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KNIGHT

ALBANIA

**A NARRATIVE
OF
RECENT TRAVEL**

that the Montenegrins should have acquired Antivari by that treaty, a place of no strategic importance, yet which gave them what they so long and eagerly thirsted for, a seaport. But it was decidedly a mistake to extend Prince Nikita's territory beyond the mountain ridge, a natural frontier, down into the valley of the Lim, giving a command of it—a standing menace to Turkey and Bosnia, a bone of many future contentions. It must be remembered, too, that the inhabitants of the district to be given up are not Slav in race or language—not of the Greek church—but Mussulmen or Roman Catholics. The Montenegrins have been made too much of lately. They now imagine that they are a great people, and have a holy mission of aggrandisement at the expense of Turkey.

Gussinje is a curious sort of a place, and has never enjoyed a very sweet reputation. As in all parts of Northern Albania, the people do pretty much what they like, and do not feel the Turkish yoke very heavily. Situated as it is on the frontier, it has become a city of refuge. Montenegrin renegades whose country has become too hot for them, Bosnian Mohammedan refugees, and vagabonds of all sorts, have flocked hither. It is in this town of Gussinje that the chiefs of the Albanian League have concentrated their forces, determined to fight to the bitter end, in spite of

the Austrian troops in Bosnia to the north of them, Turkish troops in their rear, Montenegrins before their walls, and the doubtful neutrality of the Christian Arnauts, who are all round them in the mountains, lying in wait to murder and strip small parties of either side—for this is the idea of neutrality among these people, an armed neutrality with a vengeance. Thirty-five thousand Albanians, we were told, occupy Gussinje, at the head of whom is Ali Bey.

Ali Pasha, as he has styled himself, is a Gussinian of rank, owner of lands and houses in the town and neighbourhood, a man of great intelligence, and a devout Mussulman.

He was one of the principal people implicated in the assassination of Mehemet Ali at Jakova.

This general, as my readers will remember, was sent by the Porte on the dangerous mission of negotiating the transfer of Turkish territory to her enemies. He was strongly advised not to venture into that hotbed of fanaticism and fierce patriotism, Jakova. The League held possession of the town; the population was worked up to the highest pitch of excitement; every one knew the history of the envoy. As a foreigner, a Pasha's favourite boy, a renegade, he was certain to be disliked and suspected by rigid Mussulmen, and was the very last man that should have been sent on so delicate an errand. It is rumoured that the

I believe, none of our countrymen had ever ventured before; and again, we had learnt a good deal more of the real strength of the league than a month's inquiries at Scutari could have taught us. Not that I did not take the Franciscans' account with a few grains of salt. The fathers hated the Mussulmen, and were anxious to withdraw our sympathies from the defenders of Gussinje.

The world will hear a good deal of the doings of this Albanian League some day, so a few remarks on what, from my observations, I consider to be the real condition of affairs, will not, I think, be here out of place.

The chiefs of the association are, I believe, honest men, patriotic, and determined to carry out their programme to the death.

Ali Bey is spoken very highly of even by the Montenegrins, and if reports prove true, will show himself no indifferent general.

Nearly every Mussulman in Albania is a member of the league, and its forces are daily swollen by refugees from Bosnia and deserters from the Turkish army.

That Turkey at first secretly assisted and encouraged the movement, I think there can be no doubt. At any rate it is certain that the Porte's representatives, even her highest officers in this country, openly sympathized with it.

But the league has waxed too strong for the