

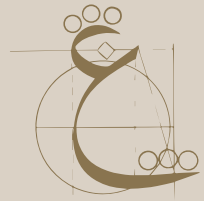


# kadim

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06



*kadim*

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evvelin kimesne bilmeye”*

*Kadim* is that no one knows what came before.

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# A Maverick Pressman: The Personal and Professional Life of Edgar Whitaker (1831-1903)

BAŞINA BUYRUK BİR  
GAZETECİ: EDGAR  
WHITAKER'IN ŞAHSİ VE  
MESLEKİ HAYATI (1831-1903)



BURHAN ÇAĞLAR\*

## ABSTRACT

This study offers an exhaustive analysis of Edgar Whitaker, a pivotal figure in Ottoman journalism and one of the primary proprietors of *The Levant Herald*. The investigation traces Whitaker's path from London through India and eventually to the Ottoman Empire. While previous research has predominantly focused on his political clashes with the Hamidian regime and his diplomatic relations, this study endeavors to expand on the understanding of Whitaker, delving into aspects of his personal life, such as kinship bonds, social interactions, and marriage. Particular attention is given to his association with the Abbotts, exploring his family ties, friendships, and social life in Constantinople. Drawing upon primary sources, archival records, and periodicals, this research presents a wide-ranging perspective of Whitaker's life, illuminating his educational background, early career, and involvement in diverse social and cultural environments. Ultimately, this study enhances the nuanced understanding of Whitaker's personal and professional spheres, revealing his multifaceted achievements as a Levantine journalist and newspaper proprietor in the Ottoman Empire.

**Keywords:** Edgar Whitaker, Journalism, *The Levant Herald*, Levantine Press, Abbotts, James Carlile McCoan, Société Musicale de Constantinople.



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## ÖZ

Bu çalışma, Osmanlı gazeteciliğinde önemli bir figür olan *The Levant Herald*'in sahiplerinden Edgar Whitaker'a odaklanmakta, onun Londra'dan Hindistan'a oradan Osmanlı İmparatorluğuna uzanan hikâyesinin izini sürmektedir. Daha önceki araştırmalar, Whitaker'ın Hamidiye rejimi ile olan siyasi münasebetlerine ve diplomatik ilişkilerine odaklanırken bu makale ailesi, sosyal çevresi ve evliliği gibi kişisel yaşamının izini sürmektedir. Makalede özellikle Whitaker'ın Abbottlar ile ilişkileri, sıhrîyet bağları, arkadaşlıkları ve İstanbul'daki sosyal hayatı ortaya konmuştur. Birincil kaynaklar, arşiv belgeleri ve süreli yayınları temel alan çalışmada Whitaker'ın eğitimine, erken kariyerine ve sosyal, kültürel çevresine dair bir perspektif sunulmaktadır. Nihayet makale Whitaker'ın şahsi ve mesleki hayatını aydınlatarak Osmanlı İmparatorluğundaki bir Levanten gazeteci ve yayıncının profesyonel yaşamına dair bilgilerimizin sınırlarını genişletmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Edgar Whitaker, Gazetecilik, *The Levant Herald*, Levanten Basın, Abbotts, James Carlile McCoan, Société Musicale de Constantinople.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the midst of the tumultuous Crimean War, the British and Ottoman forces forged a military alliance, withstanding the rigors of warfare against their shared adversary, the formidable Russian army. As the tsarist forces were ultimately defeated, the attention of the European continent turned towards the Near East, igniting a keen interest in the region. Responding to this surge of curiosity, several British journalists journeyed to the region, armed with nothing but their pens and notebooks, to document the events and convey the stories of distant lands to a captivated audience in London.<sup>1</sup>

As the war faded into memory, the Ottoman Empire underwent a significant transformation, a flowering of its press. Newspapers that were once confined to the Levantine merchants and traders took on new life, spreading their wings to reach the masses, diversifying their content, and multiplying in number. They sang of the people and places, of the hopes and fears, of all that was happening in the lands of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>2</sup>

The British press was stirred by the events of the Crimean War and sought to bring news from the frontlines to their readers. Reporters affiliated with major European newspapers, particularly *The Times* of London, ventured into the conflict to bring back stories. This was in response to the public's growing interest and curiosity in the war and the Near East. These journalists played a crucial role in conveying information about the Ottoman geography and producing reports from the frontlines between the Crimea and Constantinople line.<sup>3</sup>

In the wake of the Crimean War, *The Levant Herald*, an English language newspaper, was founded in Constantinople. It was there that London-born Edgar Whitaker rose to prominence as its publisher, earning himself a reputation as one of the most renowned British journalists in the Ottoman Empire. His writings were read not only throughout the Ottoman lands, but also across the entire Near East and Europe, solidifying his status as the voice of British journalism in the Ottoman world.<sup>4</sup>

The aim of this study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the life and legacy of Edgar Whitaker, a prominent figure in Ottoman journalism and one of the primary proprietors of *The Levant Herald*. The investigation traces Whitaker's journey from London to India, culminating in his arrival in the Ottoman Empire. This study draws upon existing scholarship to provide a thorough overview of Whitaker's life. Unlike previous studies that have focused on his instrumental role in shaping political opposition to the Hamidian regime and his relations with the Porte and the British Embassy,<sup>5</sup> this research delves into his personal life, including an examination of his familial ties, social circle, and marriage. Specifically, this research seeks to explore Whitaker's association with the Abbots and touch upon various issues including his family connections, friendships, and social life in Constantinople. Moreover, this investigation aims to provide a broader perspective on Whitaker's life, extending beyond

1 Stefanie Markovits, "Rushing into Print: Participatory Journalism During the Crimean War", *Victorian Studies* 50/4 (2008), 560-561.

2 Erol A. F. Baykal, *The Ottoman Press (1908-1923)* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2019), 28-30.

3 Markovits, "Rushing into Print", 560-561.

4 Burhan Çağlar, "Edgar Whitaker: A British Journalist in the Ottoman Empire", *Media History* 29/1 (2023), 39-58.

5 Çağlar, "Edgar Whitaker", 39-58.

his professional endeavors to encompass his education, early career, and social, cultural, and political relations. Overall, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of Whitaker's life and experiences, illuminating the personal and professional spheres of his life and providing insight into the socio-political context in which he lived and worked. Through this research, his impact on Ottoman journalism and his adaptability in a dynamic sociopolitical climate are explored, shedding light on a figure who was at once a part of, and distinct from, his contemporaries.

### 1. Voyages and Settling into the Near East

*The Levant Herald*, an influential newspaper that emerged in the wake of the Crimean War, was established by James Carlile McCoan, a war correspondent for *The Daily News*. He felt the need of a pressing to disseminate Near East news and his vision bore fruit in the form of this seminal publication, bridging the Ottoman Empire and Europe. Capitalizing on his journalistic prowess and extensive network, McCoan successfully brought *The Levant Herald* to life, creating a resonating voice for English speakers that persisted for five decades, all emanating from the heart of the Eastern capital.<sup>6</sup>

Under McCoan's proprietorship, the newspaper gained significant prestige, disseminating regional developments to a global readership beyond the Ottoman Empire, and influencing public opinion. However, as the government expanded press regulations, censorship tightened, restricting and prohibiting publications to assert authority. The 1864 Press Regulation, modeled after a French law enacted in 1852, further aggravated the impact of censorship on the press.<sup>7</sup>

After a period of devoted management, McCoan parted ways with *The Levant Herald*, transferring ownership to Edgar Whitaker in 1872 prior to his departure from Constantinople. Having previously served as the British Consul of the Dardanelles and the acting British Vice-Consul at Gallipoli, Whitaker was well-versed in the political climate of the region. McCoan's departure marked a significant transition, signifying the culmination of his influential tenure and ushering in a new era in the newspaper's history. Upon his return to Britain, he left behind a profound journalistic legacy set to be perpetuated by his successor, entrusted with the task of upholding the high standards that McCoan had set, thereby ensuring the sustained prestige of the publication.<sup>8</sup>

Edgar Whitaker was born on September 26, 1831, in Frome, Somerset, England. As the second child of Alfred Whitaker and Catherine Mary Woolbert, he was raised in a bureaucratic, conservative family. His education was primarily guided by his uncle, George Whitaker, a notable academic who held various prestigious positions at the College of Living of Oakington, Cambridgeshire, and later established Trinity College in Toronto, Canada.<sup>9</sup>

6 David Murphy, *Ireland and the Crimean War* (London: Four Courts Press, 2002), 170-173, 185.

7 Baykal, *The Ottoman Press*, 305-310.

8 Diana Cooper-Richet, "The English-Language Press in Continental Europe", *Edinburgh History of the British and Irish Press: Expansion and Evolution, 1800-1900*, ed. David Finkelstein (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 2/235-236.

9 *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express*, "Death of Mr. Edgar Whitaker" (August 24, 1903), 1.

Edgar moved to his uncle's home where he grew up in a settled, urban, and educated environment that valued politics, law, and scholarly interests over commerce. Besides his siblings Edward and Edith Rose, Edgar displayed an innate musical talent from a young age. His love for music led him to learn the violin and piano, and compose songs, which potentially influenced his unconventional career path.<sup>10</sup>

Raised in an intellectually stimulating environment that valued literature, arts, and education, Edgar was exposed to diverse cultural expressions. Music, in particular, significantly shaped his worldview. Although he initially followed in his family's footsteps, pursuing a law degree at one of Britain's most prestigious institutions, he left after the first year and embarked on a journey to India.<sup>11</sup> This journey marked an important milestone that would shape his character, enabling him to come into contact with different cultures, a life-changing experience coinciding with his youth, as his cultural personality swiftly took shape. The impact of such an adventurous life after having grown up in the unencumbered atmosphere of Britain is evident in his works published in *The Levant Herald*.

In the early bloom of youth, he toiled for the Great Indian Peninsular Railway Company stationed in Bombay, under the auspices of the East India Company. The impetus for his departure from India remains shrouded in mystery, but the demise of his father, a London judge, may have been a contributory factor. In his petition, Whitaker cited the harsh climate and weather conditions as a cause for his departure.<sup>12</sup> Although we have scant knowledge of his experiences in India, it is noteworthy that the Abbott family, with whom Whitaker forged a lifelong bond, and eventually became a son-in-law, also had a history in this region. It was common practice for the large merchant families who traversed the markets of Britain in the East to create family ties between these far-flung geographies.<sup>13</sup>

In his journey through the Ottoman lands, Whitaker's first steps took him to Smyrna, where he delved into the heart of the Levantine world as an employee of the Ottoman Bank.<sup>14</sup> It was only after acquiring *The Levant Herald* that he settled in Constantinople, embarking upon a new chapter in his life. Whitaker embarked on yet another journey in 1857 after a brief stint in his homeland, marking his return to the lands of the Orient. The Crimean War had recently ended, and the European public was aglow with interest in the Ottoman Empire following its triumph over the Tsar's armies. The Ottomans and Constantinople had become the focus of many publications, and Whitaker was drawn to this geography at a time when the Ottoman Empire was on an upward trajectory in Europe. His destination was Smyrna, a bustling port city in the Mediterranean and one of the Ottoman Empire's largest. Whitaker was appointed the director of the Smyrna branch of the Imperial Ottoman Bank, a joint subsidiary of the Abbotts, and was thereby entrusted with the establishment and operation of the bank's crucial branches. Despite his lack of formal education in finance, he discharged

10 "Men and Manners in Constantinople", *The Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art* (New York: E. R. Pelton, 1885), 743-744.

11 "Men and Manners in Constantinople", 743-744.

12 *The Times*, "Obituary" (August 25, 1903), 4; *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express*, "Death of Mr. Edgar Whitaker", 1.

13 M. Chris Mason, *Heart like a Fakir: General Sir James Abbott and the fall of the East India Company* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2023), 1-10.

14 *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express*, "Death of Mr. Edgar Whitaker", 1.



this position with responsibility.<sup>15</sup> In his role as the director, he authored a pamphlet offering an overview of the organization's nature, functions, and services. This publication aimed to encourage individuals to invest their savings with the institution, emphasizing the potential for increased profitability. Whitaker elucidated the benefits of investing, underscoring the possibility of greater returns. Additionally, highlighting the bank's comprehensive capacity to serve diverse interests, he invited society to engage as clients.<sup>16</sup> Intriguingly, he left his position before the year's end due to administrative disagreements and returned to Britain. The abruptness of his departure and his lengthy journey back home suggest impetuosity, leaving the motivations behind his decision the subject of speculation.

Smyrna, a city of lively commerce and a bustling harbor, beckoned Whitaker into the heart of the Ottoman world. He lingered almost a year, savoring the sights and sounds of a busy port in the Mediterranean. Camel caravans carrying raw materials and goods from all corners of the empire flowed into Smyrna, where ships transported them to other destinations. Investment in infrastructure was on the rise, and plans were underway to build a railway extending to the inner provinces, which would accelerate the flow of goods.<sup>17</sup> The Ottoman central authority held sway over the region, creating an atmosphere that contrasted sharply with Whitaker's impressions of India. Following a two-year stay in Britain, Whitaker returned to the Ottoman Empire, where he was appointed Vice-Consul of Gallipoli from 1859 to 1862. This appointment signaled the culmination of his interrupted education in Britain and, perhaps, the influence of his family's bureaucratic connections.<sup>18</sup> Whitaker's decision to take office in the Ottoman lands instead of returning to India or joining his uncle in Canada still remains a mystery.

## 2. The Appointment: Professional Duties and Family Ties

Gallipoli was a challenging location for Whitaker's posting given its strategic significance as the gateway to the Dardanelles and the Black Sea. Since the fourteenth century, the Ottomans had maintained control of the area, making it a site of considerable political and economic importance. Whitaker's role as acting vice-consul required him to navigate political, economic, and social relationships between the Ottoman and British governments. His responsibilities included representing British interests in Ottoman territory, negotiating trade agreements, protecting British citizens and businesses, and reporting on political and economic developments in the region. Moreover, his appointment in Gallipoli overlapped with a period of significant change in Anglo-Ottoman relations, as the Ottomans underwent modernization and reform, resulting in new opportunities and challenges for British trade and

15 *The Times*, "Obituary", 4; *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express*, "Death of Mr. Edgar Whitaker", 1; *The Bankers' Almanac and Yearbook* (West Sussex: T. Skinner, 1976), 853; Rauf Beyru, 19. *Yüzyılda İzmir'de Sağlık Sorunları ve Yaşam* (İzmir: İzmir Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 2005), 164-165. Banking initiatives had been on the agenda in the Ottoman Empire since 1847. The Imperial Ottoman Bank was formally established in London in 1856, a momentous event in the historical trajectory of Ottoman banking. See: Edhem Eldem, *A History of the Ottoman Bank* (Istanbul: Ottoman Bank Historical Research Center, 1999).

16 *Journal de Constantinople*, "Banque Ottomane" (January 19, 1856), 2.

17 Daniel Goffman, *Izmir and the Levantine World, 1550-1650* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), 124-130.

18 Thomas Arthur Reed, *A History of the University of Trinity College, Toronto: 1852-1952* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1952), 46-47, 82-86, 172; Christopher Fergus Headon, "George Whitaker", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Accessed March 1, 2019).

investment. Therefore, Whitaker's work in Gallipoli was crucial to advancing Britain's diplomatic and economic interests in the region. Overall, his appointment was a critical juncture in his career, providing him with valuable experience and expertise in Ottoman affairs, as well as enhancing his diplomatic skills and acumen for future assignments. He dutifully served at his post in Gallipoli, upholding his role from December 1859 to 1862 with the exception of a brief absence in April 1862, where he had been acting as the leading consular official in the Dardanelles.<sup>19</sup>

Upon his appointment as Acting Vice-Consul in Gallipoli, he found himself in a region with significant ties to the Abbott family. The consuls of Gallipoli and Dardanelles, the Calvert brothers, were sons-in-law of Richard Benjamin Abbott (1803-1858), the patriarch of the Abbott family who had recently passed away.<sup>20</sup> Frederick William Calvert (1818-1876) had tied the knot with Eveline Eugenie Abbott (1829-1911), and his brother, James Campbell Francis Calvert (1827-1896), with Lavinia Clementia Abbott (1834-1921).<sup>21</sup>

Elfrida Mary (1837-1860), the middle daughter of the Abbotts, was married to Captain James Hope Atkinson (1825-1865), founder of the Masonic Lodge of Smyrna.<sup>22</sup> Laura Hortensia (1842), another sister, wed John Gerard, son of Frederik Honisher, a local merchant from Smyrna. Alice Victoria (1840), the youngest sister, was yet to be joined in matrimony but was reportedly in a romantic relationship with Whitaker.<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile, Ernest Frederick, the youngest among the siblings, was pursuing legal studies at the Middle Temple in London. Upon graduation, he served an internship at the British Consular Court in Constantinople alongside James Carlile McCoan, a legal practitioner and journalist. Subsequently, Ernest assumed responsibility for his father's former mining concessions in Western Anatolia, proceeding to establish Abbott's Emery Mines Ltd by expanding existing partnerships and mining ventures.<sup>24</sup>

Amidst a tapestry of intricate family connections and marital ties, Whitaker found his place in the Levantine society, working alongside the Calvert siblings in the Dardanelles. Frank Calvert, the elder of the two brothers (1828-1908), was not commissioned for any diplomatic task, but was rather a self-made archaeologist who carried out excavations in the region in his quest to discover the lost city of Troy. In pursuit of his goal, he embarked on excavations

19 *The Graphic*, "Mr. Edgar Whittaker" (November 20, 1886), 535.

20 TNA. FO. 78/1525, No. 13, F.W. Calvert to John Russell, October 28, 1860; Susan Heuck Allen, *Finding the Walls of Troy: Frank Calvert and Heinrich Schliemann at Hisarlık* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 294, 299; Great Britain. Foreign Office, *The Foreign Office List And Diplomatic And Consular Hand Book: January 1876* (London: Harrison & Sons, 1876), 49; *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, Third Series* 165 (London: Hansard, 1862), 81-82; Michael S. Clark, "The Possidhon Affair", *San Joaquin Geological Services* (Accessed March 1, 2019).

21 Marcelle Robinson, *Schliemann's Silent Partner: Frank Calvert (1828-1908) Pioneer, Scholar, and Survivor* (Philadelphia: Xlibris Corporation, 2006), 52-45, 60, 165, 198, 194.

22 John Heron Lepper, "The Poor Common Soldier: A Study of Irish Ambulatory Warrants", *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 38 (1925):164-165.

23 Allen, *Finding the Walls of Troy*, 316; Elena Frangakis-Syrett, "British Economic Activities in Izmir in the Second Half of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries", *New Perspectives on Turkey* 6 (1991): 214-218; Nadia Giraud, "Searching for distant relations, the Abbotts of Salonica", *Levantine Heritage: The Story of a Community* (Accessed March 1, 2019); Quentin Compton-Bishop, "The Górkiewicz and Connected Families in Smyrna", *Levantine Heritage: The Story of a Community* (Accessed March 1, 2019).

24 Orhan Kurmuş, *Emperyalizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi* (İstanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2008), 70; "Bar Examinations", *The Law Students' Journal*, Ed. John Indermaur, Charles Thwaites (London: George Barber, 1890), 12/179.

in the area, eventually purchasing the land where he wanted to excavate, thereby securing permission to continue his work. In the years to come, Calvert invited Heinrich Schliemann to join him, and the two embarked on the joint quest to find the ancient city. It was at this very moment that Whitaker set foot in Constantinople, and it was not long before the Trojan treasures were unearthed. However, Schliemann fled to Athens, taking all the spoils with him. In response, Frank Calvert took to *The Levant Herald*, publishing several articles in an attempt to call out the robbery, clear his name, and bring it to public attention.<sup>25</sup>

Edgar Whitaker and Alice Victoria Abbott had been engaged since the 1860s, although their relationship was somewhat turbulent. Rumors spread about Alice Victoria's intense intimate relationship with William H. Wrench, former vice-Consul at Dardanelles. However, ultimately, Edgar and Alice married in 1884 in Constantinople, registering their marriage in London as well. In marrying Alice, Whitaker became associated, both socially and economically, with a wealthy leading family of commerce in the Levant. Through them, he built connections to the high society of the Levantine community, known for its modern and fine lifestyle.<sup>26</sup>

Edgar and Alice were unable to have a child through natural means, yet they found their family in Evelyn Wanda Gorkiewicz, the grandchild of Alice's elder. The child, born to Marcel Théophile Gorkiewicz and Hélène Adèle Louise Helenco van Lennep, was welcomed into the Whitaker family with open arms. Helenco was the descendant of Helen Louise Elisabeth Abbott and Charles David van Lennep, the Swedish consul in Smyrna, who was originally from Germany. Evelyn was raised as their own, adopting the Whitaker surname until her marriage to Sir Robert Paul in London in 1919.<sup>27</sup> Evelyn displayed considerable artistic talent, as evidenced by the landscape she painted, which may have been cultivated during her time living with Edgar and Alice in Constantinople. Evelyn regarded Edgar her uncle, and those in her immediate social circle acknowledged her as his niece. She participated in musical and artistic activities with him, including playing the trumpet in the orchestra that he conducted.<sup>28</sup> A London-based magazine offered an orientalist view, mentioned the musical taste of the Whitakers in an article, and asserted the city's lack of cultural and artistic offerings. The passage indicates that the Whitakers participated in a collective and understated European-style artistic and musical engagement, providing insight into the family's social connections and way of life in Constantinople.<sup>29</sup>

Amid the elite Levantine circles of Constantinople, the Whitakers graced the scene, attending grand balls, concerts, and other events where he showcased his virtuosic talent on the violin, flaunting his affinity for classical music. In addition to Edgar Whitaker instrumental prowess, he also composed several musical pieces, including "The Day That is Fled," a

25 *The Levant Herald*, "Schliemann's Discoveries" (July 16, 1873), 2; *The Levant Herald*, "Important Discovery at Troy: Priam's Treasure No Fiction" (January 4, 1874), 3; *The Levant Herald*, "The Recent Archaeological Discovery' in the Troad" (January 28, 1874), 3; *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express*, "The Law on Antiquities" (November 10, 1886), 2.

26 Uygur Kocabaşoğlu, *Majestelerinin Konsolosları: İngiliz Belgeleriyle Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki İngiliz Konsoloslukları (1580-1900)* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, 2004) 100; Allen, *Finding the Walls of Troy*, 327; *The Graphic*, "Mr. Edgar Whitaker", 535.

27 Allen, *Finding the Walls of Troy*, 27, 43, 70, 294; Francis Yeats-Brown, *Caught by the Turks* (London: Edward Arnold, 1919), 153-158, 173-177, 206.

28 George Brown Burgin, *Memoirs of a Clubman* (London: Hutchinson, 1921), 46.

29 "Men and Manners in Constantinople", 743-744.

composition for mezzo-soprano or contralto, dedicated to Lady Layard, the wife of the British ambassador to Constantinople. He composed “Salve Maria”, a song for soprano, and “The Days That Are No More”, dedicated to the wife of the renowned civil engineer, Thomas Brassey.<sup>30</sup> He also established the Orchestral Philharmonic Society, which later blossomed into the Société Musicale de Constantinople, hosted by the British Embassy. His own musical compositions, conducting, and performances raised the musical standards of the Levantine community in the Ottoman Capital, aided by contributions from his artistic friends. The orchestra soon caught the eye of Sultan Abdulhamid II, who invited Whitaker to perform at grand official ceremonies held at the palace.<sup>31</sup> Besides his involvement in societies in the Ottoman capital, Whitaker also had affiliations with communities in his homeland. For instance, he was nominated for induction into the Royal Geographical Society by Arnold Kemball and F. Goldschmid on November 14, 1887. However, his failure to remit his subscription dues resulted in his removal from the society in December of the following year.<sup>32</sup>

### 3. Exploration Through Print: The Visions of His Journalistic Venture

Edgar Whitaker’s acquisition of *The Levant Herald* constituted a notable milestone within the realm of Ottoman press. The augmented circulation of the newspaper not only attracted the interest of the Levantines but also captured the attention of the international press. An American missionary emphasized the publication’s prominence by noting its significant position within the print media.<sup>33</sup> According to an account from a journalist based in Smyrna, *The Levant Herald* enjoyed considerable esteem among its readership, with some interruptions in availability casting a pall over the ensuing week.<sup>34</sup> As press culture evolved, the quantity of publications proliferated, and the press’s sway over public opinion broadened. Periodicals became pervasive, appearing in a multitude of public venues, including tobacco and barber shops, coffee houses, and teahouses.<sup>35</sup>

In the early years of *The Levant Herald*, the political climate had stiffened, leading to a surge in censorship on printing and publishing, imposing heavy restrictions on all publishers. While residing in the Ottoman lands, Whitaker bore witness to numerous transformations in press life. During his tenure in the consular mission, he gained a comprehensive understanding of the potential of the capitulations’ provisions and became well-versed in the legal framework governing the Levantine press. He acquainted himself with the intricacies of the system and became highly knowledgeable about the possibilities and limitations of the regulatory environment. Despite his lack of prior publishing experience, he became well-versed in the sector. Over time, as press legislation evolved, the government tightened state control over the press to the point of almost silencing newspapers entirely. The severity of the punishments

30 *The Morning Post*, “The Day That is Fled” (November 26, 1879), 7.

31 *Le Sémaphore de Marseille*, “Correspondance Particuliere” (Jun 30, 1887), 1-2; *Journal de Salonique*, “Edgar Whitaker” (August 31, 1903), 2; Sidney Whitman, *Turkish Memories* (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1914), 171.

32 Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) /Fellowship Certificate - Edgar Whitaker; Royal Geographical Society, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography* 10 (London: Stanford, 1888), 44.

33 Roderic H. Davison “The Question of Fuad Paşa’s Political Testament”, *Belleleten* 23 (1959): 125.

34 *The Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, “Russian Intrigues in Armenia” (November 27, 1884), 5.

35 Milena B. Methodieva, *Between Empire and Nation: Muslim Reform in the Balkans* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021), 137.

for press offenses in the penal code had increased.<sup>36</sup> The Ottoman authorities claimed that all such regulations applied to the entire Ottoman press, despite the actual situation conflicting with the capitulations' provisions. The absence of a well-defined description of the press within the capitulations' documents provided grounds for respective parties to promote their own interests.<sup>37</sup> The Ottoman administration took a cautious yet unwavering approach, implementing alternative control mechanisms over publications based on economic factors through financial support.

Under Whitaker's ownership, *The Levant Herald* witnessed an increase in the imposition of bans, closures, and penalties in comparison to its previous proprietor, McCoan. The newspaper had a notorious reputation amongst the state authorities and a section of the Ottoman press. The Sublime Porte considered the newspaper's journalism to be detrimental in terms of its example to the Ottoman press in general.<sup>38</sup> Newspapers published under the capitulations were subject to inspection by the embassy of the proprietors' nationality. Since *The Levant Herald* was under the supervision of the British Embassy, it was seen as the embassy's press organ, a view shared not only by the Sublime Porte but also by the public.<sup>39</sup> Although the embassy rejected this view, Whitaker acknowledged that the newspaper had a pro-British stance during McCoan's ownership and criticized it. He asserted that upon his acquisition of the newspaper, it was always at the service of the sultan and published articles in favor of the Ottoman Empire as a matter of principle.<sup>40</sup>

Upon assuming ownership of *The Levant Herald*, Whitaker inherited an Ottoman press that had already undergone a noteworthy degree of diversification, with a variety of new forms of publication emerging. The Levantine press expanded its readership and diversified its content, with newspapers such as *La Turquie*, *Le Courrier d'Orient*, and *L'Orient Illustré* catering to French-speaking audiences. *The Levantine Times and Shipping Gazette*, an English language newspaper, posed a challenge to *The Levant Herald* due to their overlapping readerships.<sup>41</sup> Against this backdrop of a changing media landscape, Whitaker completed his purchase of *The Levant Herald*. Following the acquisition, several modifications were made to the newspaper, including a content reorganization, typological changes to the design, font, and print format, as well as a complete overhaul of the printing press. The publication sought to showcase an active and inclusive publishing strategy by dedicating additional space to readers' letters and local news. Emphasis was placed on maintaining a professional journalistic approach and delivering the most up-to-date news of interest. In this regard, the newspaper broadened its news network and built connections with the general Ottoman press, which was undergoing its own transformation. Consequently, the period witnessed a surge in references to the Ottoman press within the newspaper.

Over time, there was a growing interest in newspapers and a shift in public expectations

36 Baykal, *The Ottoman Press*, 35.

37 Bahadır Apaydın, *Kapitülasyonlar ve Osmanlı – Türk Adli ve İdari Modernleşmesi* (Ankara: Adalet Yayınevi, 2013), 200-201.

38 Başkanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA) (Presidency State Archives of the Republic of Turkey, Department of Ottoman Archives, İstanbul) (henceforth BOA), Y.PRK.AZJ, 26/65-1.

39 TNA. FO. 424/27A, No. 103, From Sir H. Bulwer to Earl Russel; TNA. FO. 424/27A, No. 36, From Mr. Layard to the Earl of Derby.

40 BOA, Y.PRK.AZJ, 11/32, Edgar Whitaker to Palace, March 29, 1886; BOA, Y.PRK.AZJ, 26/65-1.

41 Baykal, *The Ottoman Press*, 28-29.

with regard to news. Periodicals serving various political and cultural circles diversified their news coverage. *The Levant Herald* also underwent changes with regard to the nature of its news reporting, reflecting the rapidly expanding fields of interest observed among Ottoman readers. European readers expected up-to-date journalism that adhered to their standards. Notably, a wide range of topics, including politics, local issues, and rumors, were as attractive as commercial news. While the newspaper initially had a primarily economy-oriented content, it gradually expanded its coverage to include political news such as information on revolts, reforms, Ottoman debts, and other related issues.<sup>42</sup> To meet readers' evolving expectations, Whitaker aimed to publish a newspaper with a stronger focus on political content. His journalistic approach aimed to meet these expectations by providing a greater quantity of tabloid-style news, secret information, rumors, and political events. Moreover, he expanded the newspaper's coverage of domestic policy.

Whitaker's journalism went beyond traditional boundaries as he actively participated in the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878 as a correspondent. In the nineteenth century, sharing information about countries on public platforms was a notable activity and was considered valuable as espionage reports.<sup>43</sup> Remarkably, during the war, Whitaker personally toured the military headquarters of the belligerent forces and took detailed notes on the course of the conflict, including troop movements, strategic plans, and other key developments. As a war correspondent for both *The Times* and *The Exodus* during the war, he ventured to the frontlines and visited various battlefields, including the Danube and battles of Elena.<sup>44</sup> He skillfully captured the intensity and realities of war with his graphic pen, vividly depicting the scenes he witnessed on the battlefields. Recognizing the significance of his work, Russian newspapers went as far as publishing counterarguments from war correspondents of *The Times*, who offered their own observations on the latest developments at the front. As the Russian army advanced towards Edirne, Whitaker followed the refugees to Constantinople, fleeing ahead of the Russian army.<sup>45</sup> In his writings, he depicted the suffering endured by these displaced individuals, offering an account of their experiences. His publications in the *European Press*, referred to as *Turkophile* by the Russians, shed light on the perspectives of the Turks from a European standpoint.<sup>46</sup>

Whitaker's experiences as a war correspondent were not limited to the Russo-Ottoman War. He also reported on other conflicts and wars, providing unique insights into, and firsthand accounts of events as they unfolded. In the midst of the 1885 Serbo-Bulgarian Crisis, Whitaker returned to the battlefield as a war correspondent, this time accompanying the Bulgarian forces and providing updates to *The Times*.<sup>47</sup> He also closely observed the Pan-Slavic activities taking place in Bulgaria and wrote a treatise on the potential conflicts that could arise in the Balkans if its expansionist plans were to include the Eastern Rumelia

42 Baykal, *The Ottoman Press*, 28-29.

43 Feroze A. K. Yasamee, "Some Notes on British Espionage in The Ottoman Empire, 1878-1908", *The Balance of Truth: Essays in Honour of Professor Geoffrey Lewis*, ed. Çiğdem Balım-Harding - Colin Imber (Istanbul: 2000), 432-433.

44 *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express*, "Death of Mr. Edgar Whitaker", 1.

45 Onur İşçi, "Wartime Propaganda and the Legacies of Defeat: Russian and Ottoman Newspapers in the War of 1877-1878", *Russian History* 41 (2014), 185-186.

46 İşçi "Wartime Propaganda and the Legacies of Defeat", 188-189; *The Graphic*, "Mr. Edgar Whittaker", 535.

47 *The Times*, "Obituary", 4.



Province.<sup>48</sup> Whitaker's reporting for *The Times* extended beyond the conflicts he covered as a war correspondent. He served as the Constantinople correspondent for the newspaper until 1895, providing valuable insights into the political, economic, and cultural events taking place in the region. His reporting covered a wide range of topics, including the Ottoman Empire's internal affairs, its relationships with European powers, and the social and cultural changes taking place in the region.<sup>49</sup>

#### 4. A Meandering Path: From Closures to New Licenses

Whitaker's resourceful techniques as a journalist helped to raise the profile and reputation of the newspaper. He introduced new reporting techniques, such as firsthand accounts and detailed analysis, and expanded the newspaper's coverage to include a wider range of topics from politics, culture to social issues. He also sought to increase the newspaper's circulation by making it more accessible and appealing to a broader audience. These innovations served to enhance the status and influence of the newspaper both in the Ottoman Empire and abroad. Although reliable data on readership figures are scarce, reports indicate that sales of the newspaper exceeded 10,000 copies per day in 1882, a significant circulation rate for the Ottoman press. However, this surge in demand also resulted in a rise in complaints, censorship, and even suspension or closure of the publication.<sup>50</sup>

Whitaker's journalistic works often earned the ire of Ottoman authorities and resulted in penalties for the newspaper. His articles and analyses covered contentious topics such as Ottoman debts, non-Muslim policies, Ottoman statesmen, foreign states, and ambassadors, as well as significant events such as the Bulgarian uprising and Armenian question.<sup>51</sup> Publishing readers' letters was a risky endeavor and could lead to penalties for the newspaper. The letters section was also considered particularly precarious, as it often contained controversial opinions and criticism of Ottoman authorities. Despite these challenges, Whitaker and his team were committed to providing a platform for their readers to express their views and engage in informed debate. However, the risks involved ultimately led to Whitaker's exploration of alternative publishing options, culminating in the establishment of *The Constantinople Messenger*.

Early in his journalism career, Whitaker faced censorship when his use of sarcasm and ridicule to criticize the government's handling of a water shortage issue led to a two-month suspension of his newspaper. This incident occurred just two months after he had acquired the newspaper and marked an early legal challenge for Whitaker. However, the sentence was overturned within a fortnight, and the newspaper resumed publication on November 29, 1872.<sup>52</sup>

48 Edgar Whitaker, "The Coup d'Etat in Eastern Roumelia", *The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review* 18 (July-December 1885), 819-832.

49 Whitman, *Turkish Memories*, 171; Journal de Salonique, "Edgar Whitaker", 2.

50 Harlan Page Hubbard, *Hubbard's Newspaper and Bank Directory of the World* (New Haven: H.P. Hubbard, 1882), 2/1915-1916.

51 *La Presse*, "Tribunaux Étrangers" (January 15, 1867), 3; *The Manchester Courier*, "Freedom of the Press in Turkey" (January 20, 1867), 7; William James Stillman, *The Autobiography of a Journalist* (London: Grant Richards, 1901), 2/71.

52 *The Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, "Turkey" (November 11, 1872), 3; *The Levant Herald*, "Local" (November 5, 1872), 202; *The Pall Mall Gazette*, "Embezzlement at Liverpool" (December 19, 1872), 8.

In May 1877, Whitaker's coverage of the Minister of War, Redif Pasha, in *The Levant Herald*, resulted in the suspension of the newspaper. The article criticized Pasha's stance on the censorship of news related to the Russo-Ottoman War, leading to the suspension of the newspaper for a month in July.<sup>53</sup> Despite the setback, the suspension provided Whitaker with the opportunity to travel to the front lines and observe the war's progression firsthand. This experience would prove invaluable to his future reporting and cement his reputation as a pioneering figure in the Ottoman press.

During the armistice negotiations for the Russo-Ottoman War, the press was strictly forbidden from publishing articles that criticized Russia. Whitaker, however, defied this restriction by quoting a news item from the European press that criticized the Tsar. As a result, he received a warning on February 19, 1878.<sup>54</sup> In cases of misdemeanors, newspapers were generally given warnings instead of being suspended outright. If a newspaper received three reprimands, a one-month suspension would be enforced. For instance, in 1873, Whitaker was cautioned for using inappropriate language in an article about a cabinet reshuffle.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, in 1876, he received another warning when he published a correspondent letter reporting that Ottoman troops had failed against the rebels in Montenegro, contradicting the Sublime Porte's declaration of the army's victory.<sup>56</sup> Despite the risk involved, Whitaker remained committed to providing accurate and critical reporting to his readers and continued to push the boundaries of what was acceptable in the Ottoman press. This dedication to quality journalism would prove to be a hallmark of his career, as he continued to challenge the status quo and strive for editorial freedom throughout his time in Constantinople.

Roughly two weeks prior to the deposition of Sultan Abdulaziz (Jun 4, 1876), Whitaker's publication of an article detailing the embassy of Russian Ambassador Ignatyev resulted in *The Levant Herald's* suspension, thereby depriving the newspaper of the opportunity to report on the coup against the sultan in a highly charged environment. In the midst of the lively atmosphere that witnessed Sultan Murat V's ascension, the controversial death of the former Sultan Abdulaziz,<sup>57</sup> Whitaker felt compelled to report on the unfolding events. Consequently, for the first time, a new newspaper called *The Commercial Advertiser (Moniteur du Commerce)*, licensed by Whitaker's brother-in-law, F. Calvert, was published.<sup>58</sup> According to reports in the London press, newsboys who were present on the bustling streets whispered to passers-by that this publication was, in fact, *The Levant Herald*, pointing to the stacks of newspapers tucked under their arms. Copies of *The Commercial Advertiser* were even mailed to subscribers of *The Levant Herald*.<sup>59</sup> Whitaker had discovered a clever method to circumvent the penalties imposed on him. However, the new newspaper was subsequently warned that its publishing license did not cover English language publications. As a result, the

53 *The Evening Telegraph*, "The Levant Herald Again Suspended" (May 30, 1877), 3; *The Levant Herald*, "War News: Prohibition of Its Publication" (Jun 6, 1878), 176.

54 *The Standard*, "Turkey and Russia" (January 19, 1878), 5; *The Morning Post*, "Turkey and Armistice" (March 1, 1878), 6.

55 *Innsbrucker Nachrichten*, "Turkei" (April 21, 1873), 3.

56 *The Standard*, "Turkey" (January 14, 1876), 5.

57 Avi Rubin, *Ottoman Rule of Law and the Modern Political Trial: The Yıldız Case* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2018), 58-60.

58 Gérard Groc - İbrahim Çağlar, *La Presse Française de Turquie de 1795 à nos Jours: Histoire et Catalogue* (Istanbul: ISIS Press, 1985), 129, 137.

59 *The Standard*, "The Crisis in Turkey" (May 25, 1876), 5.



newspaper was asked to halt any reporting of content in languages other than French. Despite the newspaper's objections to the proficiency requirements outlined in the license, they were unable to achieve a satisfactory outcome.<sup>60</sup>

In his efforts to disseminate news in similar cases, Whitaker pursued novel licenses with a particular focus on obtaining permission to publish in English. During his search, he came across *The Constantinople Messenger*, a newspaper that first appeared in the Ottoman capital in 1856. The scarcity of surviving copies from its initial period, as well as its limited mention in the London Press, suggests that it was a sporadic publication with a restricted readership.<sup>61</sup> By incorporating *The Constantinople Messenger* into *The Levant Herald*, Whitaker took advantage of the opportunity to declare the newspaper's official establishment date as far back as 1856.

The Ottoman Empire's defeat in the war caused widespread public discontent and dismay, leading to efforts to dethrone the ruling sultan, Abdulhamid II, and restore his predecessor, Sultan Murad V, to the throne. Among these attempts, the Çırağan Incident of 1878 stands out, even though it was ultimately unsuccessful. While the Ottoman press, in general, paid no attention to the event due to censorship, Whitaker covered it fervently in *The Levant Herald* for several consecutive days. He brought the incident to the forefront of the newspaper, using language that reflected the government's rhetoric.<sup>62</sup> Subsequently, he printed an anonymous reader's letter that praised the event and contended that the ex-sultan was the rightful heir to the throne, and whose reign had been illegitimately usurped. The letter, signed on behalf of "the Ottoman Nation", sparked debate regarding its authenticity, with some sources speculating that Cleanthi Scalieri, the Master of the Prodoos Masonic Lodge, had penned it.<sup>63</sup>

The publication of the anonymous letter in *The Levant Herald* had far-reaching consequences that extended beyond the Ottoman Empire. The letter caused significant commotion within the Ottoman government, leading to swift action being taken against Whitaker. In response, Whitaker sought refuge in the British embassy, and the Porte confiscated newspaper copies and issued an arrest warrant against him. The incident resulted in a diplomatic crisis between the British Foreign Ministry and the Porte, while the former arguing that such actions without embassy permission under judicial capitulations were not permitted.<sup>64</sup>

Moreover, the impact of the letter was felt in the European press and among the British public, generating strong criticism against the Ottoman government. These events added another layer of difficulty to Britain's ongoing negotiations with the Porte, which was aiming to secure a temporary occupation and administration of the island of Cyprus in exchange for safeguarding the Ottoman Empire's Asiatic region against Russian aggression and supporting the Ottomans during the Congress of Berlin.<sup>65</sup>

60 *The Standard*, "The Crisis in Turkey", 6.

61 *The Chester Chronicle*, "Turkey" (November 1, 1856), 3; *The North British Daily Mail*, "Special Express" (October 27, 1856), 1.

62 Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1994), 389-399; *The Levant Herald*, "The Affair at Tcheragan" (May 29, 1878), 1; *The Levant Herald*, "Local & Provincial News" (May 29, 1878), 4-5; *The Levant Herald*, "The Affair at Tcheragan" (May 22, 1878), 2-4; *The Levant Herald*, "Mysterious Movement at Tcheragan: Conflict in the Palace and Death of Ali Suavi Efendi" (May 22, 1878), 2.

63 Burhan Çağlar, "Turmoil in the Capital: British Publication Alarmed the Hamidian Regime", *Belleten* 85/302 (2021), 135-139.

64 Çağlar, "Turmoil in the Capital", 135-139.

65 See, Gail Dallas Hook, *Protectorate Cyprus: British Imperial Power before WWI* (London: I. B. Tauris I. B., 2020).

Whitaker claimed that he published the letter in response to threats he had received, and he even informed the sultan's aide-de-camp about it beforehand. However, the latter denied having any prior knowledge of such.<sup>66</sup> As a consequence, Whitaker was temporarily compelled to leave the country, and *The Constantinople Messenger*, with George Fuller as its temporary editor, took over the publication duties of *The Levant Herald*. The British ambassador Layard's report to London highlighted that the public was already in a state of confusion due to the war and subsequent events. He stated that the letter in question further exacerbated the situation, resulting in significant criticism against Whitaker and accusations from the Porte that he had intentionally published it.<sup>67</sup>

*The Constantinople Messenger* identified itself as the oldest English newspaper in the Ottoman capital and announced to be the successor of *The Levant Herald*. In his effort to communicate the continuity of the publication, Whitaker utilized advertisements and news in the London Press to convey that it was the same newspaper was operating under a different name.<sup>68</sup> He made several petitions to the Palace and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, requesting the renewal of *The Levant Herald's* license. He argued that the name change had negatively affected the newspaper's reputation and sales, emphasizing his intention to serve the sultan through the newspaper.<sup>69</sup> Whitaker's application was intended to establish a dialogue with the government to enhance relationships and secure the reallocation of the canceled license to guarantee the newspaper's continued publication. He attempted to cultivate better relationships with the Ottoman government as the editor of *The Constantinople Messenger*. Nevertheless, his coverage of government officials, ministers, and the sultan caused reactions from foreign newspapers, accusing him of excessive adulation. The publication of articles that praised them without sufficient cause was deemed regrettable as this was not in keeping with the standards of its precursor, *The Levant Herald*. Some believed Whitaker should not compromise the newspaper's standards by including flattering articles.<sup>70</sup>

During the hiatus of *The Constantinople Messenger*, Whitaker attempted to find a solution by reviving *The Commercial Advertiser*. However, when he wrote an article in response to an argument in the Turkish newspaper *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, it resulted in the closure of the newspaper due to severe backlash. In the article, Whitaker used an analogy by conferring the title of veteran upon a cherished fighting rooster belonging to an eastern ruler, which was interpreted as an allusion to the Sultan Abdulaziz. The former sultan was rumored to have organized ram and cock fights and rewarded the victorious animal with a badge. This dynastic analogy carried unfavorable connotations, ultimately leading to the termination of *The Commercial Advertiser's* publication on January 23, 1880.<sup>71</sup>

66 Çağlar, "Turmoil in the Capital", 135-139

67 Çelik, *Ali Suavi*, 429.

68 *The Birmingham Daily Post*, "Turkey" (Jun 12, 1878), 8; *The Daily News*, "Turkey" (February 2, 1881), 7; *The Graphic*, "The Levant Herald" (July 20, 1878), 9; *The Hampshire Advertiser*, "Notes of the Current Events" (July 13, 1878), 6.

69 BOA, İ.DH, 785/63775, 19; From Internal Affairs to Foreign Affairs, September 15, 1879.

70 *The Glasgow Herald*, "The Eastern Question" (September 16, 1880), 3.

71 *The Dublin Daily Express*, "Turkey" (February 5, 1880), 2; *The Standard*, "A Turkish Difficulty" (February 1880), 5.

Subsequently multiple attempts at such, Whitaker eventually obtained permission to resume publishing *The Levant Herald*. His final request was approved during the official ceremony held in honor of the sultan's birthday.<sup>72</sup> In order to demonstrate his loyalty to the Porte, he presented a letter of guarantee written in French and pledged to uphold it in his publications.<sup>73</sup> Nonetheless, *The Levant Herald* was once again compelled to cease publication after only a brief period of time on March 27, 1882. The article that led to the closure of the newspaper was deemed offensive by the Palace. In a series of articles exploring French influence in the Near East, the newspaper examined the Ottoman dynasty and identified Osman Gazi as its founder.<sup>74</sup> The article asserted that the dynasty's bloodline had been intermixed for centuries through marriages with women of diverse backgrounds and concubines in the harem, resulting in a hybrid genealogy. It further suggested that due to cultural practices prevalent in the Ottoman lands, it was not possible to claim pure blood ties, even for the present sultan, Abdulhamid II (1876-1909). The Palace took offense at the article's assertion, leading to the newspaper's closure. Upon the release of this article, authorities immediately closed the newspaper and seized all copies of such.<sup>75</sup>

After the closure of *The Levant Herald* due to this controversial article, Whitaker resumed publishing under the name *The Constantinople Messenger*. However, the newspaper was terminated following a brief three-week publication. In an attempt to continue publishing, Whitaker came to an agreement with *Le Temps de Constantinople*, a French-language newspaper owned by E. Pappadopoulo. The newspaper copied the format of *The Constantinople Messenger* and even appealed to its former subscribers by replicating its advertisements. Nonetheless, this venture was also short-lived, as the publication was banned within a week.<sup>76</sup>

Upon his return to publishing *The Levant Herald*, Whitaker faced penalties soon after its release. In his coverage of the famine and drought in Anatolia, he reported on the severe suffering concentrated in the provinces with significant Armenian populations. Whitaker detailed the tragic deaths of individuals due to starvation along the roadsides, mothers abandoning their children, and an increase in banditry and looting. He called on the Ottoman government to take immediate action and stressed the Porte's responsibilities before outside intervention. *The Levant Herald*, along with two Armenian newspapers that cited Whitaker's article, were subsequently banned from publication on April 21, 1880.<sup>77</sup> In another article, Whitaker criticized the Sublime Porte's lack of accountability and the failure of ministers and pashas to fulfill their duties, which sparked a harsh reaction from the government.<sup>78</sup> Despite the suspension of *The Levant Herald*, Whitaker persisted in publishing and distributing the weekly edition to European readers while establishing a new newspaper, *Le Sémaphore de Constantinople*, for the local population. The name "Sémaphore" gained popularity due to its similarity in pronunciation to "same as before" in English.<sup>79</sup> However, both newspapers were

72 *The Western Times*, "Re-appearance of the Levant Herald" (July 25, 1881), 4.

73 BOA, Y.PRK.MK, 1/44, July 12, 1881.

74 *The Levant Herald*, "France in the East" (March 11, 1882), 3.

75 *The Times-Democrat*, "The Levant Herald" (August 20, 1882), 14; *Berliner Börsenzeitung*, "Konstantinopel" (May 18, 1882), 4.

76 *The Chicago Tribune*, "The Levant Herald" (July 4, 1882), 4.

77 *The Morning Post*, "Turkey" (May 1, 1880), 5.

78 *The Manchester Courier*, "The 'Bag and Baggage' Policy" (May 8, 1880), 3; *The Glasgow Evening Citizen*, "Lawlessness in Constantinople" (May 3, 1880), 2.

79 *The Examiner*, "News From Turkey" (May 22, 1880), 13; Groc - Çağlar, *La Presse Française de Turquie*, 75, 168; *The Daily News*, "Turkey" (July 24, 1880), 4.

eventually banned and seized due to licensing issues, leading to an investigation of Whitaker for his opposition to press laws. To avoid imprisonment, Whitaker fled first to Varna and then to London. The British Embassy intervened in the case, asserting that under the provisions of judicial capitulations, its citizens could not be subject to trial by Ottoman courts. This matter was subsequently brought to the attention of the British Parliament.<sup>80</sup>

Resuming his journalistic pursuits in the Ottoman lands, Whitaker found himself in conflict with the Yıldız Court, which had been established in 1881 to adjudicate certain statesmen charged with the murder of the penultimate sultan. In response, the Sublime Porte issued a decision prohibiting the dissemination of information pertaining to the case.<sup>81</sup> The press was instructed to avoid reporting on the investigation until official statements were released. However, Whitaker continued to provide summaries of the court proceedings for several days, defying the censorship. Consequently, *The Constantinople Messenger* was suspended from publication for a month, effective on June 21, 1881.<sup>82</sup>

As per his colleague's account, Whitaker did not consistently adhere to censorship regulations and would even intentionally invite censorship. When feeling fatigued, he reportedly wrote articles or published news that he knew would result in a ban and appeared to view the subsequent penalty as a welcome respite. As a result, Whitaker took a one-month leave from his duties to concentrate on playing the piano. Upon his return, he appeared to be reinvigorated and renewed his journalistic pursuits.<sup>83</sup>

An article in the London press criticizing the newspaper suspensions found the imposed fines to be unusual. The author noted that the content intended for publication had already been reviewed by the censorship board, and all the articles in the newspaper had subsequently been penalized for being approved. It was further asserted that the Sublime Porte had demeaned its own institutions by enforcing such measures.<sup>84</sup> The foreign press ridiculed the newspaper's repeated penalties and closures, pointing out the challenge in determining whether it was open more than it was closed or vice versa. The intense level of scrutiny and frequent punishment the newspaper endured was also noted as being unprecedented in worldwide journalism. The press emphasized the daunting, costly, and vexatious nature of reporting in the Ottoman Empire, particularly in Whitaker's position.<sup>85</sup> Nonetheless, he persevered and negotiated with the Palace to establish a new publication, *The Eastern Express*.

80 *The Northern Echo*, "Journalism in Turkey" (May 17, 1880), 3; *The New York Times*, "The Troubles in the East" (May 11, 1880), 1; *The Daily Telegraph*, "The Levant Herald" (May 6, 1880), 5; *The Standard*, "Imperial Parliament" (May 6, 1880), 2.

81 Rubin, *The Yıldız Case*, 58-60.

82 *The Constantinople Messenger*, "The State Trials" (Jun 20, 1881), 2; *The Constantinople Messenger*, "Official Notification" (Jun 22, 1881), 2.

83 Burgin, *Memoirs of a Clubman*, 46.

84 *The Standard*, "Turkey" (May 26, 1891), 5.

85 *The Times-Democrat*, "The Levant Herald" (August 20, 1882), 14; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, "Ten Pages" (March 27, 1882), 4.

Edgar Whitaker introduced *The Eastern Express* as a continuation of *The Levant Herald*. In his efforts to reassure readers, Whitaker emphasized that the publication's new name did not signify any alteration in editorial policies, and that he remained committed to serving the Ottoman sovereign and people.<sup>86</sup> Despite facing comparable legal fines and suspensions, *The Eastern Express* eventually met the same fate as its predecessors and ceased publication permanently. Whitaker subsequently launched a new newspaper, *The Levant Herald & Eastern Express*, combining both names, which he continued to publish until his death.<sup>87</sup>

## 5. The Passing of a Pioneer

On August 24, 1903, Edgar Whitaker passed away in Constantinople, the land he had called home for most of his life. He had a chronic disease that had been increasingly worsening since May of that year prior to his death. At his funeral, family, relatives, friends, and newspaper staff alike came to pay their final respects, along with foreign mission chiefs and officials who sent wreaths. The ceremony was held with a small but solemn service. Following the funeral, Edgar was laid to rest at the Haydarpaşa British Cemetery.<sup>88</sup> The land on which the cemetery was built was donated by Sultan Abdulmecid to Queen Victoria of the British Crown during the Crimean War, thus making it effectively British territory. Edgar, a son of the “Empire on which the Sun Never Sets”, found his ultimate resting place in the Ottoman capital on soil that was, by virtue of its history, British.

Out of respect for the solemnity of the occasion, the newspaper was not published on the day of the funeral. The following day, the newspaper carried the news of the funeral with these words:

“Impressive but simple like his manners and all his life was the funeral of the late Mr. Edgar Whitaker yesterday afternoon. The crowd of mourners, and the heap of telegrams and letters of condolence addressed to the widow, bore ample testimony to the regret universally felt at the death of a distinguished journalist.”<sup>89</sup>

Upon the death of Edgar Whitaker, ownership of *The Levant Herald* passed to Charles Plumer Clifton, a respected member of a notable Levantine family who shared a close relationship with the late journalist. The families had resided in close proximity to each other in Kandilli for many years.<sup>90</sup> Clifton eventually sold the newspaper to Dr. Lewis Francis Mizzi, a British national of Maltese descent, ten months after he took charge. Under Mizzi's ownership, the newspaper continued to be published for a decade, until 1914.<sup>91</sup>

86 *The Eastern Express*, January 2, 1886, 1; *The Eastern Express*, “The Eastern Express” (May 20, 1882), 2; *The Morning Post*, “Asylum for Israel” (May 31, 1882), 6; *The Daily News*, “Turkey” (February 2, 1881), 7.

87 Cooper-Richert, “The English-Language Press in Continental Europe”, 2/235-236.

88 *The Evening Mail*, “Obituary” (August 26, 1903), 4.

89 *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express*, “Death of Mr. Edgar Whitaker” (August 24, 1903), 1.

90 BOA, BEO, 2137/160221, August 11, 1903; Sir Andrew Ryan, *The Last of the Dragomans* (London: Geoffrey Bless: 1951), 49.

91 BOA, DH.MKT, 826/46, March 6, 1904; *The Times*, “Death of Dr. Lewis Mizzi: Long Legal Career in Constantinople” (August 14, 1935), 14; *The Guardian*, “Turkey” (October 8, 1914), 7.

## CONCLUSION

Edgar Whitaker's life was defined by his significant immersion into Ottoman society during the zenith of Britain's imperial power. Instead of choosing any of the various British colonies worldwide, Whitaker, intriguingly, gravitated towards India initially, before establishing his life within the Ottoman Empire. His service as the British Empire's consul further reinforced this orientation, allowing him to deeply ingrain himself within the Ottoman culture. His marriage into a Levantine family, alongside his thriving career and musical exploits, reinforced his integration within the Ottoman world and strengthened his relationships within the state and society.

During his tenure as the acting vice-consul in Gallipoli, Whitaker accumulated considerable knowledge about Ottoman affairs. This exposure to the delicate political, economic, and social interactions between the Ottoman and British governments coincided with a period of significant changes in Anglo-Ottoman relations and an expansion of the British consular organization within the Ottoman Empire.

Whitaker's acquisition of *The Levant Herald* from James McCoan marked a pivotal moment in his career, as the steward of this flagship outlet of the Ottoman press. He successfully navigated the rapidly evolving landscape of journalism, meeting and shaping public expectations. His administration of *The Levant Herald* had a profound influence on the evolution of English-language press in the Ottoman Empire during the late nineteenth century. He introduced progressive reporting methods and broadened the scope of the newspaper's coverage.

Whitaker's integration within the community he reported on provided him with an exceptional understanding of his readership's expectations, effectively guiding his editorial approach. Although his interaction with the Sublime Porte and its restrictive policies posed challenges, his British nationality afforded him certain privileges within the Ottoman context.

By leveraging intricate familial connections and marriage alliances, Whitaker was able to solidify his place within the Levantine society. His collaboration with the Calvert siblings in the Dardanelles and his marriage to Alice Victoria Abbott placed him within the elite circles of Levantines. This alignment presented him with ample opportunities and cemented his standing in the community. The couple were marked by their engagement in musical and artistic pursuits, as they became prominent figures among the elite Levantine circles. Whitaker's founding of the Orchestral Philharmonic Society, which later evolved into the Société Musicale de Constantinople, showcased his musical talent, and raised the musical standards in the Ottoman capital, contributing significantly to the cultural landscape of the period.

Whitaker's life was multifaceted, marked by his roles as the official representative of the British government in his consul post, as an author, editor, and adventurer. His life reflected a sharp wit, tenacity, adventurous spirit, and craftiness. Deeply rooted in European culture and arts, he demonstrated proficiency in literature and was fearless in expressing his critiques yet remained open to engaging in constructive dialogue with authorities. Despite facing

challenges and penalties due to his journalism, Whitaker's commitment to accurate and insightful reporting remained undeterred. His experiences within the Levantine community in Constantinople provided essential insights into the region's political and social nuances, which he skillfully navigated in his reporting and commentary. His life and career thus significantly illuminate the socio-political dynamics of the period, contributing a nuanced perspective of the era.

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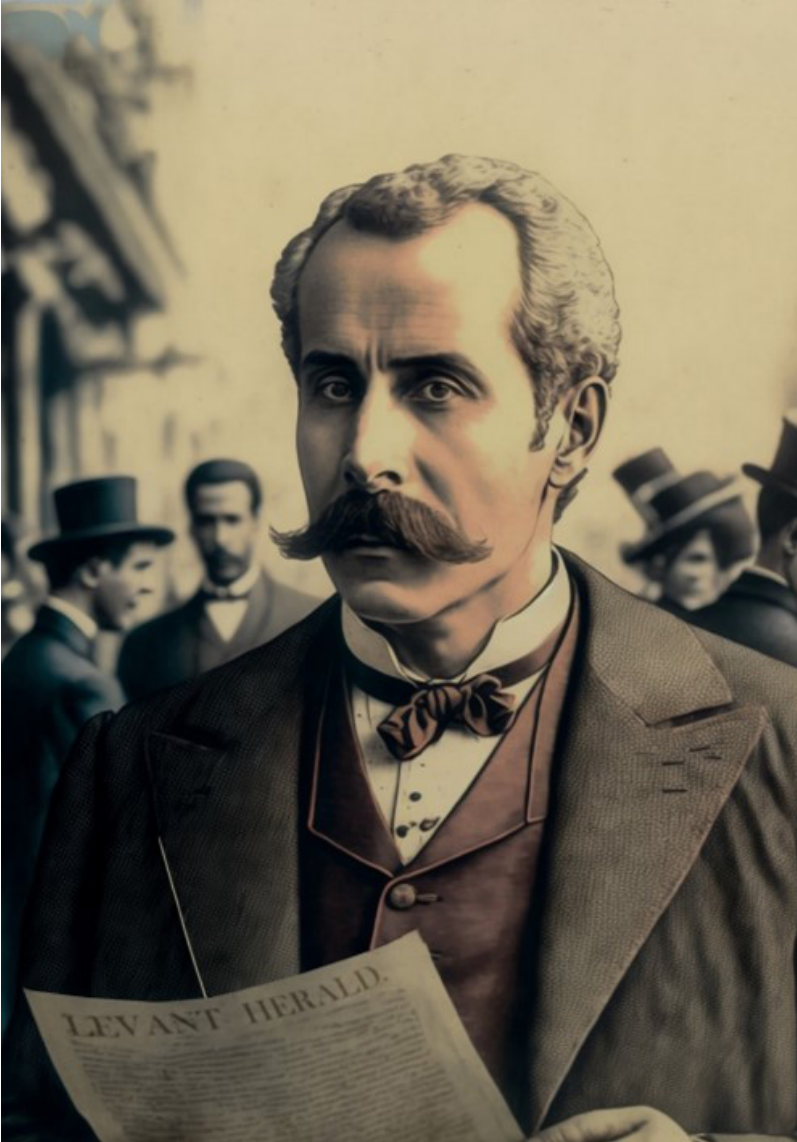


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APPENDIX

Figure 1: A contemporary artistic interpretation of Edgar Whitaker (1831-1903)  
(Generated with Midjourney AI)



**Figure 2: A contemporary artistic interpretation of James Carlile McCoan (1829-1904). (Generated with Midjourney AI)**



**Figure 3: Edgar Whitaker (1831-1903)**



**Figure 4: James Carlile McCoan (1829-1904)**



Figure 5: Edgar Whitaker's Certificate of Royal Geographical Society (Fellowship Certificates FC-WATT-WILL. Fellowship Certificates, 1836-1945.

DIED.....  
RESIGNED.....  
REMOVED *Dec. 1888.*

CERTIFICATE OF CANDIDATE FOR ELECTION.

---

Name *Edgar Whitaker Esq*

Description *Gentleman*

Residence *10, Grosvenor Place, St. James's Square*

being desirous of admission into the ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY, We, the undersigned, recommend him as likely to become a useful and valuable Fellow.

Dated this *4<sup>th</sup>* day of *August* 188*7*

*T. Holliday* F.R.G.S. { *From personal knowledge.*

*Mrs. J. L. M. M. M.*

*(Signed) Arnold Kemball* F.R.G.S.

*Samuel Haume* F.R.G.S.

Proposed *14<sup>th</sup> Nov.* 188*7*.

Elected *28<sup>th</sup> Nov.* 188*7*.

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