

TURKEY AND THE LEVANT.

Kidnapping in Smyrna—Mountain Bandits.

Correspondence of the New-York Daily Times.

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The sad condition of the Frank or European residents of Smyrna, for the last three or four years, has hardly its parallel in any port of commerce in the world. Bands of ruffians have devised a scheme of torturing violence towards them, by means of which nearly every month they obtain black mail from some one to an enormous amount. Instead of detailing in general terms the mode of action of these desperadoes, I will just narrate to you the last painful incident of the kind, and which occurred last week.

On Friday evening it was whispered around in Smyrna, from mouth to mouth, that another resident of Smyrna was in the hands of robbers. It was said, that Mr. POLYCARPE BARRY, a member of one of the most respectable families in the city, had been seized by the kidnappers at about an hour's distance from the city, and carried into the mountains. Saturday morning the fact was more openly avowed, and the feelings of sympathy excited were increased on hearing the extravagant sum demanded by the robbers for his redemption. His friends avowed that \$11,000 was the least sum they would take; that they had already sent to the kidnappers \$5,500, and that they had most contemptuously refused to accept it, declaring that if they did not send the last farthing of what they had first asked for, they should let out the blood of their prisoner. After making the greatest efforts, his family, with the aid of friends, amassed the sum necessary, and Mr. BARRY after suffering intolerable violence for nearly a week, was returned to his friends.

It appears that on Wednesday, Mr. BARRY had gone on business to Kukluja about two hours distant from Smyrna, and at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon was half way home on his return by the valley road, which is the safest. Suddenly two men in the garb of huntsmen fell upon him, seized him by the body, tore him from his horse, and dragged him to the other side of the mountain, beating him with the butt end of their muskets to make him walk faster. They were soon joined by a third man, and seeing an old man working in the fields, they forced him to follow them, to serve as their unwilling messenger for the ransom money.

After ascending and descending several mountains more remote from Smyrna, the banditti gave Mr. BARRY to understand that they knew very well who he was. This was a discouraging and alarming fact, for it convinced him that it only increased the difficulty of escaping from them, and they ordered him to write immediately to his friends to send him \$15,000. Mr. BARRY prayed and besought them, declaring that he did not possess the sum, but it was in vain. As they marched on amid torrents of rain, he would call out, "Kill me, for I cannot pay what you ask." "Yes," said the captain, "we shall do so, we shall kill you little by little; we will send your limbs one after another to Smyrna as messengers for the money, and that will make it easier for us to obtain money in future." At last half dead, and with a dagger at his breast, he wrote what they dictated with a deduction of one-sixth. The sum was obtained with great difficulty, and Mr. BARRY was faithfully restored by the robbers to his family.

Another adventure which I recall, which occurred not long since, was the entrance at a comparatively early hour of the evening, of a company of robbers into the parlor of a gentleman living in Bouja, half an hour's distance from Smyrna. They were about to seize upon the gray-haired father to carry him off to the mountains, but instead they dragged off a gallant young gentleman who endeavored to defend him. He was fortunately recovered by means of pistols of alarm fired by the daughters of the old merchant, which brought such succor that the robbers fled. Last year the Dutch Vice-Consul, a gentleman born in the country, and beloved of all the world but the robbers, was walking with his two little children in the vicinity of his own house in another village, when some men of this class seized them all three and a laborer besides, and made off with them into the mountains. The children were made use of as hostages to force the father to write the order for \$2,000, for his ransom, to his friends in Smyrna. The emotions and language of the children, about ten years of age, their courage and their devotion form a picture of melting character. They took the order, and the Consul was made to walk day after day over the mountain tops until the sum had been obtained. In this case, as he was an official personage, the Turkish Government was constrained to recompense to him his losses.

About eighteen months since this mode of abduction had been carried on to such an extent, that a general search for the thieves was made in Bouja, by the authorities, and several of them were found in the houses of English merchants! hidden in out-houses, and even one was found under a floor, under a carpet on which a table stood. The owner of the house protested that he knew nothing of it: but nobody believed him. Yet though there was a great outcry against the English for harboring bandits, we imagine everybody who knows all the circumstances will admit that their share of guilt was very small. It seems that this habit of harboring thieves has been going on for twenty years, and has been connived at by those concerned through necessity and with horror and dread; while they have seen nothing to choose but worse alternatives. The Europeans of Smyrna are chiefly the descendants of persons who have settled there for trade at some remote period. They are persons often of small means, and they say, "If we do not harbor the robbers, we shall be robbed by them, and perhaps murdered; or we must in our poverty leave the country. For the experience of all our lives is an evidence that the police of the country is impotent to protect us from their vengeance." The pusillanimity which has led them to come to terms with the robbers, leads them to tolerate the dances which they force upon their domestics in the kitchen,—to allow them to find their supplies of food there, when they are in the villages, and to wink at their availing themselves of the supposed inviolability of a European's house, by seeking refuge there when pursued by the police. This custom of harboring robbers exposes the merchants to an additional calumny,—that they participate in the distribution of the plunder of caravans, and dispose of chests of opium at exceedingly low rates.

All the villages where the robbers frequent, and all the scenes of their acts of violence, are within two hours distance of Smyrna. The robbers themselves are chiefly Greeks, from the Archipelago, and as may be inferred from the narrative we have given, they possess none of the benevolence or gallantry of the Robinhoods or Rinaldinis of former days, but are coarse and heartless ruffians. Their persons are well known in all these villages where they have hitherto walked about in open day unmolested, until some glaring affair leads the local Government to make a great display of troops, when they adjourn to the mountains. There is some hope of a remedy for this state of things in the new general orders, by which policemen can fire at any man who does not stop when ordered to do so, and by which any man may fire upon a robber who enters his house. The Tanzimat or reformed institutions were decidedly too mild for the state of things in Turkey, and the permission which all the Provincial Governors have lately received to punish for capital crimes before reporting to the Central Government, is an important step to secure prompt and effective execution of justice in case of crime.

A great portion of the Europeans who were living in the three or four country villages nearest to Smyrna, have been obliged to forsake them and live

in the city. It is wonderful that agriculture does not make progress in a region where there is greater degree of safety to the agriculturist. Has Turkey, in Asia, yet become a field for European colonization? San Francisco, and a dozen other towns of California, are less alarming to family quiet and tranquility than a resident in the vicinity of Smyrna.

The Smyrniotes have held a public meeting, without distinction of nation or religion, and appointed a Committee of Fourteen to concert measures for self-protection and defence.