

CONTINENTAL TOPICS.

THE RECENT MURDERS AT SALONICA

FRENCH PRESS DISCUSSION—HEATED TONE OF THE JOURNALS—THE TWO SIDES OF THE STORY—THE LEGISLATORS AT VERSAILLES—AN INGENUOUS RASCAL WHO FAILS OF HIS PURPOSE.

From Our Own Correspondent.

PARIS, Wednesday, May 10, 1876.

Public opinion in Europe is greatly excited by the murder of the Consuls at Salonica, the ancient capital of Macedonia. A majority of the journals, with that want of forethought and reflection which too often belongs to our profession, have been denouncing Turkey in the strongest terms on account of this tragic event, and calling for the immediate interference of the European powers. The *République Française* cries aloud for prompt action. *Le Nord*, the Russian organ in Belgium, is equally emphatic. "Whatever may have been the beginning of this affair," it says, "the blood of the two murdered Consuls cries aloud for vengeance, and nothing can be urged to lessen the gravity of such a crime. This event furnishes a new argument, of regrettable eloquence, in favor of granting autonomy to the Turkish provinces in behalf of the Christian populations. Nothing else can now stop these daily conflicts, which must sooner or later end in even greater catastrophes." This journal goes on to urge an immediate reorganization of the vassal States of the Porte. The *Journal des Débats* says that if the material struggle is confined to Bosnia and Herzegovina, it still excites passions throughout the country, the intensity and violence of which can be measured by the catastrophe of Salonica. If this struggle continues, who can guarantee that the fire will not be propagated in all parts of European and Asiatic Turkey where the Christian populations are side by side with the Mussulmans. To-day we have assassination, to-morrow it will be a general massacre. The *Débats* adds:

"It seems to us that in presence of such a state of things the enclitic policy is no longer worth while, and rose-water notes entirely inadequate. It has now become very evident that the Turks are incapable of mastering an insurrection which finds support from without, in two little States protected in a special manner by foreign powers."

This journal concludes that the propitious moment has come for taking from the dominant race in Turkey its sovereign powers. Since all Europe seems animated by the same desires, why should the great powers remain simple spectators? The conflagration has at length broken out, why hesitate to bring out the fire-engines?

This is the general tone of the Continental press, and a moment's reflection will show us that there is more passion than reflection in this view. The Salonica affair is a mere incident, as much regretted by the Porte as by any one, and should have no great weight in the settlement of the Eastern question. It is useless to grow indignant over an unfortunate event which might have happened yesterday, which may be repeated to-morrow, and which comes as a natural consequence from the state of society in the East that has existed for many years. When the Mussulmans were indisputably the dominant race, the Christians were outraged and oppressed; now that the two parties are nearly equal, such conflicts must occur until one party becomes dominant. In the history of our relations with the East such incidents have been frequent enough, yet they have never had any great effect upon the general policy of Europe. And such things frequently occur in relations with other countries. Under the Directory, after Campo-Formio, the Government of France frequently sent Talleyrand to consult with Bonaparte about foreign relations. This was done in the office of Bernadotte, then Ambassador to Vienna, who, before the passions of the war had had time to cool, raised the French tri-color above his doors. The mob assembled and Bernadotte was grievously insulted. He would have been massacred had he been within reach of the crowd. The Directory was inclined to declare war upon Austria at once, but Gen. Bonaparte was consulted. He replied:

"If you want to make war upon Austria, for solid reasons, independent of these facts, then declare it. But you certainly do not desire it. Neither can you admit that this Vienna riot is the prelude to an aggression on the part of Austria. You ought to know the policy of her government: if she wanted to make an attack upon you she would not rouse your attention; she would begin by allaying your suspicions. Gen. Bernadotte has committed a thoughtless act. That is merely an incident, and incidents should never control our general policy. Demand satisfaction, and you will obtain it."

Pretty much the same language might be used in the present case. If the great powers want to interfere with Turkey they can find many solid reasons for so doing, but the affair of Salonica is a mere incident, and cannot be made the excuse for war. If satisfaction is demanded the Porte will hasten to give it in the fullest and speediest way.

The first dispatches from Constantinople were very unsatisfactory, and showed how much the Porte had the matter at heart. An attempt was first made to throw the responsibility upon the American Consul, who sided with the Christians and instigated the riot; and, secondly, the Consuls were said to have been murdered in the mosque. This is throwing blame upon them, for the representatives of foreign powers are forbidden to enter these sacred places. If they did so, therefore, they took their lives in their hands; but it turns out that they were murdered in the street. Great stress is laid upon the action of the United States Consul. We have no Consul at Salonica. The Consular Agent there is Haggi-Lazaro, a wealthy Bulgarian resident, whose sisters were married to the two men murdered. One is the wife of M. Moulin, the French Consul, and the other married a young Englishman named Henry Abbott, who was, through the influence of the family, appointed German Consul for Salonica. The German Government has had occasion to praise him on three different occasions, and he was greatly appreciated as an official. M. Moulin, formerly Vice Consul at Jaffa, was only thirty-nine years of age, and was generally esteemed in the French Consular Corps. His mother is still living in Paris, and the Duc Decazes sent the news of his death to her on Sunday evening last. Being a native, and belonging to a prominent Christian family, our Consular Agent was naturally identified with the religious quarrels and feuds of the town, where the Christians are now in the majority. Two stories about the commencement of the quarrel are given. The first comes from Stamboul, and is based upon the report of the Governor General of Salonica. According to it a young Bulgarian girl wished to go over to Islamism and arrived in Salonica by railway. There she was met by a squad of Lapties, (gendarmes,) who were escorting her to the Governor General's palace, when they were attacked by a crowd gathered together by the American Consular Agent. He took the girl to his own house, which was besieged by a mob of Mussulmans. The people collected in the mosque, and sent a deputation to the Governor General to demand the girl. Before he arrived the French and German Consuls entered the mosque, and the crowd were so enraged that they fell upon them with bars of iron wrenched from the windows. When the Governor arrived with his troops the two men were dead, but he came in time to save the house of the American Consul.

Such is the Ottoman side of the story. On the other hand, it is reported that the American Consul Agent was out walking in the morning, when he heard piercing cries for help, and saw a young Bulgarian girl struggling with a band of Lapties. Calling upon the crowd to help him, he rushed to her rescue, and carried her off to his house. To ascertain what part of the responsibility rests upon him, we must sift these two stories and find out whether or not the girl was willingly going to turn Mussulman. Such things are of very frequent occurrence, and generally have love and marriage for a reason. A young Christian girl falls in love with a Mussulman and abjures her religion for the sake of marrying him. It may appear strange that this girl should have been met at the station by the Police, but this is the custom of the country. In all such cases the girl who has sent word that she wishes to go over to Islamism is met in this way and escorted to the palace of the Governor General. There she is questioned and given the necessary legal authority, after which she is escorted to the mosque for the religious part of the ceremony. The question now is whether this girl was proceeding of her own accord, or whether she was

being forced to become a Mussulman and appealed to him for aid. The Porte has announced its intention of doing the fullest justice, no matter to what class the criminals may belong, and to indemnify the families of the murdered men. In the case of the officials murdered in 1858, the French Government demanded 300,000 francs indemnity for the widow of the Consul, and probably the same or a larger sum will have to be paid to each of the widows in this case.

To-day the two houses of Parliament again assembled at Versailles, and our political discussions once more begin. We have had a long period of relative calm, and it has been rather enjoyed. Not much work will be done for a day or two, as the bureaux have to be reconstituted; but the question of general amnesty will be put among the first upon the order of the day. A month ago I thought that the first work would be to vote down the Ricard Ministry, but the Minister of the Interior has staved off the evil day by the publication of his three circulars, all of them being Republican enough to please even the Radicals. If M. Ricard goes on in this way the Left will be very glad to leave him in office. He has certainly attained the maximum of concessions that could be reasonably demanded for a time. He has been two months in office, and has turned out some twenty Prefects, displaced some fifty more, and is now attacking the minor functionaries of the Administration. Nor is this all, for he has demanded the resignation of all the Municipal Magistrates appointed from outside the local Councils, and imposed upon all his officials an obligation to openly declare themselves Republicans, and ordered them to act and talk on all occasions as if the Republic was definitely established. Moreover, this Cabinet has revived the law on secondary instruction in a sense opposed to the clergy; it has applied the principle of obligatory education demanded by the Republicans, and, finally, it has raised the state of siege. This is a fair amount of work for two months' time, and the Left would be ungrateful indeed not to appreciate the services of M. Ricard.

In all great cities there is a class of persons who get a living by swindling and by blackmail, but perhaps this class is more numerous here than elsewhere. A noted operator has just been caught and an interesting story revealed to the public. Generally he succeeded in getting his money, but in this instance he failed. One of the noted ladies in our best society, a Baroness and the possessor of a very large fortune, was surprised the other morning to receive a note to this effect: "Madame: Through hazard an extremely compromising letter written by you has just fallen into my hands. There are men who would demand twenty thousand francs in exchange for it; I shall content myself with one thousand." The lady read no further, but ordered her carriage and drove to the office of the Commissary of the quarter. He read the letter, which was not signed, and asked the lady if she had an idea of its origin. She had none in the world. In that case it would be difficult to catch the rascal. "If you are daring enough to aid me," the Commissary said, "we can accomplish it." The Baroness had nothing to reproach herself with, and agreed to put herself at the service of justice. On the second page the writer told the Baroness that she must go to a certain omnibus bureau with a thousand-franc bill folded in her hand so that it could be seen. At a stated hour a man would come to her and say, "If you please," when she was to follow him out, and take her letter in exchange for the money. At the appointed time the Baroness went to the bureau, accompanied by the Commissary, who had posted his agents near by. Presently a young and well-dressed man entered with a cigar in his mouth, and began to look around. He saw the bill, and, going near the Baroness, said, "If you please." She followed him out, and just as his hand touched the bill the hand of the Commissary fell upon his collar, and the two agents pounced upon him. This young man's profession had made him daring and cynical. He declared that he had no letter, and never did have in such cases, his plan being to say that the letter was left with a friend at the nearest café, and when once started in that direction with the money in his hand, it was easy to get away. Most ladies, he said, felt guilty, and did not dare to complain. When asked why he had pitched upon a lady of so good a reputation as the Baroness, he said that he did not exactly know; he had once had relations with her *femme de chambre*, and knew that she was rich and generous; she went a great deal into society, and might have written some imprudent notes; at all events he had concluded to try her, and had had bad luck. This was the first time that any lady had dared to complain, and he had pocketed many a thousand-franc bill. It is not at all probable that this rascal will get his deserts, but it is to be hoped that the law will give the Magistrates latitude enough to stop his career for at least two years.