

DUMAS
ALEXANDRE

ALIPACHA,
CELEBRATED
CRIMES

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Ali Pacha. Celebrated Crimes

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Alexandre Dumas

Ali Pacha / Celebrated Crimes

CHAPTER I

The beginning of the nineteenth century was a time of audacious enterprises and strange vicissitudes of fortune. Whilst Western Europe in turn submitted and struggled against a sub-lieutenant who made himself an emperor, who at his pleasure made kings and destroyed kingdoms, the ancient eastern part of the Continent; like mummies which preserve but the semblance of life, was gradually tumbling to pieces, and getting parcelled out amongst bold adventurers who skirmished over its ruins. Without mentioning local revolts which produced only short-lived struggles and trifling changes, of administration, such as that of Djezzar Pacha, who refused to pay tribute because he thought himself impregnable in his citadel of Saint-Jean-d'Acre, or that of Passevend-Oglou Pacha, who planted himself on the walls of Widdin as defender of the Janissaries against the institution of the regular militia decreed by Sultan Selim at Stamboul, there were wider spread rebellions which attacked the constitution of the Turkish Empire and diminished its extent; amongst them that of Czerni-Georges, which raised Servia to the position of a free state; of Mahomet Ali, who made his pachalik of Egypt into a kingdom; and finally that of the man whose, history we are about to narrate, Ali Tepeleni, Pacha of Janina, whose long resistance to the suzerain power preceded and brought about the regeneration of Greece.

Ali's own will counted for nothing in this important movement. He foresaw it, but without ever seeking to aid it, and was powerless to arrest it. He was not one of those men who place their lives and services at the disposal of any cause indiscriminately; and his sole aim was to acquire and increase a power of which he was both the guiding influence, and the end and object. His nature contained the seeds of every human passion, and he devoted all his long life to their development and gratification. This explains his whole temperament; his actions were merely the natural outcome of his character confronted with circumstances. Few men have understood themselves better or been on better terms with the orbit of their existence, and as the personality of an individual is all the more striking, in proportion as it reflects the manners and ideas of the time and country in which he has lived, so the figure of Ali Pacha stands out, if not one of the most brilliant, at least one of the most singular in contemporary history.

From the middle of the eighteenth century Turkey had been a prey to the political gangrene of which she is vainly trying to cure herself to-day, and which, before long, will dismember her in the sight of all Europe. Anarchy and disorder reigned from one end of the empire to the other. The Osmanli race, bred on conquest alone, proved good for nothing when conquest failed. It naturally therefore came to pass when Sobieski, who saved Christianity under the walls of Vienna, as before his time Charles Martel had saved it on the plains of Poitiers, had set bounds to the wave of Mussulman westward invasion, and definitely fixed a limit which it should not pass, that the Osmanli warlike instincts recoiled upon themselves. The haughty descendants of Ortogrul, who considered themselves born to command, seeing victory forsake them, fell back upon tyranny. Vainly did reason expostulate that oppression could not long be exercised by hands which had lost their strength, and that peace imposed new and different labours on those who no longer triumphed in war; they would listen to nothing; and, as fatalistic when condemned to a state of peace as when they marched forth conquering and to conquer, they cowered down in magnificent listlessness, leaving the whole burden of their support on conquered peoples. Like ignorant farmers, who exhaust fertile fields by forcing crops; they rapidly ruined their vast and rich empire by exorbitant exactions. Inexorable conquerors and insatiable masters, with one hand they flogged their slaves and with the other plundered them. Nothing was

superior to their insolence, nothing on a level with their greed. They were never glutted, and never relaxed their extortions. But in proportion as their needs increased on the one hand, so did their resources diminish on the other. Their oppressed subjects soon found that they must escape at any cost from oppressors whom they could neither appease nor satisfy. Each population took the steps best suited to its position and character; some chose inertia, others violence. The inhabitants of the plains, powerless and shelterless, bent like reeds before the storm and evaded the shock against which they were unable to stand. The mountaineers planted themselves like rocks in a torrent, and dammed its course with all their might. On both sides arose a determined resistance, different in method, similar in result. In the case of the peasants labour came to a stand-still; in that of the hill folk open war broke out. The grasping exactions of the tyrant dominant body produced nothing from waste lands and armed mountaineers; destitution and revolt were equally beyond their power to cope with; and all that was left for tyranny to govern was a desert enclosed by a wall.

But, all the same, the wants of a magnificent sultan, descendant of the Prophet and distributor of crowns, must be supplied; and to do this, the Sublime Porte needed money. Unconsciously imitating the Roman Senate, the Turkish Divan put up the empire for sale by public auction. All employments were sold to the highest bidder; pchas, beys, cadis, ministers of every rank, and clerks of every class had to buy their posts from their sovereign and get the money back out of his subjects. They spent their money in the capital, and recuperated themselves in the provinces. And as there was no other law than their master's pleasure, so there, was no other guarantee than his caprice. They had therefore to set quickly to work; the post might be lost before its cost had been recovered. Thus all the science of administration resolved itself into plundering as much and as quickly as possible. To this end, the delegate of imperial power delegated in his turn, on similar conditions, other agents to seize for him and for themselves all they could lay their hands on; so that the inhabitants of the empire might be divided into three classes – those who were striving to seize everything; those who were trying to save a little; and those who, having nothing and hoping for nothing, took no interest in affairs at all.

Albania was one of the most difficult provinces to manage. Its inhabitants were poor, brave, and, the nature of the country was mountainous and inaccessible. The pchas had great difficulty in collecting tribute, because the people were given to fighting for their bread. Whether Mahomedans or Christians, the Albanians were above all soldiers. Descended on the one side from the unconquerable Scythians, on the other from the ancient Macedonians, not long since masters of the world; crossed with Norman adventurers brought eastwards by the great movement of the Crusades; they felt the blood of warriors flow in their veins, and that war was their element. Sometimes at feud with one another, canton against canton, village against village, often even house against house; sometimes rebelling against the government their sanjaks; sometimes in league with these against the sultan; they never rested from combat except in an armed peace. Each tribe had its military organisation, each family its fortified stronghold, each man his gun on his shoulder. When they had nothing better to do, they tilled their fields, or mowed their neighbours', carrying off, it should be noted, the crop; or pastured their flocks, watching the opportunity to trespass over pasture limits. This was the normal and regular life of the population of Epirus, Thesprotia, Thessaly, and Upper Albania. Lower Albania, less strong, was also less active and bold; and there, as in many other parts of Turkey, the dalesman was often the prey of the mountaineer. It was in the mountain districts where were preserved the recollections of Scander Beg, and where the manners of ancient Laconia prevailed; the deeds of the brave soldier were sung on the lyre, and the skilful robber quoted as an example to the children by the father of the family. Village feasts were held on the booty taken from strangers; and the favourite dish was always a stolen sheep. Every man was esteemed in proportion to his skill and courage, and a man's chances of making a good match were greatly enhanced when he acquired the reputation of being an agile mountaineer and a good bandit.

The Albanians proudly called this anarchy liberty, and religiously guarded a state of disorder bequeathed by their ancestors, which always assured the first place to the most valiant.

It was amidst men and manners such as these that Ali Tepeleni was born. He boasted that he belonged to the conquering race, and that he descended from an ancient Anatolian family which had crossed into Albania with the troops of Bajazet Ilderim. But it is made certain by the learned researches of M. de Pouqueville that he sprang from a native stock, and not an Asiatic one, as he pretended. His ancestors were Christian Skipetars, who became Mussulmans after the Turkish invasion, and his ancestry certainly cannot be traced farther back than the end of the sixteenth century.

Mouktar Tepeleni, his grandfather, perished in the Turkish expedition against Corfu, in 1716. Marshal Schullemburg, who defended the island, having repulsed the enemy with loss, took Mouktar prisoner on Mount San Salvador, where he was in charge of a signalling party, and with a barbarity worthy of his adversaries, hung him without trial. It must be admitted that the memory of this murder must have had the effect of rendering Ali badly disposed towards Christians.

Mouktar left three sons, two of whom, Salik and Mahomet, were born of the same mother, a lawful wife, but the mother of the youngest, Veli, was a slave. His origin was no legal bar to his succeeding like his brothers. The family was one of the richest in the town of Tepelen, whose name it bore, it enjoyed an income of six thousand piastres, equal to twenty thousand francs. This was a large fortune in a poor country, where, all commodities were cheap. But the Tepeleni family, holding the rank of beys, had to maintain a state like that of the great financiers of feudal Europe. They had to keep a large stud of horses, with a great retinue of servants and men-at-arms, and consequently to incur heavy expenses; thus they constantly found their revenue inadequate. The most natural means of raising it which occurred to them was to diminish the number of those who shared it; therefore the two elder brothers, sons of the wife, combined against Veli, the son of the slave, and drove him out of the house. The latter, forced to leave home, bore his fate like a brave man, and determined to levy exactions on others to compensate him for the losses incurred through his brothers. He became a freebooter, patrolling highroads and lanes, with his gun on his shoulder and his yataghan in his belt, attacking, holding for ransom, or plundering all whom he encountered.

After some years of this profitable business, he found himself a wealthy man and chief of a warlike band. Judging that the moment for vengeance had arrived, he marched for Tepelen, which he reached unsuspected, crossed the river Vojutza, the ancient Aous, penetrated the streets unresisted, and presented himself before the paternal house, in which his brothers, forewarned, had barricaded themselves. He at once besieged them, soon forced the gates, and pursued them to a tent, in which they took a final refuge. He surrounded this tent, waited till they were inside it, and then set fire to the four corners. "See," said he to those around him, "they cannot accuse me of vindictive reprisals; my brothers drove me out of doors, and I retaliate by keeping them at home for ever."

In a few moments he was his father's sole heir and master of Tepelen. Arrived at the summit of his ambition, he gave up free-booting, and established himself in the town, of which he became chief ago. He had already a son by a slave, who soon presented him with another son, and afterwards with a daughter, so that he had no reason to fear dying without an heir. But finding himself rich enough to maintain more wives and bring up many children, he desired to increase his credit by allying himself to some great family of the country. He therefore solicited and obtained the hand of Kamco, daughter of a bey of Conitza. This marriage attached him by the ties of relationship to the principal families of the province, among others to Kourd Pacha, Vizier of Serat, who was descended from the illustrious race of Scander Beg. After a few years, Veli had by his new wife a son named Ali, the subject of this history, and a daughter named Chainitza.

In spite of his intentions to reform, Veli could not entirely give up his old habits. Although his fortune placed him altogether above small gains and losses, he continued to amuse himself by raiding from time to time sheep, goats, and other perquisites, probably to keep his hand in. This innocent exercise of his taste was not to the fancy of his neighbours, and brawls and fights recommenced in fine style. Fortune did not always favour him, and the old mountaineer lost in the town part of what he had

made on the hills. Vexations soured his temper and injured his health. Notwithstanding the injunctions of Mahomet, he sought consolation in wine, which soon closed his career. He died in 1754.

CHAPTER II

Ali thus at thirteen years of age was free to indulge in the impetuosity of his character. From his early youth he had manifested a mettle and activity rare in young Turks, haughty by nature and self-restrained by education. Scarcely out of the nursery, he spent his time in climbing mountains, wandering through forests, scaling precipices, rolling in snow, inhaling the wind, defying the tempests, breathing out his nervous energy through every pore. Possibly he learnt in the midst of every kind of danger to brave everything and subdue everything; possibly in sympathy with the majesty of nature, he felt aroused in him a need of personal grandeur which nothing could satiate. In vain his father sought to calm his savage temper; and restrain his vagabond spirit; nothing was of, any use. As obstinate as intractable, he set at defiance all efforts and all precautions. If they shut him up, he broke the door or jumped out of the window; if they threatened him, he pretended to comply, conquered by fear, and promised everything that was required, but only to break his word the first opportunity. He had a tutor specially attached to his person and charged to supervise all his actions. He constantly deluded him by fresh tricks, and when he thought himself free from the consequences, he maltreated him with gross violence. It was only in his youth, after his father's death, that he became more manageable; he even consented to learn to read, to please his mother, whose idol he was, and to whom in return he gave all his affection.

If Kamco had so strong a liking for Ali, it was because she found in him, not only her blood, but also her character. During the lifetime of her husband, whom she feared, she seemed only an ordinary woman; but as soon as his eyes were closed, she gave free scope to the violent passions which agitated her bosom. Ambitious, bold, vindictive; she assiduously cultivated the germs of ambition, hardihood, and vengeance which already strongly showed themselves in the young Ali. "My son," she was never tired of telling him, "he who cannot defend his patrimony richly deserves to lose it. Remember that the property of others is only theirs so long as they are strong enough to keep it, and that when you find yourself strong enough to take it from them, it is yours. Success justifies everything, and everything is permissible to him who has the power to do it."

Ali, when he reached the zenith of his greatness, used to declare that his success was entirely his mother's work. "I owe everything to my mother," he said one day to the French Consul; "for my father, when he died, left me nothing but a den of wild beasts and a few fields. My imagination, inflamed by the counsels of her who has given me life twice over, since she has made me both a man and a vizier, revealed to me the secret of my destiny. Thenceforward I saw nothing in Tepelen but the natal air from which I was to spring on the prey which I devoured mentally. I dreamt of nothing else but power, treasures, palaces, in short what time has realised and still promises; for the point I have now reached is not the limit of my hopes."

Kamco did not confine herself to words; she employed every means to increase the fortune of her beloved son and to make him a power. Her first care was to poison the children of Veli's favourite slave, who had died before him. Then, at ease about the interior of her family, she directed her attention to the exterior. Renouncing all the habit of her sex, she abandoned the veil and the distaff, and took up arms, under pretext of maintaining the rights of her children. She collected round her her husband's old partisans, whom she attached to her, service, some by presents, others by various favours, and she gradually enlisted all the lawless and adventurous men in Toscaria. With their aid, she made herself all powerful in Tepelen, and inflicted the most rigorous persecutions on such as remained hostile to her.

But the inhabitants of the two adjacent villages of Kormovo and Kardiki, fearing lest this terrible woman, aided by her son, now grown into a man, should strike a blow against their independence; made a secret alliance against her, with the object of putting her out of the way the first convenient opportunity. Learning one day that Ali had started on a distant expedition with his

best soldiers; they surprised Tepelen under cover of night, and carried off Kamco and her daughter Chainitza captives to Kardiki. It was proposed to put them to death; and sufficient evidence to justify their execution was not wanting; but their beauty saved their lives; their captors preferred to revenge themselves by licentiousness rather than by murder. Shut up all day in prison, they only emerged at night to pass into the arms of the men who had won them by lot the previous morning. This state of things lasted for a month, at the end of which a Greek of Argyro-Castron, named G. Malicovo, moved by compassion for their horrible fate, ransomed them for twenty thousand piastres, and took them back to Tepelen.

Ali had just returned. He was accosted by his mother and sister, pale with fatigue, shame, and rage. They told him what had taken place, with cries and tears, and Kamco added, fixing her distracted eyes upon him, "My son! my son! my soul will enjoy no peace till Kormovo and Kardikil destroyed by thy scimitar, will no longer exist to bear witness to my dishonour."

Ali, in whom this sight and this story had aroused, sanguinary passions, promised a vengeance proportioned to the outrage, and worked with all his might to place himself in a position to keep his word. A worthy son of his father, he had commenced life in the fashion of the heroes of ancient Greece, stealing sheep and goats, and from the age of fourteen years he had acquired an equal reputation to that earned by the son of Jupiter and Maia. When he grew to manhood, he extended his operations. At the time of which we are speaking, he had long practised open pillage. His plundering expeditions added to his mother's savings, who since her return from Kardiki had altogether withdrawn from public life, and devoted herself to household duties, enabled him to collect a considerable force for an expedition against Kormovo, one of the two towns he had sworn to destroy. He marched against it at the head of his banditti, but found himself vigorously opposed, lost part of his force, and was obliged to save himself and the rest by flight. He did not stop till he reached Tepelen, where he had a warm reception from Kamco, whose thirst for vengeance had been disappointed by his defeat. "Go!" said she, "go, coward! go spin with the women in the harem! The distaff is a better weapon for you than the scimitar!" The young man answered not a word, but, deeply wounded by these reproaches, retired to hide his humiliation in the bosom of his old friend the mountain. The popular legend, always thirsting for the marvellous in the adventures of heroes, has it that he found in the ruins of a church a treasure which enabled him to reconstitute his party. But he himself has contradicted this story, stating that it was by the ordinary methods of rapine and plunder that he replenished his finances. He selected from his old band of brigands thirty palikars, and entered, as their boubachi, or leader of the group, into the service of the Pacha of Negropont. But he soon tired of the methodical life he was obliged to lead, and passed into Thessaly, where, following the example of his father Veli, he employed his time in brigandage on the highways. Thence he raided the Pindus chain of mountains, plundered a great number of villages, and returned to Tepelen, richer and consequently more esteemed than ever.

He employed his fortune and influence in collecting a formidable guerilla force, and resumed his plundering operations. Kurd Pacha soon found himself compelled, by the universal outcry of the province, to take active measures against this young brigand. He sent against him a division of troops, which defeated him and brought him prisoner with his men to Berat, the capital of Central Albania and residence of the governor. The country flattered itself that at length it was freed from its scourge. The whole body of bandits was condemned to death; but Ali was not the man to surrender his life so easily. Whilst they were hanging his comrades, he threw himself at the feet of the pacha and begged for mercy in the name of his parents, excusing himself on account of his youth, and promising a lasting reform. The pacha, seeing at his feet a comely youth, with fair hair and blue eyes, a persuasive voice, and eloquent tongue, and in whose veins flowed the same blood as his own, was moved with pity and pardoned him. Ali got off with a mild captivity in the palace of his powerful relative, who heaped benefits upon him, and did all he could to lead him into the paths of probity. He appeared amenable to these good influences, and bitterly to repent his past errors. After some years, believing

in his reformation, and moved by the prayers of Kamco, who incessantly implored the restitution of her dear son, the generous pacha restored him his liberty, only giving him to understand that he had no more mercy to expect if he again disturbed the public peace. Ali taking the threat seriously; did not run the risk of braving it, and, on the contrary, did all he could to conciliate the man whose anger he dared not kindle. Not only did he keep the promise he had made to live quietly, but by his good conduct he caused his, former escapades to be forgotten, putting under obligation all his neighbours, and attaching to himself, through the services he rendered them, a great number of friendly disposed persons. In this manner he soon assumed a distinguished and honourable rank among the beys of the country, and being of marriageable age, he sought and formed an alliance with the daughter of Capelan Tigre, Pacha of Delvino, who resided at Argyro-Castron. This union, happy on both sides, gave him, with one of the most accomplished women in Epirus, a high position and great influence.

It seemed as if this marriage were destined to wean Ali forever from his former turbulent habits and wild adventures. But the family into which he had married afforded violent contrasts and equal elements of good and mischief. If Emineh, his wife, was a model of virtue, his father-in-law, Capelan, was a composition of every vice – selfish, ambitious, turbulent, fierce. Confident in his courage, and further emboldened by his remoteness from the capital, the Pacha of Delvino gloried in setting law and authority at defiance.

Ali's disposition was too much like that of his father-in-law to prevent him from taking his measure very quickly. He soon got on good terms with him, and entered into his schemes, waiting for an opportunity to denounce him and become his successor. For this opportunity he had not long to wait.

Capelan's object in giving his daughter to Tepeleni was to enlist him among the beys of the province to gain independence, the ruling passion of viziers. The cunning young man pretended to enter into the views of his father-in-law, and did all he could to urge him into the path of rebellion.

An adventurer named Stephano Piccolo, an emissary of Russia, had just raised in Albania the standard of the Cross and called to arms all the Christians of the Acroceraunian Mountains. The Divan sent orders to all the pachas of Northern Turkey in Europe to instantly march against the insurgents and quell the rising in blood.

Instead of obeying the orders of the Divan and joining Kurd Pacha, who had summoned him, Capelan, at the instigation of his son-in-law, did all he could to embarrass the movement of the imperial troops, and without openly making common cause with the insurgents, he rendered them substantial aid in their resistance. They were, notwithstanding, conquered and dispersed; and their chief, Stephano Piccolo, had to take refuge in the unexplored caves of Montenegro.

When the struggle was over, Capelan, as Ali had foreseen, was summoned to give an account of his conduct before the roumeli-valicy, supreme judge over Turkey in Europe. He was not only accused of the gravest offences, but proofs of them were forwarded to the Divan by the very man who had instigated them. There could be no doubt as to the result of the inquiry; therefore, the pacha, who had no suspicions of his son-in-law's duplicity, determined not to leave his pachalik. That was not in accordance with the plans of Ali, who wished to succeed to both the government and the wealth of his father-in-law. He accordingly made the most plausible remonstrances against the inefficacy and danger of such a resistance. To refuse to plead was tantamount to a confession of guilt, and was certain to bring on his head a storm against which he was powerless to cope, whilst if he obeyed the orders of the roumeli-valicy he would find it easy to excuse himself. To give more effect to his perfidious advice, Ali further employed the innocent Emineh, who was easily alarmed on her father's account. Overcome by the reasoning of his son-in-law and the tears of his daughter, the unfortunate pacha consented to go to Monastir, where he had been summoned to appear, and where he was immediately arrested and beheaded.

Ali's schemes had succeeded, but both his ambition and his cupidity were frustrated. Ali, Bey of Argyro-Castron, who had throughout shown himself devoted to the sultan, was nominated Pacha

of Delvino in place of Capelan. He sequestered all the property of his predecessor, as confiscated to the sultan, and thus deprived Ali Tepeleni of all the fruits of his crime.

This disappointment kindled the wrath of the ambitious Ali. He swore vengeance for the spoliation of which he considered himself the victim. But the moment was not favourable for putting his projects in train. The murder of Capelan, which its perpetrator intended for a mere crime, proved a huge blunder. The numerous enemies of Tepeleni, silent under the administration of the late pacha, whose resentment they had cause to fear, soon made common cause under the new one, for whose support they had hopes. Ali saw the danger, sought and found the means to obviate it. He succeeded in making a match between Ali of Argyro-Castron, who was unmarried, and Chainitza, his own sister. This alliance secured to him the government of Tigre, which he held under Capelan. But that was not sufficient. He must put himself in a state of security against the dangers he had lately, experienced, and establish himself on a firm footing against possible accidents. He soon formed a plan, which he himself described to the French Consul in the following words: —

“Years were elapsing,” said he, “and brought no important change in my position. I was an important partisan, it is true, and strongly supported, but I held no title or Government employment of my own. I recognised the necessity of establishing myself firmly in my birthplace. I had devoted friends, and formidable foes, bent on my destruction, whom I must put out of the way, for my own safety. I set about a plan for destroying them at one blow, and ended by devising one with which I ought to have commenced my career. Had I done so, I should have saved much time and pains.

“I was in the habit of going every day, after hunting, for a siesta in a neighbouring wood. A confidential servant of mine suggested to my enemies the idea of surprising me and assassinating one there. I myself supplied the plan of the conspiracy, which was adopted. On the day agreed upon, I preceded my adversaries to the place where I was accustomed to repose, and caused a goat to be pinioned and muzzled, and fastened under the tree, covered with my cape; I then returned home by a roundabout path. Soon after I had left, the conspirators arrived, and fired a volley at the goat.

“They ran up to make certain of my death, but were interrupted by a piquet of my men, who unexpectedly emerged from a copse where I had posted them, and they were obliged to return to Tepelen, which they entered, riotous with joy, crying ‘Ali Bey is dead, now we are free!’ This news reached my harem, and I heard the cries of my mother and my wife mingled with the shouts of my enemies. I allowed the commotion to run its course and reach its height, so as to indicate which were my friends and which my foes. But when the former were at the depth of their distress and the latter at the height of their joy, and, exulting in their supposed victory, had drowned their prudence and their courage in floods of wine, then, strong in the justice of my cause, I appeared upon the scene. Now was the time for my friends to triumph and for my foes to tremble. I set to work at the head of my partisans, and before sunrise had exterminated the last of my enemies. I distributed their lands, their houses, and their goods amongst my followers, and from that moment I could call the town of Tepelen my own.”

A less ambitious man might perhaps have remained satisfied with such a result. But Ali did not look upon the suzerainty of a canton as a final object, but only as a means to an end; and he had not made himself master of Tepelen to limit himself to a petty state, but to employ it as a base of operations.

He had allied himself to Ali of Argyro-Castron to get rid of his enemies; once free from them, he began to plot against his supplanter. He forgot neither his vindictive projects nor his ambitious schemes. As prudent in execution as bold in design, he took good care not to openly attack a man stronger than himself, and gained by stratagem what he could not obtain by violence. The honest and straightforward character of his brother-in-law afforded an easy success to his perfidy. He began by endeavouring to suborn his sister Chainitza, and several times proposed to her to poison her husband; but she, who dearly loved the pacha, who was a kind husband and to whom she had borne two children, repulsed his suggestions with horror, and threatened, if he persisted, to denounce him. Ali, fearing

the consequences if she carried out her threat, begged forgiveness for his wicked plans, pretended deep repentance, and spoke of his brother-in-law in terms of the warmest affection. His acting was so consummate that even Chaintza, who well knew her brother's subtle character, was deceived by it. When he saw that she was his dupe, knowing that he had nothing more either to fear or to hope for from that side, he directed his attention to another.

The pacha had a brother named Soliman, whose character nearly resembled that of Tepeleni. The latter, after having for some time quietly studied him, thought he discerned in him the man he wanted; he tempted him to kill the pacha, offering him, as the price of this crime, his whole inheritance and the hand of Chaintza, only reserving for himself the long coveted sanjak. Soliman accepted the proposals, and the fratricidal bargain was concluded. The two conspirators, sole masters of the secret, the horrible nature of which guaranteed their mutual fidelity, and having free access to the person of their victim; could not fail in their object.

One day, when they were both received by the pacha in private audience, Soliman, taking advantage of a moment when he was unobserved, drew a pistol from his belt and blew out his brother's brains. Chaintza ran at the sound, and saw her husband lying dead between her brother and her brother-in-law. Her cries for help were stopped by threats of death if she moved or uttered a sound. As she lay, fainting with grief and terror, Ali made, a sign to Soliman, who covered her with his cloak, and declared her his wife. Ali pronounced the marriage concluded, and retired for it to be consummated. Thus was celebrated this frightful wedding, in the scene of an awful crime; beside the corpse of a man who a moment before had been the husband of the bride and the brother of the bridegroom.

The assassins published the death of the pacha, attributing it, as is usual in Turkey, to a fit of cerebral apoplexy. But the truth soon leaked out from the lying shrouds in which it had been wrapped. Reports even exceeded the truth, and public opinion implicated Chaintza in a crime of which she had been but the witness. Appearances certainly justified these suspicions. The young wife had soon consoled herself in the arms of her second husband for the loss of the first, and her son by him presently died suddenly, thus leaving Soliman in lawful and peaceful possession of all his brother's wealth. As for the little girl, as she had no rights and could hurt no one, her life was spared; and she was eventually married to a bey of Cleisoura, destined in the sequel to cut a tragic figure in the history of the Tepeleni family.

But Ali was once more deprived of the fruit of his bloody schemes. Notwithstanding all his intrigues, the sanjak of Delvino was conferred, not upon him, but upon a bey of one of the first families of Zaporua. But, far from being discouraged, he recommenced with new boldness and still greater confidence the work of his elevation, so often begun and so often interrupted. He took advantage of his increasing influence to ingratiate himself with the new pasha, and was so successful in insinuating himself into his confidence, that he was received into the palace and treated like the pacha's son. There he acquired complete knowledge of the details of the pachalik and the affairs of the pacha, preparing himself to govern the one when he had got rid of the other.

The sanjak of Delvino was bounded from Venetian territory by the district of Buthrotum. Selim, a better neighbour and an abler politician than his predecessors, sought to renew and preserve friendly commercial relations with the purveyors of the Magnificent Republic. This wise conduct, equally advantageous for both the bordering provinces, instead of gaining for the pacha the praise and favours which he deserved, rendered him suspected at a court whose sole political idea was hatred of the name of Christian, and whose sole means of government was terror. Ali immediately perceived the pacha's error, and the advantage which he himself could derive from it. Selim, as one of his commercial transactions with the Venetians, had sold them, for a number of years, the right of felling timber in a forest near Lake Reloda. Ali immediately took advantage of this to denounce the pasha as guilty of having alienated the territory of the Sublime Porte, and of a desire to deliver to the infidels all the province of Delvino. Masking his ambitious designs under the veil of religion and patriotism, he

lamented, in his denunciatory report, the necessity under which he found himself, as a loyal subject and faithful Mussulman, of accusing a man who had been his benefactor, and thus at the same time gained the benefit of crime and the credit of virtue.

Under the gloomy despotism of the Turks, a man in any position of responsibility is condemned almost as soon as accused; and if he is not strong enough to inspire terror, his ruin is certain. Ali received at Tepelen, where he had retired to more conveniently weave his perfidious plots, an order to get rid of the pacha. At the receipt of the firman of execution he leaped with joy, and flew to Delvino to seize the prey which was abandoned to him.

The noble Selim, little suspecting that his protegee had become his accuser and was preparing to become his executioner, received him with more tenderness than ever, and lodged him, as heretofore, in his palace. Under the shadow of this hospitable roof, Ali skilfully prepared the consummation of the crime which was for ever to draw him out of obscurity. He went every morning to pay his court to the pacha, whose confidence he doubted; then, one day, feigning illness, he sent excuses for inability to pay his respects to a man whom he was accustomed to regard as his father, and begged him to come for a moment into his apartment. The invitation being accepted, he concealed assassins in one of the cupboards without shelves, so common in the East, which contain by day the mattresses spread by night on the floor for the slaves to sleep upon. At the hour fixed, the old man arrived. Ali rose from his sofa with a depressed air, met him, kissed the hem of his robe, and, after seating him in his place, himself offered him a pipe-and coffee, which were accepted. But instead of putting the cup in the hand stretched to receive it, he let it fall on the floor, where it broke into a thousand pieces. This was the signal. The assassins sprang from their retreat and darted upon Selim, who fell, exclaiming, like Caesar, "And it is thou, my son, who takest my life!"

At the sound of the tumult which followed the assassination, Selim's bodyguard, running up, found Ali erect, covered with blood, surrounded by assassins, holding in his hand the firman displayed, and crying with a menacing voice, "I have killed the traitor Selim by the order of our glorious sultan; here is his imperial command." At these words, and the sight of the fatal diploma, all prostrated themselves terror-stricken. Ali, after ordering the decapitation of Selim, whose head he seized as a trophy, ordered the cadî, the beys, and the Greek archons to meet at the palace, to prepare the official account of the execution of the sentence. They assembled, trembling; the sacred hymn of the Fatahat was sung, and the murder declared legal, in the name of the merciful and compassionate God, Lord of the world.

When they had sealed up the effects of the victim, the murderer left the palace, taking with him, as a hostage, Mustapha, son of Selim, destined to be even more unfortunate than his father.

A few days afterwards, the Divan awarded to Ali Tepeleni, as a reward for his zeal for the State and religion, the sanjak of Thessaly, with the title of Dervendgi-pacha, or Provost Marshal of the roads. This latter dignity was conferred on the condition of his levying a body of four thousand men to clear the valley of the Peneus of a multitude of Christian chiefs who exercised more power than the officers of the Grand Seigneur. The new pacha took advantage of this to enlist a numerous body of Albanians ready for any enterprise, and completely devoted to him. With two important commands, and with this strong force at his back, he repaired to Trikala, the seat of his government, where he speedily acquired great influence.

His first act of authority was to exterminate the bands of Armatolis, or Christian militia, which infested the plain. He laid violent hands on all whom he caught, and drove the rest back into their mountains, splitting them up into small bands whom he could deal with at his pleasure. At the same time he sent a few heads to Constantinople, to amuse the sultan and the mob, and some money to the ministers to gain their support. "For," said he, "water sleeps, but envy never does." These steps were prudent, and whilst his credit increased at court, order was reestablished from the defiles of the Perrebia of Pindus to the vale of Tempe and to the pass of Thermopylae.

These exploits of the provost-marshal, amplified by Oriental exaggeration, justified the ideas which were entertained of the capacity of Ali Pacha. Impatient of celebrity, he took good care himself to spread his fame, relating his prowess to all comers, making presents to the sultan's officers who came into his government, and showing travellers his palace courtyard festooned with decapitated heads. But what chiefly tended to consolidate his power was the treasure which he ceaselessly amassed by every means. He never struck for the mere pleasure of striking, and the numerous victims of his proscriptions only perished to enrich him. His death sentences always fell on beys and wealthy persons whom he wished to plunder. In his eyes the axe was but an instrument of fortune, and the executioner a tax-gatherer.

CHAPTER III

Having governed Thessaly in this manner during several years, Ali found himself in a position to acquire the province of Janina, the possession of which, by making him master of Epirus, would enable him to crush all his enemies and to reign supreme over the three divisions of Albania.

But before he could succeed in this, it was necessary to dispose of the pacha already in possession. Fortunately for Ali, the latter was a weak and indolent man, quite incapable of struggling against so formidable a rival; and his enemy speedily conceived and put into execution a plan intended to bring about the fulfilment of his desires. He came to terms with the same Armatolians whom he had formerly treated so harshly, and let them loose, provided with arms and ammunition, on the country which he wished to obtain. Soon the whole region echoed with stories of devastation and pillage. The pacha, unable to repel the incursions of these mountaineers, employed the few troops he had in oppressing the inhabitants of the plains, who, groaning under both extortion and rapine, vainly filled the air with their despairing cries. Ali hoped that the Divan, which usually judged only after the event, seeing that Epirus lay desolate, while Thessaly flourished under his own administration, would, before long, entrust himself with the government of both provinces, when a family incident occurred, which for a time diverted the course of his political manoeuvres.

For a long time his mother Kamco had suffered from an internal cancer, the result of a life of depravity. Feeling that her end drew near, she despatched messenger after messenger, summoning her son to her bedside. He started, but arrived too late, and found only his sister Chaintza mourning over the body of their mother, who had expired in her arms an hour previously. Breathing unutterable rage and pronouncing horrible imprecations against Heaven, Kamco had commanded her children, under pain of her dying curse, to carry out her last wishes faithfully. After having long given way to their grief, Ali and Chaintza read together the document which contained these commands. It ordained some special assassinations, mentioned sundry villages which, some day, were to be given to the flames, but ordered them most especially, as soon as possible, to exterminate the inhabitants of Kormovo and Kardiki, from whom she had endured the last horrors of slavery.

Then, after advising her children to remain united, to enrich their soldiers, and to count as nothing people who were useless to them, Kamco ended by commanding them to send in her name a pilgrim to Mecca, who should deposit an offering on the tomb of the Prophet for the repose of her soul. Having perused these last injunctions, Ali and Chaintza joined hands, and over the inanimate remains of their departed mother swore to accomplish her dying behests.

The pilgrimage came first under consideration. Now a pilgrim can only be sent as proxy to Mecca, or offerings be made at the tomb of Medina, at the expense of legitimately acquired property duly sold for the purpose. The brother and sister made a careful examination of the family estates, and after long hunting, thought they had found the correct thing in a small property of about fifteen hundred francs income, inherited from their great-grandfather, founder of the Tepel-Enian dynasty. But further investigations disclosed that even this last resource had been forcibly taken from a Christian, and the idea of a pious pilgrimage and a sacred offering had to be given up. They then agreed to atone for the impossibility of expiation by the grandeur of their vengeance, and swore to pursue without ceasing and to destroy without mercy all enemies of their family.

The best mode of carrying out this terrible and self-given pledge was that Ali should resume his plans of aggrandizement exactly where he had left them. He succeeded in acquiring the pachalik of Janina, which was granted him by the Porte under the title of "arpalik," or conquest. It was an old custom, natural to the warlike habits of the Turks, to bestow the Government provinces or towns affecting to despise the authority of the Grand Seigneur on whomsoever succeeded in controlling them, and Janina occupied this position. It was principally inhabited by Albanians, who had an enthusiastic admiration for anarchy, dignified by them with the name of "Liberty," and who thought

themselves independent in proportion to the disturbance they succeeded in making. Each lived retired as if in a mountain castle, and only went out in order to participate in the quarrels of his faction in the forum. As for the pachas, they were relegated to the old castle on the lake, and there was no difficulty in obtaining their recall.

Consequently there was a general outcry at the news of Ali Pacha's nomination, and it was unanimously agreed that a man whose character and power were alike dreaded must not be admitted within the walls of Janina. Ali, not choosing to risk his forces in an open battle with a warlike population, and preferring a slower and safer way to a short and dangerous one, began by pillaging the villages and farms belonging to his most powerful opponents. His tactics succeeded, and the very persons who had been foremost in vowing hatred to the son of Kamco and who had sworn most loudly that they would die rather than submit to the tyrant, seeing their property daily ravaged, and impending ruin if hostilities continued, applied themselves to procure peace. Messengers were sent secretly to Ali, offering to admit him into Janina if he would undertake to respect the lives and property of his new allies. Ali promised whatever they asked, and entered the town by night. His first proceeding was to appear before the *cadi*, whom he compelled to register and proclaim his *firmans* of investiture.

In the same year in which he arrived at this dignity, really the desire and object of Ali's whole life, occurred also the death of the Sultan Abdul Hamid, whose two sons, Mustapha and Mahmoud, were confined in the Old Seraglio. This change of rulers, however, made no difference to Ali; the peaceful Selim, exchanging the prison to which his nephews were now relegated, for the throne of their father, confirmed the Pacha of Janina in the titles, offices, and privileges which had been conferred on him.

Established in his position by this double investiture, Ali applied himself to the definite settlement of his claims. He was now fifty years of age, and was at the height of his intellectual development: experience had been his teacher, and the lesson of no single event had been lost upon him. An uncultivated but just and penetrating mind enabled him to comprehend facts, analyse causes, and anticipate results; and as his heart never interfered with the deductions of his rough intelligence, he had by a sort of logical sequence formulated an inflexible plan of action. This man, wholly ignorant, not only of the ideas of history but also of the great names of Europe, had succeeded in divining, and as a natural consequence of his active and practical character, in also realising Macchiavelli, as is amply shown in the expansion of his greatness and the exercise of his power. Without faith in God, despising men, loving and thinking only of himself, distrusting all around him, audacious in design, immovable in resolution, inexorable in execution, merciless in vengeance, by turns insolent, humble, violent, or supple according to circumstances, always and entirely logical in his egotism, he is Cesar Borgia reborn as a Mussulman; he is the incarnate ideal of Florentine policy, the Italian prince converted into a satrap.

Age had as yet in no way impaired Ali's strength and activity, and nothing prevented his profiting by the advantages of his position. Already possessing great riches, which every day saw increasing under his management, he maintained a large body of warlike and devoted troops, he united the offices of Pacha of two tails of Janina, of Toparch of Thessaly, and of Provost Marshal of the Highway. As influential aids both to his reputation for general ability and the terror of his arms, and his authority as ruler, there stood by his side two sons, Mouktar and Veli, offspring of his wife Emineh, both fully grown and carefully educated in the principles of their father.

Ali's first care, once master of Janina, was to annihilate the beys forming the aristocracy of the place, whose hatred he was well aware of, and whose plots he dreaded. He ruined them all, banishing many and putting others to death. Knowing that he must make friends to supply the vacancy caused by the destruction of his foes, he enriched with the spoil the Albanian mountaineers in his pay, known by the name of Skipetars, on whom he conferred most of the vacant employments. But much too prudent to allow all the power to fall into the hands of a single caste, although a foreign one to the capital, he, by a singular innovation, added to and mixed with them an infusion of Orthodox

Greeks, a skilful but despised race, whose talents he could use without having to dread their influence. While thus endeavouring on one side to destroy the power of his enemies by depriving them of both authority and wealth, and on the other to consolidate his own by establishing a firm administration, he neglected no means of acquiring popularity. A fervent disciple of Mahomet when among fanatic Mussulmans, a materialist with the Bektaxis who professed a rude pantheism, a Christian among the Greeks, with whom he drank to the health of the Holy Virgin, he made everywhere partisans by flattering the idea most in vogue. But if he constantly changed both opinions and language when dealing with subordinates whom it was desirable to win over, Ali towards his superiors had one only line of conduct which he never transgressed. Obsequious towards the Sublime Porte, so long as it did not interfere with his private authority, he not only paid with exactitude all dues to the sultan, to whom he even often advanced money, but he also pensioned the most influential ministers. He was bent on having no enemies who could really injure his power, and he knew that in an absolute government no conviction can hold its own against the power of gold.

Having thus annihilated the nobles, deceived the multitude with plausible words and lulled to sleep the watchfulness of the Divan, Ali resolved to turn his arms against Kormovo. At the foot of its rocks he had, in youth, experienced the disgrace of defeat, and during thirty nights Kamco and Chainitza had endured all horrors of outrage at the hands of its warriors. Thus the implacable pacha had a twofold wrong to punish, a double vengeance to exact.

This time, profiting by experience, he called in the aid of treachery. Arrived at the citadel, he negotiated, promised an amnesty, forgiveness for all, actual rewards for some. The inhabitants, only too happy to make peace with so formidable an adversary, demanded and obtained a truce to settle the conditions. This was exactly what Ali expected, and Kormovo, sleeping on the faith of the treaty, was suddenly attacked and taken. All who did not escape by flight perished by the sword in the darkness, or by the hand of the executioner the next morning. Those who had offered violence aforesaid to Ali's mother and sister were carefully sought for, and whether convicted or merely accused, were impaled on spits, torn with red-hot pincers, and slowly roasted between two fires; the women were shaved and publicly scourged, and then sold as slaves.

This vengeance, in which all the nobles of the province not yet entirely ruined were compelled to assist, was worth a decisive victory to Ali. Towns, cantons, whole districts, overwhelmed with terror, submitted without striking a blow, and his name, joined to the recital of a massacre which ranked as a glorious exploit in the eyes of this savage people, echoed like thunder from valley to valley and mountain to mountain. In order that all surrounding him might participate in the joy of his success Ali gave his army a splendid festival. Of unrivalled activity, and, Mohammedan only in name, he himself led the chorus in the Pyrrhic and Klephtic dances, the ceremonials of warriors and of robbers. There was no lack of wine, of sheep, goats, and lambs roasted before enormous fires; made of the debris of the ruined city; antique games of archery and wrestling were celebrated, and the victors received their prizes from the hand of their chief. The plunder, slaves, and cattle were then shared, and the Tapygae, considered as the lowest of the four tribes composing the race of Skipetars, and ranking as the refuse of the army, carried off into the mountains of Acroceraunia, doors, windows, nails, and even the tiles of the houses, which were then all surrendered to the flames.

However, Ibrahim, the successor and son-in-law of Kurd Pacha, could not see with indifference part of his province invaded by his ambitious neighbour. He complained and negotiated, but obtaining no satisfaction, called out an army composed of Skipetars of Toxid, all Islamites, and gave the command to his brother Sepher, Bey of Avlone. Ali, who had adopted the policy of opposing alternately the Cross to the Crescent and the Crescent to the Cross, summoned to his aid the Christian chiefs of the mountains, who descended into the plains at the head of their unconquered troops. As is generally the case in Albania, where war is merely an excuse for brigandage, instead of deciding matters by a pitched battle, both sides contented themselves with burning villages, hanging peasants, and carrying off cattle.

Also, in accordance with the custom of the country, the women interposed between the combatants, and the good and gentle Emineh laid proposals of peace before Ibrahim Pacha, to whose apathetic disposition a state of war was disagreeable, and who was only too happy to conclude a fairly satisfactory negotiation. A family alliance was arranged, in virtue of which Ali retained his conquests, which were considered as the marriage portion of Ibrahim's eldest daughter, who became the wife of Ali's eldest son, Mouktar.

It was hoped that this peace might prove permanent, but the marriage which sealed the treaty was barely concluded before a fresh quarrel broke out between the pachas. Ali, having wrung such important concessions from the weakness of his neighbour, desired to obtain yet more. But closely allied to Ibrahim were two persons gifted with great firmness of character and unusual ability, whose position gave them great influence. They were his wife Zaidee, and his brother Sepher, who had been in command during the war just terminated. As both were inimical to Ali, who could not hope to corrupt them, the latter resolved to get rid of them.

Having in the days of his youth been intimate with Kurd Pacha, Ali had endeavoured to seduce his daughter, already the wife of Ibrahim. Being discovered by the latter in the act of scaling the wall of his harem, he had been obliged to fly the country. Wishing now to ruin the woman whom he had formerly tried to corrupt, Ali sought to turn his former crime to the success of a new one. Anonymous letters, secretly sent to Ibrahim, warned him that his wife intended to poison him, in order to be able later to marry Ali Pacha, whom she had always loved. In a country like Turkey, where to suspect a woman is to accuse her, and accusation is synonymous with condemnation, such a calumny might easily cause the death of the innocent Zaidee. But if Ibrahim was weak and indolent, he was also confiding and generous. He took the letters; to his wife, who had no difficulty in clearing herself, and who warned him against the writer, whose object and plots she easily divined, so that this odious conspiracy turned only to Ali's discredit. But the latter was not likely either to concern himself as to what others said or thought about him or to be disconcerted by a failure. He simply turned his machinations against his other enemy, and arranged matters this time so as to avoid a failure.

He sent to Zagori, a district noted for its doctors, for a quack who undertook to poison Sepher Bey on condition of receiving forty purses. When all was settled, the miscreant set out for Berat, and was immediately accused by Ali of evasion, and his wife and children were arrested as accomplices and detained, apparently as hostages for the good behaviour of their husband and father, but really as pledges for his silence when the crime should have been accomplished. Sepher Bey, informed of this by letters which Ali wrote to the Pacha of Berat demanding the fugitive, thought that a man persecuted by his enemy would be faithful to himself, and took the supposed runaway into his service. The traitor made skilful use of the kindness of his too credulous protector, insinuated himself into his confidence, became his trusted physician and apothecary, and gave him poison instead of medicine on the very first appearance of indisposition. As soon as symptoms of death appeared, the poisoner fled, aided by the emissaries of Ali, with whom the court of Berat was packed, and presented himself at Janina to receive the reward of his crime. Ali thanked him for his zeal, commended his skill, and referred him to the treasurer. But the instant the wretch left the seraglio in order to receive his recompense, he was seized by the executioners and hurried to the gallows. In thus punishing the assassin, Ali at one blow discharged the debt he owed him, disposed of the single witness to be dreaded, and displayed his own friendship for the victim! Not content with this, he endeavoured to again throw suspicion on the wife of Ibrahim Pacha, whom he accused of being jealous of the influence which Sepher Pacha had exercised in the family. This he mentioned regularly in conversation, writing in the same style to his agents at Constantinople, and everywhere where there was any profit in slandering a family whose ruin he desired for the sake of their possessions. Before long he made a pretext out of the scandal started by himself, and prepared to take up arms in order, he said, to avenge his friend Sepher Bey, when he was anticipated by Ibrahim Pacha, who roused against him the allied Christians of

Thesprotia, foremost among whom ranked the Suliots famed through Albania for their courage and their love of independence.

After several battles, in which his enemies had the a vantage, Ali began negotiations with Ibrahim, and finally concluded a treaty offensive and defensive. This fresh alliance was, like the first, to be cemented by a marriage. The virtuous Emineh, seeing her son Veli united to the second daughter of Ibrahim, trusted that the feud between the two families was now quenched, and thought herself at the summit of happiness. But her joy was not of long duration; the death-groan was again to be heard amidst the songs of the marriage-feast.

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