

# Bulgaria, Key of the Near East

**R**ARELY has fortune played fast and loose with any people as it has with the Bulgars in the years that lie between the outbreak of the first Balkan war and the present hour in the general European conflict. In the opening months of 1913 a Bulgar army stood before the Chatalja lines, another invested Adrianople, a third had passed the Rhodopians to reach the lower Struma Valley and occupy Seres and Kavala, a fourth held Istip, and the valley of the Bregalnitz was the frontier between Servian and Bulgarian in Macedonia.

Yet a few months later all the hard-earned profits of the first Balkan war had been lost. At the Bregalnitz the Serb had overwhelmed the Bulgar and sent the mass of the armies of Ferdinand across the Bulgarian frontier. To the south a Greek army had prevailed at Kilis, cleared the lower Struma Valley, occupied Kavala. To the east the Turk had reoccupied Adrianople, while to the north the Rumanian hosts were approaching Sofia and Plevna.

By the Peace of Bucharest Bulgaria surrendered to Servia all of northern Macedonia save the little circle about Strumnitz; Monastir, Ochrida, Istib fell to the conquerors. To Greece she relinquished Kavala and her claim upon Salonica. To Rumania she yielded the lower corner of the Dobrudja, held since her liberation, one of the richest regions of the kingdom, peopled by many Bulgars and almost no Rumanians. To Turkey she ceded Adrianople, Kirk Kilisse, the towns she had captured, the ground she had watered with the best of her blood. Overwhelmed by numbers, Bulgaria sullenly laid down her arms but not her hopes. France after 1871 was not more determined to repossess herself of her lost provinces than were the Bulgars. But to the latter the chance seems to be coming in two years instead of in forty-four. For at the present moment it seems patent that Bulgaria can make her own terms with those who have despoiled her.

As it stands now, the Rumanians are eager to take up arms to redeem some 3,000,000 Rumanians dwelling in Transylvania and Bukovina. But for Rumania to send her army into the Carpathians and beyond them while Bulgaria, mobilized and unforgiving, watches the southern bank of the Danube, is too dangerous to be considered. A disaster to the Rumanian invaders would infallibly lead to a disaster to the Bulgars.

Rumanian statesmen, Russian and French and British statesmen, have been hard at work seeking to placate Bulgaria.

To all their suggestions Bulgaria has answered simply that she desires the retrocession of her lost provinces and her stolen children. Let Rumania, as a prelude and a fitting prelude to liberating Rumanians, free Bulgarians; such is the Bulgar demand. Some 3,500 square miles and 300,000 souls Bulgaria asks from Rumania; this is her response. Now and again the cable suggests her request has been granted. It was officially announced once from Petrograd that the cession had been agreed to, but the proof is still lacking.

Greece, too, has been eager to join her Servian ally, to whom she is joined by a treaty which also binds Rumania to uphold the terms of the Peace of Bucharest. For Greece an Austrian victory over Servia would insure the loss of Salonica, of the Chalcidice, of Kavala. It would mean that Austria would come down to the Aegean and become the dominant power in the waters between Asia Minor and the African shore. But to avert the peril she can do nothing, since the Bulgarians await her first misstep to repass the Rhodopians and approach Salonica. Like Rumania, she is immobilized by Bulgaria, and Servian disaster, which is her own disaster, threatens to destroy all that she has recently achieved in restoring the Hellenic world.

From Greece Bulgaria asks the retrocession of the region between the Struma and the Mesta, assigned to her by the preliminary agreements which were destroyed in the second Balkan war. Kavala is the natural port of Sofia, the only good harbor between the Struma and the Maritza. Its people are Greek, but the hinterland is Bulgar and Turk. Without it Bulgaria has no good harbor on the Aegean; with it, she has a future rival to Salonica. Venizelos agreed that Bulgaria should have this in 1913. Now, until Greece re-cedes it, she must day and night await the coming of the Bulgar.

Between Serb and Bulgar the outstanding difference is Macedonia. Before the first Balkan war Servia and Bulgaria drew a line across the Turkish territory of Macedonia from Ochrida to the point where Servia, Bulgaria and European Turkey all meet, west of Kustendil. North of

nand; Monastir, Istib, Prilip and Veles were included in the Bulgarian sphere. But when Austria forbade the Serb to take northern Albania and win a window on the sea at Durazzo, Servia renounced the bargain, claimed and took all of Macedonia, the valley of the Vardar to Guevgehli, and Bulgaria was compelled to accept this loss at Bucharest.

Of all the losses, that felt most keenly by Bulgaria was the Macedonian. For years her teachers had prepared the way for her soldiers. The *comitajis* had patrolled, the Bulgarian patriots had organized Macedonia from the Lake of Ochrida to the Rhodopians. The people spoke her dialect. At the Treaty of San Stefano this region had been assigned to the Bulgar, and in Bulgarian hearts the frontiers of that rescinded treaty are a living fact. From Servia, therefore, Bulgaria asks that the old bargain be fulfilled. Until Monastir and Istib are returned, Bulgaria will have none of Servian appeals for sympathy or aid.

Were the Austro-German alliance to get the upper hand, to disclose any promise of victory, Bulgarian troops would be in Servia without delay, would come south into the New Greece to seize the lands that for some months in 1913 they held and mean to have again. Only Austrian failure has restrained Bulgarian action; this and the knowledge that she would again have to face the attack of Rumania, eventually of Russia, still feared, although all affection, all trust, have vanished.

But the guns of the Allied fleet at the Dardanelles have changed the situation for Bulgaria, as for all the nations in the Near East. The approach of the day when the Turk will retire from Europe opens a new horizon for Ferdinand and his people. In 1912 and 1913 they conquered Thrace to the Chatalja. The Bulgarian frontier laid down at London ran from Enos on the Aegean to Midia on the Black Sea. It included Adrianople, retaken for the Turk by Enver Pasha, when the last regiment of the Bulgar garrison had been hurried west to meet the victorious Serb and Greek on the Bregalinitz and the Struma.

To-day the whole situation is reversed. When Constantinople falls, the Turks north of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles will be cut off from supplies and reinforcements. Conceivably all troops will be withdrawn to avoid such a catastrophe. Then Bulgaria, in her turn, can send an army to seize an undefended Adrianople, can resume the Enos-Midia frontier, or even claim all European Turkey save the Constantinople and

proval it would be an empty and evanescent triumph, might satisfy Bulgarian ambition, if to it Rumania added the Silistria strip and Servia the Istib district.

In any event the possession of the Straits by the Allies would give them a commanding position in their dealings with Bulgaria; it would give them also the resources with which to purchase her neutrality, if not her friendship. Without firing a shot, Ferdinand might regain three-quarters of his lost territory and perhaps all of his lost glory.

Such is the situation of Bulgaria to-day. Such are her demands. Until some of them are granted, she holds two of her recent conquerors immobilized and constitutes a deadly peril to the third if the fortunes of war turn against its allies. Until the hour when the warships of the sea powers lie off the Golden Horn, she holds the key of the Near East; even then she must be reckoned with, must be placated. The fact that most of her claims are just does not make her position less commanding or less assured of a hearing.

But Bulgaria satisfied, Constantinople taken, it is plain that a new situation will arise. Then the reconstitution of the Balkan Alliance may be possible. Bulgarian, Rumanian, Serb and Greek, nearly 25,000,000 of people may unite to defend the Balkan peninsula, alike against Austrian and Russian. With such an alliance the Eastern question, if it does not disappear, passes into a new and less dangerous phase. Austro-German ambition will be halted at the Danube and the Save, Servian, Greek and Rumanian armies may presently be seen in Hungary and Bosnia. And if this happens, who can believe that Italy can longer wait to enter the war, since only those who fight can hope for reward.

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## As to Prejudice

SITTING after dinner the other evening, we found our conversation turning on race prejudice. My companion, one of those American women who puzzle their English sisters by combining with undeniable attractiveness a confident intelligence, had confessed to prejudices which she defied anyone to change. We took them, by ourselves, to the fireside.

"You really believe that races are dyed in the wool," I recriminated, "you believe that the French are a 'gay and volatile people' and all the