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## MY FRIEND THE TURK

BY H. G. DWIGHT

### I. DOUML DOUML

CONSTANTINOPLE, in September, reminded me of the Balkan War. It was all flags and soldiers and tooting and drumming, and nobody had any idea what was going on, and the most baroque stories ran about from mouth to mouth in the true Mediterraneo-Asiatic fashion. Only the suspense was of a different color this time. There was so new a feeling in the air that I, who am an insatiate snapshotter, locked up my camera. Time was when it amused me to get arrested, and the story of my prisons would outdo Silvio Pellico. But that innocent time is no more. I firmly resolved that I would do nothing to irritate the police if they would do nothing to irritate me. They looked much more determined than I remembered them. They were also much less polite toward foreigners. That was what the flags were about, really. Incidentally they meant the Sultan's birthday, — the birthday of Papa Thankyou, as some people irreverently call him. He came to the throne late in life, after many years of hardship and humbling at the hands of his iron elder brother; and I suppose it seemed so wonderful to him to have enough money and to see everybody bow to him, that he kept saying what was in his simple Turkish heart: 'I remained grateful.' He has remained grateful ever since, and his courtiers rather laugh at him for it, poor dear, while they are secretly glad that he is like that, and the most manageable of Papas. So for

his birthday present they gave him the Capitulations.

I was just too late for the demonstration in honor of this strange beast, which many people insisted on calling 'catipulation' — or 'catipoulationne,' if you will pronounce it, as they did, in a French manner. Most of them took it to be a town in France which had been taken by the Germans, and rejoiced accordingly. Luckily I was not too late to hear an English friend of mine interview one of the demonstrators on the subject, a wiry Laz lighterman of the harbor, who reported that he and his brothers in the guild had been told to come on such and such a day to such and such a place and carry a flag. Why were they to carry flags, we inquired? How, he replied, should he know? It was the order. Some said it was to frighten the bakers, who had been baking short weight.

Another friend of mine, who first knew of the great event by the flags in his quarter, went to find out what they meant. The first man he asked said they celebrated the fall of the Moratorium, the two foreign words being equally vague to the lay Turkish mind. A second said that the Italians had taken Paris! The third did pronounce the unpronounceable word; but there was fair ground to question whether he had any more idea of what a Capitulation might be than you, intelligent Western reader. Because you are Western and intelligent it is not for me to take your time by giving you an account of those old treaties which the

Turks suddenly found means to abrogate. I may say, however, that they made it possible for foreigners to establish their own post-offices in Turkey, to live there without being taxed or tried like the people of the country, and otherwise to multiply states within the state. And I, for one, cannot find it in my heart to blame the Turks, really, for seizing so good a chance to take their own affairs into their own hands.

Meanwhile the drumming went on and on, — such drumming as can go on only in that land of drums, where half the people cannot read and where notices are given out by the same night watchmen who cry the news of fires. For fires, though, they don't drum. So that eternal pounding, generally at night, sounded all the hollower and more fateful. It began again one evening when I was sitting in a coffee-house. Two Turks sat at the next table. '*Douml douml*!' exclaimed one of them. 'What is this *douml douml*? We heard *douml douml*, and Bulgaria went. And then we heard *douml douml*, and Crete went. And then we heard *douml douml*, and Tripoli went. And then we heard *douml douml*, and Macedonia went. And now we hear *douml douml* and Constantinople will go — and I'm going too,' he added, getting up, suddenly remembering that it was not well to discuss the affairs of the empire before too many ears. For there were listeners abroad in the land, and they got more than one coffee-house politician into trouble. But the *douml douml* went on, night after night, calling for soldiers, calling for blankets, calling for winter underclothes, calling for men between twenty and forty of those who are able to carry pianos on their backs, calling for masons and carpenters and stovermen, calling even — and very insistently — for people who could speak German.

It was no wonder, for never in my

life did I see so many Germans, outside of Germany — or New York — or Venice in the mating-season. A lot of them wore uniforms and swaggered about in motor cars, preferably in those requisitioned from English residents. The fat scion of a certain great Turkish house whispered to me that the soldiers did not love the German officers too much. For your Turk, while enduring past endurance and obedient to the death, is a very human creature, if slow-moving in mind and body; and while he does his best to understand a foreign accent and even to gulp down those prepared mixtures known to him as German soup, it goes against his grain to be cuffed, or haply to be shot, for failing to salute with sufficient promptness. There were more Germans out of uniform than in, however, looking very intelligent and highly competent and rather mysterious. And the Goeben and the Breslau, or, if you like, the Yavouz Selim and the Midillü — which, being interpreted, are the Grim Selim and the Mitylene — strutted up and down the Bosphorus, under Turkish flags to be sure, but with German eagles emblazoned on their bows and dozens of German sailor-caps moving about their decks. Even when the sailors began masquerading as Turks, the way they wore their fezzes betrayed them when their faces did not.

What did it all mean? For even after the Turks allowed their front door — the Dardanelles — to be banged and bolted in everybody's nose, we were still simple enough to wonder which way the Turkish cat would jump. For the moment it meant neutrality, if you please, — a kind of neutrality which forbade the British naval mission supposed to be instructing the Turkish navy to board any Turkish ship. So the British naval mission, on the day before a certain festive naval review of which the chief figure was the Goeben-

Selim, quietly packed its Gladstone bags and departed, having contrived to get itself recalled in a manner which I hope is true. It ought to be, because a parson told me he suggested it. The naval mission expected to go, sooner or later, but wanted to be recalled before it was dismissed, and had no sure means of stating its case in a hurry to the Admiralty, mails and cables being very closely watched in those uncertain days. The parson accordingly proposed this cryptic telegram: 'Two Timothy four six seven wire twenty-one.' Which a properly brought-up Admiralty was able to read: 'For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.' And to answer in the sense of the last verse: 'Do thy diligence to come before winter. Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren.'

I must confess it sounds a little too good to be true — for even a parson may be gifted with imagination.

## II. THE CAT JUMPS

I shall always remember the gray October morning when I heard, through a window framed by yellowing rose leaves, of the raid in the Black Sea. I said nothing to the other people in the house. Again I said nothing when I was called away from the lunch table and told that certain English friends of the house were leaving at once for Dedeh Aghach, the Bulgarian port on the Ægean which had become the side door of Constantinople. Then the news came a third time, and not to me. And we all shared an impression of something grave and irreparable and portentous beyond all discerning.

The Germans chose their moment very well. They chose the feast of *Kourban Baïram*, the greatest of all

Mohammedan, or of all Sunnite, feasts, when the ceremonies of pilgrimage culminate at Mecca and when in Constantinople the Sultan, after the early morning sacrifice, holds a great levee of the grandees of the empire. The Germans chose their moment perhaps even better than they knew, for when the first day of *Kourban Baïram* falls on a Friday there is held to be something peculiarly significant about it. On this Friday, at all events, when the news came out of the previous day's attack on the Russians, the levee was said to be unwontedly impressive. It might well be, since not a few of those present must have asked themselves whether they would ever again do homage to the Sultan in Dolma Ba'hcheh Palace. It was also said that more than one voice was raised in that august assembly against the commission of acts of war without the knowledge of the country. Be that as it may, there is no doubt that very few in the country had been in the secret, and that very many of them were greatly perturbed. None of the confidence with which they went into the Balkan War was visible. The Bulgarians had cured them of that. Silence and grave faces were everywhere, and an anxious questioning whether the irreparable might not yet be repaired, as the motors scurried back and forth between embassies and ministries. On Saturday night, however, the Russian Ambassador broke off negotiations and went away.

The only alternative, of course, would have been for the Germans to go away. But there were too many of them, and by that time only cannon could have driven them away. The Goeben showed me that, out of all her lighted portholes. Without any haste, perfectly at home, she sauntered softly down the Bosphorus that evening, the big gray naughty cat, licking her lips and purring audibly after her pounce in the Black Sea.

On Sunday night the other two ambassadors left. I went to see them go; for the departure of recalled ambassadors at the outbreak of an extension of a world war is not, thank heaven, a thing that happens every day. Also, I wanted to see how the Turks would take it. They took it as they usually take things, gravely, without a sign of the popular feeling shown in Vienna and Berlin last August when the English and French ambassadors went away. What was equally characteristic was the lack of any adequate arrangements at the station, and the consequent delay of the diplomatic train for nearly an hour beyond the time at which it was scheduled to leave. Which only heightened, perhaps, the sense that bore down upon me anew, of how untheatrically life does dramatic things. Sirkeji station never looked dirtier, or less like the proper setting for a historic rupture, while any stage super would have shown more interest in his rôle than the gray-coated police on guard.

The same need not be said of the crowd that filled the station. They were mostly English and French residents, with their wives, their children, and their hand-bags, all dying to get across the frontier and all doubtful whether the Turks would let them. The Turks did not, that night, in spite of the promises they had made to the contrary. It suddenly occurred to them that they might lose some of the money the refugees owed them for income taxes. Great, therefore, was the resultant confusion, — the greater because the police, politely enough but firmly, first tried to clear the station, without completely succeeding, and then tried to keep out the arriving ambassadors and their official families. The three or four minor dignitaries present who might have known who anybody was, kept discreetly to themselves on the outer platform. It accordingly devolved up-

on the attachés of the American Embassy to be masters of ceremonies. Not all of them spoke Turkish, and they had difficulty in rescuing their own chief from the claws of the gray-coats. That I saw with my own eyes. I also saw M. Bompard and Sir Louis Malet push their own way into the station. The young men of their suites, several of them bearing historic names in France and England, likewise bore such loads of luggage as assuredly they had never staggered under before in their lives. I don't suppose that it did the young men any harm, or that they really minded. It merely underscored the general muddle.

When the last person who held a ticket for the diplomatic train was seated in it, the station doors were left unguarded, and those who had been shut out before rushed back, hoping against hope that they might still be allowed to leave by the promised second train. One poor French lady, who seemed to have no friends, ran up and down distractedly, showing her passport to everybody and sobbing that it was in order. The police were now drawn up in line facing the train, on the farther side of the platform railing. She clutched the arm of one of them, through the bars, imploring him to let her board the train. He looked around once and then showed no further consciousness of her existence. A French secretary's wife, taking pity on her, tried to comfort her and to explain that only officials and those related to them were leaving by this train. 'But I also am French!' cried the unhappy one on the wrong side of the bars. When at last the train began to move, she fainted away. She at least, poor terrified creature, showed a sensitiveness to a situation! But at that moment of sudden silence, as the light from compartment windows flickered down the platform, I think no one there, not even in the impassive line of

gray-coats drawn up at attention, can have been without some sense of an irrevocable severing, and of all that dark old imperial town had known of human ebb and flow, and of something strange in the air past all account — as of a stirring of the wind of destiny. And when the tail lights of the train went out in the Seraglio cut and we turned to go home, it seemed to me like having turned a corner. The rising buzz of talk was now all about war. We heard that the Russians had crossed the frontier of the Caucasus and that shots had been exchanged at the Dardanelles.

### III. HOLY WAR ALLA FRANCA

My fainting French lady got away. The American Ambassador saw to that, vowing that if the promised train did not leave, he would leave himself. It is not my business to be a press agent, but I must confess to an ingenuous welling of patriotic pride, and to a suspicion of something new in the annals of diplomacy, when the staffs of the Embassy, the Consulate General, and the dispatch boat, headed usually by the chief in person, turned up at Sirkeji many successive mornings and nights, — at hours when other official people were enjoying their beauty sleep or dressing for dinner, — to see that the Turks kept their word and that the refugees departed in what peace they might. The flight of I know not how many hundred of these was further sweetened by presents of Turkish Delight. And altogether the representatives of our country in troubled Stamboul must have heard such pretty speeches and read such grateful letters as will make their ears burn for the rest of their days.

At the same time it must be granted that very little of this could have happened, and that so many Englishmen and Frenchmen of military age would never have got away, if the Turks had

chosen to be less magnanimous, — especially when the Germans were at their elbow to point out the true way of treating belligerents. If there was policy in it, a policy foreseeing the day when peace would be reëstablished and when money would again be required from France and England, the fact remains that your Turk, after all, is not so black as he is painted. And while he has done and will yet do many incredibly stupid things, I cannot in my inmost heart help feeling sorry for him.

Among other memorable days of that memorable period I recollect very vividly the one, a fortnight after the outbreak of hostilities, when I heard, rather in the manner of *The Ring and the Book*, at a belligerent dinner-table, the day's story of the launching of the Holy War. Every one had some item to contribute about the gathering at the mosque of the Conqueror; or the solemn reading of *fetvas*, the justificatory questions and answers that had lain twenty-four hours in the sanctuary of the relics of the Prophet; or the mingling of Turkish and Austrian and German flags; or the marching to the Sublime Porte, the Seraglio, and the two friendly embassies; or the various speeches; or the final breaking of belligerent windows and the wrecking of a technically belligerent hotel, to say nothing of the destruction, earlier in the day, of the Russian war memorial of 1878. The last items were the ones that most impressed our imaginations on that uncanny November night. We all knew something of other holy wars. The owner of several of the broken windows was of our number; and at the end of the evening another American and I walked home with him, that his very adequate fists might have the moral support of our neutrality in case any one should attempt to interfere with him or with the important dispatch case he carried. I may add that no one did so, although, to the

several police and military patrols we passed, the hour must have seemed somewhat unusual for promenades with dispatch cases on lonely quays. And the next day the window-breaking part of the Holy War was publicly disavowed, and the owner of the dispatch case received profuse apologies from high quarters, being furthermore begged to remain in Constantinople and continue his business without fear of molestation. Nor was his altogether an exceptional instance, if one may judge from a proclamation which I saw later. The proclamation, issued to the people of Palestine, closed with these remarkable words: 'The goods, the life, the honor, and especially the individual rights of the subjects of the states at war with us are also under the guaranty of our national honor. I therefore shall not allow the least aggression toward these. . . . May God give success to Islam.'

Allah indeed is great, if Islam can be addressed in words such as these on the subject of holy war. The Germans must have counted not a little on that old bogey which they pulled out of the dust of the Turkish cupboard. It looked grim enough when it was first pulled out, as I have just borne witness. But it has quite lost its first grimness, for reasons to which I have also borne witness. A real holy war, against all Christendom, Islam might perhaps rise and wage with enthusiasm. But a holy war of tendernesses strange to European battlefields, against a fraction only of Christendom, waged in unnatural alliance with another fraction of Christendom, of which a lesser fraction lately wrested away a bleeding member of Islam — that is a holy war which Islam can scarcely be expected to comprehend. The case was rather amusingly put by an old Turkish servant of friends of mine, whom the proclamation of holy war threw into great doubt and distress

of mind. He had long eaten the bread of his Christian masters, as he expressed it, and he loved their children like his own. Yet if his caliph commanded him to up and slay them — He went away one day exceeding sorrowful, not knowing how to harmonize his two allegiances. But he came smiling back the next morning, having settled the matter overnight in a coffee-house. This holy war, it appeared, was holy war not *alla turca* but *alla franca* (those old Italian terms are still current in Turkish). Therefore there was no need for him to refuse his master's bread!

That damaging little word, I fancy, must have gone around more than one coffee-house. It betrays in its own way the changing air that has blown over Turkey since the days when ambassadors of unfriendly states were thrown, at the outbreak of war, into the Seven Towers. I think it is unfair for us of the West not to recognize the fact. I am even unfashionable enough to think there is something to be said in favor of the young man who more than any other Turk is supposed to be responsible for this new holy war. Enver Pasha may be vain and ambitious. Most men, and especially most men under thirty-five, are. It is also likely enough that he has made mistakes. His entire career, nevertheless, from the time when, as a subaltern in Smyrna, he quelled an incipient riot, to his recent reorganization of the army and wholesale retirement of elderly or incompetent officers, proves him to have the courage of his convictions. He has never failed in decision or independence of judgment. How common are such men in any land? And no one can seriously criticize him for doing what seems to him best to raise the fallen fortunes of his country. If his personal sympathies happen to be German, it cannot be said that England or France or Russia has done very much to win them.

This is not the place for me to go into the long and complicated story of international intrigue in Constantinople during the past generation. But I may point out one perfectly legitimate reason why German influence has prevailed, if only for a moment: Germany possesses no territory which once belonged to the Turks, and does not rule one Mohammedan subject.

The real trouble, of course, with Enver Pasha and his patriotic Young Turks is that their fundamental thesis is untenable — except for themselves. When they perorate about the sacred soil of their fathers and weep over their lost provinces, it is affecting because they really mean it. But no one not a Turk can sympathize with them very deeply. For their lost provinces were as little Turkish as anything could be, and if the sacred soil of their fathers exists anywhere it is hardly in the empire they rule. If time and antiquity of sentiment count for anything, the soil of that empire is far more sacred to the Greeks, to the Armenians, to the Kürds, to the Arabs, to all the other people who were there centuries before the Turks broke out of the East. No amount of oratory or patriotism can change that cold indestructible fact. And therein, my poor Turks young and old, whom I truly love, lies your tragedy. You are squatters in fields which are not your own, and your own have been too long lost for you to find again. Time was, perhaps, when you might, by killing or forcibly converting the men whose lands you invaded, have made those lands your own. But that time is past. It is too late now to convert or to destroy a nation. Your only chance is to build up a civilization superior to those about you. Are you equal to it? I fear the empire that bears your name cannot remain yours for ever, because there are too few of you in it, and you have there too few rights. To raise the

cry of Turkey for the Turks is mere blindness and chauvinism. Nothing, in the long run, can come of it, — until you, or what is left of you, in some corner of what was once your stolen empire, form a compact and practically homogeneous people.

#### IV. THRACE

It is unnecessary to recount the increasingly sombre changes in the color of Constantinople whereby a sketcher in sketch-books was drawn to muse with sympathy on his native land. His native land, to be sure, is one where you may not say what you mean, or wear what you choose, or build a wall around your garden, without getting into more trouble than such eccentricities are worth. But it is a land where at least you don't have to think twice before putting a lump of sugar into your coffee or throwing away a pair of shoe-laces; where such money as is coming to you comes; where you may post or receive letters in the English language; where no censor decorates with big black splotches the little mail that dribbles through to you; where the police do not look at you askance and strangely for carrying a notebook and sometimes scribbling in it; where your house is not searched and researched at all hours of day and night for wireless telegraphy; and where you do not have to burn most of your papers and hide the rest for fear of getting your friends into trouble.

A land so rich in the lesser liberties of life was not to be reached, however, without much visitation of police and consular offices, without argument as to whether a neutral had or had not the right to transport baggage from one part of the town to another, and without my being held up at last so long on an open drawbridge that I expected to miss my train. Even then it

was doubtful whether there would be a train to miss, for the Bulgarians had been doing something on their side of the border. Also, Enver Pasha had complained that it was much too easy for people to get away and carry out news. Every few days the trains were accordingly suppressed, without notice. Mine happened not to be suppressed, and I caught it, — after the police had added another *visa* to my already richly colored passport and had looked through my luggage. The man who did the latter found nothing to be concerned about except some film-packs that had come by post from England and had never been opened. He tore off the envelope of one, and then tore into the pasteboard case of the film-pack. He was a little alarmed by the visible darkening of the films, until reassured by a more experienced associate. So he carefully wrapped up the film-pack for me again. But I confess I had the bad manners to throw it into his wood-box.

I have always loved to go into or out of Stamboul by train, for the quaint water-side quarters through which you pass, half shut in by the battered old Byzantine walls, but giving you every now and then, through unexpected breaches, a glimpse of the Marmora and its sails and its islands swimming afar. On this cold gray November morning it all took a tinge from the day and from my mood, and I could not help wondering what dark unhappy things would happen there before I came again. We whistled through a last breach in the land wall, continued to skirt the Marmora for a little, then turned inland and climbed the bare heights of Chatalja. They were scarred with trenches, some the old ones of the Balkan War, others freshly and much more scientifically dug. I saw soldiers at work in one. Other soldiers, in big gray coats and hoods, guarded every bridge and culvert on the line.

A policeman came through the train, tall, dark, grave, handsome, asking every one his business and where he was going. In my compartment were three Turks whom he looked at and passed by. I did n't quite make them out — or two of them, at least. They might have been provincial magnates, going home after a visit to town. The more talkative of the two used one French word to every six Turkish, invariably addressing the others as *mon cher* — and even me, when he discovered that I was not an English refugee. The third was very Young Turk, — too young even to be a soldier, he confided to me. It filled him with despair, for he was waiting for the chance to become a hero. They all got out at Chatalja, the station of which is outside the lines. I wondered what they would do there with their *mon chers*.

For some distance beyond, the country was much broken and overgrown with scrubby trees, — one reason why it took the Bulgarians so long to get from Lüleh Bourgas to Chatalja. Then the land flattened out into an empty wilderness of rain, vaguely marked at long intervals by some charred relic of the Balkan War or by a raw new wooden station. No one would ever suspect the vicinity of a great capital, that had been a great capital for two thousand years. On all the side tracks, it is true, were long freight trains — of which many cars were marked in huge red letters, INFLAMMABLE or EXPLOSIBLE. It was easy to guess what was in them, brought from Austria and Germany through a benevolently neutral Bulgaria.

In the corridor I made the acquaintance of two French priests. They, like many other priests and nuns on board, had just been expelled from the country; and their schools, like all those belonging to the belligerent powers, had been seized by the Turks. They told



me how their premises had been searched eleven times in fifteen days for wireless, and how in the end they had been turned out. The one of them who had spent the longer time in the country had much to tell me that was interesting about his experiences and about his friends among the Turkish journalists and politicians of the capital. I remember most vividly how he exclaimed: 'Poor Turks! They will never arrive anywhere, for they lack continuity' — *l'esprit de suite*. 'They have honesty, they have force, but it is not enough. You must have knowledge, conceptions. While they' — His expressive eyebrows completed his meaning.

During the afternoon we changed cars, the Constantinople train going on to Sofia and the Danube, while we turned south toward the Ægean. Another policeman asked the usual questions, the answers to which he noted in the usual book. This time my companions were a vivacious Greek lady and a couple of Englishmen. It was after dark when we reached Demotica, the frontier town. There new functionaries appeared, intent upon examining our bags and our purses for letters or gold. None of the former, and only £10 of the latter, might we carry away.

One of my Englishmen had £40, for which he displayed a permit from the Minister of Finance. He was asked to step out and interview the chief of the station police. The other Englishman caught the eye of the inspector. 'Your friend Ali Effendi told me to give you his regards,' he said in Turkish. The inspector looked a little vague. 'He also asked me to give you this,' continued the Englishman, handing the inspector an envelope. The inspector took it and salaamed courteously. 'And

which are your bags?' he inquired of neutral me, turning his back on his enemy the Englishman — whose pockets were full of sovereigns and who after all had only given the fellow a dollar!

Our Greek lady looked a little coy and opened everything she had before the inspector was ready for her, even to a lunch basket in which sat a plump cold fowl. She lifted it up for the inspector to glance under it.

Meanwhile the other Englishman returned from the station with his £40, saying that he had seen a pile of gold on a table. A good deal of it came from the coin necklaces of peasant women in the third-class cars. The police would chop off ten coins, hand them back to the unhappy owner, and confiscate the rest.

At last the train started slowly, stopped, started on. The Greek lady threw open a window and solemnly spat out of it — at the country of which she was free. Then she began to laugh, so immoderately that for a moment we thought her mad, — and still more when she insisted that each one of us should lift her cold fowl. It was as heavy as lead. 'No wonder!' she cried. 'It is stuffed with gold! Ah, those Turks!'

As for myself, I could not help remembering the French priest and his exclamation, 'Ces pauvres Turcs! Ils n'arriveront jamais à rien.' Is it true? I wondered.

Just then we stopped again; I found myself looking at a new kind of soldier, who looked up out of the penumbra of light cast by the window — not very tall, but very straight, very slim, very trim, very fair, and with an assured twinkle in the eyes of which I seemed to ask my question. Bulgaria!