

28. These demonstrations of Mehemet on the Lom — they scarcely deserve a more serious name — were followed by a sortie from Plevna, made by a division of Osman's forces. This attack, however, had little result, and we mention it only as an indication of a general plan on the part of the Turks at this juncture to assume the defensive. By the first days of September the prospects of the Turks, which had been promising three weeks before, had once more become overclouded; their scheme of attack had altogether failed; and, as reinforcements were approaching their enemy, the balance of fortune, which at one moment might possibly have been turned in their favor, was evidently inclining once more against them. In considering the causes of this failure two or three circumstances are very apparent. It is evident, in the first place, how imperfect and weak were the Turkish armies when they endeavored to attack, and how utterly inferior to their antagonists. Brave and excellent as the soldiery were, they were, to a great extent, without the means of making rapid marches and effective manœuvres; their transport service and commissariat were bad, and their officers had little skill and instruction. The backwardness, in a word, of the Ottoman race revealed itself in its organization for war; and, however well the troops could defend positions, they could not equal the Russians when on the offensive. Nevertheless, as we have endeavored to show, the Turks really had a fair chance of success from the 31st of July to the third week of August, had their operations been ably conducted, so great had been the results of the defeat at Plevna, and so comparatively small the number of their foes. In examining the reasons why they did not succeed, the principal blame attaches to the chief who, from first to last, had in this contest a baleful influence on the Ottoman cause. As we have, we think, demonstrated, Suleiman Pasha ought to have joined Mehemet, and was expected to do so, and this junction might have changed the position of affairs. He chose, however, to diverge to the Shipka Pass, and from this moment the one strategic movement that might have had results became all but hopeless. In addition, the pasha ruined an army in his frantic efforts to force a passage; and, though he gave some proof of tactical skill, this reckless persistency was almost criminal. As for Mehemet Ali, he certainly displayed no energy in his operations on the Loin; but it must be borne in mind that, without his colleague, he had not the means of decisive action; he was like a bird that tries to fly though deprived of a wing. Besides, he was viewed