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Fred Burnaby

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On Horseback through Asia Minor

Frederick Burnaby (1842–85) joined the Royal Horse Guards in 1859, but, when not assigned to active duty, he crafted his own adventures. He ballooned across the English Channel, and travelled in Spain, Asia Minor and Russia. He was wounded, and eventually killed, fighting for the British Empire. His book, *A Ride to Khiva* (1876) gave a personal account of his hazardous mission into Russian territory during the 'Great Game' when the British and Russian Empires were vying for power in central Asia. It was an instant bestseller, and brought him overnight fame. This two-volume work, published in 1877, recounts his next adventure: a two-thousand mile journey through Asia Minor to assess Turkey's chances in the impending war with Russia. On the way, he creates vivid snapshots of the region and of the people he encounters. This first volume covers Burnaby's journey from Constantinople to Arabkir and includes a map of the entire route.

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VOLUME 1

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ON HORSEBACK THROUGH
ASIA MINOR.

BY
CAPTAIN FRED BURNABY,
AUTHOR OF "A RIDE TO KHIVA."

WITH PORTRAIT AND MAPS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

London:
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PREFACE.



It has been said that a man often writes his book first, his preface last. The author of this work is no exception to the general rule. These volumes contain an account of a journey on horseback through Asia Minor. I was five months in that country, and traversed a district extending over 2000 miles. My limited leave of absence prevented me from staying more than a few days at the important towns which lay on the route.

Although unable to learn so much as was to be desired of the ways and mode of life of the various inhabitants of Anatolia, I had the opportunity of talking to every class of society with reference to the questions of the day—the Conference, and the impending war with Russia. Pachas, farmers,

peasants, all of them had something to say about these subjects.

I met people of many different races: Turks, Armenians, Greeks, Turkomans, Circassians, Kurds, and Persians. They almost invariably received me very hospitably.

The remarks which were made by the Moham-medans about the Christians, and by the Armenians about the Turks and Russians, sometimes interested me. I have thought that they might interest the public.

The impression formed in my own mind as to the probable result of the war between Russia and Turkey was decidedly unfavourable to the latter power. Since this work has been written the soldiers of the Crescent have gallantly withstood their foe. My reasons for arriving at the above-mentioned opinion will be found in these volumes. They merely contain a sort of verbal photograph—if the reader will allow me to use the expression—of what I saw and heard during the journey.

A few official reports, referring to the treatment of the members of the United Greek Christians by the Russian authorities will be seen in the

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Appendices, and amongst other matter a document brought to England by two Circassian Chiefs. It relates to the invasion of Circassia by the Russians. There are also some march routes and descriptions of various districts, taken and translated from different military works.

THE AUTHOR.

SOMERBY HALL, LEICESTERSHIRE,
September, 1877.

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INTRODUCTION.

It was the autumn of 1876: I had not as yet determined where to spend my winter leave of absence. There was a great deal of excitement in England; the news of some terrible massacres in Bulgaria had thoroughly aroused the public. The indignation against the perpetrators of these awful crimes became still more violent, when it was remembered that the Turkish Government had repudiated its loans, and that more than a hundred millions sterling had gone for ever from the pockets of the British tax-payer. This was very annoying.

We were on the eve of an important election.¹ Some people declared that our Government might have prevented the massacres in Bulgaria; others, that an ostentatious protection had been shown to Turkey, and that Europe had been wantonly disturbed through the instrumentality of our Ministry.

¹ Buckinghamshire.

Illustrious statesmen, who were solacing themselves after the toils of the session, by meandering through the rural districts on bicycles, or by felling timber in sylvan groves, hurried up to town.

Two letters appeared in the columns of the leading journal signed by gentlemen belonging to the Church of England, saying that they had seen Christians impaled by the Turks.

Pamphlets were written and speeches made in which the subjects of the Sultan were held up to universal execration. Several distinguished Russians, who happened at that time to be in England, threw oil on the flames which had been kindled.

Ladies, like Madame de Lievens, of whom the late Duke of Wellington wrote,² went from *salon* to *salon* and extolled the Christian motives of the Tzar. This feminine eloquence proved too much for a few of our legislators, who, like Lord Grey in the year 1829, entertained some old opposition opinions of Mr. Fox's, that "the Turks ought to be driven out of Europe."

It was difficult to arrive at the truth amidst all

² *Vide* Correspondence of the late Duke of Wellington, letter to the Earl of Aberdeen, dated Walmer Castle, July 29th, 1829.

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the turmoil which prevailed. Were the Turks such awful scoundrels? Had the reverend gentlemen, to whom I have already alluded, really seen Christians impaled, or were these clergymen under the influence of a hallucination? There was one way to satisfy my own mind as to whether the subjects of the Porte were so cruel as they had been described. I determined to travel in Asia Minor; for there I should be with Turks who are far removed from any European supervision. Should I not behold Christians impaled and wriggling like worms on hooks in every high road of Armenia, or find an Inquisition and a weekly *auto da fé* the amusement of the Mohammedans at Van?

Judging from the pamphlets which were continually being written about the inhuman nature of the Turks, this was not at all improbable. I should also have the opportunity of seeing something of the country between the Russo-Turkish frontier and Scutari.

It was the beginning of November. My leave of absence would commence towards the middle of the month. It was time to make preparations for the journey. On this occasion I determined to take an English servant, a faithful fellow, who had been with me in many parts of the world.

Before leaving London I thought that it might be as well to write to the Turkish Ambassador, and ask him if there would be any objection on the part of the authorities in Constantinople to my proposed journey in Asia Minor, at the same time saying that in the event of my obtaining the permission to travel in Anatolia, I should be much obliged to His Excellency if he could supply me with the requisite passport. To this letter I received, by return of post, the most courteous reply. I was informed that every Englishman could travel where he liked in the Turkish Empire, and that nothing was required but the ordinary foreign office passport, one of which His Excellency enclosed.

In the meantime I read all the books I could find which treated of Asia Minor. According to the works of those travellers who have been to Armenia in the winter, the cold would be very great. Indeed Tournefort found the wells in Erzeroum frozen over in July. Milner in his "History of the Turkish Empire," remarks of the mountainous district in Armenia, "Throughout this high region no one thinks, except under most urgent necessity, of travelling for eight months in the year, owing to the snow, ice, and intense cold."

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Regimental duty detained me in England during the summer. I could only avail myself of the winter for my journey. I had experienced the cold of the Kirghiz steppes in December and January, 1876, and was of opinion that the clothes which would keep a man alive in the deserts of Tartary, would more than protect him against the climate of Kurdistan. For shooting purposes I determined to take a little single Express rifle, made by Henry, and a No. 12 smooth-bore. A small stock of medicines was put in my saddlebags in the event of any illness on the road.

My arrangements were completed. I was ready to start.

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