

Politics and Religion in the Balkans

WORD has come to the East through the messenger of war, that all things shall be made right, and the Cross shall be raised as the sign of Peace, where the Crescent has so long been the emblem of Tyranny. In the territory bounded by the Mediterranean, the Danube, the Black Sea and the Adriatic, fifteen million Christian inhabitants shall feel this peace; for the hand of the Turkish oppressor shall be removed, and every man shall have his rightful heritage unmolested. In every sanguinary struggle fought by the Greek, Bulgarian and Macedonian against the Moslem the purpose and incentive has mainly been a religious one.

The Balkan states were not anxiously awaiting this war, for, if they were, they could have easily driven the Turks out of Europe, when they were at war with the Italians. But, seeing that the Christians desired to obtain better rights and more protection in European Turkey, the Turks began to mobilize. They continually harassed the Christians in Albania, Old Serbia and Macedonia, until, finally popular feeling in the now allied states manifested itself in a demand for war. But this Alliance did not declare war without a cause. In Old Serbia, the Christian possessions were taken by armed Mohammedan Albanians, a few of whom would take up a residence, on the outskirts of a Christian village and plunder and rob the entire place. The Servians were forbidden to carry weapons. As a result many had their lands and other worldly possessions taken. Thus a great number of them became tenants to these Albanians. Finally the Old Servians had to flee to Serbia, and there dwell as a burden on the state.

Many Servian women and girls were carried off and by mere force were Islamized. Some were compelled to say that they had changed their religion of their own free will; and then followed the death of their fathers or husbands, as the case might be, unless they fled. Many, however, adopted the religion of their oppressors, professed Islam outwardly and practiced Christianity in their privacy. If a man possessed a great amount of money, he was forced to give it up or be slain. If a brigand