

Italy's Military System

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AMONG the armies of Europe to-day none is such an unknown quantity as the Italian — and yet none so important and interesting to evaluate, because of the rebirth of the nation of which it is the instrument. For Italy is clearly determined to be not merely in name but in reality one of the Great Powers, and to demand the respect so due.

The desire for this respect in the comity of nations is, indeed, at present a much clearer source of her care for the armed forces than any of the ambitious designs for conquest with which she is often credited abroad. It was characteristic of Fascism that at the very outset it threw its own protective mantle over the army and insisted on respect being shown to officers of the fighting forces, who for several years had been targets of mob insult, hardly daring to be seen in uniform. The logical sequel was to ensure that this respect was merited in the eyes both of Italian citizens and of the world outside Italy.

How far has the Fascist Government succeeded in this aim? My desire to ascertain this prompted a glad acceptance of an invitation to visit the training centres of the Italian army. To the courtesy, cordiality, and unrestrained facilities offered me I cannot pay high enough tribute. And the fittest return I can make is to show equal candor in my comments, for only a healthy organism can bear the strong rays of criticism — a bad one is better passed over in silence.

No better sign of health, indeed, could be afforded than the open way my investigations were permitted. Both in the army and the air force I was given carte blanche to visit whatever places I wished, even experimental centres, and when there encountered no vestige of 'shepherding.' If indicative of courtesy, this was still more a sign of a commonsense rare among officials in any country, our own not excluded. It is the characteristic of ignorance to label everything 'secret and confidential' — with the result that by reducing the practice to absurdity real secrets are disclosed. In contrast, the present Italian authorities

clearly appreciate that no one can penetrate the intricacies of a technical design from a casual view — and the more he sees the less likely. For the true art of secrecy is to be so open about ninety-nine per cent of a subject that the really secret one per cent is the more easily

THROUGH the eyes of a world-famous English military critic we see Italy training her troops with clear vision for the actualities of war, employing methods and equipment in some respects unequaled by any other nation of the earth. Mussolini believes in a strong army backed by a united civic sentiment, ready to organize the non-combatant population for the exigencies of international conflict.

Whether such vivid visualization, coupled with an aroused public sentiment, is the best assurance for prolonged peace or whether it more probably tends to war is a subject upon which minds may differ. Captain Liddell Hart's article will be found illuminating from any viewpoint.

hidden — because its existence is then unrealized.

Repaying frankness by frankness, I would say that the regeneration of the army is beyond doubt, but that this progress is most marked as yet in the moral and physical spheres, less so in the mental, and least of all in the material — like the varying levels of a moving platform.

There is an unmistakable new spirit throughout the army, and an experienced observer has only to watch the troops on the march and at work to feel the existence of a real pride of service, which is the foundation of morale. This probably owes much to an improvement in the class of officer and the new relations between officers and men. With the recollection of stories I had heard of the former gulf, exemplified after Caporetto, it was a pleasant surprise, yet a common experience, to find officers saying that whatever their men were called on to do they must share, to give a lead. This was no empty gesture, for in the arduous physical exercises officers up to and in-

cluding the rank of captain take part daily with the men.

And these are no ordinary trials, for the physical training and development of the new Italian army is not only its most impressive feature, but far superior to anything I have ever seen. They are training up an army of human cats, and breeding them, too, for the gospel and practice of physical culture are being spread throughout the nation, beginning with the boys who are not yet of military age.

This aim scores doubly. On the one hand, it promises to produce a higher standard of physique and health in the nation, accentuated in the next generation, and, on the other, it is most shrewdly adapted to Italy's military problem. For all Italy's European frontiers and most of her possible theatres of war are mountainous. In such terrain agility and hardiness are immense assets; indeed, it is the only type of country where physical qualities are still, under modern conditions, preponderant over matériel. A further value, also, is that the lack and difficulty of communications make supply a serious problem in the mountains, which enhances the value of troops who can march and fight on a minimum of food — as Napoleon proved in his early Italian campaigns. Certainly the marching endurance of the Italian troops is as astonishing as their slender scale of rations, and it was most impressive to see the fine fettle in which they marched back after a hard day's training — despite their short service and a pace faster than our own. An indirect testimony both to physique and morale was that nowhere have I seen hospitals and guard-rooms so empty.

In the intellectual training of the officers the watchword is *plus pratique*. In view of the Italian traditional temperament there is special value in a rigorous mental discipline, which is in keeping with the new national tendencies. Yet even this worthy purpose can be carried to excess, and in a military class particularly may limit vision, which is all the more essential now when the methods

and means of warfare are changing rapidly. Thus schemes and operation orders, while admirably 'organized,' seemed to tend to excessive length and detail. And it is perhaps a consequence of this thoroughness in detail that the tactical doctrine and organization do not fully exploit their inherent assets. For the broken surface and abundant dead ground in the mountains offer immense opportunity for an agile light infantry, true skirmisher-sharpshooters, to penetrate past and outflank the opposing machine-guns—which today in flat country form a close-woven network of fire impenetrable to infantry.

But the Italian tactics seem to me to savor too much of the deliberation and close formations of the World War. I cannot see that such tactics would be likely to make a greater impression on the enemy's front than they did in 1915–17. For if more elastic and more mobile than the French methods, they have also less fire-power to fulfil these deliberate methods. And in laying down that it is useless for infantry to open fire until within three hundred yards or so of the enemy, they not only put a severe strain on human nature, but seemingly fail to appreciate the potentialities of the rifle as a weapon of precision—the most suitable one for agile skirmisher-sharpshooters, working forward along natural cover and covered by massed machine-guns in rear.

Such a system might well fit the Italian army—which has already the human foundation for it—all the more because at present the country's main deficiency lies in material. The Air Force, wisely, appears to have received first preference in the supply of new matériel. For in case of war it is the force of immediate action, while the Army could expand, both in men and matériel, secure behind its mountain ramparts.

IN rebuilding her scheme of defense, Italy, like France, has shown a full understanding of the fact that a modern war calls upon the whole resources of the nation, which should be or-

ganized beforehand to this end. And in some ways she has advanced beyond any nation in coördinating these resources. At the top comes the Supreme Council of National Defense, presided over by the Prime Minister, and its advisory organs are not merely military, naval, and air, but include a Civil Mobilization Committee, which in turn has an offshoot in a Service of Industrial Observers, who keep

generals, Cavallero, who had actually left the service to be managing director of the great Pirelli company.

The country is divided into ten army corps districts, besides the Sicilian command, and of these six lie in the north, with headquarters respectively at Turin (I), Alessandria (II), Milan (III), Verona (IV), Trieste (V), Bologna (VI). A new XI Corps, also, is being formed, with headquarters at Udine, taking over part of the Fifth Corps area on the north-eastern frontier. The existing organization yields thirty divisions, a figure which superficially appears high compared, for example, with the twenty, plus five light divisions, to which the French home forces are being reduced. But the Italians, of course, have not the large forces abroad which the French are compelled to keep in the colonies and on the Rhine. Further, the Italian division in peace consists usually of only six battalions of infantry and one regiment of mixed field artillery—compared with the French nine infantry battalions, one field artillery regiment, and one field howitzer regiment.

Outside the army corps organizations are the nine regiments (27 battalions) of Alpini and twelve (24 battalions) of Bersaglieri cyclists, five regiments of heavy artillery, the cavalry, and the tanks. The cavalry are famous for their horsemanship, and the officers are of a stamp closely akin to our own, but Italian military opinion of the value of cavalry is indicated by the fact that the three cavalry divisions of pre-war days have been broken up, and the twenty-nine regiments reduced to twelve. There is one regiment of light tanks, of five battalions, compared with the French forty-four battalions, plus two of heavy tanks. It is my impression also that research for

new types is at a standstill. Yet the existing Fiat is a faster and superior machine to the Renault, and I gather that last autumn it was tried with considerable success in the Alps, proving able to move when it was nearly track-deep in snow.

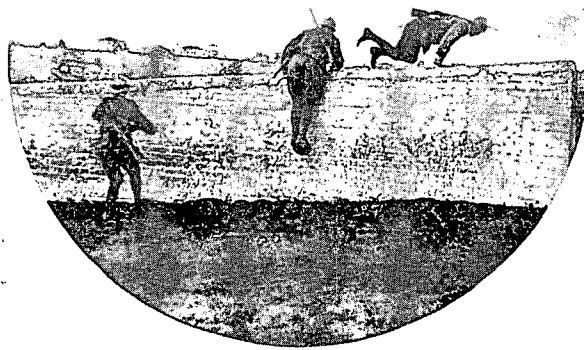


Photo Fotograms

VAULTING a six-foot wall helps train an 'army of human cats' for mountain fighting, where agility and hardiness are tremendous assets

it informed of the state of industry and its capacity for producing war material. Again, there is a Chief of the General Staff, who prepares and coördinates the plans of all three fighting services. The Ministry of War, like so many others, is in Signor Mussolini's own hands, but the routine direction is delegated to the Under-Secretary of State. And it is significant of the value that Signor Mussolini places upon youth and expert qualifications in picking his ministers that the post is filled by one of the ablest junior

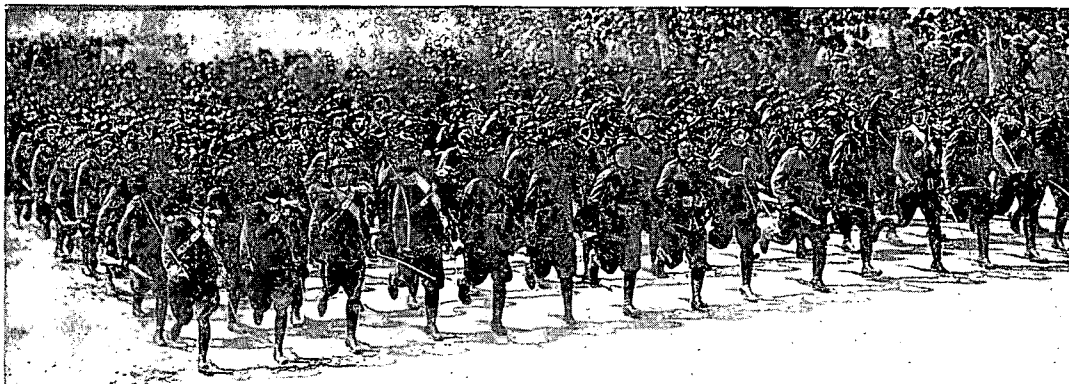


Photo Pacific and Atlantic

BLACK-HELMETED BERSAGLIERI (sharpshooters) pass in review massed at parade trot, with overhanging clouds of dust . . . dust, the bane of the infantryman!

TO SKETCH the human fabric woven on the Italian army frame is not easy in a short space. Perhaps the best way is to outline some typical experiences during my round of visits. The Central Schools for infantry training are at Civitavecchia — on the Mediterranean shore, forty miles north of Rome. Driving on to a parade ground formed by nature, where the low hills fall gently to the sea, I saw drawn up at the far end a company of infantry at war strength. The men were in 'gym' kit — merely cardigan, shorts, socks, and belt — and bareheaded, but with arms. Across the down a martial song floated to one's ears, and when they moved forward, marching and counter-marching, cadence of step and of chant coincided in a stirring harmony which was as exhilarating as it was impressive.

Bayonet fighting followed, also to a rhythmic chorus, but consisting of the old style drill of points and parries rather than the modern individual test round a prepared assault course. However, they added a further exercise which was most uncomfortably practical — letting the lines of men cross naked bayonets, and afterwards practise using the naked hand to parry the opponent's bayonet and disarm him. I was relieved when the exercise finished without any Roman having been butchered to make a military critic's holiday. Then, grounding arms, the men moved to a part of the hillside which was covered with gymnastic apparatus. Here the whole two hundred, not merely a picked few, went through a series of vaulting, jumping, and balancing exercises in a way which only crack gymnasts in England could have rivaled.

A visit later afforded me the chance to see the tactical work. The infantry battalion comprises one machine-gun company and three ordinary companies — a basis of organization similar to the French and German, and one which our own Army has adopted since March 1. But the Italian, in comparison with the others, seems distinctly under-weaponed, for the machine-gun company has only six guns in peace and twelve in war. Similarly, the other companies have only four light automatics apiece — although eight in war — whereas our companies have eight and the French nine. This slender weapon strength is the more surprising because the Italians go as far as to term these 'light machine-gun' companies, divided into two platoons, each of two squads. Thus, there is one light machine-gun to each 'squad' of twenty men, whereas the French have one to each 'group' of twelve men.

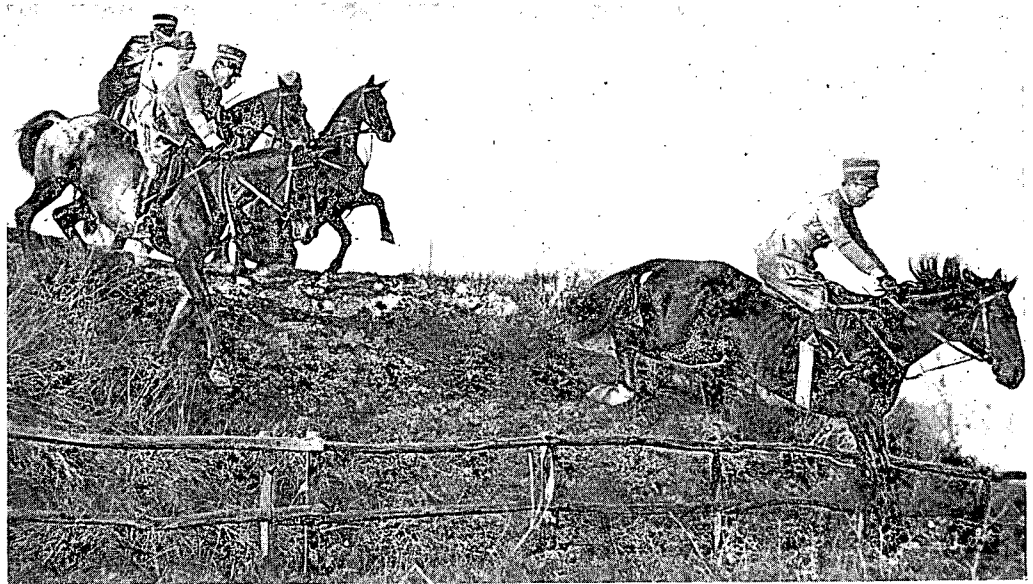


Photo Pacific and Atlantic

FAMOUS for hard riding, Italian cavalry take hillock and fence without pause. Horsemen will appreciate the excellent jumping form of the leader. Such tradition and pride of service do much for army morale

But one discovers that in the combat the men of the squad are not tied so narrowly to the light automatics as with the French, where the fighting power is essentially reckoned in numbers of light automatics and the men of the group as its servants merely. The Italian platoon moves forward in two long worms — each of one squad — close together, and as the enemy's fire grows hotter these 'fan out' to right and left respectively of the light automatics which march at the head of each squad. Then, while these, with their crews, keep the enemy post under fire, the riflemen seek to manoeuvre round each flank.

Although the large size of the squads makes them seem both vulnerable and unmanageable, one discovers that they break up into little groups of three, working forward at a pace which is a testimony to their stamina. This attack was carried out swiftly, silently, and with a skilful use of cover — both natural and from the machine-guns in rear. For the Italians, rightly, hold that support by heavy machine-guns is necessary for the infantry to advance at all. Wherefore one wonders that they have so few, and whether they are right in fettering the movement of their agile infantry by the intermixture of light machine-guns — unhandy and liable to stoppages. Again, such frontages as fifty yards for a platoon and 400 for a battalion seem to have corpse-producing density under modern conditions. In contrast, their physical assets might be exploited better if they were to use well-extended companies of light-footed riflemen — trained to use this weapon with precision — to infiltrate and manoeuvre under cover of

equally strong machine-gun companies. In the mountains such a form of attack has great scope.

I WAS, I believe, the first foreigner who has been permitted to visit the tank training centre, which lies on the outskirts of Rome. There is a symbolical significance in the fact that it lies beside a road down which the legions of Ancient Rome marched to many a victorious campaign — won by their combination of armor with a unique mobility, both strategical and tactical. Therein lies a lesson for the New Rome, for even a mountainous frontier has valleys, and beyond mountains there are always plains.

The tank centre, like many of the technical establishments of the Italian forces, appears somewhat small in comparison with the scale of those forces and of the country generally. Officers and men radiate keenness, and are of an exceptionally good type; but, as in other technical centres, one feels that the quality of the men and their instruments deserves a better quantity.

The tank battalion comprises four companies, each of two platoons in peace and four in war. Besides one company headquarters tank and one reserve tank, the two platoons have each four (Fiat) tanks. In appearance these are hardly distinguishable from the French Renault, but actually weigh five tons compared with Renault's seven, and have a speed of over twelve miles per hour compared with six miles per hour. They are also far quicker in manoeuvre. Colonel Miglio, the Commandant, kindly turned out a platoon, which carried out the various phases of an approach march and attack.



Photo Pacific and Atlantic

INSTEAD OF A FENCE, a mortared wall that means a bad spill for the clumsy. Six young officers of the Italian Cavalry — a branch of the service which carries the same prestige as in Great Britain and the United States

For road moves, instead of carrying these tanks on large lorries, like the French, the Italians carry them on a small two-wheeled trailer, simple and strong, behind a light lorry. The method has much to recommend it, and is very expeditious. The tanks ran straight on to the trailers, were coupled on to a bar projecting from the lorry, and in a very few minutes the column was moving off — the crews riding on the lorries with the ammunition.

The road march was to an assembly position in the cover of a deep sandstone quarry. On reaching a point on the road near by, the column halted — and in less than two minutes by my watch, the tanks had dismounted from the trailers and were climbing off the road. When I saw the precipitous sides of the quarry, forty feet deep, I caught my breath — and still more when the tanks, making for different points along the edge, lowered themselves over it. Even caterpillar tracks could not grip, of course, on such a slope but they held for the first dozen feet, and then, skilfully handled, slid swiftly but safely to the pit-bottom. After an interval, emerging at a point rather less severe, they moved forward to the attack, threading their way through coppices, dimly seen and mysterious shapes converging swiftly and stealthily on the objective.

A unique feature of the Italian system is that although the tank holds only two men, a driver and machine-gunner, the crew consists of six. Besides being spare men, the surplus act two as scouts and two as pioneers — with shovels and

signal grenades. Lightly equipped and extremely athletic, they follow their particular tank, helping its passage over obstacles, and then, in the assault, moving with cat-like agility and use of cover by rapid bounds to back it up. Thus, where many tanks are attacking, they form a special tank-accompanying light infantry.

Camouflage is another feature, for these tanks take more than 'a leaf' from Macbeth — so entwined with leaves and branches that they are a literal fulfilment of Birnam Wood coming to Dunsinane. Camouflage is equally prominent — but not obvious — at the engineer school at Civitavecchia, where apparent village washing troughs conceal machine-gun emplacements and wayside shrines are really observation posts. Here, too, painted wood shavings are woven in quantities into 'grass' of all shades, autumnal and spring. Searchlight experiment seemed equally active — for this mountain warfare offers great scope. Perhaps most interesting of all were the varied examples of bridge construction, for the Italian engineers have no superiors, if any rivals.

BUT if anyone desires an impression of their variety of activities and achievements he cannot do better than visit the Museo de Geneo in Rome, where no fewer than eighty-six rooms are filled with models illustrating the historical evolution and present state of fortification, signalling, bridging, and a host of other branches of the engineer's technique. I know of no military museum

which approaches this collection, the result of twenty years' devoted labor by General Borgati, the warden of the Castle of St. Angelo. The army engineers go far outside the usual scope, for they even build drydocks for the navy, submarine refuelling stations, and seaplane bases. And their artistic skill finds expression in the new barracks which are springing up, for the Fascist Government is clearly determined to set an example to others in the decent housing of its troops.

In contrast, it was my impression, perhaps erroneous, that the chemical development is backward. There does not seem, as in Germany and Russia, a deep interest in gas warfare, nor smoke. A smoke tank produced a very weak cloud by our standards, and the artillery have scarcely any smoke shell.

At present only the army and corps artillery are mechanized. Of these the medium calibres are drawn by the Pavesi tractor, which I saw demonstrated at the Artillery School. A unique-looking machine, rather like two ancient chariots coupled together, it has four large wheels, all driven.

For road travel a two-wheeled sprung trailer is run underneath the gun-trail, lifting the gun-wheels off the ground. This seems a happy solution of the problem of hauling guns at a rapid pace and over long distances without damage to the delicate parts of the gun. For cross-country travel the gun is lowered on to the ground and the trailer supports the end of the gun-trail — forming an intermediate link and support between tractor and gun. But it seems a weak link, for in descending rough slopes it has a habit of turning over.

As for general motor transport, there is a centre in each army corps for training drivers and mechanics, for transport duties, and for repairs. I visited the one at Rome, commanded by Colonel Mussa. As throughout the army, the material was old, except for numbers of the new Fiat light cars. But it looked well cared for, better than the general run of equipment seen elsewhere, while the garages and barrack-rooms alike were a model of order. It is worth remark that the Italian practice here is to keep men to one specialty throughout their term of service, so that they can take similar employment in civil life and return to it in emergency — round pegs in round holes.

Persons and Personages

Interesting Figures Who Have Achieved Prominence in World News

HALIDÉ EDIB HANOUM

THERE was anger and consternation in the palace of Sultan Abdul-Hamid, known to his foes as Abdul the Damned. For his majesty had learned that the eight-year-old daughter of one of his secretaries was studying at the College for Girls at Constantinople, the school of the accursed American infidels. That was dangerous. The thing was little better than a scandal, and an imperial *iradé* speedily put an end to it.

All this happened some thirty years ago, but almost every one of those thirty years has brought new evidence that Abdul was right. It *was* dangerous — dangerous, that is, for the old order in Turkey. Little Turkish girls belonged in the harem where their mothers could take care of them — so said the holy men of Islam. Little Turkish girls belonged in school and college where they could fit themselves for a share in the new life of the Turkey that was to come — so said a few thoughtful Turks who could look imaginatively into the future.

The little girl whom Abdul-Hamid forced to leave school and go home to study with private tutors was Halidé

Edib Hanoum, who has since become leader in the political and intellectual life of modern Turkey and, now that she is in exile, one of America's guests at the Williamstown Conference on International Relations.

So, in spite of Abdul, she had her own way, as she has been having it, with intermittent periods of adversity, ever since. A few years after the Sultan-Caliph forced her to leave the College for Girls, she entered again, graduating in 1901. In the same year she married Salih Zeki Bey, renowned as the foremost mathematician of Turkey. In a few years there was something new in Islam — a woman intellectual, a woman journalist, a woman advocate of liberalism. A celebrity while she was still in her early twenties, Halidé Edib became one of the chief journalistic supporters of the Young Turk movement in 1908, and, when the reaction against the Young Turks began the following year, she had to flee in disguise, finding refuge in London. Not until after Abdul-Hamid had been dethroned and exiled was it safe for her to return to Constantinople.

But new troubles were in store. In the monogamous Occident, allegedly 'advanced' thinkers frequently speculate on, and occasionally experiment with, the advantages and practice of polygamy. In the polygamous Orient, the prospect of monogamy has charms, particularly for wives; and when Salih Zeki Bey announced that he had married again, the progressive Halidé Edib promptly divorced him, in spite of his flattering desire that she should remain as his principal wife.

In 1916 she was married again, this time to Dr. Adnan Bey, Director-General of the Health Department, and the next year she became professor of Western Literature at the University of Istamboul. Then came the armistice, the Allied plan to partition Turkey, the landing of the Greek Army at Smyrna, and the defiant beginning of the new Turkish nationalist movement by Kemal Pasha's little group, who fled to sun-baked Angora to establish a new government and a new army of their own.

Among their sympathizers who remained in Constantinople (where, under the guns of British battleships, Sultan Mohammed V still nominally reigned) was Halidé Edib. Knowing very well that they could control the Sultan with their fleet but that far inland at Angora the Nationalists were beyond any foreign control, the British decided to round up the leading Nationalist plotters who still remained in Constantinople. Seeking to strengthen themselves by strengthening the Sultan, they made a sudden raid; but when they counted prisoners it was discovered that Halidé Edib and her husband had, just in time, fled to Angora.

One dramatic incident of the flight was the mysterious appearance of a flashlight moving through the garden of the house where the refugees were hidden, which was supposed to indicate the presence of a government spy, but turned out to be in the hands of Halidé Edib's divorced husband, taking his evening stroll quite unconscious that the lady who had refused to be head of his harem was hidden close at hand.

At the new capital she threw herself into the work of the nationalist organization, occupying her one period of leisure by writing the *Memoirs*, now in course of publication by the Century Company, which tell in detail the story of her earlier years. Under Allied auspices, the Greeks landed at Smyrna, and presently began their march inland toward Angora. At Constantinople, Halidé Edib, her husband Dr. Adnan Bey, Kemal Pasha, and other Nationalist leaders had been condemned to death and the sentence confirmed by a decree of the Sheikh-ul-Islam, which authorized any good Mohammedan to kill them on sight. As the little group of leaders sat safely in Angora reading their death sentences, Dr. Adnan Bey observed seriously, 'I hate to be condemned to death.'

'I also dislike it,' said Kemal Pasha. But Halidé Edib took a more cheerful view. 'Nothing could make us more popular,' she said, for already the people were realizing how completely the Sultan, whose court had passed the sentence, was controlled by foreigners.

Halidé Edib enlisted in the army, became a corporal, then a sergeant. At last the armies of the New Turkey were ready. They swept forward and drove the Greeks into the sea. Smyrna went



Courtesy of the Century Company

HALIDÉ EDIB HANOUM

THIS VERY MODERN Turkish lady has bobbed hair and wears European clothes