

### Chapter 3

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 or 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 he 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 Bektagis 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 redhot 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, he 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 advantage, 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.

The daughter of Chainitza, by her first husband, Ali had married a certain Murad, the Bey of Clerisoura. This nobleman, attached to Ibrahim Pacha by both blood and affection, since the death of Sepher Bey, had, become the special object of Ali's hatred, caused by the devotion of Murad to his patron, over whom he had great influence, and from whom nothing could detach him. Skilful in concealing truth under special pretexts, Ali gave out that the cause of his known dislike to this young man was that the latter, although his nephew by marriage, had several times fought in hostile ranks against him. Therefore the amiable Ibrahim made use of the marriage treaty to arrange an honourable reconciliation between Murad Bey and his uncle, and appointed the former "Ruler of the Marriage Feast," in which capacity he was charged to conduct the bride to Janina and deliver her to her husband, the young Veli Bey. He had accomplished his mission satisfactorily, and was received by Ali with all apparent hospitality. The festival began on his arrival towards the end of November 1791, and had already continued several days, when suddenly it was announced that a shot had been fired upon Ali, who had only escaped by a miracle, and that the assassin was still at large. This news spread terror through the city and the palace, and everyone dreaded being seized as the guilty person. Spies were everywhere employed, but they declared search was useless, and that there must be an extensive conspiracy against Ali's life. The latter complained of being surrounded by enemies, and announced that henceforth he would receive only one person at a time, who should lay down his arms before entering the hall now set apart for public audience. It was a chamber built over a vault, and entered by a sort of trap-door, only reached by a ladder.



After having for several days received his couriers in this sort of dovecot, Ali summoned his nephew in order to entrust with him the wedding gifts. Murad took this as a sign of favour, and joyfully acknowledged the congratulations of his friends. He presented himself at the time arranged; the guards at the foot of the ladder demanded his arms, which he gave up readily, and ascended the ladder full of hope. Scarcely had the trap-door closed behind him when a pistol ball, fired from a dark corner, broke his shoulder blade, and he fell, but sprang up and attempted to fly. Ali issued from his hiding place and sprang upon him, but notwithstanding his wound the young bey defended himself vigorously, uttering terrible cries. The pacha, eager to finish, and finding his hands insufficient, caught a burning log from the hearth, struck his nephew in the face with it, felled him to the ground, and completed his bloody task. This accomplished, Ali called for help with loud cries, and when his guards entered he showed the bruises he had received and the blood with which he was covered, declaring that he had killed in self-defence a villain who endeavoured to assassinate him. He ordered the body to be searched, and a letter was found in a pocket which Ali had himself just placed there, which purported to give the details of the pretended conspiracy.

As Murad's brother was seriously compromised by this letter, he also was immediately seized, and strangled without any pretence of trial. The whole palace rejoiced, thanks were rendered to Heaven by one of those sacrifices of animals still occasionally made in the East to celebrate an escape from great danger, and Ali released some prisoners in order to show his gratitude to Providence for having protected him from so horrible a crime. He received congratulatory visits, and composed an apology attested by a judicial declaration by the *cadi*, in which the memory of Murad and his brother was declared accursed. Finally, commissioners, escorted by a strong body of soldiers, were sent to seize the property of the two brothers, because, said the decree, it was just that the injured should inherit the possessions of his would-be assassins.

Thus was exterminated the only family capable of opposing the Pacha of Janina, or which could counterbalance his influence over the weak Ibrahim of Berat. The latter, abandoned by his brave defenders, and finding himself at the mercy of his enemy, was compelled to submit to what he could not prevent, and protested only by tears against these crimes, which seemed to herald a terrible future for himself.

As for Emineh, it is said that from the date of this catastrophe she separated herself almost entirely from her blood-stained husband, and spent her life in the recesses of the harem, praying as a Christian both for the murderer and his victims. It is a relief, in the midst of this atrocious saturnalia to encounter this noble and gentle character, which like a desert oasis, affords a rest to eyes wearied with the contemplation of so much wickedness and treachery.

Ali lost in her the guardian angel who alone could in any way restrain his violent passions. Grieved at first by the withdrawal of the wife whom hitherto he had loved exclusively, he endeavoured in vain to regain her affection; and then sought in new vices compensation for the happiness he had lost, and gave himself up to sensuality. Ardent in everything, he carried debauchery to a monstrous extent, and as if his palaces were not large enough for his desires, he assumed various disguises; sometimes in order to traverse the streets by night in search of the lowest pleasures; sometimes penetrating by day into churches and private houses seeking for young men and maidens remarkable for their beauty, who were then carried off to his harem.

His sons, following in his footsteps, kept also scandalous households, and seemed to dispute preeminence in evil with their father, each in his own manner. Drunkenness was the specialty of the eldest, Mouktar, who was without rival among the hard drinkers of Albania, and who was reputed to have emptied a whole wine-skin in one evening after a plentiful meal. Gifted with the hereditary violence of his family, he had, in his drunken fury, slain several persons, among others his sword-bearer, the companion of his childhood and confidential friend of his whole life. Veli chose a different course. Realising the Marquis de Sade, as his father had realised Macchiavelli, he delighted in mingling together debauchery and cruelty, and his amusement consisted in biting the lips he had kissed, and tearing with his nails the forms he had caressed. The people of Janina saw with horror more than one woman in their midst whose nose and ears he had caused to be cut off, and had then turned into the streets.

It was indeed a reign of terror; neither fortune, life, honour, nor family were safe. Mothers cursed their fruitfulness, and women their beauty. Fear soon engenders corruption, and subjects are speedily tainted by the depravity of

their masters. Ali, considering a demoralised race as easier to govern, looked on with satisfaction.

While he strengthened by every means his authority from within, he missed no opportunity of extending his rule without. In 1803 he declared war against the Suliots, whose independence he had frequently endeavoured either to purchase or to overthrow. The army sent against them, although ten thousand strong, was at first beaten everywhere. Ali then, as usual, brought treason to his aid, and regained the advantage. It became evident that, sooner or later, the unhappy Suliots must succumb.

Foreseeing the horrors which their defeat would entail, Emineh, touched with compassion, issued from her seclusion and cast herself at Ali's feet. He raised her, seated her beside him, and inquired as to her wishes. She spoke of generosity, of mercy; he listened as if touched and wavering, until she named the Suliots. Then, filled with fury, he seized a pistol and fired at her. She was not hurt, but fell to the ground overcome with terror, and her women hastily intervened and carried her away. For the first time in his life, perhaps, Ali shuddered before the dread of a murder.

It was his wife, the mother of his children, whom he saw lying at his feet, and the recollection afflicted and tormented him. He rose in the night and went to Emineh's apartment; he knocked and called, but being refused admittance, in his anger he broke open the door. Terrified by the noise; and at the sight of her infuriated husband, Emineh fell into violent convulsions, and shortly expired. Thus perished the daughter of Capelan Pacha, wife of Ali Tepeleni, and mother of Mouktar and Veli, who, doomed to live surrounded by evil, yet remained virtuous and good.

Her death caused universal mourning throughout Albania, and produced a not less deep impression on the mind of her murderer. Emineh's spectre pursued him in his pleasures, in the council chamber, in the hours of night. He saw her, he heard her, and would awake, exclaiming, "my wife! my wife!-- It is my wife!--Her eyes are angry; she threatens me!--Save me! Mercy!" For more than ten years Ali never dared to sleep alone.