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FIGHTS FOR THE FLAG

Sir Edward Codrington at Navarino

October 20, 1827

"Navarino was as honest a victory as was ever gained by the arms of any power from the beginning of the world"—Lord John Russell (Speech in the House of Commons).

"Fast as the flaming beacon which convey the news of the fall of Troy to Argos, the joyous tidings were transmitted from mountain to mountain, from crag to crag, from isle to isle, and one throb of exultation and thankfulness was felt in every bosom. Never since the defeat of Hasdrubal by the Consul Nero, on the banks of the Metaurus, had such a sensation pervaded the heart of a nation. Every one felt as if he himself were delivered from captivity or death. . . . Christendom had come to the rescue; again, as in the days of the Crusades, the Cross had been triumphant over the Crescent."—Alison's "History of Europe."

Memory has a very limited office in politics. The typical politician is essentially an opportunist, much exercised about today, but with no memory of yesterday, and not much thought of to-morrow. Yet it is curious how completely all the editors who have written, and all the orators who have discoursed about the recent struggle betwixt Greece and Turkey, forgot how exactly, as far as the Eastern question is concerned, 1897 was a reproduction of 1827. The Greek struggle for Crete which we have just watched is, in all its essential features, the drama of the Greek War of Independence acted over again, on the Turkey of 1897, considered as a fighting power, was immeasurably stronger than the Turkey of 1827. France, too, that today bears to Russia the relation that the tail bore to the dog in Lord Dundreary's famous apolgue, was seventy years ago hostile to Russia by the whole trend of its policy. The differences betwixt the two periods, in a word, are almost as significant as their agreements. But the most tragical, difference is that today we have no Navarino. English, French, and Russian admirals in the present struggle have been firing on the wrong side. We have Canea instead of Navarino!

The Greek revolt against Turkey broke out in 1821, and all righteousness was on its side. The land of Homer and of Plato, of Marathon and of Salamis, was the prey of Turkish pashas. The governing methods of the pashas are described with great plainness in a Greek manifesto of the period. "Any virgin that pleased them they took by force. Any merchant who was making money they beheaded, and seized his goods. Any proprietor of a good estate they slew, and occupied his property. And every drunken vagabond in the streets could murder respectable Greeks and was not punished for it." Armenia makes that statement credible. The Turk of 1897 is the replica of the Turk of 1827. But the national life of Greece was beginning to revive. The trade of the Greek islands and education made slavery intolerable. When the Greeks revolted, their chances seemed as desperate as those of Holland against Spain under Philip II. A population of less than 2,000,000 plunged into battle against one of 30,000,000! The hopes of the Greeks rested at first on the Russian Emperor Alexander. Thrice already Russia had incited the Greeks to revolt; and the immemorial policy of Russia seemed a sufficient pledge of help to a movement which would rob Turkey of one of her provinces. But there was a revolutionary movement throughout Europe; in Spain, and Naples, and Piedmont, there were risings against despotic government. And much as the Czar hated Turkey, he hated popular movements still more. "I discerned in the said, "the revolutionary mark. From that moment I kept aloof from them." The Emperor William might have League of the Three Emperors in 1897, in a word, is but the reproduction, in another form, of the Holy Alliance which governed Europe in 1821.

Left to themselves, the Greeks fought with magnificent courage. Nothing can well be more striking, indeed, than the contrast betwixt the resisting power of Greece today, and that of seventy years ago. The struggle was a true Seven Years' War. On the part of the Greeks, it was a guerilla war, a war of sudden surprises, of wild onfalls and ambuscades; while on sea they fought and destroyed Turkish fleets with fire-ships. This style of warfare suited both Greek geography and Greek genius, and army after army, despatched by the exasperated Sultan, perished in the contest.

That the war was marked by terrific savagery goes without saying. The Turk, when his wrath, or his religious fanastism, is aroused, is the most cruel of human beings; and the sultan Mahmud, dining the early stages of the struggle at least, made stupendous cruelty his deliberate policy. Thus on Easter Sunday in 1821, he hung the Greek partriarch in Constantinople on the lintel of his own gate, with three of his own bishops. A few weeks afterwards, no less than five archbishops and three bishops were hanged in the streets of Constantinople without trial. The tale of massacres in that war almost, if not quite, equals the Turkish performances in Armenia in our own times. Nobody quite knows how many were massacred in Smyrna in 1812; but the victims rose in numbers to tens of thousands. Cyprus was almost entirely depopulated by a similar massacre. In Scio, to quote Professor Ramsay, "80,000 people were massacred within two months; 32,000 were made slaves; 30,000 destitute refugees escaped to other lands." The story of Chios is almost more tragical still. "Every corner of the island was ransacked," says Alison; "every house burned or sacked, every human being that could be found slain or carried off into captivity. Modern Europe has never witnessed such an instance of bloodshed or horror. To find a parellel to it we must go back to the storming of Syracuse or Carthage by the Romans, or to the sack of Bagdad or Aleppo by Timour.' It was calculated the 25,000 persons were slain, and 45,000 women and children dragged into slavery. A curious feature of that fierce struggle was the enormous number of Christians—mostly women and children—whom the Turks sold as slaves, usually in the Egyptian market. As a postscript to Smyrna massacre, 10,000 women and children—all Christian—were publicly sold in the market-place of Salonica. After the capture of Missolonghi, Ibrahim, Pasha boasted that he had "collected 3000 heads, and sold 4000 women and children"!

The Greeks, it may be frankly admitted, sometimes rivalled the Turks themselves in cruelty. They had suffered 1400 years' bondage, Byzantine or Mohammedan, and they had the vices of slaves. Massacre, too, was answered by massacre—deep calling unto deep. At the beginning of 1821 there was a Mussulman population of more than 20,000 persons scattered through agricultural Greece, and says Finlay, "before two months had elapsed the greater part was slain; men, women, and children were murdered without mercy or remorse"—and all by Greeks!

Europe could not watch a struggle at once so heroic, so tragic, and so prolonged, without being profoundly stirred. The pulse of generous sympathy beat strongest, perhaps, in British blood, and—again as in 1897—not a few English volunteers lent both their swords and their purses to the cause of Greek freedom. A curious degree of ill fortune, however, attended all attempts of private persons to assist Greece. Hastings, a gallant sailor, fit to have led fleets, lost his life in an inglorious sea channel Gordon was driven from the Greek service by sheer disgust. The Greeks hired the services of that immortal free-lance of the sea, Lord Cochrane, at a generous rate, paying him £50,000 to take command of their fleet; bue even the genius and daring of Cochrane could achieve nothing in such a warfare. Sire Richard Church, too, was engaged to command the Greek land forces; but both Church and the Greeks misunderstood each other. The Greeks, to quote Finlay, expected Church to prove a Wellington, with a military chest well supplied from the British treasury; Church expected the irregulars of Greece to excute his strategy like regiments of the Guards! The truth is, Greek politics were a chaos, and Greek patriots, though they could fight, could not obey. The National Assembly appointed Church "arch-general," and Cochrane "arch-admiral," giving these titles as a substitute for ordinary power.

Bryon was the most famous ally the Greek cause won. After carrying "the pageant of his bleeding heart" across Europe, this "pilgrim of eternity"—to quote Matthew Arnold—took it too the assistance of Greece. Bryon, in a sense, rendered the Greek cause no practical service. He was neither a politician nor a soldier. He hated war, while he regarded politics, according to one of his critics, as the the art of cheating the people by concealing one-half of the truth, and misrepresenting the other! Byron landed at Missolonghi on January 5, 1824, and died on April 19, thus giving only the last three months of his life to the cause of Greek independence. But his fame, and the pathos of his death, helped to quicken the generous sympathy of Europe on behalf of Greece. Byron, perhaps, served Greece better by dying so promptly than if he had lived longer and actually fought for her. The financiers of Europe rendered as little real help to Greece as its soldiers and sailors and poets. Thus in 1824, the first Greek loan was floated. It was for £800,000 at 5 per cent. and each £100 stock brought £59. The Greeks, that is, received £472,000, and contracted a debt for £800,000! A loan of £2,000,000 was floated next year at only £55, 10s. The money-lenders of Europe were greedy, and it is with not unmixed regret one remembers that they never received either principal or interest! The Greeks had no financial conscience. "They appear to have considered the loan," says one historian, "as a small payment for the debt due by civilised society to the country that produced Homer and Plato"!

Meanwhile, though the Greeks still continued to win victories, their cause grew desperate. One-third of the adult population had perished when the war had lasted only two years; at the end of six campaigns the complete extermination of the Greek people was an end visibly near. The country was in a state of anarchy. The fields were untilled. The sailors of the islands were lasping into piracy as a vocation. At the end of 1826 the Greek Treasury contained only sixteen piastres—about five shillings! Turkey, too, had found a formidable ally in Egypt, where Ibrahim Pasha had, like Lord Kitchener today, trained and hardened the fellaheen into soldiers of high quality. Pity for Grece grew acute throughout Europe, and the siege of Missolonghi crystallised it into action. The Greeks held that swamp-girdled village against Ibrahim Pasha as the British held the shallow ditches at Cawpore against Nana Sahib. When food was exhausted, and their last charge of powder had been fired, the inhabitants—men, and women, and children—joined in one reckless, heroic, night assault on the Turkish line, and, for the most part, perished fighting. "The siege," says Finlay, a somewhat grudging critic, "rivals that of Plateæ in the energy and constancy of the besieged; it wants only a historian like Thucydides to secure for it a like immortality of fame."

Europe at last intervened, Emperor Alexander was dead, and his successor Nicholas hated Turkey even more than he hated "the revolution." Canning has the merit of shaping the policy which delivered Greece. He opened communication wit the Greek leaders, and sent the Duke of Wellington to St. Petersburg, nominally to congratulate the Czar on his accession, really to consult on the affairs of Greece. On July 6, 1827, what is known as the Treaty of London was signed betwixt England, France and Russia. The object of the treaty was declared to be "the reconciliation of the Greeks and Turks." An armistice was to be proposed, and if necessary, enforced. Greece was to be self-governed under the suzerainty of the Sultan, to whom an annual tribute was to be paid. The Sultan with a paroxym of wrath, rejected the treaty, but for once the "Concert of Europe" meant business, and was prepared to deliver itself from the iron lips of cannon and the glittering points of bayonets.

A combined fleet under Sir Edward Codrington made its appearance in Greek waters. It consisted of three English line-of-battle ships and four frigates, four French line-of-battle ships and four frigates. The combined Turkish and Egyptian fleets lay in the bay of Navarino—a great armament of sixty-five sail, with a weight of fire nearly double that of the allied fleet; and Codrington's business was to prevent that great fleet carrying on operations against Greece. In an interview with Ibrahim Pasha, Codrington warned him that any attempt to act in defiance of the treaty would bring on instant attack by the allied fleet. Ibrahim replied that he was a soldier, and must obey orders, and his orders were to carry on the war, and this he would do at all costs. Finally, however, he pledged his word of honor to observe the armistice till he received fresh instructions from Constantinople. He broke his word. The smoke of burning villages told of the ravages of his troops. His fleet twice attempted to leave the harbor, and only retired before the grim menace of Codrington's open portholes. To maintain a winter blokade outside Navarino, however, was impossible, and on October 19, Codrington determined to run in to the harbor and anchor his fleet, ship by ship, alongside the Turkish and Egyptian ships.

Never had a sailor a more difficult task than Codrington. He commanded a mixed fleet—he is the only British admiral, indeed, in history who had a French squadron and a Russian squadron in his line of battle. Only eleven years before, it must be remembered, Russian troops had occupied Paris; the retreat from Moscow was still a recent memory. And one of Codrington's anxieties was lest his French and Russian allies should turn their guns against each other! Scandal, indeed, has it that, in the battle which followed the French ships actually fired into the Russian squadrons to "avenge Moscow"! It is certain that Codrington, in his plan of battle, anxiously interposed the English ships betwixt the Russian and the French, so as to lessen the risk of his allies turning their guns on each other.

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Shapes in velvet, plush, or felt, ready for trimming, and millinery ornaments in plumes, wings, fancy feathers or flowers, make it easy for the home-milliner, this season, to trim her hat successfully.

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A gray plush hat may be embellished with a pair of shaded red wings, mounted at the back, and finished with a band of folded ribbon about the crown, in the same color as the plush.

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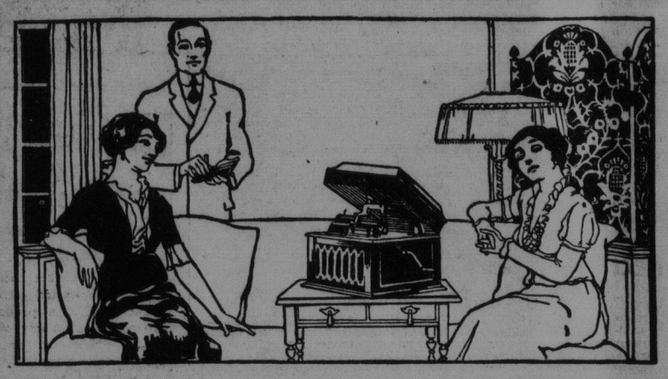

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