

THE PHANARIOTE RULE

These offices very presently fell to the lot of the Phanariotes (Greek merchants and bankers inhabiting the quarter of Phanar) who had in some way or another assisted the princes to their thrones, these being now practically put up to auction in Constantinople. As a natural consequence of such a state of affairs the thoughts of the Rumanian princes turned to Russia as a possible supporter against Ottoman oppression. A formal alliance was entered into in 1711 with the Tsar Peter the Great, but a joint military action against the Turks failed, the Tsar returned to Russia, and the Porte threatened to transform Moldavia, in order to secure her against incipient Russian influence, into a Turkish province with a Pasha as administrator. The nobles were preparing to leave the country, and the people to retire into the mountains, as their ancestors had done in times of danger. It is not to be wondered at that, under the menace of losing their autonomy, the Rumanians welcomed the nomination of the Dragoman of the Porte, Nicholas Mavrocordato, though he was a Greek. The people greeted with joy the accession of the first Phanariote to the throne of the Principality of Moldavia¹ (1711).

Knowledge of foreign languages had enabled the Phanariotes to obtain important diplomatic positions at Constantinople, and they ended by acquiring the thrones of the Rumanian principalities as a recompense for their services. But they had to pay for it, and to make matters more profitable the Turks devised the ingenious method of transferring the princes from one province to another, each transference being considered

¹ Xenopol, *op. cit.*, ii. 138.