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'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie

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About this record

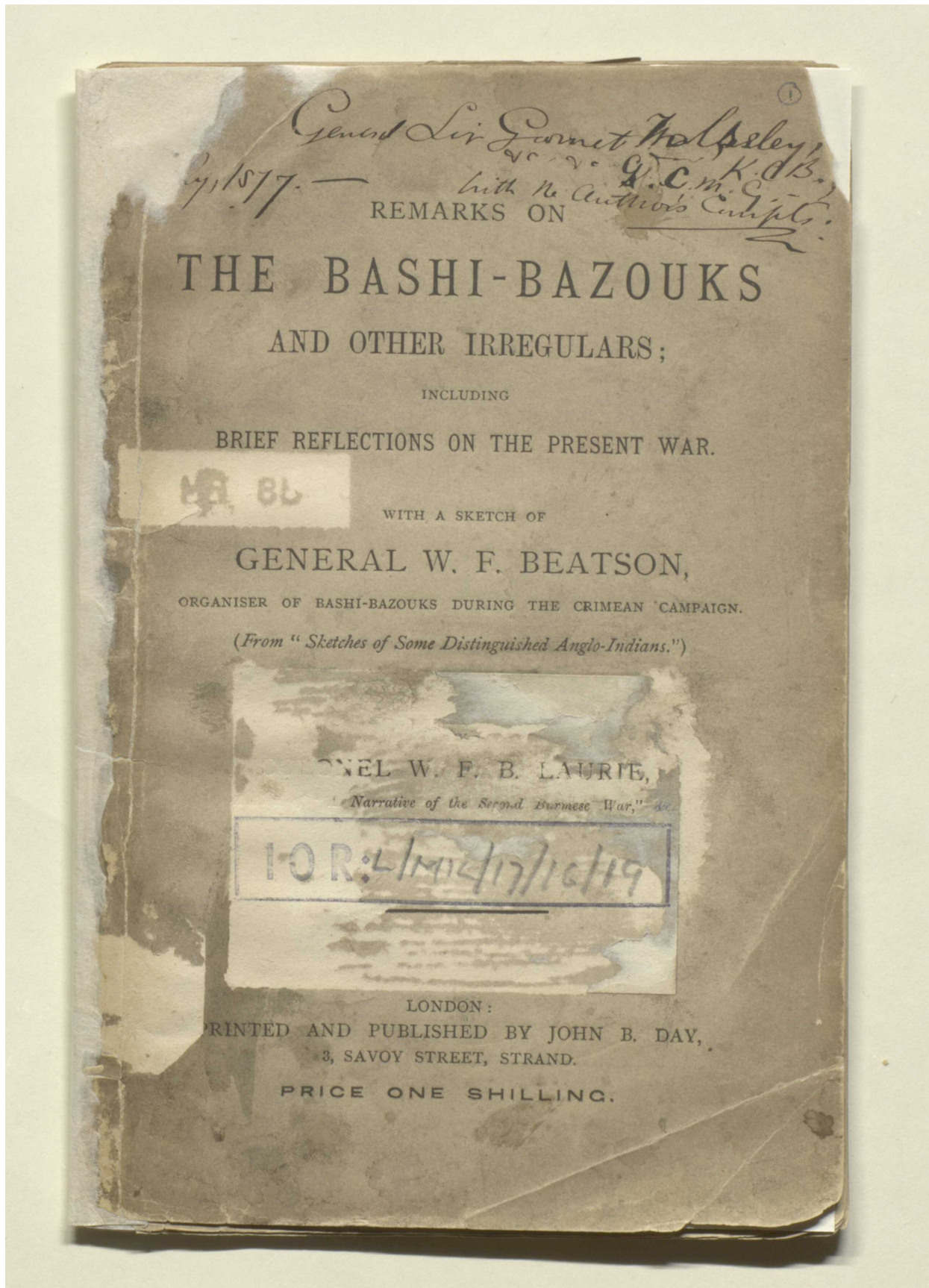
The volume comprises information about the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars including the following:

- remarks – discusses the notoriety and character of the Bashi-Bazouks, and their involvement in the Bulgarian atrocities during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877. A brief assessment of Turkish and Russian military is included, alongside a summary of current British interests in Asia Minor, and the involvement of William Ferguson Beatson with the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean War (1853-1856);
- Egypt – notes British interest in the country, and the announcement of intentions to send a force from India to occupy and hold Egypt in the event of an attack;
- the Turkish Irregulars – notes the use and advantage of using large irregular forces;
- Major-General W F Beatson – provides a biography of the man with remarks on his character, and details of his military career;
- papers relating to General Beatson's Indian Career - contains extracts, an inscription,

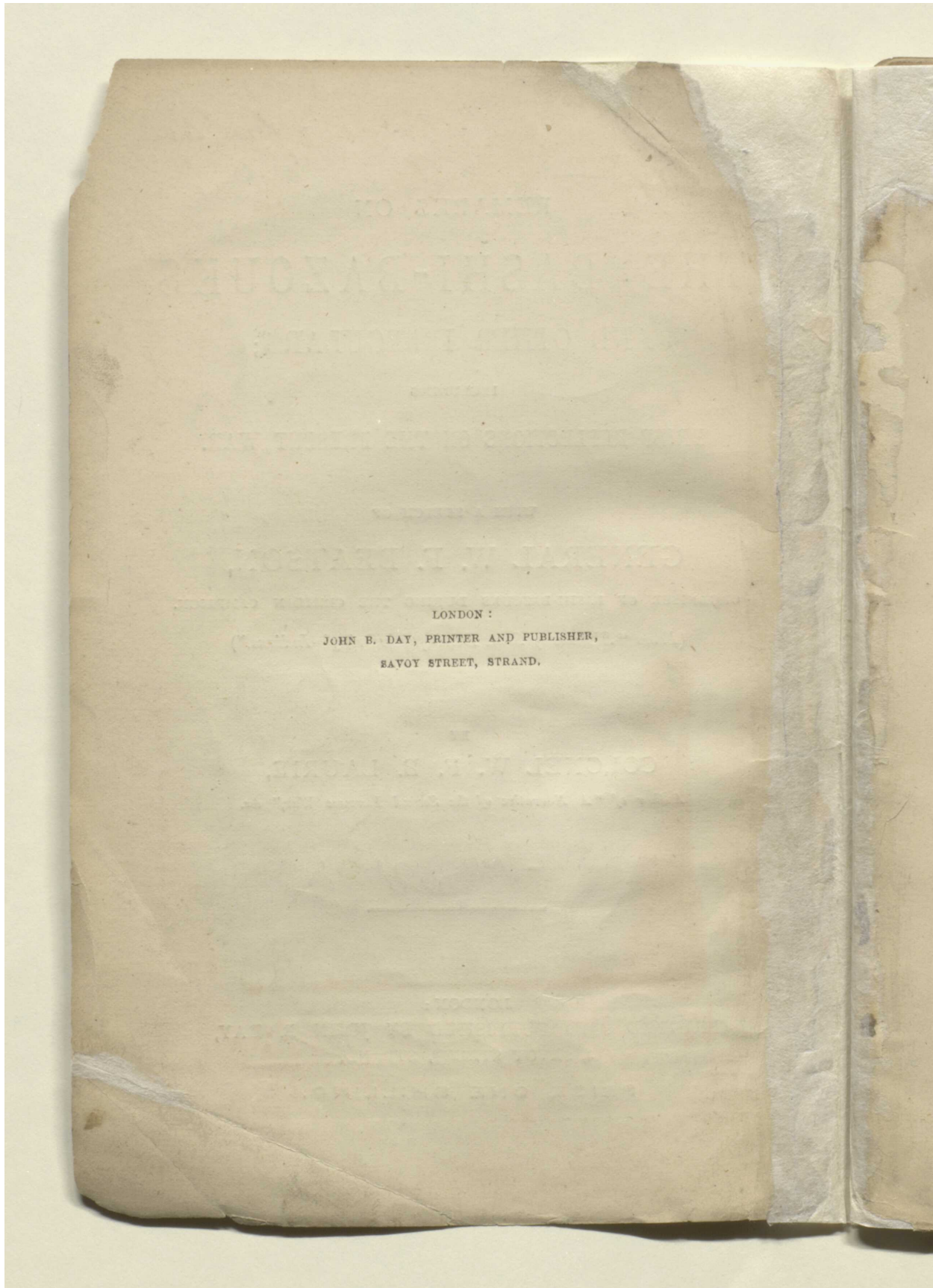
and a quote dated 1848-1860.

The front cover (f 1) contains an inscription to General Sir Garnet Wolseley (who served in the Crimea Campaign) with the author's compliments, dated July 1877.

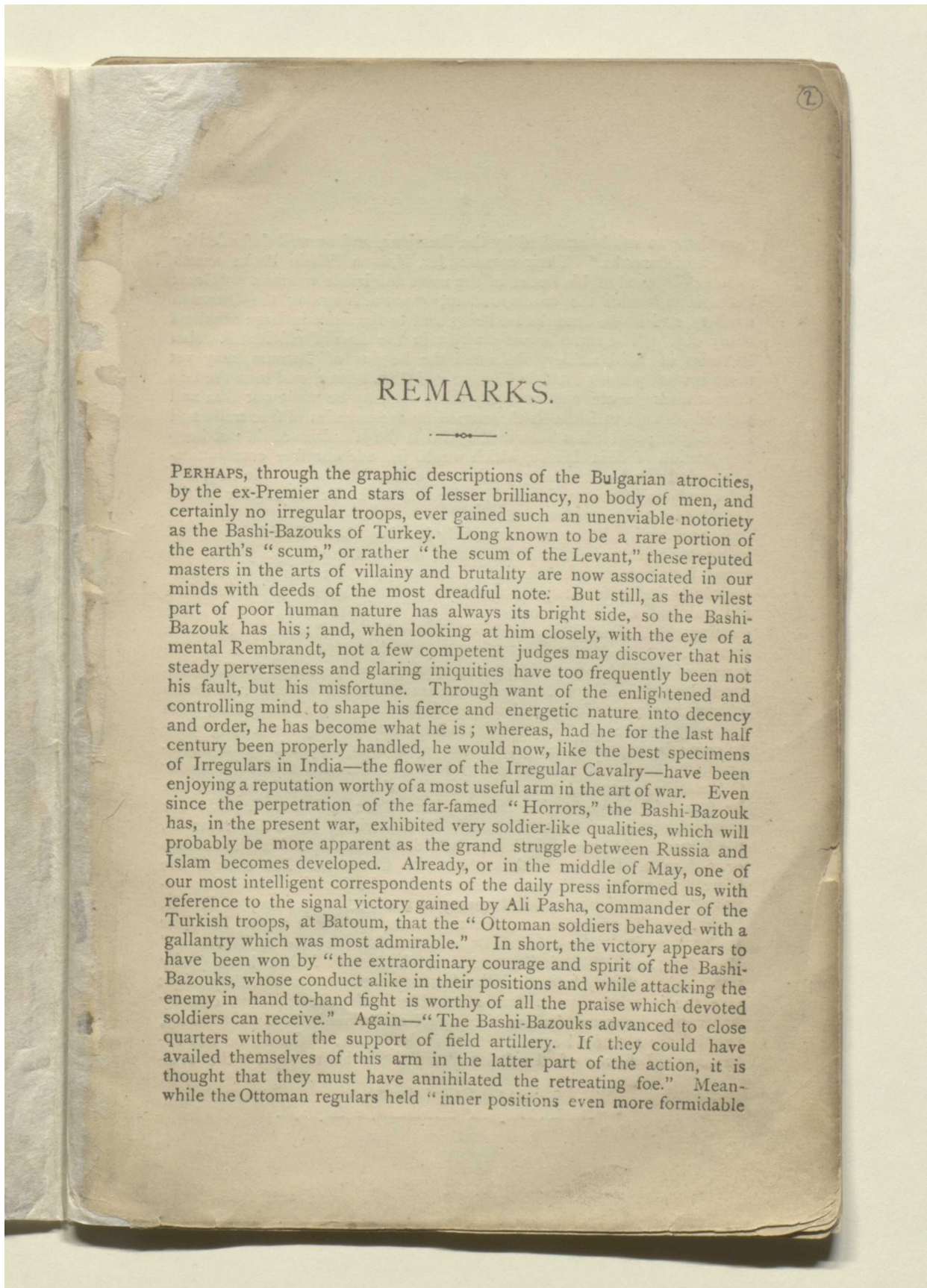
'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [front] (1/24)



'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [front-i] (2/24)



'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [2r] (3/24)



REMARKS.

PERHAPS, through the graphic descriptions of the Bulgarian atrocities, by the ex-Premier and stars of lesser brilliancy, no body of men, and certainly no irregular troops, ever gained such an unenviable notoriety as the Bashi-Bazouks of Turkey. Long known to be a rare portion of the earth's "scum," or rather "the scum of the Levant," these reputed masters in the arts of villainy and brutality are now associated in our minds with deeds of the most dreadful note. But still, as the vilest part of poor human nature has always its bright side, so the Bashi-Bazouk has his; and, when looking at him closely, with the eye of a mental Rembrandt, not a few competent judges may discover that his steady perverseness and glaring iniquities have too frequently been not his fault, but his misfortune. Through want of the enlightened and controlling mind to shape his fierce and energetic nature into decency and order, he has become what he is; whereas, had he for the last half century been properly handled, he would now, like the best specimens of Irregulars in India—the flower of the Irregular Cavalry—have been enjoying a reputation worthy of a most useful arm in the art of war. Even since the perpetration of the far-famed "Horrors," the Bashi-Bazouk has, in the present war, exhibited very soldier-like qualities, which will probably be more apparent as the grand struggle between Russia and Islam becomes developed. Already, or in the middle of May, one of our most intelligent correspondents of the daily press informed us, with reference to the signal victory gained by Ali Pasha, commander of the Turkish troops, at Batoum, that the "Ottoman soldiers behaved with a gallantry which was most admirable." In short, the victory appears to have been won by "the extraordinary courage and spirit of the Bashi-Bazouks, whose conduct alike in their positions and while attacking the enemy in hand-to-hand fight is worthy of all the praise which devoted soldiers can receive." Again—"The Bashi-Bazouks advanced to close quarters without the support of field artillery. If they could have availed themselves of this arm in the latter part of the action, it is thought that they must have annihilated the retreating foe." Meanwhile the Ottoman regulars held "inner positions even more formidable

'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [2v] (4/24)

4

than those so vainly attacked by the Russians, and so well defended by the Bashi-Bazouks." Their commander, Hassan Tahsin Pasha, seems to have disposed of his forces in the most admirable manner. "Great enthusiasm," adds the correspondent,¹ "prevails among the Ottoman soldiery, and Bashi-Bazouks are being sent to the front in large numbers every day." The same bravery, which in the face of efficient Russian batteries of field artillery defended the heights of Batoum, may yet more intensely show itself in Europe and Asia Minor, and turn the tide of war during some extraordinary crisis—it may be while our free and rightful passage to India is threatened by the enemies of free trade and free religion; and it has been well said that the Russians could not keep any portion of Asia Minor, which would impede our free communication with India²—or we may yet have the Bashi-Bazouk, in the height of his energy and ferocity, fighting by the side of the British soldier on the Danube or at Constantinople!

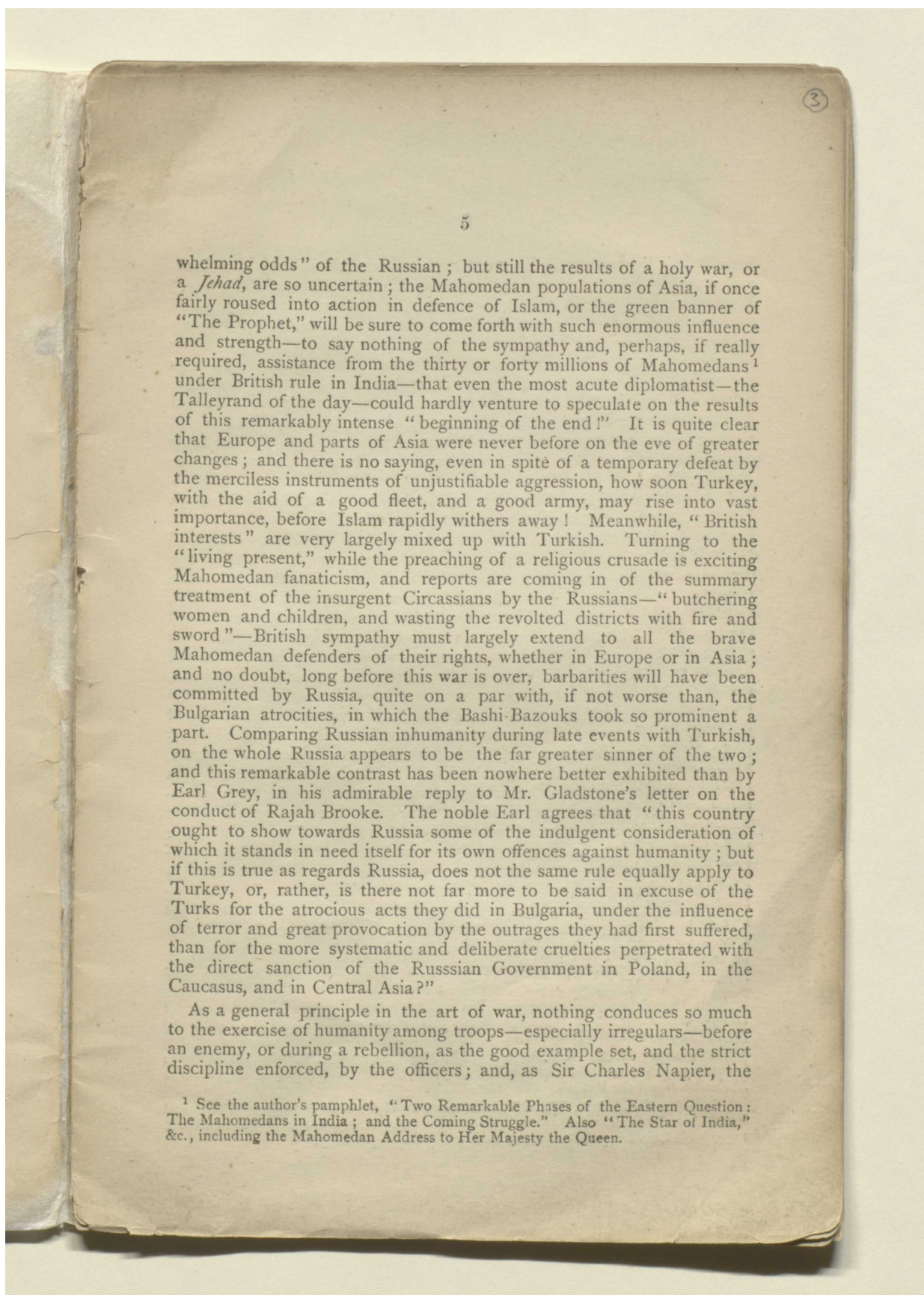
But neutrality, if possible, or merely looking after "British interests," being our wise policy, and the order of the day signifying that the grand future is now to be chiefly regarded, and much of the comparatively insignificant past forgotten, it may be some time before the political horizon becomes sufficiently clear to admit of the latter contingency. Among the tonics for the "sick man," when he becomes convalescent, and from well carried out reforms he ceases to be the terror of Turkish bondholders, one of the most potent and efficacious must be that which will have his numerous and scattered land forces efficiently commanded; and among these the Turkish irregulars, from the very nature of the countries where service may for a long time to come be expected, must ever occupy a conspicuous if not a distinguished place. It is now well-known that the vast territories under Ottoman rule contain "a wider diversity of race and religion than can be found in the possession of any other Power, unless we include the colonial empire of Great Britain." While writing these few remarks, the fortunes of war in Asia Minor would seem to depend on the success or failure of the revolt throughout the Caucasus. But even if the Circassian revolt does not interfere with "the Russian plan of operations," the Russians must feel uneasy at a miscellaneous levy of Kurds, Bashi-Bazouks, and a few regular regiments, the whole under Mukhtar Pasha, hurrying down towards Bayazid "to bar the road to Erzeroum." Regarding such and similar useful work *in esse*, it has been justly remarked:—"Only half disciplined as these raw levies are, they might give the invader a great deal of trouble in the mountainous country intervening between him and the capital of Armenia." Unfortunately, people are already beginning to lose hope that "the brave but ill-manœuvred forces of the Sultan" will be able to repel "the over-

¹ Of the *Daily Telegraph*.

² "Russian Prospects" in *Standard*, of May 24th.



'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [3r] (5/24)



5

3

whelming odds" of the Russian ; but still the results of a holy war, or a *Jehad*, are so uncertain ; the Mahomedan populations of Asia, if once fairly roused into action in defence of Islam, or the green banner of "The Prophet," will be sure to come forth with such enormous influence and strength—to say nothing of the sympathy and, perhaps, if really required, assistance from the thirty or forty millions of Mahomedans¹ under British rule in India—that even the most acute diplomatist—the Talleyrand of the day—could hardly venture to speculate on the results of this remarkably intense "beginning of the end!" It is quite clear that Europe and parts of Asia were never before on the eve of greater changes ; and there is no saying, even in spite of a temporary defeat by the merciless instruments of unjustifiable aggression, how soon Turkey, with the aid of a good fleet, and a good army, may rise into vast importance, before Islam rapidly withers away ! Meanwhile, "British interests" are very largely mixed up with Turkish. Turning to the "living present," while the preaching of a religious crusade is exciting Mahomedan fanaticism, and reports are coming in of the summary treatment of the insurgent Circassians by the Russians—"butchering women and children, and wasting the revolted districts with fire and sword"—British sympathy must largely extend to all the brave Mahomedan defenders of their rights, whether in Europe or in Asia ; and no doubt, long before this war is over, barbarities will have been committed by Russia, quite on a par with, if not worse than, the Bulgarian atrocities, in which the Bashi-Bazouks took so prominent a part. Comparing Russian inhumanity during late events with Turkish, on the whole Russia appears to be the far greater sinner of the two ; and this remarkable contrast has been nowhere better exhibited than by Earl Grey, in his admirable reply to Mr. Gladstone's letter on the conduct of Rajah Brooke. The noble Earl agrees that "this country ought to show towards Russia some of the indulgent consideration of which it stands in need itself for its own offences against humanity ; but if this is true as regards Russia, does not the same rule equally apply to Turkey, or, rather, is there not far more to be said in excuse of the Turks for the atrocious acts they did in Bulgaria, under the influence of terror and great provocation by the outrages they had first suffered, than for the more systematic and deliberate cruelties perpetrated with the direct sanction of the Russian Government in Poland, in the Caucasus, and in Central Asia?"

As a general principle in the art of war, nothing conduces so much to the exercise of humanity among troops—especially irregulars—before an enemy, or during a rebellion, as the good example set, and the strict discipline enforced, by the officers ; and, as Sir Charles Napier, the

¹ See the author's pamphlet, "Two Remarkable Phases of the Eastern Question : The Mahomedans in India ; and the Coming Struggle." Also "The Star of India," &c., including the Mahomedan Address to Her Majesty the Queen.

'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [3v] (6/24)

6

Iron Duke's lieutenant, and a great authority on all military questions, told us in India—"Experienced captains are the pillars of discipline." Writing on discipline in the Indian armies, while lamenting the want of senior officers with regiments, the Conqueror of Sind remarks: "Many able officers have said, '*Look at the superiority of the Irregular Cavalry and Infantry to the Regulars; yet they have but three European officers to a regiment.*' But the few officers of Irregulars are selected for energy, talent, and activity." Many of them were young, but the late wars had given them experience; and, with a touch of grim humour, the General took care to point out that the Directors "cannot sell *Cadets*; they can select officers for the *Irregulars*—they cannot do so for the *Regulars*."

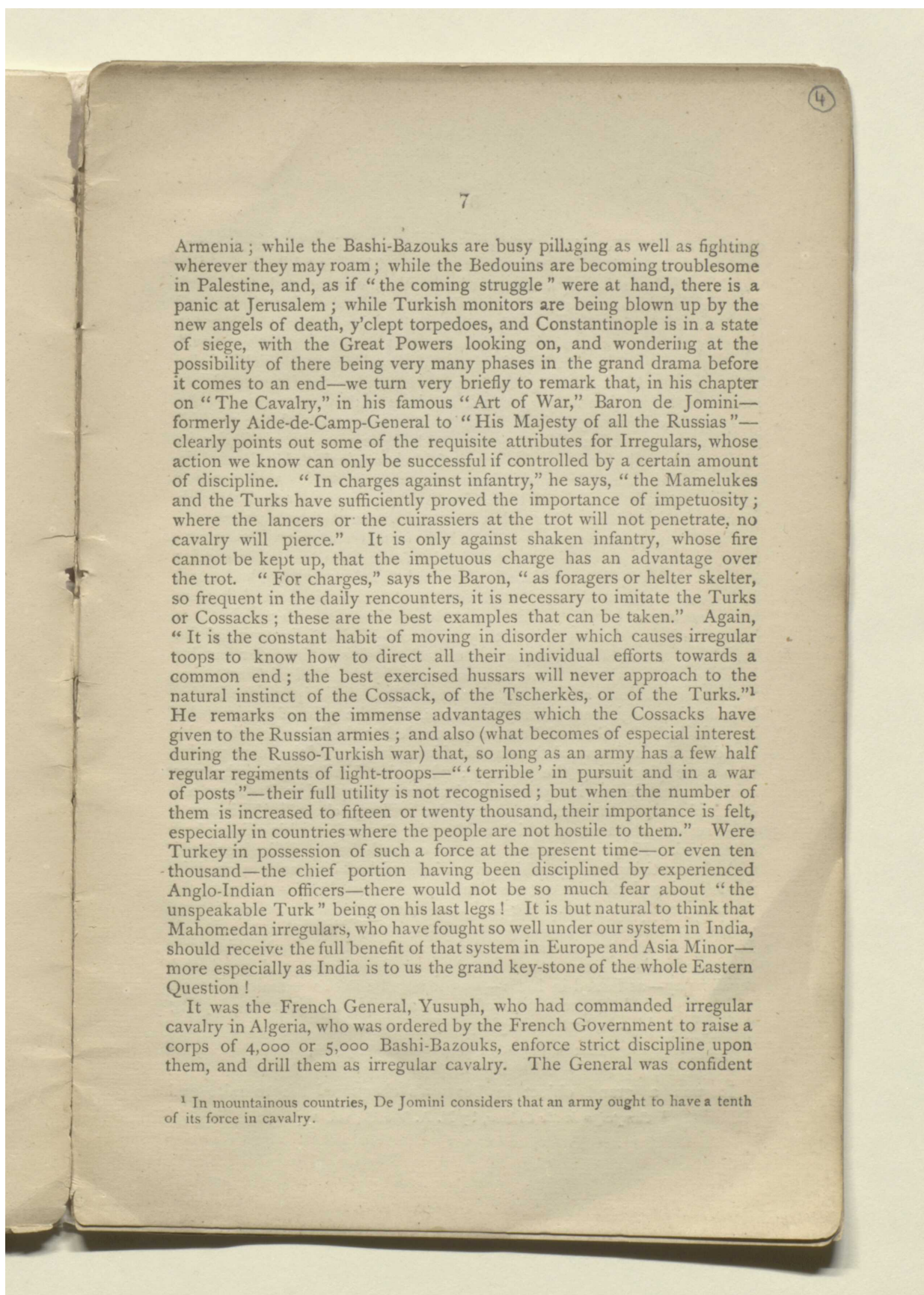
The subject of the following brief sketch (originally written in January, 1875) was highly appreciated by Sir Charles; and this is evident by a letter from the Commander-in-Chief in India to Colonel W. F. Beatson, dated 26th September, 1850—nearly six years after the Governor of Sind and the Government of India had commended the Commandant-in-Chief, Bundelkund Legion (composed of cavalry, artillery, and infantry), for the "energy, endurance, and decisive courage" shown by his Irregulars during an arduous campaign against robber tribes: "I will not fail to do my best to serve the wishes of an old comrade, and one who did right good service when under my command, which I have neither forgotten, nor have I any disposition to forget." Reverting to the Bulgarian atrocities, a question naturally arises—Had the Turkish Irregulars who committed them been for a series of years under such disciplinarians and distinguished Anglo-Indians as Beatson, Mayne, Christie, Neville Chamberlain,¹ Macintire,² and others less known to fame, would they have been committed at all, under any circumstances? Most assuredly, we think not. The discipline of irregulars, which they had taught and enforced in India—"the nursery of captains"—the head-quarters of the fighting army of the world, where the reality of soldier-life is never absent—the country from which so many immortal British soldiers have gathered nearly all their fame—carried down from year to year by officers on furlough and retired, might have prevented the atrocities which have caused the world to shudder, and the wordy political declamation thereon, which has given so much encouragement to Russian ambition, to check, under the mask of a Christian mission, what the aggressor is pleased to style Turkish pride!

Now, leaving the progress of this most eventful war, while encounters are occurring between the Cossacks and Irregulars at Lake Van, in

¹ General Sir N. B., K.C.B., now H.E. the Commander-in-Chief of Madras; formerly attached to Christie's Corps of Irregular Cavalry, and highly distinguished in Afghanistan and the Punjab.

² Brigadier-General A. W., C.B., commanding Hyderabad Subsidiary Force, and for many years an ornament to the Nizan's Cavalry. At the battle of Banda (April, 1859) he led his Irregulars with the most conspicuous gallantry.

'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [4r] (7/24)



7

Armenia ; while the Bashi-Bazouks are busy pillaging as well as fighting wherever they may roam ; while the Bedouins are becoming troublesome in Palestine, and, as if "the coming struggle" were at hand, there is a panic at Jerusalem ; while Turkish monitors are being blown up by the new angels of death, y'clept torpedoes, and Constantinople is in a state of siege, with the Great Powers looking on, and wondering at the possibility of there being very many phases in the grand drama before it comes to an end—we turn very briefly to remark that, in his chapter on "The Cavalry," in his famous "Art of War," Baron de Jomini—formerly Aide-de-Camp-General to "His Majesty of all the Russias"—clearly points out some of the requisite attributes for Irregulars, whose action we know can only be successful if controlled by a certain amount of discipline. "In charges against infantry," he says, "the Mamelukes and the Turks have sufficiently proved the importance of impetuosity ; where the lancers or the cuirassiers at the trot will not penetrate, no cavalry will pierce." It is only against shaken infantry, whose fire cannot be kept up, that the impetuous charge has an advantage over the trot. "For charges," says the Baron, "as foragers or helter skelter, so frequent in the daily rencounters, it is necessary to imitate the Turks or Cossacks ; these are the best examples that can be taken." Again, "It is the constant habit of moving in disorder which causes irregular troops to know how to direct all their individual efforts towards a common end ; the best exercised hussars will never approach to the natural instinct of the Cossack, of the Tscherkès, or of the Turks."¹ He remarks on the immense advantages which the Cossacks have given to the Russian armies ; and also (what becomes of especial interest during the Russo-Turkish war) that, so long as an army has a few half regular regiments of light-troops—"terrible" in pursuit and in a war of posts—their full utility is not recognised ; but when the number of them is increased to fifteen or twenty thousand, their importance is felt, especially in countries where the people are not hostile to them." Were Turkey in possession of such a force at the present time—or even ten thousand—the chief portion having been disciplined by experienced Anglo-Indian officers—there would not be so much fear about "the unspeakable Turk" being on his last legs ! It is but natural to think that Mahomedan irregulars, who have fought so well under our system in India, should receive the full benefit of that system in Europe and Asia Minor—more especially as India is to us the grand key-stone of the whole Eastern Question !

It was the French General, Yusuph, who had commanded irregular cavalry in Algeria, who was ordered by the French Government to raise a corps of 4,000 or 5,000 Bashi-Bazouks, enforce strict discipline upon them, and drill them as irregular cavalry. The General was confident

¹ In mountainous countries, De Jomini considers that an army ought to have a tenth of its force in cavalry.

'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [4v] (8/24)

8

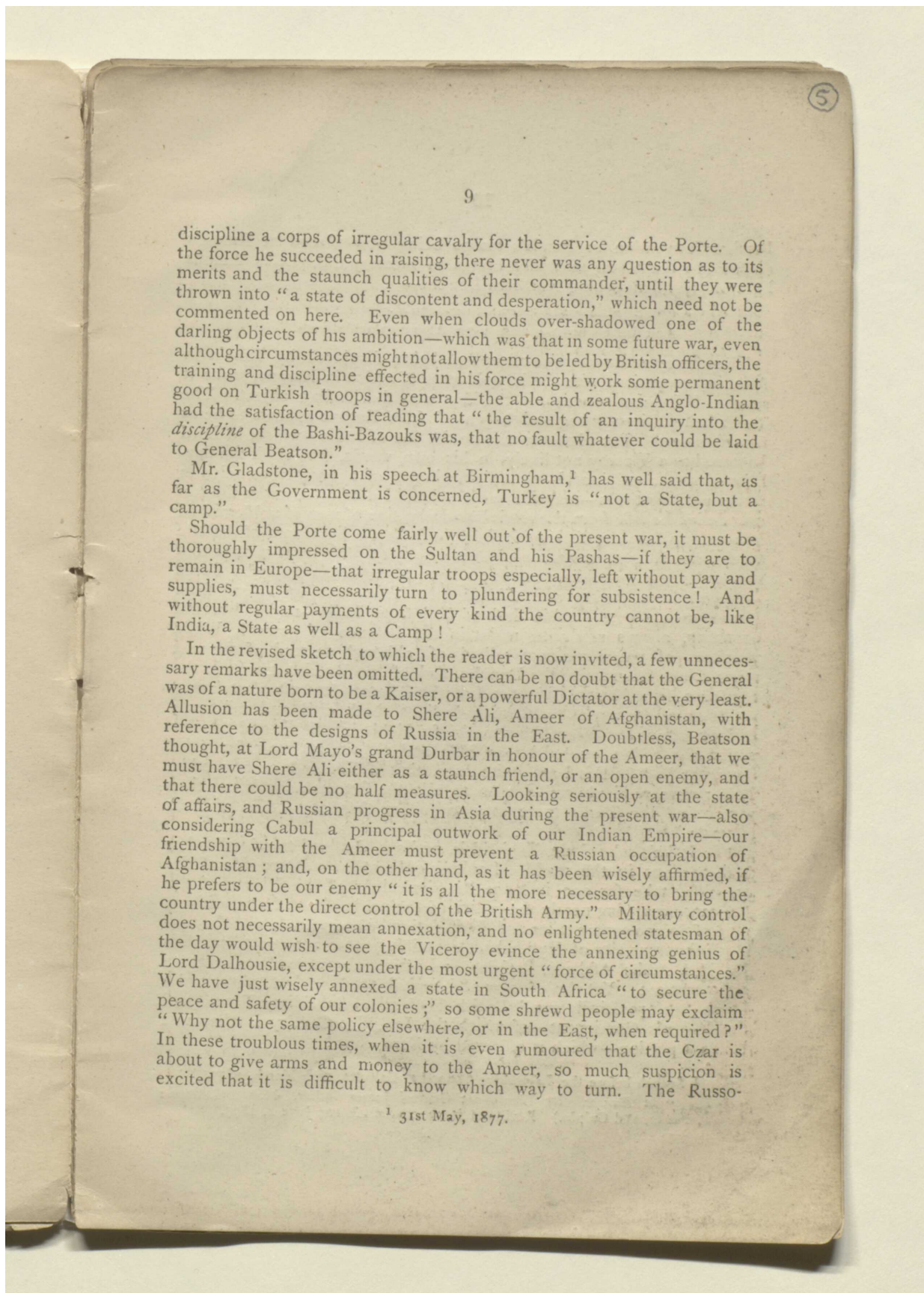
that he could effect this; but he was unsuccessful. "Almost every tenth man carried a banner or a flag, green, blue, or white, on which was blazoned a scimitar surmounted with the crescent and star, and surrounded with sentences from the Koran, in all the various dialects of Turkey. These flags they flourished with threatening looks and vehement gestures, dashing and prancing their horses recklessly along the highway." So they appeared to Mr. Woods, the shrewd and able "Special" of the *Morning Herald*, at Varna, at the commencement of the Crimean War; and he thought that nothing could be done with what seemed "the scum and offscourings of all nations in those parts of the world." Each man carried a different arm, and there was no similarity in dress; the majority wore the ample-folded, conical turband of Asia Minor. The French cavalry officers were disgusted with such troops; and even Sir John Falstaff himself would not have marched through Coventry with them. But what was chiefly wanted was patience—patience and perseverance, which had turned so many similar undisciplined, ungovernable vagabonds in India into capital irregular soldiers. Before General Yusuf's plan had failed—the French General had even in his zeal supplanted their wretched firelocks and daggers with handsome cavalry carbines, pistols, and swords, with which, three days after being thus equipped, they made off—Colonel Beatson, of the E.I.C.S.,—famous for his management and training of irregular cavalry—with several other officers, were sent out by the Earl of Clarendon, "with commissions authorising them to raise and discipline the Bashi-Bazouks into regiments of irregular horse, after the plan of our irregular horse in India." General Beatson proceeded to the Danube, where he could have raised several thousands of irregulars out of the mere parties who were plundering the country; "but that Lord Raglan, who was said to entertain an insuperable objection to employing Bashis at all, declined to pay the recruits out of the military chest."¹ This was a most serious obstacle, on which neither the General nor his officers had calculated. However, in the face of over-whelming difficulties, and with that untiring energy, which ever distinguished him, as remarked in the following sketch, he organised and partly disciplined 4,000 men for the service of the State. He had thus done good work before "some of the Turkish Pachas issued an order formally disbanding the Bashi-Bazouks in the provinces of Bulgaria and Roumelia." Nothing can be done without pay among regulars or irregulars; and good and regular pay—as issued in India—was, it may be said, the mainspring on which depended the prevention of the redoubtable Bashis from adopting "the good old rule," "the simple plan,"

"That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can!"

It was a grand object in Beatson's chequered life to raise and

¹ *Campaign in the Crimea*, by N. A. Woods, vol. 1, p. 170.

'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [5r] (9/24)



9

discipline a corps of irregular cavalry for the service of the Porte. Of the force he succeeded in raising, there never was any question as to its merits and the staunch qualities of their commander, until they were thrown into "a state of discontent and desperation," which need not be commented on here. Even when clouds over-shadowed one of the darling objects of his ambition—which was that in some future war, even although circumstances might not allow them to be led by British officers, the training and discipline effected in his force might work some permanent good on Turkish troops in general—the able and zealous Anglo-Indian had the satisfaction of reading that "the result of an inquiry into the *discipline* of the Bashi-Bazouks was, that no fault whatever could be laid to General Beatson."

Mr. Gladstone, in his speech at Birmingham,¹ has well said that, as far as the Government is concerned, Turkey is "not a State, but a camp."

Should the Porte come fairly well out of the present war, it must be thoroughly impressed on the Sultan and his Pashas—if they are to remain in Europe—that irregular troops especially, left without pay and supplies, must necessarily turn to plundering for subsistence! And without regular payments of every kind the country cannot be, like India, a State as well as a Camp!

In the revised sketch to which the reader is now invited, a few unnecessary remarks have been omitted. There can be no doubt that the General was of a nature born to be a Kaiser, or a powerful Dictator at the very least. Allusion has been made to Shere Ali, Ameer of Afghanistan, with reference to the designs of Russia in the East. Doubtless, Beatson thought, at Lord Mayo's grand Durbar in honour of the Ameer, that we must have Shere Ali either as a staunch friend, or an open enemy, and that there could be no half measures. Looking seriously at the state of affairs, and Russian progress in Asia during the present war—also considering Cabul a principal outwork of our Indian Empire—our friendship with the Ameer must prevent a Russian occupation of Afghanistan; and, on the other hand, as it has been wisely affirmed, if he prefers to be our enemy "it is all the more necessary to bring the country under the direct control of the British Army." Military control does not necessarily mean annexation, and no enlightened statesman of the day would wish to see the Viceroy evince the annexing genius of Lord Dalhousie, except under the most urgent "force of circumstances." We have just wisely annexed a state in South Africa "to secure the peace and safety of our colonies;" so some shrewd people may exclaim "Why not the same policy elsewhere, or in the East, when required?" In these troublous times, when it is even rumoured that the Czar is about to give arms and money to the Ameer, so much suspicion is excited that it is difficult to know which way to turn. The Russo-

¹ 31st May, 1877.

'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [5v] (10/24)

10

Persian Convention, or Persia's troops being now placed at Russia's disposal by the Shah, naturally brings to memory Campbell's famous lines on the all-absorbing Northern Power :—

“ Whom *Persia* bows to, China ill confines ;
And India's homage waits when Albion's star declines ! ”

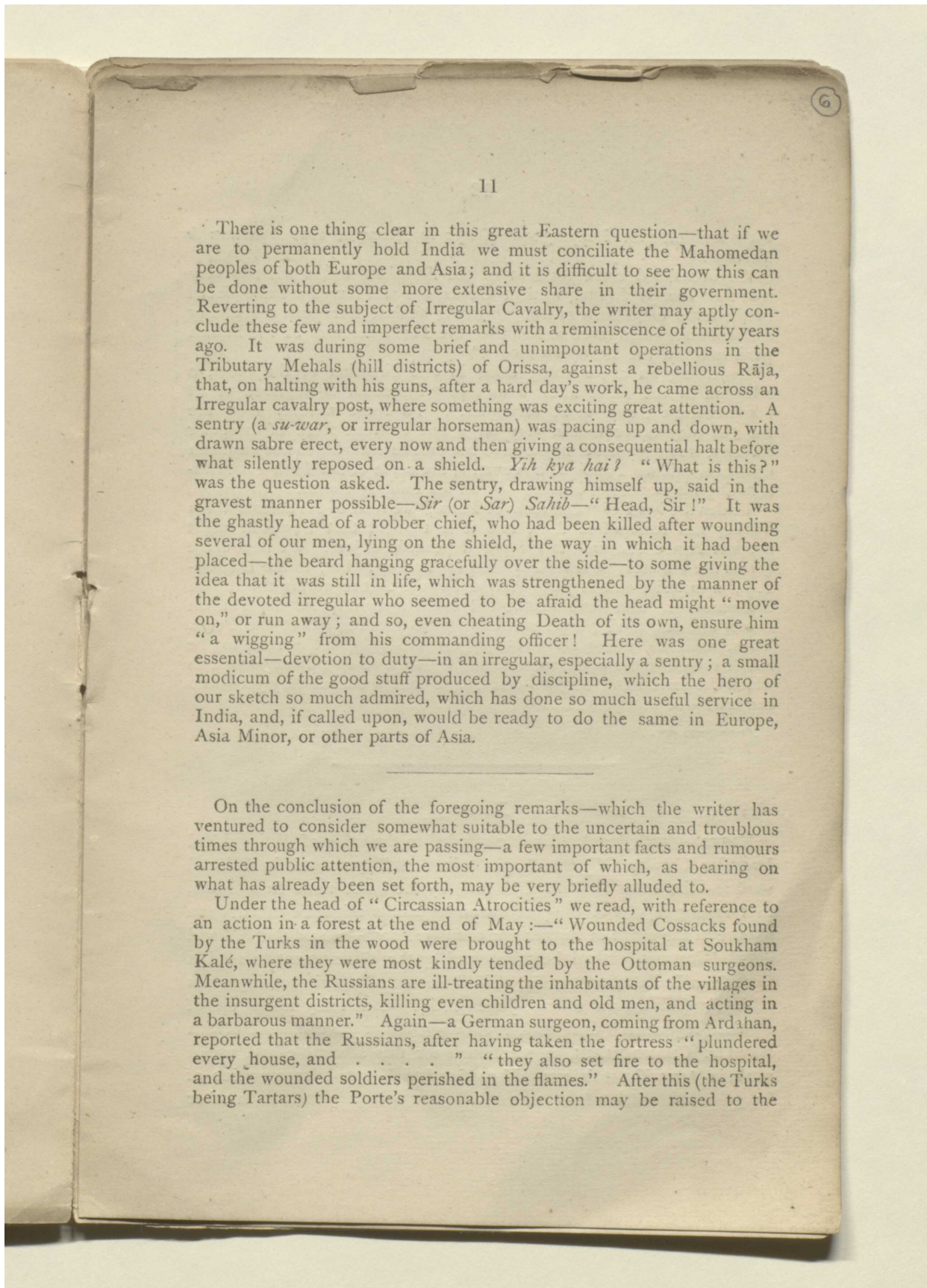
The energy and enterprise at present being displayed by Russia in Asia, in comparison with the languid state of action in Europe, make it seem as if Russian conquest in the East were the leading object. The Turks being driven “ bag and baggage ” from Europe appears to be as far off as ever. But whatever may be the fate of India—which, in Lord Lytton, has a Viceroy not likely, in his own words, “ to shirk the daylight of public opinion ”¹—thus giving hopes of a prosperous reign in rather perilous times—may the most splendid dominion under the sun ever derive benefit from the services and devotion of men of unblemished honour, of whom our distinguished Anglo-Indian, a lieutenant of the late Sir Charles Napier, was a conspicuous example ! We must confess to a strong desire of beholding one day a large Mahomedan Irregular Force—*Sunnis* from Turkey and *Shiahs* (the *Romanists of Islam*) from Persia, with a considerable dash of both from India—under BRITISH OFFICERS, always ready to maintain the balance of power ! While messages of peace are now talked of, although we read of the vast preparations for crossing the Danube, and of the Russian troops in the Caucasus being harassed night and day by Ottoman Irregulars, work may yet be found for unemployed Anglo-Indians (both civil and military) ; and we cannot but accept the remark of a highly intelligent and popular writer of the day, quoted by an able and zealous reviewer for “ the Services : ”—“ Of this I am quite sure, that if England or any other Power were suddenly called upon to rule the Ottoman dominions they would find the Turks more easy to govern than any other of their subjects. ”²

For India's sake alone, England is, perhaps, destined to rule all other Mahomedans in the world. Looking only at the military side of the question, take for one instance the dominions of the Nizam of the Deccan, occupying nearly the centre of the peninsula of India, with an area of 90,000 square miles and a population of 10,000,000, with the restless, iniquitous city of Hyderabad, containing some 200,000 of reckless Rohillas, Arabs, Afghans, Pathans, and others, always ready to welcome a disturbance. Yet the country and capital are kept in first-rate order by the comparatively small British Hyderabad Subsidiary Force, and the Nizam's Contingent—of which the Irregular Cavalry is the most brilliant portion—which is officered by Europeans !

¹ Speech before the Legislative Council at Calcutta, 28th March, 1877.

² *Turkey in Europe*. By Lieutenant Colonel James Baker, M.A. (London : Cassel, Petter, and Galpin.) Reviewed in the *Broad Arrow*, June 2, 1877.

'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [6r] (11/24)



11

There is one thing clear in this great Eastern question—that if we are to permanently hold India we must conciliate the Mahomedan peoples of both Europe and Asia; and it is difficult to see how this can be done without some more extensive share in their government. Reverting to the subject of Irregular Cavalry, the writer may aptly conclude these few and imperfect remarks with a reminiscence of thirty years ago. It was during some brief and unimportant operations in the Tributary Mehals (hill districts) of Orissa, against a rebellious Rāja, that, on halting with his guns, after a hard day's work, he came across an Irregular cavalry post, where something was exciting great attention. A sentry (a *su-war*, or irregular horseman) was pacing up and down, with drawn sabre erect, every now and then giving a consequential halt before what silently reposed on a shield. *Yih kya hai?* "What is this?" was the question asked. The sentry, drawing himself up, said in the gravest manner possible—*Sir* (or *Sar*) *Sahib*—"Head, Sir!" It was the ghastly head of a robber chief, who had been killed after wounding several of our men, lying on the shield, the way in which it had been placed—the beard hanging gracefully over the side—to some giving the idea that it was still in life, which was strengthened by the manner of the devoted irregular who seemed to be afraid the head might "move on," or run away; and so, even cheating Death of its own, ensure him "a wiggling" from his commanding officer! Here was one great essential—devotion to duty—in an irregular, especially a sentry; a small modicum of the good stuff produced by discipline, which the hero of our sketch so much admired, which has done so much useful service in India, and, if called upon, would be ready to do the same in Europe, Asia Minor, or other parts of Asia.

On the conclusion of the foregoing remarks—which the writer has ventured to consider somewhat suitable to the uncertain and troublous times through which we are passing—a few important facts and rumours arrested public attention, the most important of which, as bearing on what has already been set forth, may be very briefly alluded to.

Under the head of "Circassian Atrocities" we read, with reference to an action in a forest at the end of May:—"Wounded Cossacks found by the Turks in the wood were brought to the hospital at Soukham Kalé, where they were most kindly tended by the Ottoman surgeons. Meanwhile, the Russians are ill-treating the inhabitants of the villages in the insurgent districts, killing even children and old men, and acting in a barbarous manner." Again—a German surgeon, coming from Ardahan, reported that the Russians, after having taken the fortress "plundered every house, and" "they also set fire to the hospital, and the wounded soldiers perished in the flames." After this (the Turks being Tartars) the Porte's reasonable objection may be raised to the

'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [6v] (12/24)

12

witty and oft-quoted saying:—" *Gratez le Russé, et vous trouverez le Tartare!*"

An occasional correspondent of the *Standard* writes what is very true:—"Troops fighting against Circassians and Kurds are not placed in the same conditions as troops fighting against European soldiers, or soldiers disciplined more or less (like the Turkish armies of the Balkan peninsula) on the European model."

Regarding an approaching crisis in one direction or the other, a telegram in the *Globe* informs us that "Erzeroum is deprived of all communication, and must surrender." To some military men the thought may occur that a very large and efficient force of Irregular Cavalry, well-supported, might have been made available to keep up such communication. Fatalism, however, is the curse of the Turk—notwithstanding his wonderful bravery—in all his military tactics.

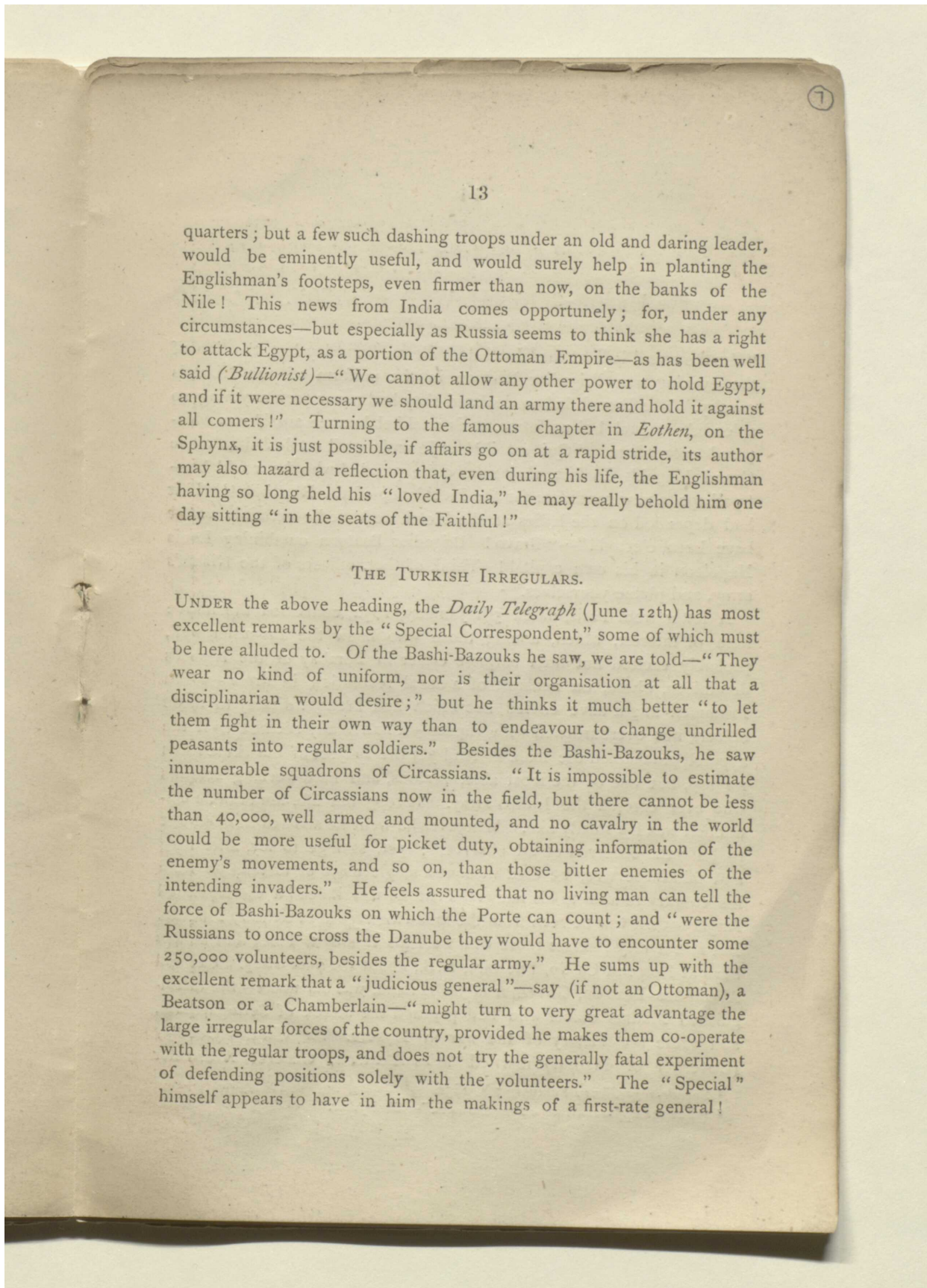
Under the head of "Rumours of Peace," we read of the defeats which Turkey has suffered in Asia, and it is thought that England might support Prince Bismarck in the grand peaceful object. We next come across the old story of the "Partition of Turkey;" but, to the Englishman, a most important piece of late news is that regarding the Indian Mahomedans, who have manifested much sympathy for the Turkish cause, and are raising large subscriptions in India in aid of the Porte. Thus, with so many great events on the gale, all seems to be steadily working for a "coming struggle," or a coming arrangement, in which the services of English and Anglo-Indian officers may yet—who can tell?—be at a premium!

June 8th, 1877.

EGYPT.

NOTES.—(12th June). Having alluded to the value of distinguished Irregular Cavalry Officers—Anglo Indians well practised in Oriental warfare—the writer is pleased to find, by the latest news from India, that among reports of the part Indian regiments might be called upon to take in the event of further war complications it is said that full and detailed instructions had been received by the Government to send a force from India to occupy Egypt in the event of certain contingencies arising." (*Homeward Mail*, June 11th). An army made up of "picked regiments" from each Presidency, under the command of SIR NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN, is mentioned for this admirable and useful work in *posse*, if not *in esse*. If confined to Egypt, a large portion of Irregulars with such a force would not be so necessary there as in other

'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [7r] (13/24)



13

quarters ; but a few such dashing troops under an old and daring leader, would be eminently useful, and would surely help in planting the Englishman's footsteps, even firmer than now, on the banks of the Nile! This news from India comes opportunely; for, under any circumstances—but especially as Russia seems to think she has a right to attack Egypt, as a portion of the Ottoman Empire—as has been well said (*Bullionist*)—"We cannot allow any other power to hold Egypt, and if it were necessary we should land an army there and hold it against all comers!" Turning to the famous chapter in *Eothen*, on the Sphynx, it is just possible, if affairs go on at a rapid stride, its author may also hazard a reflection that, even during his life, the Englishman having so long held his "loved India," he may really behold him one day sitting "in the seats of the Faithful!"

THE TURKISH IRREGULARS.

UNDER the above heading, the *Daily Telegraph* (June 12th) has most excellent remarks by the "Special Correspondent," some of which must be here alluded to. Of the Bashi-Bazouks he saw, we are told—"They wear no kind of uniform, nor is their organisation at all that a disciplinarian would desire;" but he thinks it much better "to let them fight in their own way than to endeavour to change undrilled peasants into regular soldiers." Besides the Bashi-Bazouks, he saw innumerable squadrons of Circassians. "It is impossible to estimate the number of Circassians now in the field, but there cannot be less than 40,000, well armed and mounted, and no cavalry in the world could be more useful for picket duty, obtaining information of the enemy's movements, and so on, than those bitter enemies of the intending invaders." He feels assured that no living man can tell the force of Bashi-Bazouks on which the Porte can count; and "were the Russians to once cross the Danube they would have to encounter some 250,000 volunteers, besides the regular army." He sums up with the excellent remark that a "judicious general"—say (if not an Ottoman), a Beatson or a Chamberlain—"might turn to very great advantage the large irregular forces of the country, provided he makes them co-operate with the regular troops, and does not try the generally fatal experiment of defending positions solely with the volunteers." The "Special" himself appears to have in him the makings of a first-rate general!

'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [7v] (14/24)

14

MAJOR-GENERAL W. F. BEATSON.

"At the grand ball at the Hotel de Ville on Saturday last, the lion of the evening was Brigadier Beatson in the uniform of the Nizam's cavalry. The French ladies declared they had never seen anything so splendid. 'Quel bel uniforme, mais quel bel homme aussi,' was whispered everywhere. 'Qui est il?' 'Je crois qu'il est le Sultan ou le Grand Mogul.' In fact, they were quite puzzled who he could be—'perhaps a new candidate for the Presidency of the Republic!' If it had depended on the ladies at the Hotel de Ville he certainly would have been elected!"—"Bravo! Brigadier Beatson outshining Louis Napoleon in his own capital! Think of that, officers of the Nizam's army, and plume yourselves."¹

A letter from Paris, dated 5th January, 1852, contained the above item of interest, which, among those who knew the Brigadier well, probably excited but little surprise either in Bombay or the Nizam's dominions, where, on account of a local revolution in dress—which Brummell might have envied, but which had brought dismay to those officers not overburdened with rupees—it had really seemed as if the apparel proclaimed the man.² And yet the subject of our sketch was no fop, but one of the most able, zealous, and hard-working soldiers who ever entered the Indian army. Throughout life, honourable distinction was his steady aim. Wherever he went he seemed marked out to be "the observed of all observers;" yet, strange to say, after long and faithful service, he died without a single mark of distinction from his country to add to his name. That he was indeed a distinguished Anglo-Indian will be seen from the following record of military services. But first it may interest those who were his friends to learn that he was born at Rossend Castle, Fifeshire, N.B., about the year 1805. General Alexander Beatson, Governor of St. Helena, was his uncle—the distinguished Madras officer who had planned the attack of Seringapatam, and wrote the history of the war in Mysore. Sir Charles Oakeley (Governor of Madras) married Miss Beatson, General Alexander

¹ See *Bombay Times*, February 7th, 1852.

² "For the apparel oft proclaims the man."—*Shakspeare*.

'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [8r] (15/24)

15

Beatson's only sister. The father of our hero was Captain Robert Beatson (Beatson of Kilrie), of the Royal Engineers, who had three sons appointed to the Bengal Native Infantry. William Ferguson entered the Bengal army in 1820. Being on furlough, he (with the sanction of the British Government) served with the British Legion in Spain, 1835-1836, first as Major, afterwards as Lieutenant-Colonel commanding the 10th, or Munster Light Infantry, at the head of which regiment he was severely wounded. For his services in Spain he received the Cross of San Fernando from Queen Isabella, and Her Britannic Majesty's permission to wear it in September, 1837. Beatson was not the only Indian officer who, under Sir De Lacey Evans, won distinction in Spain, but he was certainly one of the foremost in what was considered a good cause. He returned to India in 1837, and having been appointed to the important command of the Bundelkund Legion, received the thanks of Government for the capture of Jignee, in Bundelkund, in 1840; and of Chirgong, in 1841.

In February, 1844, he received the thanks of the Governor-General's agent, Scindiah's dominions, for recovering for the Gwalior Government forts and strongholds in Kachwahagar.

In March, 1844, he played one of his best cards by volunteering with his Bundelkund Legion for Sind. For this he received the thanks of Government; which volunteering, the Governor-General declared, placed the Government of India under great obligation.

In March, 1845, he was mentioned in Sir Charles Napier's despatch, regarding the campaign in the Boogtee Hills; which service called forth the approbation of Government.

In July, 1846, the conduct of his Legion while in Sind, was, much to the satisfaction of the Commandant, praised in General Orders by the Governor-General, Viscount Hardinge.¹

Having been appointed to the command of the Nizam's Cavalry, we find Brigadier Beatson, in July, 1848, receiving approbation from the Government of India for taking the Jagheer and fort of Rymou from that troublesome, ever-warlike, and energetic race, the Rohillas; and in November, 1850, he recaptured Rymou from the Arabs.

In February, 1851, he captured the fort of Dharoor, one of the strongest in the Dekhan.

¹ Lord Dalhousie arrived in India on the 12th January, 1848, and on the 18th Lord Hardinge left Calcutta on his way home.

'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [8v] (16/24)

16

In March, 1851, the Resident at Hyderabad paid Beatson a high compliment, by issuing the following General Order :—

“ Brigadier Beatson having tendered his resignation of the command of the Nizam’s Cavalry, from date of his embarkation for England, the Resident begs to express his entire approval of this officer’s conduct during the time he has exercised the important command of the Cavalry Division.

“ Brigadier Beatson has not only maintained, but improved, the interior economy and arrangement of the Cavalry Division ; and the value of his active military services in the field has been amply attested and rendered subject of record, in the several instances of Kangoan, Rymou, Arnee, and Dharoor.”

The Brigadier appears to have tendered his resignation rather hastily, for we find him, shortly after, asking Lord Dalhousie’s permission to withdraw his application ; but his Lordship, with characteristic decision, did not approve of the “waving spirit” of even so distinguished an officer. So Beatson proceeded to England.

We next find him in Turkey, on special service (1st May, 1854), with rank as Colonel on the staff in the British Army. He received the rank of Lieutenant-General in the Turkish Army on his arrival at Constantinople. For his services on the Danube he obtained the gold medal from the Sultan, the “Nishan i Iftihar.” In 1854 he was with the Heavy Brigade at Balaklava and Inkerman, and was mentioned in General Scarlett’s despatch regarding the famous charge which has made Balaklava immortal. “During the time he was with me” (writes General Sir J. Scarlett, when recommending him to Head-quarters in October, 1856) “as Lieutenant-Colonel Beatson, he proved himself a most active and useful officer, as willing to work as the youngest Aide-de-Camp, with the experience of active service before the enemy. He was with me under fire the early part of the 25th October, 1854, near the Turkish forts. He was by my side at the charge of the Heavy Brigade—and rode by my side down the valley in support of the Light Brigade—under as severe a fire as troops were ever exposed to, and had his horse struck by a spent shot in the side. During the whole of this day he behaved with the greatest gallantry and coolness, and entirely supplied the place of my Aide-de-Camp (Captain Elliott), after the charge of the Heavy Brigade, in which Captain Elliott was severely

'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [9r] (17/24)

17

wounded." He received the British and Turkish silver medals for the Crimea, the former with three clasps.

On the 1st November, 1854, Beatson was given the local rank of Major-General in Her Majesty's Army in Turkey; and he organised 4,000 Bashi-Bazouks. This corps was composed of confessedly the most difficult troops in the world for European officers to deal with; but for which the commandant's "long experience among the Arabs and Rohillas of the Nizam's cavalry peculiarly fitted him."

It was "during the transfer of the command from Colonel Beatson to Colonel Smith" that the events were said to have occurred which were set forth in the well-known trial in the case of *Beatson v. Skene*. The consul at Aleppo (Mr. Skene), who was with the commandant of the Bashi-Bazouks at the Dardanelles, was reported to have brought against him the extraordinary charge of attempting "to incite to mutiny the troops he had been appointed to command, so as to prevent others succeeding him therein." The value of such a charge was at once apparent when he was specially employed to aid in suppressing the great mutiny in India, after being charged with attempting to create one in Turkey.

Resting assured that he would be able to clear his fair fame, he returned to India on the breaking out of the mutiny in 1857, when he was immediately employed on the highly responsible duty of raising and organising two regiments of cavalry, which, under the name of "Beatson's Horse," he took into the field. For services with one of the regiments of this brigade, the 18th Royal Irish, and Bombay Artillery, he received the thanks of Sir Hugh Rose in February, 1859. Sir Hugh Rose (now Lord Strathnairn) had made known to the Bombay Commander-in-Chief the satisfaction he derived from the manner in which Colonel Beatson discharged his duties while under his command, and praised him for zeal and energy in carrying out his instructions. Sir Hugh was perfectly aware of his "readiness to encounter any hardship or fatigue for the good of the service." He returned to England towards the close of 1859, when his unfortunate case came on for trial. On the grounds of the communication being "privileged," the verdict of the Jury was "for the defendant." "The Jury wish to express their strong opinion of regret that, on discovering how unfounded the reports were, the defendant had not thought proper to withdraw his statements." The trial was a serious pecuniary loss to the General, as

'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [9v] (18/24)

18

it cost him £3,000. The case was fully noticed in the London and provincial journals of January, 1860.

We have before us a "Supplement" of Beatson's services under four successive Governors-General, Lords Auckland, Ellenborough, Hardinge, and Dalhousie. Lord Canning made the fifth; and, though engaged under the lamented Viceroy in a peaceful but brilliant service, Lord Mayo, the sixth. Under Lord Canning's successor, Sir John (now Lord) Lawrence, whose reign appears to have been one of consolidating the Empire after the mutiny, Beatson's name does not come much before the public. Shortly after his return to India, or about the years 1864-65, there was almost nothing for him to do; so he could only wait patiently for what he was generally confessed to have very strong claims—the command of a division. This he at length obtained from the Commander-in-Chief, Sir William Mansfield (the late Lord Sandhurst); but he and his friends felt that the high and lucrative appointment, worth over £4,000 a year, came rather too late in life.¹ Still the old soldier was very thankful for the great honour paid him, through which the wonted energy might again burst forth; and he had hope of retrieving his pecuniary losses.

In the Allahabad Division, "up in the morning early" (as was ever his custom), and action everywhere among the troops, soon became the order of the day. A sham fight was taking place at Allahabad, while the troops in some other cantonments were only just arriving on the ground! Lord Chatham's famous maxim, "If you do not rise early, you can make progress in nothing" (advice doubly valuable in India, where the sun, if you would be cool, compels you to rise early), was never absent from Beatson's mind; and we cannot help thinking it not improbable that, had he been in command at Meerut during the 10th and 11th May, 1857, at the first outbreak of the mutiny, he would have headed a party of horse, galloped off, and not left the saddle till he had done his utmost to secure the mutineers on their way to Delhi, and bring them back, under a strong guard, to their proper station!

Early in 1869, we find him in command of the Sirhind (Umballah) Division, where the grand Durbar, in honour of Shere Ali, the Ameer of Afghanistan, was held, under Lord Mayo, with unusual splendour.

¹ Beatson was a full Colonel in the Army, November, 1854; a Regimental Colonel in May, 1864; Major-General, 8th January, 1865; and was appointed to command the Allahabad Division, 3rd October, 1866.

'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [10r] (19/24)

19

Beatson was now in his glory, and put forth all his energies to deserve the thanks which he so generously received for his admirable arrangements regarding the troops; and our friend, the Ameer, doubtless, went back to his own country, having formed a very high opinion of our Army, under the Chief, Sir William Mansfield, and his soldier-like Lieutenant, General Beatson. This was the brilliant service before alluded to; and Lord Mayo's Durbar, we may hope, Shere Ali considered, in every sense, a victory of Peace! If such friendships last, the designs of Russia (if such there be), or any other great Power, against our splendid dominion, will vanish like mist before the morning sun.

Our distinguished Anglo-Indian's career is now drawing to a close. The "last of earth" is not far distant. Originally of a strong constitution, his health, from over-work and anxiety, now gave visible signs of being somewhat shattered; and, while commanding at Allahabad, he lost his wife, on which occasion he sent a letter to the present writer detailing the sympathy shown in his bereavement by all the officers at the funeral. More than a year of his divisional command still remained to be served; but he determined to visit England early in 1870, leaving the year in reserve for his return. Shortly after reaching home he lost a favourite daughter, which affliction he bore with truly Christian resignation; and before his health was fairly established—although much improved—he, soon after the sad event, left for India to accomplish the "one year more," which has killed, and will yet kill, so many Anglo-Indians! His condition in the loved land of his best achievements gradually became precarious, and he was recommended to Malta for change of climate. Thence, at the end of January, 1872, he returned to England to join his only surviving daughter, Mrs. M'Mullen, who had recently lost her husband, Major M'Mullen, "while on active service in India." On arrival, he was so weak that he had to be carried from the ship. Early in February, the London journals contained the following announcement:—"GENERAL BEATSON.—This distinguished officer died on Sunday (the 4th) at the Vicarage, New Swindon, the residence of the Rev. G. Campbell, aged sixty-seven."¹ Gazing on him in his last sleep, he reminded you of an effigy in a cathedral of one of the knights of old, with a visage conscious of having, during an eventful life, done much hard and chivalrous work. Or, he might have given some the idea of a dead warrior on the hard-won field, with, as Aytoun describes the "dead

¹ Then follows a record of his services.

'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [10v] (20/24)

20

Dundee," a slight smile on his visage, as if, in the splendid lines of Campbell—conscious of leaving "no blot on his name"—he dared to

"Look proudly to Heaven from the death-bed of fame."¹

Having now endeavoured to do justice to Beatson's military career, it behoves us to make a few remarks on his character, which may afford a key to the strange fact of his dying without a mark of distinction from his country after his name. He was impetuous in most of his dealings with mankind, to a remarkable degree; and he seemed to consider that every one should be subservient to his rule. He was safe enough if you did not differ from him; but if you once disagreed it seemed as if you would never again recover his friendship. Although a first-rate officer, and strict disciplinarian, and, from the nature of his profession, obliged to succumb in weighty matters to the higher powers, still this unfortunate spirit of dislike of correction, or advice, sometimes followed him into quarters where, had he acted otherwise, marks of high favour and distinction were certain. There can be no doubt that he had numerous very fine qualities; but disappointed ambition seemed occasionally to freeze "the genial current" of his soul, and prevent his achieving that greatness which he so eminently deserved. After all, how many well known and more successful men, in and out of the Services, are deserving of the same remark, and have shown, more or less, qualities which stood in the way of General Beatson's rapid advancement and distinction. One good anecdote of him may be told, showing his impetuosity, even at the quiet *chota haziree* (small breakfast) after parade. It was in Central India, when the fame of "Beatson's Horse" was beginning to attract attention, that, as the commandant and his officers were seated round the small table, preparatory to the larger and later repast, Beatson suddenly drew his sword, and made a smart cut at the helmet of one of the officers, who, naturally looking up from his tea, inquired the reason for such an assault. "I only wanted to find out whether or not your helmet was sword-proof," coolly replied Beatson. That he was a favourite among many of his officers is undeniable; and the following extracts will show how he was appreciated in the Bundelkund Legion, and the Nizam's Cavalry. Take him in what light we will, Beatson will long be remembered as one of the bravest and best soldiers of the old India Army.

¹ "Lochiel's Warning."

'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [11r] (21/24)

21

PAPERS RELATING TO GENERAL BEATSON'S INDIAN CAREER.

No. 1.

Extract of a Letter to Government from GENERAL FRASER, Resident at Hyderabad, dated 6th March, 1848.

"I have always been anxious to diminish, as far as possible, the debts of the Cavalry Division, and it is a source of gratification to me to find that the Brigadier has taken such steps as may tend to effect this desirable object.

"I am happy that I am enabled to speak in terms of high approval of Brigadier Beatson. He was not appointed at my recommendation, and there was another Officer who I thought had superior claims to the Cavalry Division, from having served in it for many years with credit and reputation; but there is no man with whom I could be better satisfied than with Brigadier Beatson, nor any one, in my opinion, who would be better suited to command the Cavalry branch of the Nizam's Service."

[General Fraser was a distinguished Anglo-Indian, a capital Persian scholar, and well-read on nearly every subject. He held several important political appointments during his long career. The writer recollects him at Hyderabad, in 1846, remarking, as we entered with our swords on (according to custom) before breakfast, "Take off your swords, gentlemen; this is a time of peace!"]

No. 2.

Extract of a Letter from COL. WOOD, Military Secretary to LORD HARDINGE, dated 18th October, 1848.

"It now appears that Col. Tomkyns has applied for an extension of leave, only to the 29th February next, and that on his re-assuming his command, Major Beatson, who is officiating for him, will be deprived of his appointment.

"The G. G. considers the claims of this Officer on the Government are very strong, having, whilst in command of the Bundelkund Legion, consisting of Cavalry, Infantry, and Artillery, done good service to the State, at a most important crisis, when our troops refused to march

'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [11v] (22/24)

22

to Scinde, which his troops volunteered to do, the command of which he has been deprived of by the men of the Legion having been drafted into the regular Regiments of the Bengal Army.

"Under these circumstances the G. G., although he acknowledges that Major Ingles, having commanded a Regiment of the Nizam's Cavalry for 17 years, would be a very proper Officer to command the Cavalry Division, does not feel justified in passing over Major Beatson in favour of that Officer."

No. 3.

The following is the Inscription on a Sword presented after the Bundelkund Legion was broken up:—

"To MAJOR W. F. BEATSON, late Commandant-in-Chief of the Bundelkund Legion.

From his friends of the Legion, in token of their admiration of him as a Soldier, and their esteem for him as an individual—1850.

No. 4.

The following accompanied the presentation of a handsome piece of plate, from the Officers of the Nizam's Cavalry, after BRIGADIER BEATSON gave up command:—

"We have availed ourselves of this method of testifying our regard for you personally, and our admiration of your talents and abilities as a Soldier, under whose command we have all served, and some of us have had opportunities of witnessing your gallant conduct in action with the enemy, and your sound judgment, upon all occasions, when Brigadier in command of the Nizam's Cavalry, both in Quarters and in the Field."

No. 5.

Extract of a Despatch from the COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF to the GOVERNOR GENERAL, dated Head Quarters, Simla, 19th October, 1853.

Recommending "The introduction, under an Inspector, or other properly qualified Officer, of a well-considered and uniform system in

'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [back-i] (23/24)

23

the Cavalry so as to ensure effectually, for the future, the most perfect efficiency attainable.

"In the event of these suggestions meeting with the approval of the Most Noble the Governor-General-in-Council, I am to observe that Major W. F. Beatson, late Brigadier in the Army of his Highness the Nizam, whose return from furlough is shortly expected, appears to His Excellency, from his long experience, a fit Officer to investigate into the state of the Irregular Cavalry, and to prepare such rules and regulations as may conduce to its perfect organisation."

No. 6.

"Bryanstone Square,

"11th July, 1860.

"The Turkish Ambassador presents his compliments to General Beatson, and begs to inform him, in reply to his note of yesterday, that the document therewith and herewith enclosed is a *Berat*, or Diploma, dated the 2nd *Decade* of the month of *Redjeb*, 1272 (3rd *Decade* of March, 1855), conferring upon General Beatson the *Nishan Iftihar* for Military services rendered to the Imperial Ottoman Government."

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'Remarks on the Bashi-Bazouks and other irregulars; including brief reflections on the present war. With a sketch of General William Ferguson Beatson, organiser of the Bashi-Bazouks during the Crimean campaign' by Colonel William Ferguson Beatson Laurie [back] (24/24)

