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HISTORICAL SUMMARY
OF THE RUSSIAN WAR.
FROM ITS COMMENCEMENT TO THE PRESENT TIME.

Omer Pacha had been diligently employed in organizing his wild troops since the early part of July; and, with the aid of some European officers (chiefly French), belonging to the Artillery, Engineers, and other military classes and denominations, he soon saw himself at the head of an army in which he could place confidence, and which proved itself equal to all the exigences of the war. The Turks are patient and hardy in the field; their courage—where they have not reason either to distrust or to despise their own commander—is proverbial, and has been proverbial for more than four hundred years. But since they first broke into Europe, many improvements in the material instruments of war have necessitated corresponding changes in the tactics of an army. Mahmoud, the late Sultan, perceived this; and he determined to revolutionize his military establishment, and to substitute the "Frank" weapons and the "Frank" discipline for the arms and system of his people. *After* he had destroyed the Janissaries, and *before* he could supply their place with his new troops, came the last Russian invasion. How absurd it would be to draw any conclusion respecting the comparative efficiency of Turkish and Russian soldiers, from the events of that war, may be perceived at a glance. A regular Russian army encountering, not a regular Turkish army, but a rabble of armed Turks, *who had just abandoned their national mode of battle and had not acquired familiarity with even the rudiments of the new system*, cannot by its exploits, give us any criterion whatever by which to judge whether such an army of Russians ought, or ought not, to defeat a proportionately numerous Turkish force, well disciplined, well equipped, and well commanded.

The problem was soon to be solved in a manner which astonished all Europe. Omer Pacha, having duly received notification that war was declared, granted yet three weeks to all neutral flags to pass to and fro on the Danube, and proclaimed that this licence would terminate on the 25th of the month then current, October. All Russian subjects resident in Turkey were placed under Austrian protection. The election of the monk Anthimos to the Patriarchate of Constantinople—although he had two competitors of the Russian party, who would have given 60,000 piasters for the post—shows the feeling which at this date, prevailed in the capital. There was no necessity for our fleets to remain where they unhappily did remain all that year. The Russians were diligently using the Black Sea as a highway for the movement of troops, the re-arrangement of strategic posts, and the transit of provisions, arms, and ammunition. For example, 5,000 Russian soldiers, whom the fleets might have intercepted, were landed in October at Redout Kaleh to succour the army of the Caucasus, and to attack Batoum; and many operations which have since entailed severe fighting and great bloodshed, in Asia as well as in Europe, were by our supineness and hesitation (for we could have paralysed in a moment all those movements) allowed to be quietly accomplished. On the 1st November, M. de la Cour was recalled, and General (now Marshal) Baraguay d'Hilliers appointed Ambassador at Constantinople on the part of the French Emperor.

BATTLE OF OLTENITZA.

It was the next day (November 2d) that Omer Pacha began to cross the Danube. He had been ordered by the Turkish Government to break down all the bridges. That this alone would have been a very inadequate precaution, the finished soldier who was charged with the protection of Turkey, perfectly well knew. But it is very frequently possible to do more towards defending a river on the enemy's side of it than on your own—on the farther, in fact, than on the hither bank. A long line of river cannot, with equal forces, be so guarded as to hinder the enemy from somewhere crossing it in strength; but, firstly, such a position may be taken as to place him at a disadvantage when he does cross; and, secondly, the defender of the river may himself cross, and strike a heavy blow against the enemy in some unguarded and vulnerable point, and then return, to watch for another chance. Omer Pacha adopted both these plans. Establishing securely his communications with the sea through Varna, and rendering Schumla, at the distance of thirty miles inland, impregnable, he collected such a force of infantry and artillery around and within easy reach of that powerful basis, that by always refusing, as military men say, the right wing of his position, and throwing the left forward, which it will be seen he did throughout, he was sure, *at the very least*, of fulfilling his trust, and of defending the remainder of Turkey effectually. For of two things, one—either the troops thus thrown diagonally forward and outward from his left hand would succeed in defeating the Russians, in which case all was well; or the more advanced wing would have to retire. In this case it was diagonally drawn back as it had been thrown forward, gaining more and more strength as the Russians retained less and less, and as it approached the powerful basis of the position, viz. the right flank resting on Schumla, Varna, and the sea. Now either the Russians would, in that position, fight a general battle (and Omer Pacha could not be better pleased than by such a proceeding on their part), or they would retreat to secure their subsistence. To turn Omer Pacha's position by their right, which would be the furthest removed from their magazines and supports, and then, while his army lay unharmed and complete in their rear, to venture by a large circuit, first towards the west, and subsequently southwards, would be to allow him to destroy them at his leisure—which would probably be, before they had arrived, starving, at the foot of the Balkans.

Having taken these defensive precautions and having collected a disposable body sufficient for his purpose, he determined to divert the Russians from passing the Danube, by passing it himself. His sudden presence would compel the enemy to much marching and countermarching, perhaps even to a great concentration of troops—operations not performed without serious fatigue, or without disturbing the combinations, and arresting the more general designs of the hostile commander. Besides all this, he might inflict some direct and severe loss on the enemy. But the great object, was, by a bold movement, to animate and cheer his own troops, and to dispel the delusion of Russian superiority.

The arrogance of Prince Gortschakoff favoured Omer Pacha's project, in two ways; first, to defeat him after he had assumed so high a tone, and after he had spoken of "annihilating the Pagans," would produce only the greater moral effect, if it could be done; and secondly, that very arrogance and oversecurity of the Prince and his Lieutenants, made it more easy to be done. Omer Pacha's first movements perplexed the Russians; and this effect, which was certainly obtained, may excuse a rather too bold extension and projection of that elastic left wing which we have described. The extremity of that wing stretched westward far beyond the junction of the Aluta, and hovered menacingly around Lesser Wallachia: and, if Prince Gortschakoff's commissariat had allowed him to collect the mass of his troops against the centre of so long a line (upwards of 200 miles), he might at once have split it into two and forced the Danube. But in war, time is of as much importance as space; and Omer Pacha was perfectly well informed of the state of the Russian preparations. Add to this that the enemy's position was itself so straggling as to make it less unsafe and less strategically incorrect to diffuse and scatter his own, in pursuance of any objects then in view. Accordingly, he proceeded to seize an island far up to the Danube, between Widdin and Kalafat, where a strong body belonging to his left wing intrenched themselves firmly. Prince Gortschakoff could not conceive what was intended. For the moment his own passage of the Danube, and even took measures to protect his right from being turned, and a disaster incurred in Lesser Wallachia. Taking some troops, he, on the 1st November, hurried to Slatina on the Aluta, and suspended or altered all the plans of his campaign. Omer Pacha, tranquil and firm, saw that amongst other things, the effects of a diversion were produced. Since the 19th of October he had busily but secretly collected 200 gun-boats at Rutschuk, and with these he flung two or three thousand men across, who intrenched themselves near Giurgevo. While the Russians were assembling to storm this position, which was certain to cost them a greater loss than they could inflict, the sword of Omer had but dazzled their eyes. Every push told indeed, but the first few passes were only the bewildering play of a good weapon in a firm and skilful hand, and were intended to secure the opening for a more fatal thrust driven home with greater vigour.

On the 2d of November, and on the 3rd and 4th, he forced his passage fifteen miles lower down from Turkutia to Oltenitza, with 13,000 men. The Russians were numerically much stronger. But they had been, in part, perplexed respecting the designs, and even respecting the presence of the Turkish Generalissimo; in part, they were outmanœuvred during the actual operations, and in part they were beaten fairly on the field. The Turks forced the passage with artillery, held it manfully by the bayonet, and then secured it with spade and pickaxe. The conflict lasted, omitting the intervals which interrupted it, for three-and-twenty hours; and will ever be memorable under the name of the Battle of Oltenitza. It was at the very time during which it was contested that Nicholas was exclaiming in his distant capital, "*non confundar in æternum.*"

The combat, and the manner of it, deserve a special description. At Turtukai, or just below it, the Danube is about 1200 yards across; but there is an island between the two shores, which island is 600 yards distant from the south, and 200 yards distant from the north bank. Now, as the Russian margin of the river descends almost to the water's edge, whereas the Turkish shore rises to the immense height of 600 feet, it is quite evident, that the Russians, had they even occupied that island, could not have kept it for half an hour against the Turkish artillery from the opposite eminence. But they attempted not to occupy it; and Omer Pacha, taking it with perfect security and sensible advantage, planted thereon a strong battery; for the island, though commanded by the south shore, commands the north, and commands it irresistibly. All these operations of Omer were managed with the calmness and precision of an able game of chess; and the step we have just described was the first important move. As it was of decisive value to put in use this battery on the island, so it was equally desirable that it should not play *over* the disembarking Turks—in aim which, if it can be avoided, is too nice and critical for a chance-medley and hand-to-hand encounter, such as was certain to ensue. For this reason, the landing point was chosen not directly in front of the island, but lower down, and to the right, so that the battery mentioned should effectually protect the Turkish left, by enfilading its assailants. To protect the Turkish right, the largest guns which Omer possessed were placed by him in battery on the south shore still lower down. They had to clear a range of 1200 yards. The Turks thus protected, and at first only 2000 strong, crossed one river, but landed from the waters of two. A little stream, called the Argish, flowing from the north, seems to refuse the Danube just as it is about to fall into that great river, and, taking a short parallel sweep to the east, then turns again to the south for a few yards, and effects its confluence. Here the Turks landed, and spreading somewhat to the left, had, of course, on that flank and in their rear the bending stream of the Argish. In front of their left and of their centre, the ground was full of copsewood—in front of their right it was open. They had intrenched themselves by ten o'clock in the morning of November 2d.

At eleven o'clock, a cloud of Cossack skirmishers attacked them, and were followed by four columns of infantry and twenty cannon. Large masses of cavalry immediately afterwards appeared against the right of the Turks, the only part of the field where horse could manœuvre. We need say no more; the nature of the position speaks for itself. The Russians could on that day collect but 8000 men, and these were with case repulsed; for, though the occupants of the intrenchments were but 3000, that number was sufficient, with the advantage of their field works; and there was the protection of the river batteries besides. Next day the Russians were in greater number, but the Turks had also been reinforced incessantly, and, moreover the intrenchments were stronger. Omer Pacha gained a second victory, precisely like the first. On the 4th of November, the third and greatest attack was made. The Russians were now 20,000 strong, while Omer had flung into this venturesome and forward outpost all the men he could spare, amounting to 18,000.

A very protracted and desperate engagement ensued. There was, what even Frenchmen and Englishmen would call, real fighting. The Turkish left was impregnable, and as it was both very uniwiting, and had in front of it covered ground and brushwood, where the enemy lay, the carnage was was here not great. But on the Turkish right, which was assailed over an open and level space, a fearful slaughter ensued. The Russian infantry tried to storm this side. When first advancing, they were mowed down in whole companies by the Turkish artillery from the south bank; on their nearer approach the fire of the Turkish musketry, and even pistol shots, discharged from behind a cover which forbade any effective retaliation, continued to shake their array and thin their ranks. But "they would not be refused." They reached (in some disorder, it is true, and much weakened, but still they reached) the foot of the earth-works. At this time the, Osmanlis had hardly lost a man since morning. A sudden shout arose among them, they leaped over their own intrenchments, and charged the astonished, decimated, and already half-broken assailants with the bayonet, routing them completely. The movement could not extend far, on account of the Russian cavalry, which prohibited all pursuit. In many respects, it was a very peculiar contest; and we can account for the smallness of the number slain, on the side of the Turks. It is stated to have been under twenty. The Russians lost a thousand men. Omer Pacha all this time, showed the temperament of a Turk, instead of that of a German, which he is. He is an Austrian of the name of *Lattas*, a soldier of fortune, who has become a great General, and has secured to himself already, a considerable place in history. During the engagement, he remained on his own side of the river. He had taken every measure in his power. He had done what he could do to ensure victory; and he now watched the varying phases of the action, while smoking his pipe. He was quietly seated on the high ground, with a celebrated stranger, who was present through motives of professional curiosity—General Prim, the Spaniard. They gazed on the scene through telescopes, seated with their feet comfortably stretched towards a large wood fire. They saw the test fight of an army hitherto untried, and they saw its victory.

Our endeavour has been so to describe the operations of this memorable day that a civilian might understand them. We wish our readers also to appreciate withdiscrimination the abilities of Omer Pacha. His military genius is solid, rather than dazzling.

After this event, the Turkish position seemed to be, for some time, that of assailants, much more than of men acting on the defensive. They occupied both sides of the Danube, in the most important places. We have seen how they stood at Turtukai and Oltenitza. These Turks were but part of the same division which held Rustchuk and Giurgevo, and were led by Omer in person. Sistova, Nicopolis, and Rahova were also in their hands. They had, under the command of Ismail Pacha, crossed the river at Widdin, and not only had seized Kalafat, but had entered Kalarasch with 5000 men. They had placed two thousand men on an island, as though they would hold both the banks, and likewise what lay between.

Nine days elapsed before the Russians ventured again to attack the Turkish redoubt between Oltenitza and the river. They were waiting for reinforcements. The season was now growing late; but as rapidly as its rigours would allow, large reinforcements were poured from Bessarabia into the Principalities. These were not the reinforcements to which we allude, and which the Russians at Oltenitza were awaiting; they expected strategic succours rather, which they could command by the recall of their scattered divisions, and the reparation of Prince Gortschakoff's mistakes. On the 14th, they again attacked the stubborn intrenchments. General Engelhardt had arrived with the reserves. They were repulsed with loss. They then endeavoured to mask the position; and, by getting possession of the island for even an hour, to force this out-garrison, on their own bank, to lay down its arms. All these attempts were unsuccessful; and, on the 14th of November, they were even forced to look more to defence and less to attack; for, on that day, the Turks had the spirit and strength to make an outburst; and, having fallen upon Oltenitza itself, and ravaged its suburbs, retired without loss. On the 26th, Omer Pacha established a bridge between the south shore and the island of Mokau or Mokaunon, higher up the Danube, not far from Giurgevo; and, about the same time, he withdrew the troops which were in position on the farther bank in front of Turtukai, and under Oltenitza; and though retaining also the island of Ramadan, he was obliged to concentrate his soldiers rather more, in the face of the ever-increasing numbers of the enemy.

A GENERAL SURVEY.

This was the true situation of affairs when an absurd rumour, which arrived on the 17th November, threw London and all England into commotion, after having terrified Vienna and excited the Continent. It was reported that, by a series of most brilliant victories—the details of which were at present wanting, but likely to come by the next mail—the Turks had driven the Russians with great carnage *beyond* Bucharest, which was on fire "in three places." The circumstantial appearance of this statement reflects credit on the judgment of its inventors—who had doubtless their motives for paltering so shamefully with the public anxiety. Similar fabrications, such as that the Turks had advanced towards Krajova, offering a battle which General Hubbuck declined, sustained the wonder of distant cities, while the Turks were very prudently drawing more together, and evacuating Oltenitza, Giurgevo, and Kalarsch. In reality, Omer Pacha was reducing the length of his line; but he took care both to conceal the movement, and to strike whatever blows fortune permitted. He still held Kalafat, while, at a distance of nearely three hundred miles from that position by the convex road which he was obliged to use (though at a much shorter distance through Wallachia), he gave the Russians a severe check at Matchin, in the north of the Dobrudscha, facing Braïlow. The enemy began to respect a man, to whom they ascribed the endowment of ubiquity. Ubiquity, however, is not true generalship; and the quasi-ubiquity of rendering it impossible to the Russians to guess where they should meet him next,—this, with what might result from rapidity of movement was the only ubiquity to which Omer Pacha aspired.

The Russians imagined that they had built a house, where they indeed had but pitched a tent; and, as if they were permanently fixed in the Principalities, General Budbergh was now nominated by the Czar, President of the Civil Administration of Moldavia. The appointment was worth one year's purchase.

A little incident occurred on the 17th, in which we think we recognise Russian agency; we allude to the reconciliation, at Frohsdorf, between "Henry the Fifth" on the one part, and (in the name of the whole Orleans family), the Duc de Nemours, on the other. The reconciliation took place seven years too late. We doubt, if it could ever have prevented the reign of Napoleon III.; but certainly it has not shaken his throne.

For a fortnight nothing of importance happened; though it is worth while to mention, that the Russian war-ship, *Vladimir*, whose daring and skilful sally afterwards from Sebastopol (when we supposed that port to be securely blockaded by the Anglo-French squadrons) extorted the admiration of Europe; that same ship *Vladimir* on the 20th November, 1853, spread terror along the Bulgarian coast, where she captured and carried away a Turkish pepper vessel and an Egyptian war-steamer of ten guns.

SOMETHING STRANGE.—Half the evil in this world comes from people not knowing what they do like, not deliberately setting themselves to find out what they really enjoy. All people enjoy giving away money, for instance; they don't know *that*—they rather think they like keeping it; and they *do* keep it under this *false* impression, often to their great discomfort. Everybody likes to do good, but not one in a hundred finds *this* out. Multitudes think they like to *do* evil; yet no man ever really enjoyed evil since God made the world.

Swearing.—He who swears tells us that his bare word is not to be credited.