about over its impassable valleys. I know where the region under my charge begins, but I don't know

where it ends." And so saying he pointed to tiers upon tiers of snowy ranges rising beyond each other as far as the eye could reach. He took us to his little wooden house, while the emaciated and starving people crowded round outside. Our mule caravan was unloaded, and the packs put in a large store, ready for the morrow.

In the village of Melo before the war there were 2,000 inhabitants; now there were only 700. For every man, there were at least eight women. We found that they were mostly Osmanli Turks, probably descendants of settlers from Asia. There were also some who called themselves Gurji. They spoke Georgian as well as Turkish, but in other respects they dressed and lived just like Turks. They were Lazis in fact, in an advanced state of Turkification.

Next day we began to distribute the clothing to the children. We found an immense number of orphans. The old Mullah of the village had no less than fourteen under his care alone. We suggested that we should take these orphans back with us to Batum, and put them in an orphanage; but the men and women would not hear of this. Just as a wild animal clings to its native haunts even after its lair is burnt out, so these Turk and Lazi natives preferred to live crowded and in want, rather than be relieved of these orphan children. On no account would they let them go to the towns, for they feared the corrupting influences of so-called civilization, which is all the more pernicious in war-time. Moreover, the Koran tells them that if they bring up an orphan in their family, they will be rewarded in paradise. Thus their anxiety to do the bidding of their prophet is strik-

ingly and pathetically evident. We spent the whole of the day in distributing 300 packets of clothing to the orphans, and doling out rations of maize to the women. Those that got portions went away happy and glad, guaranteed against the winter's cold, but when our supply gave out we had gently to turn the rest away. It was the most tragic moment in the whole journey; but nothing could be done; and one could only promise to send up another consignment as soon as possible.

The day after we had finished the distribution, the Russian officer proposed to me to go on a short journey further into the interior to see something of this extraordinary country. It was impossible to ride, so we left our horses behind and walked on foot to the South, winding up and down the ridges by tiny paths. Towards midday we reached a lovely little village called Chelchim, tucked away under some frowning cliffs, and protected from every wind, a perfect sun-bath, facing the South. Here were hundreds of little terraces, which diligent workers had built up against the rocks, and many little irrigation canals for bringing water from the torrent that rushes down the valley. The houses were built of wood on trestles, with stones on the roofs to prevent the wind from blowing off the boards. The vineyards and orchards had a desolate appearance. They had not been irrigated for a whole year since the inhabitants fled away. They were all wild and unpruned, and the last year's fruit lay rotting on the ground. The inhabitants had not long returned, and looked at us with half-scared faces. A fine old man then came out to see us. He was a Lazi patriarch, dressed in a short tunic, with Caucasian braids and cartridge-pouches, tight leg-

gings of black cloth, and a *bashlik* tied round his head. His large clear eyes of a wonderful orange hue, his oval face and aquiline nose, showed at once that he was a descendant of the true Kartvellian or Georgian stock. He took us into his wooden house, and insisted on giving us all the hospitality he could offer. We knew that the people here were half starving, and wished to refuse; but he compelled us to eat his little cakes of coarse maize, and we knew that it is an insult in the East to refuse a host's proffered hospitality. The women of this Lazi village were tall and dark, and extraordinarily beautiful with the typical beauty of the East. They went about unveiled; though I believe that nearer the coast they veil strictly. These Lazis were very fond of guns, and almost the first thing they asked us was whether we could sell them a rifle. According to my Russian companion, they have constant feuds, and are always killing each other on account of women and love affairs. The Turks of the neighbouring villages look down on them, and say that they are a disorderly and lazy lot. The disorder however is never carried so far as to disturb or rob neighbours, and only extends to these private blood-feuds among themselves.

We stayed the night here, and next day went on to another village of Lazis called Kheviskiar. Here we made a remarkable discovery. We found some Greeks practising Christian rites in an underground room. There was no apparent reason for hiding the fact that they were Christians. It must have been known to the Moslem villagers, and probably to the Turkish authorities, when they were in charge of the country. And yet in the cellar under a wooden house, where these Greeks

told us that they held their services, we saw a little table with a white cloth upon it and a wooden cross. Apparently they had always been accustomed to hold them there, and had not troubled to build a church; but the custom dates back to the time when such secrecy was necessary to escape persecution by the Turks. In recent years religious persecution has practically ceased in Turkey, and its place has been taken by political persecution of subject races. But why were these Greeks here, so far from the sea coast? They certainly were Greeks, for they dressed in European trousers and jackets, and the women wore white kerchiefs on their heads; they spoke Greek, and there was a young priest, who had come from Trebizond. They themselves told me that Greeks had been there from time immemorial; and one can only conjecture that they penetrated centuries ago into this remote part of Lazistan from the coast, and settled there for the purpose of trading with the natives. We also heard of, but did not see, Armenian Catholics, who live in a village called Katejar, further up the Chorokh. They too are probably descendants of Christian immigrants, who came in times past to open up trade.

On November the 28th we returned to Melo on foot, and the next day I made my way back to Artvin. I remained there a week longer to arrange about sending up further consignments for the starving people, and then returned to Batum. Thus in the course of the summer and early winter of 1916 I had completed my travels over the northern section of the Caucasus front. These last two journeys, in Lazistan and Adjari, were particularly interesting, because in relief-work I was able to come into closer contact with the natives of these

little-known countries. It also gave me an insight into the character of the war, and the appalling havoc and cruelty that it inflicts upon innocent civil populations. More than that, I now see clearly that the guilt of war-atrocities upon civil populations cannot be put down to any one combatant. The whole of war is an atrocity, and wherever it comes, hunger, disease, massacres and burnings come in its train. One side with threats forces the civil population into a course of action, and then the other side comes in and accuses them of treachery. A massacre follows with all its attendant horrors. This is the history of the war on the Caucasus front, as far as it concerns the civil population; and no doubt the same has occurred everywhere. The more one looks dispassionately at the facts, and collects the stories told by sufferers of all races and creeds on the spot, as I have done in the course of eighteen months, the more it becomes clear that it is impossible to charge any one government with the crime. The only just method of settlement in the future is to set up an international commission to restore, as far as this is possible, the ruined homes and husbandry of these innocent people, the victims of Russian and Turkish imperialist greed, and of the cynical intrigues of Western Powers. The funds that go for this work might be supplied either from a common fund of all the Powers, or by those Powers whose territories adjoin the devastated regions.

# PART III

# POLITICAL

## CHAPTER VIII

## THE ARMENIAN QUESTION AND ITS SETTLEMENT

EVER since the industrial revolution of the West began, the imperialism of the European Powers, working along economic channels, has produced a competition for the undeveloped countries of the earth, of which Armenia is one. Lying on the marches of two Imperial Powers, she has been the victim of their ambition to control her future and exploit her wealth. The expansion of Russia into the Caucasus at the beginning of the 19th century brought that country into direct contact with the Armenian people, and made it to some degree responsible for their fate. The concession for the Bagdad railway at the end of the century brought the Central Powers of Europe also to the borders of Armenia, and laid a similar responsibility on them too. How these two Empires have lived up to their responsibilities I shall now endeavour to show.

The political and economic expansion of Russia and Germany in the Middle East was the direct result of the decay of the Ottoman Empire; and the steady decline of Turkey's political independence is the principal factor in the Eastern Question. The fundamental weakness of Turkey was nowhere more clearly seen than in the

Armenian vilayets. Here there were three main racial and political elements: a large Christian population, commercial and agricultural; the tribal organization of Khurdish nomads; and, lastly, the Turkish official class, which ever since the abolition of the Janissaries has become increasingly effete and incompetent, through lack of fresh blood from below.

The industrial revolution of the 19th century, and the steady expansion of its economic influence to the undeveloped parts of the earth, tended to widen the gap between the nomad and the settled populations of the Armenian highlands. The Armenian has become more and more attached to the soil as a cultivator, and the Armenian trader more and more involved in the European economic network. The Turkish official class, on the other hand, owing to its political and social privileges as a ruling race, has remained stationary and sunk in apathy, while the nomad Khurdish tribes have been left in a state of feudalism and serfdom under their semi-independent chiefs. Thus the official class was incapable of commanding the respect or confidence of these other elements; and that alone is enough to account for the state of chaos and disorder that has been chronic in these regions during the last thirty years.

It would be untrue, however, to say that the Ottoman Turks were uninfluenced by the movements of Western Europe. The attempt to throw off absolutism in Russia in 1906 awakened similar ideas among the more intelligent section of the Turkish educated classes. But owing to the disunited and chaotic state of the eastern parts of the Empire, the Turkish reform movement quickly acquired a purely nationalist aspect, and the leaders,

concentrating upon the only real problem, as the first step, have aimed at reforming the political status of the Empire by uniting the various elements of the population. It seems, however, that there were in the ranks of the Young Turk party from 1908 onward two schools of ideas, which, though in agreement on fundamentals, were in disagreement as to the methods by which the principle of national unity should be realized. Thus the group in the Committee of Union and Progress led by Ahmed Rize Bey inclined for a time more to the liberal "Ikhtilaf" party, of which Sherif Pasha and Prince Sabah-ed-din were the leaders. They were inspired more by French ideas, and held that the absorption of the non-Turkish races of the Empire could be effected on democratic lines, and by the general trend of economic forces. The right wing of the Committee, however, led by Enver Pasha, bore the stamp of Prussianism, and held that unification could only be effected by vigorous administrative action, and by the centralization of power in the hands of a military bureaucracy. The struggle between these two groups continued right up to the outbreak of the European war, when the militarist group succeeded in gaining the day.

To the influence of the first group, and of that of the more enlightened Progressives among the Balkan Slavs, may be attributed the autonomous reform scheme for Macedonia and Albania, which was set on foot just before the Balkan wars, and also the plan to create a Balkan confederacy with Turkey as a partner, to act as a barrier against Austrian expansion eastward and Russian expansion southward. M. Charikoff, the Russian ambassador at Constantinople in the year before the Balkan war,

is believed to have worked in the direction of this solution. There certainly was a body of opinion in Russia at this time which favoured a peaceful solution of the Balkan question, and the settlement of the problem of the Straits by mutual concession. The failure of the original idea of the Balkan alliance was due to the two Powers against whose interference in Balkan affairs it was aimed. The economic influences that backed these Powers, and partly no doubt inspired them, were to be seen in the Austrian project for a railway concession through the Sanjak of Novibazar to Salonika, and in the competing Russian project of the Danube-Adriatic railway. This latter project is said to have been agreed upon in principle by the Balkan States in 1912. Other influences, however, worked against this Balkan settlement. During the early years of the Viceroyalty of Prince Vorontsoff Dashkoff, the Russian authorities in the Caucasus were particularly nervous about raising the question of Macedonian autonomy, fearing that it would become a precedent which might be applied to Turkish Armenia and the Trans-Caucasus. The interference of the Viceroy of the Caucasus at Petrograd undoubtedly effected the withdrawal of M. Charikoff, and helped to alter the trend of Russian policy at Constantinople.

After the Balkan war Turkey was left greatly weakened, and it was now possible for the party in Russia which had opposed autonomy for Macedonia twelve months before, to propose it for Armenia now, knowing that this step would accelerate the process of disintegration, and help Russia to gain control of the marches of the Ottoman Empire, thus bringing her nearer to the Straits and Constantinople. Accordingly the reform scheme pro-

posed by Russia at the end of 1912 aimed at establishing a limited form of autonomy in the six Armenian vilayets, which would have the effect of weakening the control of Constantinople over these regions. The intervention of Germany at this moment to limit the principle of autonomy and bolster up the Constantinople regime in Armenia was, like that of Russia, inspired by desire of territorial privileges and ultimate gains, and had no sort of altruistic concern for the welfare of the inhabitants of these regions. The policy therefore both of Russia and Germany greatly strengthened the group among the Young Turks, that wished to solve the racial question in Armenia by applying the principle of " blood and iron ". It was then that they decided to put into practice Dr. Rohrbach's plan for colonizing the frontier districts of Asia Minor with Moslems from Macedonia, and bringing about a removal to Mesopotamia of the Christians and the non-assimilable racial elements. The Armenian reform negotiations for 1913-14 undoubtedly strengthened Enver Pasha's group, and weakened the liberal elements in Constantinople which hoped for a gradual and natural reconciliation between the Christians and Moslems, the nomads and the peasants in the Asiatic vilayets. This process of reconciliation seems to have made considerable progress among the native populations of these regions in the months before the war, in spite of all that European diplomacy had been doing.

The Khurdish population of the Van and Bitlis vilayets is divided into two distinct social castes: the military landowning Asshirets and the unarmed peasant Rayats. The Armenians inhabiting the more fertile plains, round the lake, are independent cultivators of the soil living

in peasant communities. Some of them also live in the northern foothills of the Taurus, and have come under the power of the Khurdish Asshiret chiefs. For years past these chiefs have tyrannized over both Armenian and Khurdish Rayat alike, between whom a tacit understanding to defend themselves against the common enemy had begun to grow up. The Ottoman revolution in 1908 sent eddying currents as far as the highlands of Khurdistan and Armenia. The words "liberty, equality, fraternity" began to be whispered in the taverns of the Armenian revolutionaries and in the tents of the Khurds. An agreement was arrived at between the Armenian Dashnakists and the Khurdish party in the Turkish Parliament to support the Turkish Government, so long as it remained true to its ideals. There even began to spring up a mutual understanding between some of the Asshiret chiefs and the Armenians. The economic tie between the Khurds as stock-raisers and the Armenians as agriculturists and traders was becoming stronger, and in the Van region several Khurdish chiefs even sent their children to Armenian schools, and became interested in Armenian commercial enterprises. Thus the process of reconciliation between Khurd and Armenian was developing when the European Powers began to whisper about Macedonian and Armenian reform schemes. The idea got about that they were going to divide up Turkey in the interest of one or other of the subject races. The effect in Armenia was instantaneous. At once the delicate plant of brotherhood began to wither and die before the rays of the sun of nationalism. The Khurds seem to have been the first to break with the Porte. Collisions between Ottoman troops and Khurdish Asshirets

occurred in the Bitlis vilayet and in Bohtan from 1912 onward. As late as the summer of 1914 there was a big rebellion of the Bedr-khan tribe of Bohtan, which ended in the hanging of several of the chiefs by the Turks. Meanwhile the Armenians seem to have kept in with the Porte, and to have avoided a breach till much later. But the interference of the Powers apparently convinced the Porte that they were determined to prevent the union of the Ottoman people, and to dismember the Empire. The result was to strengthen still further the party of Prussianism at Constantinople, and to weaken the moderate elements of Young Turkey. The years 1913-14 saw the commencement of the trade boycott against the Greeks, and the attempt to spread fanaticism among the Khurds by secret propaganda. It was hoped thereby to drive the wedge in between Armenian agriculturists and Khurdish nomads, and so, by provocation, to prepare for the forcible transportation of the Christians to Mesopotamia. Thus the hopes of peace and brotherhood between the natives of Armenia were dashed; the fire of nationalism was lighted, and the European Powers who had helped to light it were growling at each other over the sharing of the future spoils. Thus all the groundwork was prepared for the Armenian massacre of 1915.

At the outbreak of the European war the Committee of Union and Progress became all-powerful, and all reform schemes and reconciliation plans fell to the ground. The Armenian party, "Dashnaktsution", happened to be holding a conference at Erzerum when the war began. Turkey had not yet entered; but at the beginning of August Hilmi Bey, Behadin Shekir Bey, and Nedji Bey were delegated by the Committee to make

certain proposals to the Armenians in the event of war with Russia. These delegates arrived at Erzerum at the end of the month, and their first proposal was that the Armenians should observe complete neutrality, the population of Armenia and the Trans-Caucasus doing its military duty, to whatever Empire it owed allegiance. This the Armenians accepted, and all seemed to point to an agreement. But a few days later the Turks suddenly made another proposal. Turkey, they said, could never be secure until there was a chain of buffer States between her and her arch-enemy, Russia, and they claimed that, if war broke out, the Armenians should assist them in carrying out their plan. They then produced a map of the Middle East in which the following political divisions were made. Russia was to be pushed back to the Cossack steppes beyond the main range of the Caucasus. Tiflis and the Black Sea coast, with Batum and Kutais, were marked as belonging to an autonomous province of Georgia. The central part of the Trans-Caucasus, with Kars, Alexandropol and Erivan, were to be joined to the vilayets of Van, Bitlis, and East Erzerum, as an autonomous Armenia. Eastern Trans-Caucasia, including Baku, Elizabetopol and Dagestan were to become an autonomous province of Shiite Tartars. The Armenians, feeling the impossibility of the Ottoman Empire ever being able to realize such a grandiose scheme, and knowing that, should they fail, the Turks had up their sleeves Rohrbach's plan to transplant all the Christians to Mesopotamia, refused to have anything to do with the proposal. So the Young Turk delegates, unable to make any impression in Erzerum, proceeded to Van, where they met with no greater success.

According to statements made to me during 1915 by prominent Van Armenians, it is clear that the action of the Tiflis Dashnakists, about which the Committee of Union and Progress had doubtless been informed by the end of August, was the principal cause of these Turkish demands. Early in August 1914 the Tiflis Armenians seem to have decided that a Russo-Turkish war was inevitable, and thereupon the Dashnakist leaders there at once offered 25,000 volunteers to assist the Russians in conquering the Armenian vilayets. This offer was made *before* the outbreak of the war with Turkey, and in the interval the volunteers were busy training and forming at the various centres in the Caucasus. At the end of October, when Turkey came into the war, preparations had been so far advanced that Andranik, the famous revolutionary leader from Turkey, at the head of the first volunteer battalion, took part with the Russians in the advance through North-west Persia, capturing Serai early in November. Meanwhile five more battalions had been formed and were ready to leave for the front, as soon as they could get rifles and equipment. Fifty per cent. of these volunteers were Armenians who had left Turkey, Bulgaria and Roumania since the outbreak of the European war, and had come to the Caucasus to offer their services.

There can be little doubt that this volunteer movement, started under the auspices of the Caucasus Armenians, was the cause of the Young Turk demands on the Armenians of Erzerum, Van and Bitlis for a similar volunteer movement against Russia, and of the subsequent persecution when this demand was refused. Pro-

minent Armenians, whom I met in Van, told me how the attitude of Djevdet Pasha towards them and their people became much more unfriendly as soon as the news arrived that Armenian volunteers were on the front fighting against the Turks. He at once demanded the return of a number of Armenian deserters, whose absence had hitherto been winked at. He accused them of going over to the volunteers with the Russians, and commenced the policy of forcing the Armenians into special labour battalions, where they had very hard work and bad food. Thus the Van Armenians were at the mercy of the Turks, who avenged on them all the rash acts of their kinsmen in the Caucasus. That their conduct was keenly resented by the Turkish Armenian refugees in the Caucasus, was made clear by some articles in the *Van Tosp*, the organ of the Van Armenians in Tiflis early in 1916. In its issue for January 9th, 1916, Professor Minassian took the Dashnaktsution party to task for having entered into negociations with the Russian authorities without consulting its kindred societies in Turkish Armenia. It had spread, he said, baseless rumours of a Russian promise of autonomy for Armenia, and then had proceeded to organize volunteer battalions, regardless of the effect that this would have on their kinsmen in Turkey, whose position under the nose of the Turks was very precarious and required tactful handling. He denied that there was any serious negociation with the Russian Government about Armenian autonomy, and said that the Dashnaktsution leaders of the Caucasus were pretending to represent responsible opinion, whereas they really only represented a group. The *Orizon*, the organ of the Dashnaktsution

in Tiflis, defended itself by saying that the massacre would have happened in any case, and that Prince Vorontsoff Dashkoff had not only verbally promised Armenian autonomy in return for the service of the volunteers, but had actually signed a document to this effect. Whether this document ever existed is however exceedingly doubtful. This political split between the Russian and Turkish Armenians is nothing new. Being constantly in touch with Khurds and Turks, the Van and Bitlis Armenians have understood better how to deal with them, and have more than once developed a policy of their own. In 1883 the first split took place, when the Armenaganz party with moderate tendencies was started in Van in opposition to the socialist leanings of the Dashnaktsution. From this again there broke away some years later the Hunchakanz, also inspired from Van. Its policy was socialistic, like that of the Dashnaktsution, but it kept aloof from them, feeling that the Van Armenians required a special group to represent their interests. By the Spring of 1915 all the groundwork was prepared for the Armenian massacres. Three factors seem mainly to have contributed: the rise of Enver Pasha's party at Constantinople, the dissensions among the Armenians, and the time-honoured policy of "Divide et impera" at Tiflis.

The deportations which began on June 26th, 1915, and the abominable massacres that followed have been so fully described in the official British Blue-book that I will not weary the reader with the tale of horror. I will only remark that it is another example of what happens to a small nationality sandwiched in between two Empires at war, of which we see other examples

in the Adjars, Lazis, Khurds and Assyrians. Indeed, the losses of these peoples through massacre and disease, as far as they can be accurately computed, are roughly in proportion. Of the 1,800,000 Armenian inhabitants of the six vilayets, according to reports from Turkey, only 800,000 remain. Of the 900,000 Khurds inhabiting the vilayets of Van, Bitlis, Erzerum and Kharput, according to information received by the Russian military authorities and published by the *Kavkaskoye Slovo* at Tiflis, November 1916, only 250,000 are now left. The Assyrian Christians have been reduced from 79,000 to 30,000 during their retreat in the summer of 1915 from their highland homes to Persia. For the Lazis and Adjars I give figures in Chapters VI and VII.

With regard to the restoration of Armenia after the war, it is probable that what still remains of its three races could speedily repopulate the land, in view of the healthy climate and prolific nature of the people. The disaster that has befallen them is probably no greater than that which took place during the invasion from Asia in the middle ages. At present however the bulk of the Khurds are with the Turks, about 200,000 of the Armenians are with the Russians in the Caucasus, and 30,000 Assyrians are in Persia.

It is not easy to predict what proportion of these refugees will return to their homes after the war. During the three Russo-Turkish wars of the last century there was a similar influx of Christians from Armenia into the Caucasus, and of Moslems (Turks, Khurds, and Cherkess) from the Caucasus into Asia Minor. In 1829, 120,000 Armenians migrated into the Erivan and Akhal-

kalak regions. In 1854, 24,000 came into the Erivan government, and in 1877, 21,000 into the Erivan and Kars governments. In 1895, 35,000 Armenians migrated to these regions, and between the wars and massacres a good deal of northward migration went on. In fact, during the 19th century the Armenian population of the Caucasus increased from one million to 1,600,000. Also during the last fifty years 30,000 Cherkess left Dagestan for Asia Minor, and an unknown number of Khurds migrated from the Erivan and Kars governments to the Van and Bitlis vilayets. Exactly the same process is taking place to-day. One hundred and eighty thousand Armenians from Van and the east part of the Erzerum vilayet have gone to the Caucasus. All the Asshiret Khurds to the South and East of Lake Van have fled into the interior of Asia Minor. Thus each Russo-Turkish war has been accompanied by a reshuffling of the population of the Armenian plateau, a portion of the Christians flying to Russia, and a portion of the Moslems to Turkey. On peace returning, some go back to their old homes, and some stay in the place to which they have fled.

In considering the prospects of settlement in the Van and Bitlis vilayets, we can assume that all that remains of the Armenian population will return. But the question of the large Khurdish population which has fled to Asia Minor is a more difficult one. The population figures of the Armenian vilayets are the playthings of the political propagandist, and it is not difficult to see interested motives in those published by the Turkish Government on the one hand and by the Armenian Catholicos on the other. The figures of Mr. Lynch, probably accurate for twenty years ago, are not sufficiently up to date in a

country where the population is in a continuous state of movement. M. Mayefsky, for many years the Russian Consul in Trebizond, has compiled tables during his travels through Armenia, which are probably accurate for the northern parts of Armenia. Also the Armenian writer, Ado, has compiled figures for the population of the more southern districts. Coming from these sources, one neutral in respect to Armeno-Khurdish affairs, and the other purely academic, these figures, if put together, are probably as near to actual fact as it is possible to obtain. One point in their favour is that they are attacked by both Moslems and Armenians as unfair to their national aspirations. The figures are as follows: in the Van vilayet 112,000 Armenians and 224,000 Khurds; in the Bitlis vilayet 156,000 Armenians and 249,000 Khurds; in the Erzerum vilayet 180,000 Armenians and 249,000 Turks. The question now arises what will happen to the lands of this large Khurdish population, scattered about over the plateau. There is no sort of geographical unity in the regions inhabited by Armenians and Khurds. The Khurds are most numerous in the hill country to the South of Lake Van, in the Sassun region, in the Bin-gel Dag and Ala Dags. The Armenians are concentrated in the lower lands, on the plain of Mush, and to the East of Lake Van. But any traveller in Armenia finds, if he attempts to draw a line between the regions inhabited by Khurds and Armenians, that he will cover his map with endless spider's-webs and scrawls. In addition to this the land question has been complicated in the past by the fact that the two races in many regions claim each other's land.

Before the war the Khurdish Asshiret tribes, who had

insufficient pastures in the headwaters of the Tigris, were constantly shifting northwards, encroaching on the Armenian lands in the regions of Van and Mush. The low standard of husbandry among the Khurds has forced them to look for new lands, and it has been most convenient for them to expand northward at the expense of their Armenian neighbours, using the feudal rights of their Asshiret chiefs to reduce the Christians to a state of dependence and serfdom. Hence there has been an economic war between the nomad and the settled elements of the population of Armenia, which has been far more deep-seated than their religious antagonism. To this must be attributed the steady migration of the Khurds from the headwaters of the Tigris northwards to Mush and Van, and their conflict with the Armenians in these regions. As a result of this movement much of the lands in the South Armenian plateau were in disputed possession before the war. Armenians would often claim lands which they said the Asshirets had taken from them, while the Asshirets based many of their claims on the fact that the land was unoccupied, as the owners had migrated to the Caucasus, or else had agreed to become Rayats, paying tribute in corn. There can be little doubt that this economic conflict has been an important cause of the migration of Armenians into the Caucasus, where they have increased during the last hundred years by 600,000. This process is periodically reversed by the outbreak of a Russo-Turkish war, when Russia has always annexed territory in Armenia, from which part of the Moslem natives and Khurdish nomads have fled, their vacant lands being at once filled by Armenians from the Caucasus. On the restoration of

peace the old tendency for the Khurdish nomads to press the Armenian peasants northward, always recommences. During this war, too, Russia has occupied another slice of the plateau which she has been nibbling at for a hundred years. Most of the Khurds have fled, leaving their lands unoccupied, but on the advent of peace a large number, responding to that instinct which draws a wild animal back to the caves where it was born, and the meadows where it fed, will wander eastward and northward to their old camping grounds. Once again then the Armenian plateau will be occupied by a mixed population scattered about without any geographical division between the two chief races.

Under these circumstances it is impossible to talk of Armenian autonomy in any sense which does not imply also autonomy for the Khurds. If justice is to be done to small peoples, and if the settlement of the war in Asia is to be based on the high moral principle that each nationality is to choose its own form of government, then the interests of the Khurds must be taken into consideration as well as those of the Armenians. Some method must be found whereby both these peoples can give expression to their desires as to the new order to be created after the war. This can only be done by summoning an assembly, in Van or some convenient centre, of the Armenian peasantry and the Khurdish tribesmen, in order to ascertain their views. But who is to summon such an assembly? The greater part of the country is at the moment in the hands of Russia. The Armenians who have not been massacred are either in exile in Mesopotamia or in refuge in the Caucasus. The Khurds who have escaped death or disease are

scattered about over the highlands of Anatolia. The only practical way seems to be to appoint an international commission, perhaps the same which should have the task of assessing the damages of the war and making good the losses. This commission could be instructed by all the Powers who have been at war, as well as by the neutrals, to summon an assembly of all the natives of Armenia. The Armenians are already fairly well organized into political and other societies, so that the ascertaining of their views will not be a matter of great difficulty. But with the Khurds, who are hardly yet beyond the tribal state, the task will not be so easy. In most cases the tribal chiefs will probably be elected by the Asshirets who still remain, while the Rayats, their former serfs, will almost certainly elect their representatives on a democratic basis.

The problem before such an assembly will be to decide whether the future political fate of the Armenian highland is to be bound up with Russia or Turkey. It is inconceivable that the people of Armenia should cut themselves off from the rest of the world, or create a separate political unity in these days of railways, telegraphs and international trade. It is no less inconceivable that Armenia should have its own state railways, posts and customs. These are too obviously general services, and should operate over a very much wider area than the basin of Lake Van and the Upper Euphrates. Indeed the ideal should be to bring all such services, as far as national prejudices will allow, under international control. If the state of the world after the war will not permit of so ideal a solution, then the next best would be to induce small countries like Armenia in such matters

of general human interest to co-operate with their larger neighbours. The difficulty of attaching Armenia to Turkey again, would be that the rulers of that Empire have been guilty of such crimes towards the Christian population that, even if there were a change of government at Constantinople, it would be difficult altogether to forget the past. On the other hand, even the Khurds would probably have no objection to union with Russia, where already millions of their co-religionists are living. Whatever may be decided, one point is clear, that if the democratic principle, which the Russian Council of Workers and Soldiers has set before the world, that all peoples shall have a right to decide their own destiny, is faithfully observed, then the fate of Armenia must be put in the hands of the Armenian and Khurdish peoples. We have seen how in the past before the war these two peoples showed themselves able to work together, and would indeed have become reconciled to one another, but for the imperialist policies of Russia and Turkey, and for the cynical intrigues of the European Powers. What was done in the past under the influence of the Ottoman revolution can be done again in response to the message of hope, which went forth from Russia in March 1917.

## CHAPTER IX

## NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM IN THE CAUCASUS

It is an interesting fact that the growth of national consciousness among the smaller peoples of Europe coincided with the period of industrial development and the accumulation of capital in the larger countries, and with their consequent scramble for colonies, and competition for spheres of economic influence. It is very probable that the development of nationalism was in part a method of protection for the smaller peoples against imperialist aggression and economic exploitation. At any rate the two processes went hand in hand, and it is clear that the growth of national consciousness was not looked upon with favour by any of the Great Powers bent on imperial expansion, for their relations with economically backward races is one long story of repression. In cases where nationalism in a small people had reached a point where it could not be crushed, the efforts of imperial neighbours were then directed towards destroying it by different means. Other small peoples with a rising national consciousness were set up against them, in order that by fratricidal strife they might reduce each other to impotence. This policy has been carried out with great efficiency by the Ottoman Government in Armenia, and by Russia

in the Caucasus, where each succeeding Viceroy has done his best to set Georgian against Armenian, and Armenian against Tartar. This was the old time-honoured principle of the Roman Empire—"Divide et impera." All great Powers ruling Eastern dominions have adopted it at one time or another; nor can it be said that the rule of the British in India has been any exception. In Europe we see how reactionary and capitalist governments are able to use national passions (irredentist desires, as in Italy and Serbia, or revenge, as in France), in order to create wars and enslave the working classes. So too in Asia the policy of setting one race against another, of crushing any movement for freedom by bolstering up reactionary groups or Oriental despotisms, is necessary to Empires controlled by groups of financial exploiters on the look-out for concessions.

When the Russian power first extended into the Caucasus over a century ago, the native population was split up into countless nationalities and tribes, each having little in common with one another. At that time political nationalism was almost extinct among the Armenians, and was beginning to wane among the now vassal Georgians, while the Mahommedans were still recognizing the Viceregent of the Almighty on earth in the person either of the Shah of Persia or of the Sultan of Turkey. The change to the suzerainty of the Tsar made but little difference to the psychology of these peoples. Their political apathy had not even been affected by the echoes of the French Revolution, as had been the case with the Christians of the Balkans. The Middle East still lay slumbering in mediævalism. Towards the middle of the 19th century, however, a cultural revival began,

centring round the small educated circles of Georgian aristocracy and Armenian *bourgeoisie* in Tiflis and some of the principal towns. The Armenians, who throughout the ages have kept alive the muse of poetry in their mountain homes, began to develop their modern literary language, and produced a new school of writers, who revived the love of Armenia in the breasts of its people. Among the Georgians also Chafchavadze brought lyrical poetry to the firesides of the people, and struck the note of human sympathy. But the revival of literature contained as yet no germ of political nationalism, although it prepared the ground for it. The Georgians began to look to the gems of their ancient literature, and to read again the works of the bard Rustevelli, while the Armenians once more turned to Narek and other mystic poets of the middle ages. Thus the tender plant of nationalism grew subconsciously in both peoples, as each learnt to prize the literature of its ancestors, and to recreate it in a new form. The whole movement was no doubt a late wave of Romanticism coming from Western Europe, and reaching the Middle East some thirty years after its appearance in the West.

In the same way the movement towards political nationalism was late in spreading into Asia. While it was growing in Europe throughout the latter half of the 19th century, the peoples of the Caucasus were still only developing it in its cultural form. The spread of political nationalism from Italy and Greece to the Balkans was stimulated by educational propaganda, and also by the interference of international diplomacy. But these influences left the Middle East as yet unaffected. There the impulse which set practical nationalist ideals

in motion, came primarily from the Russian Revolution of 1905. The partial freedom won by the Russian people, though speedily withdrawn, inspired the subject peoples of the Balkans with the yearning for emancipation from foreign rule. The impulsive and idealistic character of the revolutionary movement in the Caucasus during the years 1905–6, is shown by the rising of the people like one man, over a large part of the country, to demand political and social rights which had not even been conceded to Western Europe. Thus the district of Guria formed a republic, while the proletariat of Baku demanded the eight hours day. Moreover the whole movement was definitely international in its ideals. But the Government of the Tsar knew how to deal with the situation, and from that day onward the Black Bands got to work to arm one race against another and organize massacre and pogroms. In 1908 the revolution in Turkey broke out, also a response to the Russian Revolution. Again the idea of Liberty was speedily diverted by a ruling oligarchy into the channels of narrow nationalism, and the brotherhood of Christian and Moslem was drowned in a bloody sea of intrigue and massacre. In the following year the wave swept into Persia and deposed a Shah; but here the ruling caste in Russia united with its fellow workers in the task of stemming the tide of freedom. It was as if the people of Russia and of the Near and Middle East had almost simultaneously grasped the idea of the brotherhood of man and the solidarity of the workers, thus passing with one stride from mediæval apathy to modern internationalism. For an instant they seemed to see the light, and then the powers of darkness closed

upon them, blinding them with national hatred. Europe had given a message of hope to Asia, but the ground was not yet prepared. The failure of this great and noble idea was due to the premature and unhealthy growth of political nationalism. The young plant had been stunted, and so it grew fungus-like, and sent forth poisonous fumes. We all know how the Balkan wars at first brought liberation through blood and tears, and how quickly the ideals which were supposed to inspire them deteriorated. It was exactly the same story further East, though the development was a little slower. In Armenia the reconciliation between Khurd and Armenian was turned into bitter race feuds, which culminated in the appalling massacre of the Armenians in 1915. In the Caucasus the national idea began to develop strongly among the three races, Georgian, Armenian and Tartar, and thus a sort of unstable balance of power was produced between them, with which the Russian reaction played as with a toy. It was very similar to the balance created on the Balkan peninsula between Bulgarian, Greek and Serb, with the so-called Concert of the Powers intriguing for the support now of one and now of the other. And the results were almost as disastrous; for, as I have shown above in the account of my journeys in Armenia and Persia, the national feuds engendered by this balance caused nothing less than band-warfare and massacre when the war broke out.

It is interesting to observe how parties among the different races in the Caucasus developed in the years after the Russian Revolution of 1905. Among the Armenians the Dashnaktsution was the most influential of all. Its motive force and ideals were essentially

political, and its rise in the years before the revolution shows clearly that the old ideas of cultural nationalism were no longer sufficient for the Armenian youth. The Dashnaktsution in its inception was a revolutionary society among the Armenian peasants, and was in fact a product of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, which worked among the Russian peasants in the last half of last century. For a time its ideals were not specially nationalist, except in so far as its propaganda spread mainly among Armenians. It seems to have been part of a general international movement, feebly commencing among the proletariat and peasants in the Near and Middle East. After the Russian Revolution the whole movement acquired a more definitely nationalist tendency. This was no doubt in response to the growing bitterness of the national feuds in Europe, and a result also of the deliberate sowing of dissensions among the small peoples of the Empire by the Russian Government. There were indeed always some Armenians, such as the Hunchakists and the Cadets (Constitutional Democrats), who kept aloof from the nationalist movement of these years. But the main driving force rested with the Dashnaktsution, which now conceived the idea of emancipating the Turkish Armenians and creating a united Armenia with political autonomy. The history of this movement in the period just before the war I have dealt with in Chapter VIII.

The same cross-currents of nationalism and internationalism are to be observed in the political development of the Georgians. During the Russian Revolution the Georgian peasantry and intelligentsia showed themselves ardent supporters of the international movement for the

emancipation of the wage-earner, and the division of the land among the people who work it. Thousands of them suffered for their faith in Siberia, while the Socialist and Revolutionary parties in Russia received many of their leaders from among them. But after the suppression of the Revolution of 1905, the international idea weakened in Georgia, and gave way to a narrow form of nationalism. This movement was encouraged by the Russian reaction, not with the intention of satisfying it, but of playing it off against the similar movement among the Armenians. The idea of political autonomy, which had been forgotten since the days of the last Kings of Georgia, began now to take the foremost place among the politicians of Tiflis. The National Democratic party was formed with the same idea as that of the Armenian Dashnaktsution, namely to realize political freedom by national emancipation first, before concentrating upon the international movement for emancipating the proletariat. Side by side with them worked the Georgian National Federalists, who not only demanded cultural, but also territorial autonomy. The Georgian aristocracy also stood for a form of political autonomy, not as a step towards the freedom of the proletariat, but in order to fortify their fast-decaying class privileges. This party received a certain degree of support from the Viceroys of the Caucasus, themselves aristocrats and ready to help their own class. But in spite of these nationalist societies, the idea of international Social Democracy did not die among the Georgians even during the recent dark years. Crushed under police persecution, they nevertheless kept their organization together, and waited for the dawn of better days.

Political movements among the Tartars and Moslems of the Caucasus have been but feebly developed. Of all the races of the Middle East they have been the last to become affected by influences from Europe. The Persian and Turkish Revolutions were of course not without their effect upon them, but in the main the Russian Government saw to it that they were kept in ignorance and darkness, fearing above all else a Pan-Islamic movement in Asiatic Russia. The utmost efforts were made to prevent the spread of Mahommedan education. No permission was given for the founding of Mahommedan colleges for the training of Mullahs, and young Moslems were only with difficulty allowed to go to Constantinople or Cairo for higher education. During the Revolution of 1905 the Tartars were the victims of a particularly foul intrigue. The rumour was spread by agents of the Black Hundreds that the Armenians were arming to attack the Moslems and establish an Armenian kingdom. The simple Moslems fell into the trap, received arms from the Black Hundreds, and thus began one of the most horrible massacres in Armenian history. When it was all over, and the heavy hand of the Stolypin reaction lay upon the Caucasus, the Tartars recognized that they had been betrayed. The lesson has never been forgotten, and from that time forth there has been an ever-growing tendency to unite the forces of all Caucasian Moslems in a national revival. But it has not taken the form of Armenian and Georgian nationalism. The Tartars feel that their religion gives them a particular connection with all other Moslem neighbours. They feel a certain community of interest and fellow-sympathy with their co-religionists in Turkey and Persia. This form of freemasonry is characteristic

of Moslem movements, which are not nationalist in the narrow political sense, as among Christian races, but cultural, like the earlier movements in the middle of last century among the Armenians and Georgians. They aim at developing the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish literature and language, at spreading knowledge of the great Moslem writers and thinkers of the past in Islam, and, generally, at promoting intercourse between Moslems in different parts of the world. Nationalism, in the sense of separating out one group of Moslems from another on the basis of language or origin or past history, of dividing Turk from Caucasian Tartar, or from Persian, has not yet been developed; and on the whole it does not seem likely that it will be. The old religious feuds between Sunni and Shia, between Shia and Ali-Allahi, are dying out. All over the Caucasus Moslems of various sects and racial origins are beginning to fuse into one cultural whole. What direction will this All-Islam movement take? Will it try to convert the threat of Enver Pasha into actuality, and frighten Europe with a Pan-Islamic Confederation on a political basis? Or will it realize that the conquests of Islam, if they are to be abiding, must be spiritual and not temporal? I think that the second development is the more probable. The discredit into which the Pan-Islam propaganda of the Young Turks has fallen as a result of their behaviour during the war, is likely to show the Moslems of the Middle East and Trans-Caucasus that it is in the cultural Renaissance of Islam that the future of their people is to be found. This will moreover open the door for the spread of the international idea from the Socialist Democracies of Western Europe.

On no soil would this seed bear richer fruit than on that of a regenerated Islam. That religion, even in its more primitive forms, is renowned for its democratic character, and to-day its chief need is to purge itself of those customs and superstitions which have largely crept into it from without. Much of course will depend upon the course of events in Persia, which is the great shrine for the regeneration of Moslem culture.

Since the Revolution of 1905 the political relations between the Armenians, the Georgians and the Mahommedans in the Caucasus have been disturbed and embittered by national conflicts and jealousies. Before the war the Georgians numbered about 1,500,000, and the Caucasus Armenians about 1,400,000. For nearly a hundred years Armenians had been migrating into the Caucasus to escape massacre and disorder in Turkey, thus continually increasing the Armenian population, whereas the Georgians have remained almost stationary. The 200,000 refugees from the massacre of 1915 have now given the Armenians a definite majority.

Besides this, the Georgians have long been feeling the steady pressure of Armenians coming up from the South. Several districts in the Tiflis province have become occupied by Armenians where there were none before, while the busy Armenian merchant has pushed into all the towns of the Caucasus. The Eastern Georgians are not by nature a very active race, but have now become aroused by what they regard as an invasion of their territory. This feeling has been encouraged by the Russian Government, in order to create national dissensions among the Caucasus peoples. Moreover,

when the Alashgert region of Turkish Armenia was occupied by the Russian troops in May 1915, the project was set on foot for colonizing this ancient Armenian country with Cossacks, thus dispossessing the Armenians and forcing them northward into the Georgian country. The document setting forth this scheme, signed by the Viceroy, Prince Vorontsoff Dashkoff, was discovered in Tiflis after the 1917 Revolution, and was published in the Armenian papers. The balance being thus disturbed between two of the most important nationalities in the Caucasus, the Georgians began to look for an ally who might join them in putting political pressure on the Russian authorities to keep the Armenians back. This they found in the Tartars, whose landowners and hereditary khans joined with the old Georgian aristocracy to resist the Armenian invasion. The Tartars of the Trans-Caucasus number nearly two millions, excluding all the Mahommedan tribes of Dagestan. But politically they were not yet organized, and their various societies and cultural organizations represented only the views of the reactionary aristocracy. Nevertheless they and the Georgians during 1916 started a campaign in the local Caucasus press against the Armenians, and formed the so-called " Tartar-Georgian Block." The policy of this Block was well exhibited in the spring of that year, when the Grand Duke Nicolas, then Viceroy, introduced a plan for the establishment of Zemstvos, or popular rural councils, into the Caucasus. Feeling between the three nationalities was running high, and each was determined to turn the establishment of local autonomy to its own advantage. The Armenians wanted to create special electoral districts, which would give them a majority over the Tartars in the provinces

of Kars and Erivan. These provinces have a very mixed population, and the presence of large irreconcilable minorities makes it difficult to establish local autonomy for the various nationalities. The Armenians proposed to meet this by re-drawing the boundaries between the Erivan and Kars provinces, in such a way as to group the Armenian population as far as possible in one administrative region. They also demanded a democratic franchise which should give the peasants, who were mainly Armenians and Tartars, a predominant influence over the landlords, most of whom were Tartar khans and Georgian aristocrats. The latter were particularly strong in the southern part of the Tiflis government, where a great controversy raged over the form of Zemstvos for the district of Borchalinsk. The Georgian and Tartar aristocracy, backed by the Russian authorities, insisted on the old franchise established in 1892 by Alexander the Third, when he altered the constitution of the Zemstvos in Russia. These had been initiated by Alexander the Second upon a broad liberal basis, giving considerable representation to the peasants: but his son was so reactionary, that he changed the franchise and gave the predominant power back to the landlords. The Grand Duke Nicolas, who was in sympathy with the Georgian and Tartar aristocracy, now introduced this reactionary franchise, in order to sow dissension between the Armenians and the Tartar-Georgian Block, and prevent the Armenians from having enough political power to put an end to aristocratic land privileges. The Georgian peasantry and Social-Democratic parties had no say in this controversy. They were not represented at the conference held in April 1916 at Tiflis. But according

to their press they sympathized with the Armenians in their demand for a democratic franchise, although they took a broader view of the ultimate issue than the Armenian *bourgeoisie*, who were clearly only out for race predominance. The results were a foregone conclusion, and the reactionary Tartar-Georgian Block had its way, aided by the Russian authorities, who were thus successful in fomenting feuds between the nationalities, and preserving the old ruling class. This then was the state of the nationality problem in the Caucasus on the eve of the great Revolution of 1917. But during the winter of 1916–17 signs of change became manifest. The peasantry, the intelligentsia, and the urban workers among the Georgians and Armenians, and, so far as they were articulate, among the Tartars, began to realize that they were the victims of reactionary intrigues. The increasing discontent in European Russian moreover began to open their eyes. About January 1917 there was a movement among the Armenian Dashnaktsution, and other revolutionary parties, to bring about a *rapprochement* with the similar societies among the Georgians and Tartars. The aristocracy of course held aloof, and the organ of the Georgian land-owning class and National Federalists kept up its campaign against the Armenians to the last. The Armenian *bourgeoisie* also did not respond very readily. But the spell was broken. The peasantry and proletariats of all the nationalities were beginning to see the light, and to join hands once more for the first time since the evil days after the 1905 Revolution. When at last the joyful tidings of the great revolt at Petrograd in March reached the Caucasus, the flood was let loose. Once again the international movement came into full swing,

just as it did during the Revolution of 1905. But it is too early to say yet what will be the fate of this movement. The old forces of reaction are not yet dead, and the classes interested in racial feuds in the Caucasus and in the ascendancy of one nationality over another, are still at work. The Council of Workers and Soldiers' Deputies, which was formed in the Caucasus in the first days of the Revolution, has an even more uphill task than its sister organizations in European Russia. Standing of course for the immediate re-establishment of the " International ", for the solidarity of the workers of all lands, and for peace without annexations or indemnities, based on the right of each people to choose its own form of government, the Council of Workers and Soldiers' Deputies in the Caucasus enjoys the whole-hearted support of the Georgian Social Democrats and the Armenian Dashnakists, as it does also of the peasantry of both peoples. The enemies of the international movement are to be found now mainly in two quarters. The Georgian aristocracy, to which a number of the intelligentsia are now allied, are insisting upon an immediate realization of the narrow nationalist ideas for the political autonomy of Georgia. They remain entirely unaffected by the international movement, and are only using the Revolution as a means to realize their schemes. Furthermore, the Armenian capitalist and *bourgeois* classes are in close sympathy with the Russian Cadets and Liberal Imperialists, who are hostile to the international movement on the ground of class interest, and are still dreaming of plans of conquering foreign markets. How the new orientation will work out, and what will be the result of the struggle, is not yet clear. But one thing is certain : the international movement is now working, and is begin-

ning to break down the old lines of division in the Caucasus, dividing the people horizontally into classes, instead of vertically into nationalities. But the process may take a long time to accomplish. Meanwhile some compromise may have to be found which will satisfy the national aspirations of some, and not conflict with the international ideals of others. Perhaps the best compromise would be the creation of a wide political autonomy for the whole of the Caucasus, with federated areas in which the Georgian, Armenian and Tartar democracies would respectively predominate. Each of these areas would have full power to deal with its own local affairs, and thus the nationalists might be appeased; while the services that are of general use to the whole community would be controlled by a general assembly of all the Caucasian peoples at Tiflis. It is remarkable that it was some such scheme that Enver Pasha intended to set up, when he invaded the Caucasus in December 1914. German publicists, such as Rohrbach, and other imperialists of the Central Empires, have been working for its realization for many years. But if it is now realized, the difference will be that the autonomous and federated Caucasus will be in close alliance, not with the reactionary Central Empires, but with the grea Republic of Free Russia.

## CHAPTER X

## THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND ITS EFFECTS IN ASIA

THE powers of darkness were tightening their grip upon Russia during the autumn and winter of 1916. The evil shadow of oppression and reaction, in the form of a corrupt and privileged ruling class, lay over the land. The war from the very first days of August 1914 had been no war for freedom, but rather a diversion to keep the Russian people occupied at home, so that they should forget their internal troubles. Just as the reaction that overcame the Emperor Alexander the Second in his later years forced him into the Russo-Turkish war to escape revolution, and just as the intriguing courtiers of Nicolas the Second forced on the war with Japan to stifle the cry for freedom, so ten years later the oligarchy in Petrograd hoped by the conflict with Germany to postpone the day of reckoning. During those two and a half years, during which took place the advance in Galicia, the retreat from Poland, the conquest of Armenia and the disaster in Roumania, Russia was waging two wars—the external war against the armies of the Central Powers and Turkey, and the internal war against her own suffering people. The religious persecution of the Ruthenes in Galicia was followed by the pogroms of the Jews in the

rear of the armies in Poland. The massacres of Moslems on the Asiatic fronts were no less criminal, if less extensive, than the Turkish massacre of the Armenians. Meanwhile the Russian peasants were driven by millions into the army, to be mutilated on the fronts or die of disease in the rear. Arrests and deportations of intellectuals continued with unabated vigour, and every protest from the enlightened few was met with imprisonment or Siberian exile. All this was common knowledge to any one in Russia who wished to know the truth, though silence was imposed by rigorous censorship. But the press syndicate that controls opinion in England was not silent. The sentimental travellers who wrote in the Northcliffe press, babbled of the "new era" in Holy Russia; of a people on their knees to God and their little Father Tsar. Inspired articles and "Russian supplements", published for financial considerations, expatiated upon the fine future that awaited Russia after the war under the fatherly protection of exploiters and concessionaires. But there were some who knew the truth, and who had to suffer in silence, till the dawn should lighten the night of iniquity and falsehood. My journeys over the Caucasus front, and my long sojourns in Tiflis during these months, enabled me to see what was going on in Asiatic Russia. The gulf between the rulers and the ruled was widening every day, and the only question was, when would the crash come? I confess that, judging by the conditions in the Caucasus, it seemed to me as if the Revolution was not yet very near. The people were steeped in Asiatic fatalism, and their sufferings from the war and from their rulers seemed only to deepen their despondency. Once during the summer of 1916 we heard of a case where the people, maddened by

repression, had taken the law into their own hands, and had suffered an even more terrible penalty. The calling up of the Moslem races of Central Asia to serve in the rear of the armies, had caused one of the bloodiest episodes in the history of those regions. The Kirgiz Tartars had long had grievances against the Government because of the wholesale manner in which they had been deprived of their lands in the Semiretch province, in order to give artificial encouragement to Russian emigrants. The additional burden of military service, now suddenly imposed without consulting their wishes, lit the spark of revolt. The whole of the Moslem population of the Semiretch rose to a man, fell upon and annihilated the Cossack garrisons in Vierny and Pishbek, and carried 5,000 Russian colonists as prisoners into the mountains. The rebellion was of course suppressed with the customary ruthlessness, and General Kuropatkin afterwards succeeded in calming the population by the exercise of a little tact. But the news of this rebellion, spreading into the Caucasus during the summer of 1916, fanned the flames of discontent, and exposed still more the Government's policy of sowing dissensions among its subjects in Asia in order to keep them weak and disunited.

The decisive factor which seems to have brought the revolutionary movement to a head, was the food crisis. Mankind will endure much; but when their stomachs are empty, they begin to demand the reason why. It is not difficult to trace a connection between the decrease in the food supplies of Russia during the war, and the increase of the revolutionary spirit. In normal years Russia used to export from 400 to 600 million pouds of cereals, leaving for the home market about 1,000 million pouds,

One would naturally expect that at the outbreak of war, when all exports were stopped, this 1,000 million pouds, together with the 400 to 600 million pouds previously exported, would be more than sufficient to feed the people and the army. And so it was for the first twelve months from August 1914 to August 1915, when only 200 million pouds of cereals were purchased by the Government for the army and for other state purposes, leaving well over a milliard pouds on the home market. In the next year, from August 1915 to August 1916, the army had become much larger, and the country was flooded with refugees both from Poland and the provinces of Asiatic Turkey. The number of persons who had been taken from works of production to works of destruction was steadily increasing, and the Government purchases of cereals rose to 500 million pouds. Meanwhile the villages were becoming depopulated, and the area of land under cereal cultivation decreased by 8 per cent. For the year August 1916 to August 1917 the needs of the army and the refugees called for state purchases of cereals to the amount of 900 million pouds, that is, nearly the whole amount ordinarily distributed on the home market by private exchange, leaving only 500 million pouds for the rest of the population. So it was clear that, if in the spring of 1917 a sufficient area had not been sown with corn to make up for the deficiency of the harvest of 1916, Russia was threatened with famine. The knowledge of this impending catastrophe caused the peasants all through the winter of 1916–17 to hoard their stocks of grain. Moreover the flooding of the country with 10 milliard roubles of paper money (the figure reached in April 1917), made the peasants still more reluctant to sell. In the Caucasus

the people began to revert to primitive exchange by barter. In the bazaars of Tiflis, Elizabetopol, Erivan and Baku, the peasants would offer their produce in exchange for sugar, oil, and clothing material, and would take it back if they did not receive these articles. The industrial productivity of the country declined steadily. Those industries that did not turn to war-work were suffering from a shortage of labour. Also the rolling stock on the railways could not be kept in repair, and so the whole transport system got out of gear.

The suffering through shortage of food in the towns and large industrial centres during the winter of 1916–17, was no doubt the most potent cause of the revolutionary spirit. Privation united the wage-earning proletariat, which, although only 7 per cent. of the population, is nevertheless politically the best organized section of it. The peasants, of whom all the youngest and best were in the army, began to think as never before; and the Russian army became for the first time in history a united revolutionary army. These two forces, the organized proletariat and the peasant army, between them guaranteed the success of the Revolution. Meanwhile two other classes in the community were struggling for the control of the government. First, the aristocracy and the higher bureaucracy round the Court, led by such characters as Rasputin, tried by fair means or foul to maintain the old autocracy. Their efforts did not stop even at intrigue for a separate peace with Germany. Scenting the danger of revolution as a result of the war and of Russia's economic collapse, they were anxious after the first year to put a stop to it, and concentrate upon the repression of revolutionary tendencies. Having taken their share in

bringing about the war in order to divert the attention of their people from internal reforms, they now found that they had opened the flood-gates, and were in danger of being drowned themselves: hence their secret endeavours during the autumn and winter of 1915–16 and 1916–17 to conclude a separate peace. It has been far too readily assumed in England that the Russian reactionaries were simply German agents. This idea has been fostered by the Northcliffe press and other tools of reaction in England. Yet those very organs were the first to shed tears over the Tsar when he abdicated, and to damage the reputation of the Russian revolutionary democracy with all the slander which their correspondents could concoct. The truth was that the corrupt and effete ruling class in Russia, whom the English reactionaries and the Northcliffe press had been doing their best for years to bolster up, even to the extent of suppressing information about the religious persecution in Galicia and the pogroms of the Jews in Poland, was not German at all. It was of course in sympathy with the Junker ruling class in Germany, just as two burglars in trouble are ready to help one another. This trade-unionism is characteristic of all ruling classes, not only in Russia and Germany, and is nowhere better seen than in the disreputable attempt of *The Times* after the Revolution to justify Nicolas the Second before the world as an innocent victim. The reaction in Russia was essentially Russian, just as the reaction in Germany is German, and in England is English. If Baron Friedericks and Hoffmeister Sturmer had German names and origin, Sukhumlinoff, Protopopoff, the Metropolitan Peterim, and Rasputin had Russian names and origin. They all worked together for the same ends, namely to keep

their privileges as the sole controllers of Russia's destinies.

The other class in the community which was struggling for control of the government, was the capitalist middle class, which was small in numbers, but wealthy and influential, and hoped to swim into power on the tide of war. This *bourgeois* group, represented in the Duma by the Progressive Block, is the product of European capitalism which has been gradually penetrating Russia for some years past. They differed from the ruling aristocratic and bureaucratic class round the Court in that they were more Western in outlook and more efficient. But flourishing behind high tariffs and trade monopolies, their economic interests had become entirely hostile to those of the proletariat and peasants. They were, and still are, the great supporters of the high tariff, which falls so heavily upon the working classes in the form of high prices. They are the chief imperialists of Russia, with dreams of economic expansion both East and West to increase their spheres of exploitation. They are the most enthusiastic supporters of the "economic war after the war" with the Central Powers. In recent years the bulk of the so-called intelligentsia, or educated people of the "free professions", have been joining in alliance with them. Up to this time the intelligentsia had kept more or less to themselves as a class; but with the growing antagonism between the capitalists and the proletariat, they threw in their lot with the former. Thus it is clear that before the Revolution there existed three main political groups in Russia, and that with the collapse of one of them a struggle commenced between the other two for the control of the government. Hence the conflict of interest, which

immediately appeared between the Council of Workers and Soldiers' Delegates, representing the proletariat and peasantry, and the Provisional Government, representing the capitalist and intellectual classes.

In the Asiatic provinces of Russia the same class divisions with certain differences were in process of formation. Thus in Siberia only one of these three classes existed, namely the peasants; and the Siberians, being always by tradition the most progressive of all Russian peasantry, were in the forefront of the revolutionary movement. In Turkestan the autocratic regime was represented by the higher officials, backed by the native aristocracy, the Emir of Bokhara and his Kushbegs. The Mahommedan peasantry, as far as they were organized and articulate, formed part of the revolutionary force of the All-Russian peasant-proletariat. In the Caucasus all three classes were to be found, though with the complication of nationalist divisions. Russian officialdom with the Viceroy as its centre, together with the Georgian aristocracy, represented the forces of reaction. The *bourgeois* element was to be seen in the Armenian middle class and the Russian colonists of the principal towns. The peasant-proletariat was represented by the vast bulk of the Armenian, Georgian and Tartar population, both urban and rural. The peasants, it is true, were up to the last engaged in national quarrels fomented by the Government; but being more in contact with Western ideas than the people of Turkestan, they began to show signs of uniting for their common interest, as soon as the economic chaos in the country brought home to them that they were the victims of reaction and war. About Christ-

mas-time the Armenian revolutionary societies approached their kindred societies among the Georgians and the Tartar national organizations, with a view to calling a truce to all national conflicts and uniting for common action. All through January and February of 1917 secret negociations were carried on, which succeeded to a certain degree in composing the national disputes that raged round the Zemstvo and refugee questions. In Baku the Socialist-Revolutionary societies among the oil-workers began to prepare for a general strike and waited the signal from Petrograd. The Russian authorities, getting wind of what was going on from their police-spies, sent a secret agent, Kutchubiesky, to Tiflis with power to arrest and deport without trial any single person that he thought fit, except the Grand Duke Nicolas. Wholesale arrests and raids on private dwellings began. Meanwhile the town of Kutais went fifteen days without any bread, because of the collapse of transport on the Trans-Caucasus railway. Brigandage began to break out in the Karabach region of the Elizabetopol government, owing to famine in the small towns. On the front in Armenia and Persia the conditions were even worse. The troops went for days without food, and typhus fever began to rage. On the Black Sea coast a regiment had been ordered up to the front, but had mutinied and refused to go unless food was sent with it.

The Staff of the Caucasus Army had decided in January that an offensive should be begun in the Spring, in conjunction with the British in Mesopotamia and Palestine, so as to complete the process of closing in on the Turkish Empire from three sides. The Expeditionary Force in Persia was to demonstrate before Kermanshah,

and the Army Corps on the Armenian plateau was to do the same before Kharput and Erzinjan. An attacking force was to advance from the shores of Lake Urumiah, descend into the Mesopotamian plains, occupy Mosul and cut off the retreat of Halil Pasha, who would be at the same time pressed by the British from Bagdad. But the internal conditions of Asiatic Russia prevented the realization of this plan. The troops could not be guaranteed supplies for the advance from Lake Urumiah. Consequently, when in the middle of February the Allied offensive against the eastern side of the Turkish Empire began, only a part of the programme was realized. Bagdad was occupied by General Maude, but the advance on Mosul had to be abandoned, and Halil Pasha's army was able to retire thither in safety. The news of the fall of Bagdad reached Tiflis on March 12th, and created scarcely any interest whatever. People were thinking of other things. The Duma had just been dismissed, and news of disorders in Petrograd was secretly coming through. For the next two days there was the most intense suppressed excitement in the city. The Grand Duke Nicolas kept back all the telegrams from Petrograd, refusing to allow any to get out. Nevertheless the news was public property. One of the telegraph clerks knew the ciphers, and kept all the revolutionary societies informed. The revolutionary leaders of course decided to take the signal from Petrograd, but it was too early to move in the Caucasus until it was certain that the Revolution was secure in the capital. If it should fail, the Caucasus by itself could do nothing. On the night of the 14th, Kutchubiesky ordered the arrest of all the members of the Armenian Dashnaktsution and of the Georgian Socialist-Revolutionary societies. But

the gendarmes, instead of being able to effect the arrest, found on the morning of the 15th that they themselves were arrested by armed bodies of these same revolutionaries and locked up in their own quarters. On the same day came the news that Nicolas the Second had abdicated; and then the flood was let loose. On the 16th and 17th the whole fabric of the Russian imperial authority was in process of dissolution. First the police vanished off the streets; then the Government offices closed down; then bands of revolutionaries and students arrested all the remaining gendarmes, and seized the premises of the secret police, where they arrested the chief and his wife. Prince Orloff, the head of the civil department, who had a *liaison* with the wife of the secret police chief, was in her rooms at that moment, and was arrested too, but was released on his identity being recognized. An executive committee was formed of the revolutionary societies, of the garrison, which had gone over wholesale to the Revolution, and of the principal middle-class members of the City Council.

Sunday March 18th was the great day in the Caucasus. The Revolution was then known to be secure in the Asiatic provinces; the old government had collapsed, and the hour for rejoicing had arrived. On the morning of that day I passed down the Golovinsky street of Tiflis, and crossed the bridge over the Kura to the outskirts of the city. The streets were full of silent and serious people walking in the same direction. They were all going to a great mass meeting of the Caucasian people on the Nahalofsky square to welcome this great day in the history of Russia. In a large open space six raised platforms had been built, and round them was assembled a vast

multitude composed of almost every element in the multi-racial population of the Caucasus. There were wild mountain tribesmen, Lesgians, Avars, Chechens and Swanetians in their long black cloaks and sheepskin caps. The eddies of the wave of revolution had swept up into the recesses of the Caucasus, where they had lived sunk in patriarchal feudalism until yesterday. Many of them did not know whether they were subjects of the Tsar of Russia or the Sultan of Turkey. Yet they had come across miles of mountain tracks out of curiosity to confirm the rumours they had heard, and in order to pay their humble tribute to the Russian Revolution. There were the picturesque peasants of the fair provinces of Georgia, who had driven in on bullock-wagons. Doubtless many of them during the last ten years had been exiled to Siberia, where they had learnt from Western Socialists to appreciate the principles of Marxism, and had caught the breath of the International. Then there were Armenian merchants from Tiflis, the staunch supporters of all progressive movements in Russia. There were educated Tartars of the East Caucasus, who had helped to inspire the revolutionary movement in Persia in 1909. There were the representatives of the urban proletariat of Tiflis and some from the Baku oil-fields, the grimy products of Western European industrialism which is slowly creeping into the East. Among them was the intellectual Russian student, the Georgian poet and the Armenian doctor, who had hitherto been forced to hide their talents. In this great concourse of Caucasian peoples were standing side by side the most primitive and the most progressive types of the human race. For years they had been sunk in apathy, fatalism and scepticism, and their racial feuds had been

purposely fomented by the old government. Now the flood of their combined intellect and energy had burst forth and broken the crumbling banks of privilege and oppression. The spirit Demos had suddenly risen out of a multitude of suppressed individualities, and had manifested itself in the form of that great gathering of mediæval mountaineers and twentieth-century working-men, all inspired by the same idea of brotherhood and freedom.

The scene was indeed a memorable one. First upon the platforms mounted the Social-Democrat leaders, who until now had held their meetings in secret places. They called upon the people to preserve order, and to proceed immediately to elect deputies for the Council of Workers and Soldiers. Each district of the city of Tiflis was that day opening a committee-room under the auspices of the Social-Democrat and Socialist-Revolutionary societies. Any person who wished could write his name down to become a member of the Tiflis branch, which was to elect delegates for the Council of Workers. Every company of soldiers garrisoned in Tiflis and the district was to meet and elect one delegate for the Council of Soldiers. Throughout the whole of European and Asiatic Russia during these days the urban proletariat, the peasantry and the army were at work forming the great Council, which has since been so famous not only in Russia, but in international politics. It became the organ for carrying on the fight not only against what was left of the old Tsarism, but, much more important, against the capitalist *bourgeoisie* which had taken over the reins of government in Petrograd. While the instructions for the election of the delegates were being issued at one side of this great meeting, on other platforms speeches were

being made by Socialist leaders explaining the immediate policy of the Council. I heard speeches proclaiming the need for the revolutionary democracy to fight against the "old Tsarism and the parasitical *bourgeoisie*," showing clearly that the initiators of the Council of Workers and Soldiers' Delegates had in their minds the coming struggle with the middle classes and capitalists of the Progressive Block in the Duma, quite as much as that with the old reaction. Though in the Asiatic provinces the movement started a few days later, it took the same form as in Moscow and Petrograd. It was a genuine international movement, for it refused to consider any of the questions of nationality which had so long been troubling the Caucasus, and dividing the proletariat into hostile factions.

From the very first day, Armenian, Georgian and Tartar working-people joined on terms of absolute equality. Of course the nationalist parties, like the Dashnaktsution and Georgian Federalist and Aristocratic Union, continued to exist, and indeed became very active after the Revolution; but side by side with these, for the first time in Asiatic Russia a democratic and international organization was growing up in close alliance with the great Petrograd Workers and Soldiers' Council, and expanding so gigantically that it now controls the government of the Caucasus. Even on that first Sunday, the international character of the movement manifested itself. While the revolutionary leaders were busy with their organization, the greater part of the Tiflis garrison, headed by its commanders on horseback, marched into the square. The commanders rode up to the platform, and taking off their hats asked to be allowed to take part in the proceedings. Several

soldiers then mounted the platforms and made speeches welcoming the Revolution, and the international solidarity of the workers of the world. One common soldier to whom I listened said, "Comrades, let us not forget that over there in Germany we have brothers crushed under the same tyranny from which we have now been delivered. May God grant that the hour of their deliverance has also struck!" Thus in its earliest stages, even in the Asiatic provinces, the Revolution was assuming the character of a movement for the liquidation of the war by appealing to the international solidarity of the workers. Such signs as these which I saw on that first week of revolution, developed into the great peace programme of the Petrograd Council of Workers and Soldiers a month later, which renounced annexations and indemnities, and called upon the peoples of the world to follow their example. A people that had just thrown off the darkest tyranny that has ever blackened the earth, was now appealing to its brothers throughout the world to heal the wounds of humanity. While I was watching this great scene and listening to the speeches, I heard a deafening roar of cheers. The political prisoners, who since 1906 had been pining in the dungeons of the Tiflis prisons, were being liberated and brought to the meeting. They were carried on the shoulders of comrades to the platforms, whence they addressed the multitude. The massed bands then struck up the Marseillaise. Every head was bared. The mountain tribesman took off his shaggy fur cap, the long hair of the Russian student fluttered in the breeze, and the troops, who a few days before had sung "God save the Tsar", now presented arms to the great revolutionary hymn. Three times it was played amid frantic cheering. A young officer then got

up and said, "As one who took part and suffered in the last revolution, I know that it failed because the army was not united. Let us make no mistake this time. Let us all, officers and men, keeping the strictest discipline and the firmest union, stand by the Revolution with our lives."

The great meeting then quietly dispersed, the mountain tribesmen to their distant valleys, the peasants to their villages, and the townsmen to their homes, and one of the greatest days in the history of the Caucasus had come and gone.

I returned to my rooms about half past three that afternoon, and found there a note from the military censor, informing me briefly that the Grand Duke Nicolas would receive me at three o'clock that day, in order to give me a communication for the foreign press. I immediately went off to the Viceroy's palace and presented myself. I was met in the great hall by Prince Orloff, who looked very serious and worried. After waiting a few minutes he took me into a small ante-chamber, where I saw the Grand Duke Nicolas walking up and down with his hands behind his back and his head down, apparently deep in thought. When he looked up at me, I saw that his face was very thin and that his eyes were bloodshot. His hands were trembling; and for a moment I thought to myself, "Can this really be the great Grand Duke Nicolas, that lion of strength, whom England and France have been worshipping for so long?" I had seen him frequently riding in his motor-car in the streets of Tiflis, but I could scarcely recognize him now. He had indeed been living through a time of terrible anxiety and mental strain during these days when the throne of the Romanoff family, of which

he was a chief member, was tottering to its doom. The Grand Duke then began to speak to me in Russian. His voice was very faint, and I had difficulty in hearing many of his words. "I have called you here", he began, "because I wish to make you a communication which you can send to the English press. I recognize the new order in Russia, for I regard it as the sole means of salvation for our fatherland. As Commander-in-Chief of the armies I will allow no reaction of any kind. But I appeal to my countrymen to preserve order, and not to break the discipline in the army; for even in republican France the principle, 'L'armée est sacrée', is observed." When he had finished, I retired to the great hall, where I wrote out a telegram. On coming out into the street I saw that the palace was surrounded by civilian guards, members of the Socialist-Revolutionary Society. The information had leaked out, through revolutionary spies in the palace, that the Grand Duke had been in communication with the abdicated Emperor with a view to making a counter-revolution as soon as he arrived in Europe. A Tartar friend of mine in close touch with the revolutionaries told me that evening, when I met him in the street, that they had intercepted a telegram which the Grand Duke had just sent making preparations for the counter-revolution. He was to be arrested at once, my friend said; for the Caucasus people were determined not to let him out of their grasp. The palace was surrounded all the night of the 18th, and the Grand Duke was virtually a prisoner. On the next morning it appears that the revolutionaries were informed by M. Kerensky by wire from Petrograd that they could let the Grand Duke leave the Caucasus and come to Europe, for he would be

looked after the moment he arrived at Rostoff. So on the afternoon of the 19th the Grand Duke left in a special train. His last passage through the streets of Tiflis had a touch of irony about it. He was accompanied by his faithful Cossack bodyguard, specially selected Tersk Cossacks, who had been always regarded as the most loyal of all the Caucasus troops. But on this day they escorted him to the station waving red flags and singing the Marseillaise! This incident is enough to show the extraordinary change that had come over the whole country. On arrival in Europe the Grand Duke Nicolas was deprived of his command and sent under guard to the Crimea. Thus ended the career of this famous Romanoff. He had some good points. He had a strong character and a powerful will. He was not a military genius; indeed his military qualities were quite second-rate. But he had managed while he was in Asia to get good soldiers round him and to keep them. In his civil administration of the Caucasus he showed fair-mindedness according to his lights. But there was no getting over the fact that he belonged to the Imperial Romanoff family, and was a possible candidate for the throne. Moreover his whole outlook, tradition and upbringing was that of an autocrat, and he could not understand that the world has now no place for that type of ruler. So when Nicolas the Second went, he had to go too. As a matter of fact, some months before the Revolution he had warned the Tsar of the coming danger to the Romanoff family, and when no heed was taken of his warning, it is said that he was put up by a certain section of the army officers as a candidate for the throne. During the winter of 1916–17 there was occasional talk of a "coup d'état",

a palace revolution in fact, with the object of putting on the throne of Russia a more capable autocrat than Nicolas the Second, and so staving off the Revolution. The assassination of Rasputin was one of the steps in this palace revolution. But it was not carried out in its entirety, because the powerful hand of the Empress succeeded in crushing it. Had it come off, the great Russian Revolution might conceivably have been postponed for some months, or even for some years.

On March 20th I left by the night train for Kars, as I hoped to see what effect the Revolution was having on the people of the Armenian plateau. When in the afternoon of the 21st my train entered the Kars station, the platform was crowded with troops from the garrison, waving red flags and singing the Marseillaise. I recalled the days in February of the previous year, when I had been here and had seen the commencement of the great offensive against Erzerum. There was no talk then of anything but of war against the Turk, and every road was covered with troops marching to the slaughter. I also remembered how during the Summer I had talked to the soldiers on my way back from the Chorokh, and how I had despaired at their fatalism and helplessness in the clutches of the military machine, yet how I had felt their subconscious self trying to assert itself and speak for humanity. Now at last I saw the triumph of those hopes that had seemed so far off in the Summer. The grey-coated men who had marched like sheep to the slaughter were now raising the red banners of revolt against militarism and tyranny, and were sending a silent message to their Turkish brethren across the plateau to follow their example.

On the platform I saw a familiar face. It was that of Ali Khan Kantimirof, the Moslem with whom I had been engaged in relief work in June. "We have locked them all up", he said to me. "Who is we?" I asked. "The new provisional government of Kars", he said. "And whom have you locked up?" I asked. "The Commandant of the fortress, the Governor and Vice-Governor and all the principal officials", he replied. They had not even spared poor Colonel Schmerling, the Vice-Governor, with whom I had stayed the last time I had been there. The change had been dramatic indeed. Within twenty-four hours the rulers of Kars had been locked up in the fortress, over which the red flag now flew, and a provisional government had been established over the whole province. I walked with Ali Khan to the offices of the former gendarmes, which were now the headquarters of the new government. As soon as it was clear that the Revolution in Petrograd had triumphed, the people of Kars had arrested the military and civil authorities, and elected an Executive Committee to carry on the government in co-operation with the Committee at Tiflis. The whole Empire being at this moment in a state of flux, each district became more or less independent, or at any rate had a wide measure of autonomy in the absence of a central authority. It is remarkable that everywhere, even in the distant parts of Asiatic Russia, the people just liberated from centuries of slavery began to create a popular system of government, which was the same in principle over all these vast territories. Here in Kars a form of the Petrograd Council of Workers and Soldiers' Deputies was set up, modified to suit the circumstances. In European Russia the revolutionary masses were divided upon a purely social basis

into the urban proletariat and the peasantry; but in the Caucasus the fundamental units were found in national groups, which until yesterday had been in bitter conflict with one another. Hitherto there had been in the Kars province no internationalist body whose aim was to spread the ideas of Social Democracy. Now it was not only formed, but actually was the only instrument of authority in the province. I found in the executive Committee representatives of all the four nationalities of the Kars plateau, with many of whom I had become acquainted in the Summer of the previous year. The Greeks had a young advocate, the Armenians a doctor, the Moslems Ali Khan, the organizer of relief work among the refugees; the Russian colonists had elected a Malakan peasant. I was shown the quarters of the local militia, which was being formed under the auspices of the executive Committee. The very people who two years ago had massacred each other when the Turks invaded the country, and who since then had been engaged in bitter mutual accusations, were now serving together on committees and militias to preserve order and bring a new life to the people. It was a remarkable example of how mankind, when left alone to themselves with no one in authority over them, do not break out into anarchy and commit unsocial acts, but attempt to construct order on the basis of mutual toleration. It is only agents from without, provocators from the old regime, or sceptics from among the *bourgeoisie*, who can destroy this fabric of revolutionary socialism which is now being built up in Russia. It is this danger which the Russian Revolution is living through at this moment.

The garrison in the Kars fortress were also working in

close union with the Executive Committee of the province. On the first day of the revolution they had arrested the commanders who were reactionary or harsh with the men, and had elected those who were sympathetic to them. I found that the rank and file, all of them peasants from European Russia, had begun to elect delegates for a Union of Soldiers. Together with the delegates of the natives, they were ruling the Kars province from their headquarters in the fortress, the native delegates having charge of all civil, the soldiers of all military affairs. The character of the Soldiers' Union was socialist-revolutionary from the first, for they had elected as the president of the Executive Committee a student civilian who was a former organizer of the secret revolutionary society.

When on March 24th I returned to Tiflis, I found that the Executive Committee for the city and province, which had been formed in the first days of the Revolution by the Socialist-Revolutionaries, had begun to draw to itself members from all quarters for the task of forming a provisional government. Besides the Union of Soldiers and Workers, many other organizations were now sending representatives to take part in the work of the Executive Committee. Delegates had been elected by the professional alliances, such as the trade-unions of metal-workers, carpenters, motormen and tramway-workers, also by various educational associations, such as the school-teachers' union, and societies for the promotion of learning, by co-operative, insurance and benevolent societies, etc. Delegates also came from the bankers' and shopkeepers' alliances, from the local bourse and other middle-class organizations. Finally, the national organizations were represented, such as the Georgian and Armenian political

parties. In fact, this great Tiflis Executive Committee elected under the auspices of the International Socialist parties, was a sort of union of syndicates of every kind, and from every class of the community.

On Sunday 25th of March I visited Mtschet, the ancient capital of Georgia, not far from Tiflis. The Georgian nationalist societies had summoned a great meeting in the ancient cathedral, where after the service it was decided to elect an Exarch to be head of the Georgian Church. On the following day I went to Elizabetopol to a conference of the Caucasian Tartars. The educational and benevolent societies among the Tartars had got together, and had sent delegates to start political organization in the Moslem villages in view of the elections for the Constitutional Assembly at Petrograd.

That same week came the news that great events had taken place in Turkestan. The old order was changing even there. In Tashkent the Russian garrison had formed a Union of Soldiers. The civil population had formed a Union of Workers from among the Moslem natives (Sarts) and the Russian colonists. These two bodies together formed the Executive Committee which superseded the authority of the Governor-General, who was arrested and sent off to European Russia. On this Committee were twenty-three members; seven from the native Moslems, seven from the Soldiers, and nine from the Russian colonists. This caused some dissatisfaction at first, and the native members were afterwards increased. Smaller committees were formed in the principal towns. The race-feeling between Moslems and Russians disappeared. Russian common soldiers sat on public bodies with dark-skinned natives, whom the old Russian Govern-

ment used to treat as an inferior race. They recognized each other as brothers and as sons of free Russia. Regulations were drawn up to govern the policy of the future administration of the country. These included the immediate removal of all agents and officials of the old Government, and equal political rights for all nationalities; natives were to elect their representatives from convenient local unions with proportional representation for minorities; the Central Committee in Tashkent was to be the main authority, and to have a large measure of local autonomy; measures were to be taken against the *colonial* policy, by which the late Russian Government was continually depriving the natives of their lands, and settling on them colonists from Europe and Siberia. Thus the natives of Turkestan won their freedom with their brother Russians. But one dark corner remained in Central Asia, the native state of Bokhara, where the Russian Government had been bolstering up the tyrannous Asiatic despotism of the Emir.

While the great wave of revolution was sweeping across the deserts and oases of Turkestan, the Emir of Bokhara was desperately trying to maintain his position as a despot, and to that end threw into prison all whom he suspected of fomenting revolution, and excluded from his territory the agents from the Council of Workers and Soldiers. In this he was ably seconded by the Russian Resident Agent, M. Miller, once the Russian Consul-General in Persia, where he had gained a reputation as a supporter of reaction. But the idea of revolution had evidently been long preparing, even in Bokhara, for as soon as the news came through that the Governor-General

of Turkestan had been arrested and the Union of Soldiers and Workers had been formed in Tashkent, the bazaars of Bokhara were filled with crowds of Young Bokhariots, who marched with red flags to the Emir's palace demanding "Freedom and a Constitution". They were met by reactionary Mullahs, armed agents of the Emir, and the Russian Resident Agent. An encounter took place in which there was some loss of life, and the Young Bokhariots had to retire. As soon as news of the disorder reached Samarkand and Tashkent, the Union of Soldiers and Workers sent delegates with an armed force to Bokhara. Finding that the Resident Agent had been supporting the Emir in his policy of resistance, they at once removed him and sent him to Tashkent. The Emir was forced to receive a deputation of his people, and within a few hours a manifesto was issued, declaring the abolition of capital and corporal punishment, equality of political rights for all Bokhariots, and a Constitutional Assembly to be elected by the people of Bokhara. Thus fell the last Asiatic tyranny in Russian Asia.

It remains to say a word about the Cossacks. The Revolution was just as successful with them as with the other peoples of Asiatic Russia. On my journey from the Caucasus to European Russia during the last week of March 1917 I stopped at several of the Cossack centres in the North Caucasus to see the effect of the Revolution upon them. Everywhere was enthusiasm and rejoicing. At Mozdok the Cossacks in the *stanitsas*, who were not at the war, had elected their own committees and got in touch with the chiefs of the neighbouring mountain tribes, Chechens and Avars, and had asked them to send representatives. Even here a primitive form of Council of

Workers and Soldiers' Deputies had been created on the basis of equal rights and brotherhood between the workers of all lands. Cossacks were fraternizing with mountain Circassians, and the enemies of centuries were now united under the banner of liberty, equality and fraternity. In Vladikavkas and Grozny the Cossacks had arrested their former Ataman and elected their own, and had passed resolutions demanding a Republic. Perhaps one of the principal reasons why the Cossacks have gone over so whole-heartedly to the Revolution, is that in recent years they have deeply resented the Government's policy in depriving them of their ancient right to elect their military leaders. The Cossacks were originally emigrants who came for various reasons from the European provinces to colonize and hold the Asiatic frontiers. Gradually the Russian bureaucracy deprived them of their democratic institutions and of the local self-government which they originally enjoyed. The grant of lands free of taxes, however, kept them contented for a long time, and enabled the Tsars to rely on them to help in crushing revolutions. But since the 1905 Revolution a great change has come over the Cossacks. The appointment of Atamans who had not their sympathy, and were corrupt and incompetent nominees of Petrograd, roused the feeling that they had been made the instruments of tyranny in 1905. Thus they came into the forefront of the revolutionary movement in 1917. The Cossacks have in fact returned to their original democratic state, and to-day are one of the bulwarks of the Revolution.

I have now described how the great movement for the emancipation of man from military despotism came to the provinces of Asiatic Russia. The shots fired on the

banks of the Neva on those fateful days of March echoed far and wide across the plains of the Ukraine to the Cossacks' steppes, over the snowy peaks of the Caucasus to the bleak plateaux of Armenia, and across the Caspian to the sandy wastes and fertile oases of Turkestan. The people that live in the great plain between Europe and Asia have at last seen the light, and have freed themselves from the darkness of the middle ages. But they have done more. Situated between Asia and Europe, they have the elements of all that is best in the civilizations of both continents; they are young and vigorous, creative and imaginative. They have seen through the mist of blood and misery which for so many weary months has enveloped both them and the other peoples of Europe, and they have dared to tell the world the truth, and show humanity the road to freedom. Their message to their brother men in Europe and Asia can be read in the abdication of Nicolas the Second, in the appeal of the Council of Workers and Soldiers' Delegates to the proletariat of the world, and in the declaration of the Provisional Government renouncing war for the sake of conquest. A fateful hour has come for Western Europe. Will its peoples drift back to mediæval barbarism, or will they follow that star that has risen in the East and can lead them along the path of regeneration to a new life?

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