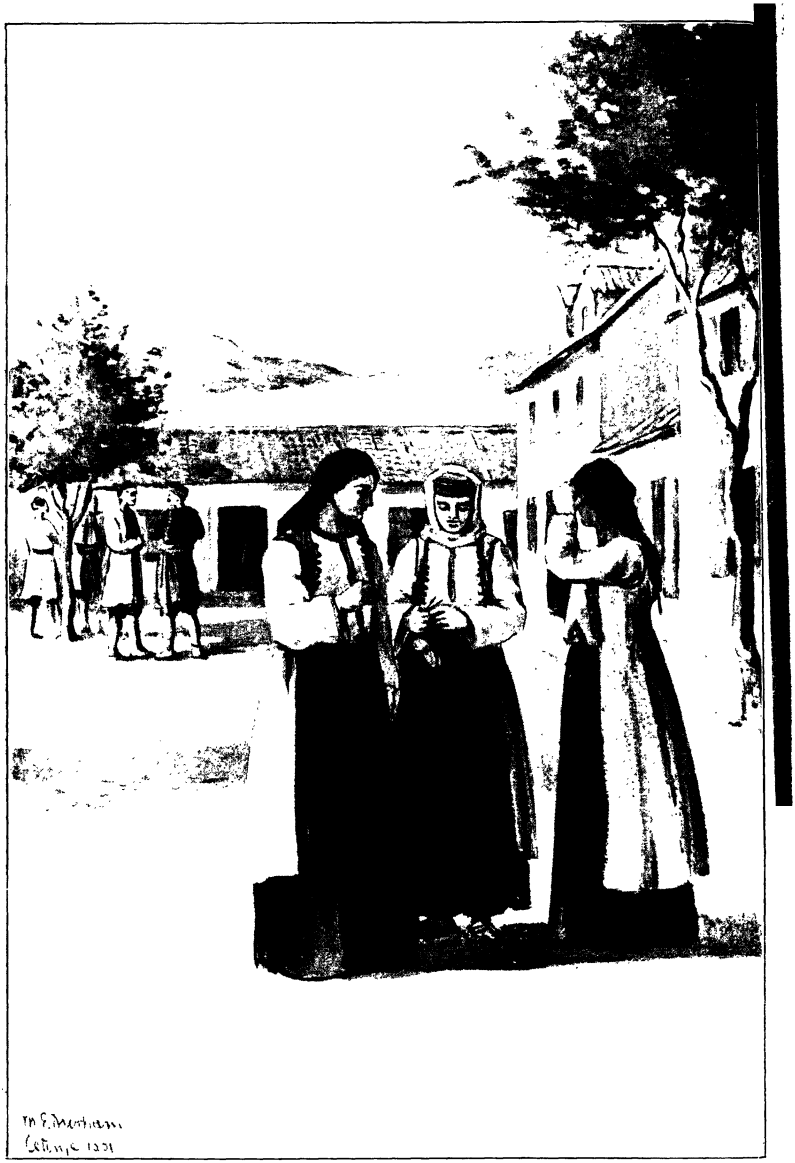
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MONTENEGRIN WOMEN, CETINJE.

THROUGH THE LANDS OF THE SERB

BY

MARY E. DURHAM

LONDON
EDWARD ARNOLD
1904

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DEDICATED

TO

MY MOTHER

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

In the spelling of proper names the system adopted in the *Times Atlas* has been followed as nearly as possible. Owing to the absence of Miss Durham in Macedonia, the following pages have not had the advantage of her revision in going through the press.

PART I

MONTENEGRO AND THE WAY THERE

"What land is this?"
"This is Illyria, lady."
Twelfth Night.

THROUGH THE LANDS OF THE SERB

CHAPTER I

CATTARO—NJEGUSHI—CETINJE

I DO not know where the East proper begins, nor does it greatly matter, but it is somewhere on the farther side of the Adriatic, the island-studded coast which the Venetians once held. At any rate, as soon as you leave Trieste you touch the bubbling edge of the ever-simmering Eastern Question, and the unpopularity of the ruling German element is very obvious. "I — do — not — speak — German," said a young officer laboriously, "I am Bocchese"; and as we approached the Bocche he emphasised the fact that he was a Slav returning to a Slav land. Party politics run high even on the steamboat.

We awoke one morning to find the second-class saloon turned into a Herzegovinian camp, piled with gay saddlebags and rugs upon which squatted, cross-legged, a couple of families in full native costume, and the air was thick with the highly scented tobacco which the whole party smoked incessantly. The friendly steward, a Dalmatian Italian, whispered

hastily, "This is a Herzegovinian family, signorin'. Do you like the Herzegovinese?" Rather taken aback, and not knowing what his politics were, I replied, stupidly enough, "I find their costume very interesting." This frivolous remark hurt the steward deeply. "Signorin'," he said very gravely, "these are some of the bravest men in the world. Each one of these that you see would fight till he died." Then in a mysterious undertone, "They cannot live without freedom . . . they are leaving their own land . . . it has been taken, as you know, by the Austrian. . . . They are going to Montenegro, to a free country. They have taken with them all their possessions, and they go to find freedom."

I looked at them with a curious sense of pity. Though they knew it not, they were the survivors of an old, old world, the old world which still lingers in out-of-the-way corners, and it was from the twentieth century quite as much as from the Teuton they were endeavouring to flee. All these parti-coloured saddle-bags and little bundles tied up in cotton handkerchiefs represented the worldly goods of three generations, who had left the land of their forebears and were upon a quest as mystical as any conceived by mediæval knight—they were seeking the shrine of Liberty. "Of old sat Freedom on the heights"; let us hope they found her there! I never saw them again.

On the other hand, in a boat with Austrian sympathies, the tale is very different. "I am a Viennese, Fräulein. Imagine what it is to me to have to travel in this dreary place! The people?—they are a rough, discontented set. Very ignorant. Very bad. No—

I should not advise you to go to Montenegro—a most mischievous race." "And what about Bosnia and the Herzegovina?" "Oh, you will be quite safe there; *we* govern that. They are a bad lot, though! But we don't stand any nonsense."

Thus either party seizes upon the stranger and tries to prevent his views being "prejudiced." He seldom has need to complain that he has heard one side only; but there is a Catholic side, an Orthodox side, a Mohammedan side, there are German, Slav, Italian, Turkish, and Albanian sides; and when he has heard them all he feels far less capable of forming an opinion on the Eastern Question than he did before.

Dalmatia has its charms, but tourists swarm there, and the picturesque corners are being rapidly pulled down to provide suitable accommodation for them. Let us pass on, then, nor pause till we have wound our way through that wonderful maze of fiords, the Bocche, and landed on the quay at Cattaro. Cattaro is a tiny, greatly coveted, much-fought-for town. The natural port for Montenegro but the property of Austria, it swelters, breathless, on a strip of shore, with the waters in front of it, and the great wall of the Black Mountain rising sheer up behind. Its "heart's in the Highlands," but the enemy holds it as a garrison town; the Austrian army pervades the neighbourhood, and a big fort, lurking opposite, commands the one road from mountain to coast. Cattaro, after all, is only a half-way house to Montenegro, and this is why Austria lavishes so many troops upon it.

Behind the town starts the rough zigzag track, the celebrated "ladder of Cattaro," which until 1879

was the only path into Montenegro, and is the one the peasants still use. The making of the road was for a long while dreaded by the Montenegrins, who argued that a road that will serve for a cart will also serve for artillery. A tangible, visible gun was their idea of the means by which changes are wrought; but the road that can let in artillery can let in something more subtle, irresistible, and change-working. The road was made, and there is now no barrier to prevent the twentieth century creeping up silently and sweeping over this old-world land almost before its force is recognised. Whether the hardy mountain race which has successfully withstood the gory onslaught of the Turk for five hundred years, will come out unscathed from a bloodless encounter with Western so-called civilisation Time alone can tell.

The road from Cattaro to Cetinje has been so often written of that it is idle to describe it once again, nor can any words do it justice. After some three hours' climbing, we pass the last Austrian black-and-yellow post, and the driver, if he be a son of the mountain, points to the ground and says, "Crnagora!" (Tsernagora). Crnagora, gaunt, grey, drear, a chaos of limestone crags piled one on the other in inextricable confusion, the bare wind-swept bones of a dead world. The first view of the land comes as a shock. The horror of desolation, the endless series of bare mountain tops, the arid wilderness of bare rock majestic in its rugged loneliness, tell with one blow of the sufferings of centuries. The next instant fills one with respect and admiration for the people who have preferred liberty in this wilderness to slavery in fat lands.

Wherever possible, little patches of ground are

cultivated, carefully banked up with stones to save the precious soil from being washed away, and up on the mountain sides scrubby oaks dwarfed and twisted by the wind find a foothold among the crags. Most of the men carry revolvers, and the eye soon becomes so much accustomed to weapons that on a return to unarmed lands everyone appears, for a few days, to be rather undressed. The road winds, the red roofs of Njegushi come in sight, and we make our first halt in a Montenegrin town, and rest our weary horses.

We enter the little inn, and our coachman claims his revolver, which is hanging with several others behind the bar, for none are allowed to enter Austria; they are deposited in some house near the frontier and picked up on the way back. George Stanisich, the big landlord, hurries up his womenkind to make ready a meal, looks after the drinks, and converses cheerfully on the topics of the day—preferably on the war, if there happens to be one. "Junastvo" (that is, heroism—"deeds of derring-do") is a subject that occupies a large space in the Montenegrin mind, and no wonder, and every man's ambition is to be considered a "dobar junak" (valiant warrior) and worthy of his forefathers.

Njegushi cannot fail to make a most vivid impression on the mind, for it is the entrance to a world that is new and strange. The little stone-paved room of the inn, hung with portraits of the Prince and the Tsar and Tsaritsa of Russia; the row of loaded revolvers in the bar; the blind minstrel who squats by the door and sings his long monotonous chant while he scrapes upon his one-stringed gusle; and the tall, dignified men in their picturesque garb, all belong to an unknown existence, and the world we have

always known is left far below at the foot of the mountain. In Njegushi one feels that one has come a long way from England. It is, in fact, easy to travel much farther without being so far off. Yet the Montenegrin love of liberty and fair play and the Montenegrin sense of honour have made me feel more at home in this far corner of Europe than in any other foreign land.

Njegushi is the Prince's birthplace. His ancestors were some of a number of Herzegovinians who, intolerant of the Turk, emigrated in the fifteenth century. The village they left was called Njegushi, and they gave the same name to their new home. In connection with this I give here a curious tale which I have met with more than once. I repeat it as told; my informants, Servians, believed it firmly, but I can find no confirmation of it.

When these Herzegovinese migrated to Montenegro, a large body of them went yet farther afield and settled in the mountains of Abyssinia, among them a branch of the family of Petrovich of Njegushi, from which is directly descended Menelik, who preserves the title of Negus and is a distant cousin of Prince Nikola of Montenegro, and to this large admixture of Slav blood the Abyssinians owe their fine stature and their high standard of civilisation, as compared with the neighbouring African tribes.

The house of the Prince stands on the left of the road as we leave the town. The road ascends once more; a steep pull up through a bleakness of grey crags; we reach the top of the pass (3350 feet), and turn a corner. "Cetinje!" (Tsetinye), says the driver briefly, and there, in the mountain-locked plain far below, lies the little red-roofed town, a village

city, a kindergarten capital, one of the quaintest sights in Europe, so tiny, so entirely wanting in the usual stock properties of a big town and yet so consciously a capital. Two wide streets which run parallel and are joined by various cross streets make up the greater part of it, and it has some 3000 inhabitants. As we enter the town the first building of importance stands up on the left hand, brand-new, a white stone building with a black roof. To any other capital it would not be remarkable either for size or beauty; here it looms large and portentous. It is the biggest building in the town, and it is the Palace of the Austro-Hungarian Legation. Not to be outdone, Russia has just erected an equally magnificent building at the other end of the town, which now lies between representatives of the two rival powers. "Which things are an allegory." Twenty years ago Cetinje was a collection of thatched hovels. To-day, modest as they are, the houses are all solidly built and roofed with tiles. Few more than one storey high, many consisting only of a ground floor, all of them devoid of any attempt at architecture; not a moulding, a cornice, or a porch breaks the general baldness: they are more like a row of toy houses all out of the same box than anything else. The road is very wide, and very white; a row of little clipped trees border it on each side, so clipped that they afford at present about as much shade as telegraph posts, and they all appear to have come out of the same box too. It is all very clean, very neat; not a whiff offends the tenderest nostril, not a cabbage stalk lies in the gutter. It is not merely a toy, but a brand-new one that has not yet been played with.

Cetinje is poor, but dignified and self-respecting. A French or Italian village of the same size clatters, shouts, and screams. Cetinje is never in a hurry, and seldom excited. It contains few important buildings. The only ones of any historic interest are the monastery, the little tower on the hill above it where were formerly stuck the heads of slain Turks, and the old Palace called the Biljardo from the fact that it contained Montenegro's first billiard-table. It now affords quarters for various officials and the Court of Justice. There are no lawyers in Montenegro, and this is said to simplify matters greatly. The Prince is the final Court of Appeal, and reads and considers the petition of any of his subjects that are in difficulties. Such faith have folk in his judgment that Mohammedan subjects of the Sultan have been known to tramp to Crnagora in order to have a quarrel settled by the Gospodar. That he possesses a keen insight into these semi-civilised people and a remarkable power of handling them is evident from the order that is maintained throughout his lands even among the large Mohammedan Albanian population, and it would undoubtedly have been much better for the Balkan peoples had he had larger scope for his administrative powers.

Cetinje's other attractions are the park, the theatre, and the market, where the stranger will have plenty of opportunity of wrestling with the language.

The language is one of the amusements of Montenegro. It is not an easy one. I hunted it about London for months, and it landed me in strange places. The schools and systems that teach all the languages of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America know it not. In the

course of my chase I caught a Roumanian, a Hungarian, and an Albanian, but I got no nearer to it. I pursued it to a Balkan Consulate, which proved to consist entirely of Englishmen who knew no word of the tongue, but kindly communicated with a Ministry which consisted, so they said, entirely of very charming men, with whom I should certainly be pleased. The Ministry was puzzled, but wished to give me every encouragement. It had never before had such a run upon its language. It suggested that the most suitable person to instruct me would be an ex-Minister who had come over to attend the funeral of Queen Victoria. The ex-Minister was very polite, but wrote that he was on the point of returning to his native land. He therefore proposed that a certain gallant and dashing officer, attaché to the Legation, should be instructed to call and converse with me once a week. "No remuneration, of course," he added, "must be offered to the gallant captain." "But suppose," I said feebly, "the captain doesn't care about the job; it seems a little awkward, doesn't it?" "Oh no," said the Consul, exultant; "when he hears it is by the orders of X., he won't dare refuse." As I am not a character in one of Mr. Anthony Hope's novels, but merely live in a London suburb, I thanked everybody and retired upon a small grammar, dazzled by the fierce light that my inquiries had shed upon the workings of this Balkan State, and wondering if all the others were equally ready to loan out Ministers and attachés to unknown foreigners.

There is a childish simplicity about the conversation of the up-country peasant folk that is quite charming. They are as pleased with a stranger

who will talk to them as is a child with a kitten that will run after a string, and, like children, they have no scruples about asking what in a more "grown-up" state of society would be considered indiscreet questions, including even the state of one's inside. The women begin the conversation and retail the details to their lords and masters, who, burning with curiosity, stand aloof with great dignity for a little while, and end by crowding out the women altogether. Neither men nor women have the vaguest idea whence I come nor to what manner of life I am accustomed. When they learn that I have come in a train and a steamboat, their amazement is unbounded. That I come from a far countrie that is full of gold is obvious. "And thou hast come so far to see us? Bravo!" Much patting on the back, and sometimes an affectionate squeeze from an enthusiastic lady, who at once informs the men that I am very thin and very hard. "Bravo! thou art brave. Art married?" "No." Great excitement and much whispering. "Wait, wait," says a woman, and she shouts "Milosh! Milosh!" at the top of her voice. Milosh edges his way through the crowd. He is a tall, sun-tanned thing of about eighteen years, with the eyes of a startled stag. His mother stands on tiptoe and whispers in his ear that this is a chance not to be lightly thrown away. A broad smile spreads over Milosh's face. He looks coy, and twiddles his fingers. "Ask her! ask her!" say the ladies encouragingly. "Ask her!" say the men. Milosh plucks up courage, thumps his chest and blurts out, "Wilt thou have me?" "No, thank you," I say, laughing; and Milosh retires amid the jeers of his friends, but



CEMETERY NEAR CETINJE.

really much relieved. "Milosh, thou art not beautiful enough," say the men ; and they suggest one Gavro as being more likely to please. Gavro takes Milosh's place with great alacrity, and the same ceremony is repeated. The crowd enjoys itself vastly, and tries to fit me out with a really handsome specimen. I glance round, and my eye is momentarily caught by a very goodly youth. "No! no! he's mine, he's mine!" cries a woman, who seizes him by the arm, and he is hastily withdrawn from competition amid shouts of laughter. "I have no money," says one youth frankly, "but thou hast perhaps enough." "And he is good and beautiful," say his friends. For they are all cheerfully aware that their faces are their only fortunes. There is a barbaric simplicity and a lack of any attempt at romance about the proposed arrangements which is exquisitely funny, for they are far too honest to pretend that I possess any attractions beyond my supposed wealth. I have often wondered what the crowd would do if I accepted someone temporarily, but have never dared try. Five offers in twenty minutes is about my highest record.

But all these are country amusements. Cetinje is far too civilised a city to indulge in them, and to "see Montenegro" we must wander much farther afield.

CHAPTER II

Podgoritza and Rijeka

Travelling in Montenegro—in fine weather, be it said—is delightful from start to finish. And to Shan, my Albanian driver, whose care, fidelity, and good nature have added greatly to the success of many of my tours, I owe a passing tribute. He is short and dark, a somewhat mixed specimen of his race, and hails from near the borders, where folk are apt to be so mixed that it is hard to tell which is the true type. Careful of his three little horses, and always ready in an emergency, he yet preserves the gay, inconsequent nature of a very young child. His veneer of civilisation causes him to assume for short intervals an appearance of great stiffness and dignity, but it melts suddenly, and his natural spirits bubble through. Thus, at an inn door before foreigners, he is stately, but in the kitchen to which I have been invited to accompany him, he waves his arms wildly and performs a war dance, chaffs the ladies, and makes himself highly agreeable. His tastes are simple and easily satisfied. I have stood him several treats of his own selection, and they usually cost about fourpence. One was an immense liver which was toasted for him in hot wood ashes, and which he consumed along with a

whole loaf of bread — whereupon he expressed himself as feeling much better. His generosity is unfailing; at the top of a pass, in a heavy storm of sleet, he offered me the greatcoat he was wearing, and he is always ready to help a distressed wayfarer. One awful evening, when the rain was falling in torrents and it was rapidly growing dark, we were hailed, between Rijeka and Cetinje, by a man in distress. A sheep, his only one, which he was driving up to Cetinje, had fallen, wet and exhausted, by the roadside, and he knew not what to do. Shan was greatly concerned. He explained to me that the man was very poor, the sheep very tired and also that the sheep was a very little one, then he took it in his arms like a baby and arranged it on the box, where it cuddled up against him for warmth, and, through wind, rain, and the blackest night I have ever been out in, he drove three horses abreast, held up an umbrella, nursed the sheep, and sang songs till we arrived safely at our journey's end.

Acting on the principle of "Do as you would be done by," when his pouch is full, he distributes tobacco lavishly along the route with a fine "Damn-the-expense" air which one cannot but admire, and when not a shred remains, he begs it, quite shamelessly, of everyone he meets. When I first made his acquaintance, his appearance puzzled me. Learning that he was an Albanian, I remarked upon the fact to him; he immediately crossed himself hastily. "Yes, an Albanian," he admitted, "but Cattolici, Cattolici," and he added as an extra attraction, "and I came to Montenegro when I was very little." He persists in regarding me as a co-religionist; for the

fact that I am neither Orthodox nor Mohammedan is to him quite sufficient proof. His Catholicism is quite original. Unlike most Catholic Albanians, who display a horror of the Orthodox Church, he is most pressing in his attentions to the Orthodox priests, and will never, if he can help it, be left out of a circle of conversation that includes one. One Easter Day I saw him persist in kissing, in Orthodox fashion, the village priest, who having more than enough osculation to go through with his own flock, did his best to dodge him, but was loudly smacked upon the back of the neck. His views upon doctrinal points are mixed, but his simple creed has taught him faith, hope, and charity "which is the greatest of the three."

Withal he is a bit of a buck, and likes to cut a dash in what he considers large towns. He strolls in when I am having dinner and converses with the company at large; he makes me a flowery speech—he is my servant; it is mine to command and his to obey; whatever I order he will carry out with pleasure. When he learns that I shall not require him till to-morrow, he beams all over his sun-tanned face. Then he fidgets and makes pointless remarks. I do not help him. He strolls with elaborate carelessness behind my chair and whispers hurriedly that towns are very expensive, and if I would only advance him a florin or two of his pay— I supply the needful, and later I meet him, a happy man, playing the duke among a crowd of friends, to all of whom he introduces me with great style and elegance. But his dissipations are very mild, though from the swagger he puts on you would

think they were bold and bad. I have never seen him the worse for drink, and he is punctuality itself and very honest. Child of the race with about the worst reputation in Europe though he is, I would trust him under most circumstances.

Leaving Cetinje by its only road, we soon reach the top of the pass, and a sudden turn reveals the land beyond. We have come across Europe to the edge of Christianity, and stand on the rocky fortress with the enemy in sight. The white road serpentines down the mountain side, and far below lies the green valley and its tiny village, Dobrsko Selo; on all sides rise the crags wild and majestic; away in the distance gleams the great silver lake of Skodra. Beyond it the blue Albanian mountains, their peaks glittering with snow even in June, show fainter and fainter, and the land of mystery and the unspeakable Turk fades into the sky—a scene so magnificent and so impressive that it is worth all the journey from England just to have looked at it.

We cast loose our third horse, and rattle all the way down to Rijeka, skimming along the mountain side and swinging round the zigzags on a road that it takes barely two hours to descend and quite three to climb up again; for Cetinje lies 1900 feet above the sea, and Rijeka not much more than 200 feet.

Rijeka means a stream, and the town so called is a cluster of most picturesque, half-wooden houses, facing green trees and a ripple of running water and backed by the mountain side—as pretty a place as one need wish to see. The stream's full name is Rijeka Crnoievicheva, the River of Crnoievich, but

for everyday use town and river are simply Rijeka. But its full name must not be forgotten, for it keeps alive the fame of Ivan Beg Crnoievich, who ruled in the latter half of the fifteenth century, in the days when Montenegro's worst troubles were beginning. Unable to hold the plains of the Zeta against the Turk, Ivan gathered his men together, burnt his old capital, Zabljak, near the head of the lake, retired into the mountains, and founded Cetinje in 1484. He built a castle above Rijeka as a defence to his new frontier, and swore to hold the Black Mountain against all comers. But he meant his people to grow as a nation worthily, and not to degenerate into a horde of barbarians. He founded the monastery at Cetinje, appointed a bishop and built churches. And—for he was quite abreast of his times—he sent to Venice for type and started a printing press at Rijeka. In spite of the difficulties and dangers that beset the Montenegrins, they printed their first book little more than twenty years later than Caxton printed his at Westminster. Ivan is not dead, but sleeps on the hill above Rijeka, and he will one day awake and lead his people to victory. The printing press was burned by the Turks, and the books which issued from it—fine specimens of the printer's art—are rare.

The stream Rijeka is a very short one. It rises in some curious caverns not much farther up the valley, and flows into the lake of Skodra. The town is built of cranky little houses, half Turkish in style, with open wooden galleries painted green—gimcrack affairs, that look as though they might come down with a run any minute, when filled as

they frequently are with a party of heavy men. It has an old-world look, but, as most of the town was burnt by the Turks in 1862, appearances are deceptive. A perfect Bond Street of shops faces the river. Here you can buy at a cheap rate all the necessaries of Montenegrin existence. In the baker's shop the large round flat loaves of bread, very like those dug up at Pompeii, are neatly covered with a white cloth to keep off the flies.

Plenty of tobacco is grown in the neighbourhood. In the autumn the cottages are festooned with the big leaves drying in the sun, and you may see Albanians, sitting on their doorsteps, shredding up the fragrant weed with a sharp knife into long, very fine strips till it looks like a bunch of hair, shearing through a large pile swiftly, with machine-like regularity and precision. Tobacco is a cheap luxury, and I am told Montenegrin tobacco is good. Almost every man in Montenegro smokes from morning till night, generally rolling up the next cigarette before the last is finished.

The town possesses a burgomaster, a post-office, a steamboat office, a Palace, and an inn, which provides a good dinner on market days. It is a clean, prosperous, friendly, and very simple-minded place — I did not realise how simple-minded till I spent an afternoon sitting on the wall by the river, drawing the baker's shop, with some twenty Montenegrins sitting round in a crimson and blue semicircle. It was in the days when I knew nothing of the language, and the Boer War was as yet unfinished. I drew, and my friend talked. A youth in Western garb acted as interpreter. He ascertained whence we had come, and then

remarked airily, "Now, I come from Hungary, and I am walking to the Transvaal. This man," pointing out a fine young Montenegrin, "is coming with me!" Stumbling, voluble and excited, in very broken German, he unfolded their crazy plan. They were both brave men and exceedingly rich. "I have two thousand florins, and a hundred more or less makes no difference to him," kept cropping up like the burden of a song. Their families had wept and prayed, but had failed to turn them from their purpose. They were going to walk to the Transvaal. "But you can't," we said. He was hurt. "Of course not all the way," he knew that. They had meant to walk across Albania to Salonika, but the Consul at Skodra had put a stop to this dangerous scheme. Now they were going by sea from Cattaro to Alexandria, and thence, also by sea, to Lorenzo Marques. After this, they should "walk to the Transvaal." "Why don't you walk from Alexandria?" we asked. He answered quite seriously that they had thought of this, but they had been told there was a tribe of Arabs in the centre of Africa even more ferocious than the Albanians, so, though they were of course very brave men, they thought on the whole they preferred the boat. When they arrived, they meant to fight on whichever side appeared likely to win, and then they were going to pick up gold. We thought it our duty to try and dissuade them from their wild-goose chase, but our efforts were treated with scorn. "What can you do? You speak very little German, and your friend nothing but Servian." "No, he doesn't," said the Hungarian indignantly. "He speaks Albanian very well, and I—I know many languages. I speak Servian and Hungarian." The



BAKER'S SHOP, RIJEKA.—ALBANIAN AND TWO MONTENEGRINS.

idea that a place existed where no one spoke these well-known tongues was to him most ridiculous, and the Montenegrin, to whom it was imparted, smiled incredulously. We urged the price of living and the cost of machinery required in gold-mining. The first he did not believe; the second he thought very silly. The gold was there, and he was not such a fool as to require a machine with which to pick it up.

The Montenegrin, who had been bursting with a question for the last quarter of an hour, insisted on its being put. "Could he buy a good revolver in Johannesburg?" He waited anxiously for a reply. "You see," explained the Hungarian, "he must leave his in Montenegro." "But why? It looks a very good one." The Montenegrin patted his weapon lovingly; he only wished he could take it, it would be most useful, but . . . in order to reach the boat at Cattaro he must cross Austrian territory, and you are not allowed to carry firearms in Austria! He shook his head dolefully when we said that permission could surely be obtained. "No, this was quite impossible; under no circumstances could it be managed. You don't know what the Austrians are!" said the Hungarian mysteriously. The unknown land, the unknown tongues, the British, the Boers, the rumble-tumble ocean and the perils of the deep were all as nothing beside the difficulty of crossing the one narrow strip of Austrian land. We told him revolvers were plentiful in Johannesburg, and the prospect of finding home comforts cheered him greatly. We parted the best of friends.

From Rijeka the road rises rapidly again, and

strikes over the hills, winding through wild and very sparsely inhabited country. The mountain range ends abruptly, and we see the broad plains stretching away below us, with the white town of Podgoritza in the midst of it. The plain is very obviously the bed of the now shrunken lake of Skodra, and the water-worn pebbles are covered with but a thin layer of soil. But both maize and tobacco seem to do well upon it, and every year more land is taken into cultivation. The rough land is covered with wiry turf and low bushes, and swarms with tortoises which graze deliberately by the roadside. The river Moracha has cut itself a deep chasm in the loose soil between us and the town, and tears along in blue-green swirls and eddies. We have to overshoot the town to find the bridge, and we clatter into Podgoritza six or seven hours after leaving Cetinje, according to the weather and the state of the road.

Podgoritza is the biggest town in Montenegro, and has between five and six thousand inhabitants. It is well situated for a trading centre, for it is midway between Cetinje and Nikshitje, and is joined by a good road to Plavnitza, on the lake of Scutari, so is in regular steamboat communication with Skodra and with Antivari *viâ* Virbazar. Its position has always given it some importance. As a Turkish garrison town it was a convenient centre from which to invade Montenegro; to the Montenegrin it was part of his birthright—part of the ancient kingdom of Servia—and as such to be wrested from the enemy. It was the brutal massacre of twenty Montenegrins in and near the town in time of peace (October 1874) that decided the Montenegrins to support the Herzegovinian in-

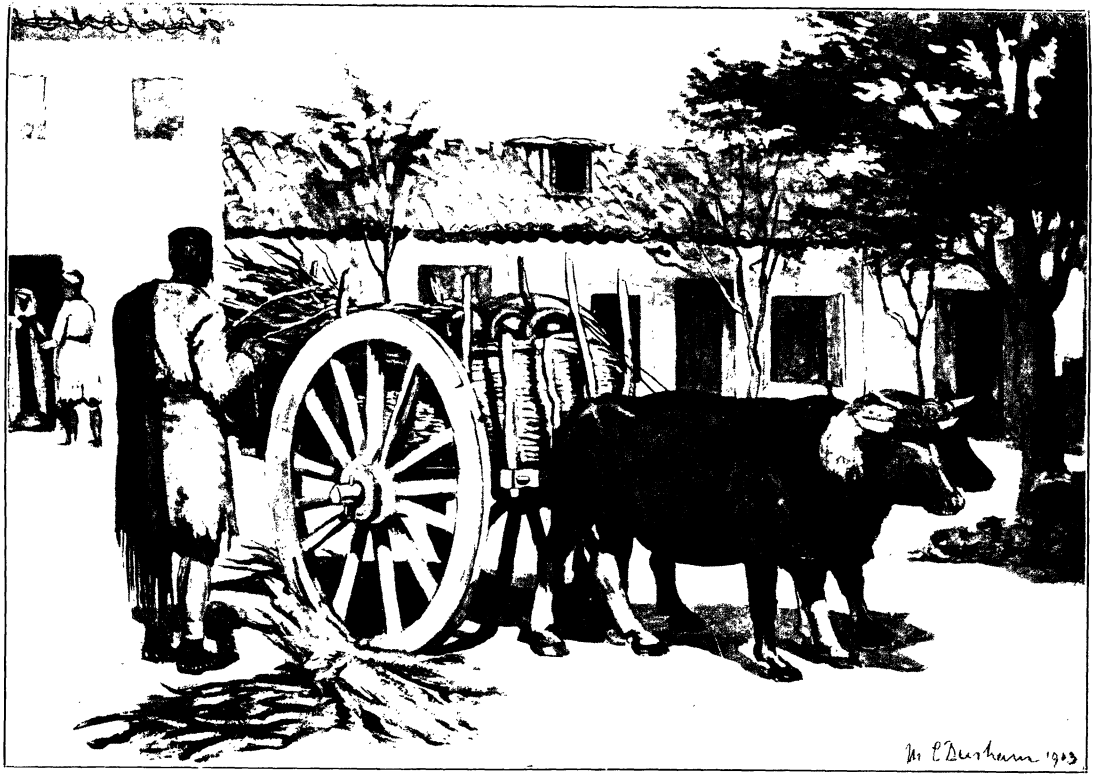
surrection and declare war. Podgoritza was besieged and taken in October 1876. The walls of the old town were blown to pieces with guns taken from the Turks at Medun, and an entirely new town has since sprung up on the opposite side of the stream Ribnitza. Podgoritza (= "At the Foot of the Mountain"), if you have come straight from the West, is as amusing a place as you need wish to visit. It has not so many show places as Cetinje even, and its charm is quite undefinable. It consists in its varied human crowd, its young barbarians all at play, its ideas that date from the world's well-springs, subtly intermingled with Manchester cottons, lemonade in glass-ball-stoppered bottles, and other blessings of an enlightened present. The currents from the East and the West meet here, the old world and the new; and those to whom the spectacle is of interest, may sit upon the bridge and watch the old order changing.

The Montenegrin town of Podgoritza is clean and bright. The long wide main street of white stone, red-roofed shops with their gay wares, and the large open market square where the weekly bazaar is held, are full of life. Both street and market-place are planted with little trees, acacias and white mulberries; and the bright green foliage, the white road, the red roofs, the green shutters, the variety of costume, make an attractive scene in the blaze of the Southern sun. Across the gold-brown plain rise the blue mountains where lies that invisible line the frontier. The slim minarets of the old Turkish town shoot up and shimmer white on sky and mountain; the river Ribnitza flows between the old town and the new, and over the bridge passes

an endless stream of strange folk, the villagers of the plain and the half-wild natives of the Albanian mountains passing from the world of the Middle Ages to a place which feels, however faintly, the forces of the twentieth century. Bullock carts, with two huge wheels and basket-work tops, trail slowly past, groaning and screeching on their ungreased axles. Look well at the carts, for our own forefathers used them in the eleventh century, and they appear in the Harleian MSS.

Everything moves slowly. All day long folk draw water from the stone-topped well on the open space between the old town and the new—draw it slowly and laboriously, for there is no windlass or other labour-saving contrivance, and the water is pulled up in a canvas bag tied to a string. Three or four bagfuls go to one bucket.

In spite of the fact that Podgoritza is the centre of the Anglo-Montenegrin Trading Company and deals in Manchester cottons, the day seems distant when it will lose its other simple habits. I was walking one day down the "High Street" with a friend, when a young Albanian went to call on his tailor. He came out presently with a fine new pair of the tight white trousers that his clan affects. He exhibited them in the middle of the road to two or three friends, and they were all evidently much struck with the make and embroidery. If the garments were so charming "off," what would they be "on"! The whole party hurried across to the shop door of the happy purchaser, and such an alarming unbuckling and untying began to take place that we discreetly went for a little walk. On our return the



BULLOCK CART, PODGORITZA.

transfer had been effected. Two friends were grasping the garment by the front and back, and the wearer was being energetically jigged and shaken into it. This was a tough job, for it was skin-tight. The legs were then hooked-and-eyed up the back, and presently the youth was strutting down the middle of the road stiff-kneed and elegant, with the admiring eyes of Podgoritza upon him, and a ridiculously self-conscious smile.

Wandering gipsy tribes turn up here, too; mysterious roving gangs, their scant possessions, tin pots and tent poles, piled on ponies; their children, often as naked as they were born, perched on top of the load. They have no abiding place; impelled by a primeval instinct, they pass on eternally. Extraordinarily handsome savages some of them are, too. I have seen them on the march—the men in front, three abreast, swinging along like panthers; half stripped, clad in dirty white breeches and cartridges; making up with firearms for deficiency in shirts, and carrying, each man, in addition to his rifle, a long sheath knife and a pistol in his red sash, their matted coal-black locks falling down to their beady, glittering black eyes, which watch you like a cat's, without ever looking you straight in the face. Their white teeth and the brass cases of the cartridges sparkling against their swarthy skins, they passed with their heads held high on their sinewy throats with an air of fierce and sullen independence. Behind follow the boys, women, and children, with all their worldly goods; golden-brown women with scarlet lips and dazzling teeth, their hair hanging in a thick black plait on

either side of the face, like that of the ladies of ancient Egypt; holding themselves like queens, and, unlike their lords and masters, smiling very good-naturedly. So entirely do they appear to belong to an unknown, untamed past, that I was astonished when one of them, a splendid girl in tawny orange and crimson, addressed me in fluent Italian outside the Podgoritza inn. "I am a gipsy. Are you Italian?" Italy was her only idea of a foreign land, and England quite unknown to her. She hazarded a guess that it was far off, and imparted the information to a little crowd of Albanian and Montenegrin boys who were hanging around. When the servant of the inn thought the crowd too large, he came out to scatter it. The boys fled precipitately; the girl stood her ground firmly, as one conscious of right, and told him what she thought of him volubly and fiercely, her eyes flashing the while. He retired discomfited, and she informed us superbly, "I told him the ladies wished to speak to me!" Unlike the Montenegrins, she understood at once that we were merely travelling for travelling's sake, and regarded it as perfectly natural. She retired gracefully when she had learnt what she wished to know.

The Montenegrin and Albanian gipsies are mostly Mohammedans, and what is vaguely described as Pagan. They seldom or never, it is said, intermarry with the people among whom they wander, but keep themselves entirely to themselves. One day the old quarter of Podgoritza was agog with a Mohammedan gipsy wedding. From across the river we heard the monotonous rhythmic pulsation of a tambourine, and at intervals the long-drawn

Oriental yowl that means music. We strolled down to the bridge and joined the very motley collection of sight-seers. Gay and filthy, they gathered round us, and enjoyed at once the spectacle of two foreigners of unknown origin and the festivity which was going on in the back garden hard by. It could hardly be called a garden, it was the yard of a squalid little hovel backing on the river, and was filled with women in gorgeous raiment walking backwards and forwards in rows that met and swayed apart, singing a long howling chant, while the pom-pom and metallic jingle of the tambourine sounded over the voices with mechanical regularity. Presently all fell aside and left a space, into which leapt a dancing-girl, a mass of white silk gauze with a golden zouave and belt and a dangling coin head-dress. She wreathed her arms gracefully over her head and danced a complicated *pas-seul* with great aplomb and certainty, her white draperies swirling round her and her gold embroideries flashing in the sunlight. When she ceased, the party withdrew into the dirty little hut, and as we were now the whole attraction to the obviously verminous crowd we withdrew also. The hut was the headquarters of the bridegroom, and this was a preliminary entertainment. Next morning, four carriages dashed into the town at once, bringing the bride and her escort from Skodra in Albania. The horses' heads were decorated with gaily embroidered muslin handkerchiefs, and the bride's carriage was closely curtained and veiled. The amount of men and weapons that poured out of the other vehicles was astounding. When three carriages had unloaded, the bride's carriage drove

up close to the entrance of the yard in which the hut stood, and the men made a long tunnel from door to door by holding up white sheets; down this the bride fled safe and invisible, while curiosity devoured the spectators on the bridge. Every window in the hut was already shuttered and barred, and we thought there was no more to be seen.

But our presence had been already noted. A commotion arose among the men at the door of the hovel. A young Montenegrin onlooker came up, pulled together all his foreign vocabulary and stammeringly explained, "They wish you to go into their house." All the men in the crowd were consumed with curiosity about the hidden bride, and obviously envied us the invitation. We hesitated to plunge into the filthy hole. We didn't hesitate long, though. The bride and her friends meant to show off their finery to the foreigners; a dark swagger fellow who would take no denial was sent out to fetch us, and we followed our escort obediently to the cottage door. We paused a half-second on the doorstep; it looked bad inside, but it was too late to go back. A passage was cleft for us immediately, and we found ourselves in a long low room with a mud floor—a noisome, squalid den in which one would not stable an English donkey. There was no light except what came through the small door and the chinks. It was packed with men; their beady, bright eyes and silver weapons glittered, the only sparks of brightness in the gloom.

As my eyes got accustomed to the subdued light, I saw in the corner a huge caldron of chunks of most unpleasant-looking boiled mutton, with floating isles

of fat, and my heart sank at the thought that perhaps our invitation included the wedding breakfast. The men guarding the door of the inner apartment parted, and we went in. No man, save the bridegroom, entered here. It was a tiny hole of a room, but its dirty stone walls were ablaze with glittering golden embroideries and it was lighted by oil lamps. The floor was covered with women squatting close together, their brown faces, all unveiled, showing very dark against their gorgeous barbaric costumes. It was a fierce jostle of colours—patches of scarlet, orange, purple and white, mellowed and harmonised by the lavish use of gold over all, coin head-dresses, necklaces, and girdles in reckless profusion. In the light of common day it would doubtless resolve itself into copper-gilt and glass jewels, but by lamplight it was all that could be desired. On a chair, the only one in the room, with her back to the partition wall, so as to be quite invisible to the men in the next room, sat the bride, upright, motionless, rigid like an Eastern idol. Her hands lay in her lap, her clothes were stiff with gold, and she was covered down to the knees with a thick purple and gold veil. There she has to sit without moving all day. She may not even, I am told, feed herself, but what nourishment she is allowed is given her under the veil by one of the other ladies. At her feet, cross-legged on the ground, sat the bridegroom, who I believe had not yet seen her—quite the most decorative bridegroom I ever saw, a good-looking fellow of about five-and-twenty, whose black and white Albanian garments, tight-fitting, showed him off effectively, while the arsenal of fancy weapons in his sash gave him the

required touch of savagery. He gazed fixedly at the purple veil, endeavouring vainly to penetrate its mysteries, and, considering the trying circumstances in which he was placed, seemed to be displaying a good deal of fortitude. The air was heavy with scented pastilles, otherwise the human reek must have been unbearable.

Everyone began to talk at once, and it was evident from their nods and smiles that we had done the correct thing in coming. Unfortunately we couldn't understand a word, but we bowed to everyone, repeated our thanks, and tried to express our wonder and admiration. Whether we were intended to stay or not I do not know, but, haunted by a desire to escape with as small a collection of vermin as possible, and also to evade the chunks of mutton in the caldron, we backed our way, bowing, into the outer room after a few minutes, and were politely escorted to the entrance. Judging by the smiles and bows of everyone, our visit gave great satisfaction. After we left, the doors were shut, and there was a long lull, during which the mutton was probably consumed. If so, we escaped only just in time. In the afternoon the tambourines and sing-songs started again, and far into the night the long-drawn yowls of the epithalamium came down the wind.

In spite of the mixed Christian and Mohammedan population, excellent order is maintained. The more I see of the Montenegrin, the more I am struck with his power of keeping order. It is a favourite joke against him that when he asks for a job and is questioned as to his capabilities, he replies that he is prepared to "superintend," and it turns out that he is

unable to do anything else. But not even our own policeman can perform the said "superintending" more quietly and efficiently. To the traveller the Mohammedan is very friendly. The attempt of a man to draw or photograph a woman is an insult which is not readily forgiven and may lead to serious consequences, but as long as one conforms to local customs these people are as kindly as one could wish, and not by a long way so black as they have often been painted. As a matter of fact a large proportion of the rows that occur all over the world between different nationalities arise from someone's indiscreet attentions to someone else's girl. And this is why a lady travelling alone almost always has a friendly welcome, for on this point at any rate she is above suspicion.

The Orthodox Montenegrin is equally anxious to make one feel at home. At Easter-tide, when the whole town was greeting each other and giving pink eggs, we were not left out. "Krsti uskrshnio je" ("Christ has risen") is the greeting, to which one must reply, "Truly He has risen," accepting the egg. People go from house to house, and eggs stand ready on the table for the visitors, who kiss the master and mistress of the house three times in the name of the Trinity. Montenegrin kisses—I speak merely as an onlooker —are extremely hearty. It is surprising what a number they get through on such a festival. For four days does the Easter holiday last.

Montenegrins take their holidays quietly. It used to be said of the Englishman that he takes his pleasures sadly. But that was before the evolution of the race culminated in 'Arry and 'Arriet. The

Montenegrin has not yet reached this pitch of civilisation. I wonder whether he inevitably must, and if so, whether what he will gain will at all compensate for what he must lose. For civilisation, as at present understood, purchases luxuries at the price of physical deterioration. High living is by no means always accompanied by high thinking, and . . . the end of it the future must show. When the Montenegrin has learnt what a number of things he cannot possibly do without, let us hope he will be in some way the better. It is certain he will be in many ways the worse.

Things Christian lie on one side of the Ribnitza, and things Mohammedan on the other. The Turkish graveyard lies out beyond the old town, forlorn and melancholy as they mostly are. The burial-ground of the Orthodox is on the Montenegrin side of the town. The dead are borne to the grave in an open coffin, and the waxen face of the corpse is visible. The coffin-lid is carried next in the procession. I was told that this curious custom originated in the fact that sham funerals were used when the Balkan provinces were under Turkish rule as a means of smuggling arms. But I doubt this tale. For the custom used to prevail in Italy, and does still, I believe, in Spain. It is, in all probability, much older than the Turks, and a tradition that dates from the days when burning and not burial was the usual way of disposing of the dead and the body was carried to the funeral pyre upon a bier. The open coffin, the funeral songs, and the commemorative feasts annually held on the graves by many of the South Slavs, the lights and incense burnt

upon the graves, and the lighted candles carried in the funeral processions together reproduce, with extraordinary fidelity, the rites and ceremonies of the Romans. And how much older they may be we know not.

CHAPTER III

OSTROG

I HAVE driven the road many a time since, and I have been again to Ostrog, but I shall never forget that day three years ago when I went there for the first time. It was the only part of that journey about which our advisers said we should find no difficulty; "foreign languages" were spoken, and there would be no trouble about accommodation. We started from Podgoritza early and in high spirits.

The valley of the Zeta is green and well cultivated. It narrows as we ascend it, and an isolated hill crowned with the ruins of a Turkish fortress stands up commandingly in the middle. This is the "bloody" Spuzh of the ballads, the stronghold that guarded the former Turkish frontier. Montenegro at this point was barely fifteen miles across, and Spuzh and Nikshitje gripped it on either hand. From being a border town with an exciting existence Spuzh has subsided into an unimportant village. Danilovgrad, on the other hand, a few miles farther on, a town founded in memory of the late Prince, is full of life, and though a bit rudimentary at present, shows signs of soon becoming large and flourishing. It is possible now to drive right up to the lower monastery

of Ostrog by a fine new road, but this did not yet exist on my first visit, and we pulled up at Bogatich—a poverty-stricken collection of huts and a tiny church. A tall, lean, sad-eyed Montenegrin, with his left arm in a sling, came out of the little "han" to greet us, bringing with him a strong whiff of carbolic. They were a melancholy little household. His wife, who brought water for our reeking horses, had had her right arm taken off an inch or two below the elbow, and carried the bucket horribly in the crook of the stump. They cheered up when they heard we wanted a guide to the monastery, and called their daughter from the shed for the purpose.

She came out, a shy, wild-looking thing of about fifteen, barefooted, her knitting in her hands, accepted the job at once, tied our two hand-bags on her back with a bit of cord, and we started up in search of the unknown, armed with a leg of cold mutton, a loaf of black bread, a sketch-book, and a flask of brandy.

It was midday, and almost midsummer; the air was heavy with thunder, and no breath of a breeze stirred as we scrambled up the loose stones. The girl snorted loudly like a pig, to show us the way we should go, and took us, in true Montenegrin fashion, straight up from point to point without heeding the zigzags of the horse-track except where the steepness of the rock compelled her. The way soon became steeper and steeper, in fact a mere rock scramble, and it was abominably hot; and when suddenly our plucky little guide, who had as yet shown no signs of fatigue, gave out all her breath with a long whistle and pointed to the nearest patch

of shade, we gladly called a halt. The great advantage of a girl-guide is that she takes you to the right place and you can rest on the way. Little boys as a general rule are vague and inconsequent; they pick up crowds of friends *en route*, even in the most desolate and apparently uninhabited spots, and you don't generally arrive at your destination. Either they don't know the way, or they conduct you to another spot, for reasons of their own.

We sat with our girl, and made futile attempts to converse with her. It was a wild, lonely spot, and save the rough track worn by generations of pilgrims, as rugged as it was created. Great grey limestone rocks arose around us, with sturdy young trees sprouting in the crannies; a small grey snake wound its way over the sunbaked stones, and a tortoise scrambled about the grass alongside. The valley shimmered in a hot haze far below, and beyond towered the bare crags of the opposite mountains. We seemed a very long way from anywhere. Appearances were however deceptive, as a short scramble brought us to a wall, a gateway, and some buildings. The girl seemed to think we had now arrived, and we imagined that we were about to find the guest-house where French, Italian, and German were spoken. We passed through the gateway on to a long wide shelf on the mountain side, 1900 feet above the sea. Two or three very poor cottages stood at the entrance, and at the farther end a tiny church, crudely painted with a maroon dado of geometrical patterns, and three small houses all apparently shut up and uninhabited. Not a soul was to be seen. The girl went into one of

the cottages and fetched a tin pot of cold water, which we all drank greedily, seeing which the cottage woman came out and supplied us with as much as we required, and gave us a bench to sit on. She was mildly concerned at our appearance, for we had sweated all through our shirts, and the girl had left a black hand-print on my back, but she spoke no word of any other language but her own, and speedily retired again to her cottage. We sat on the bench and pondered, feeling very forlorn. If this were Ostrog, as the girl assured us with vigorous nods, it was not worth the roasting scramble. We were miserably disappointed, but decided that, as we had come to see Ostrog, we would see it properly, and that, if there were any inhabitants, they had not finished the midday siesta. We squeezed into a patch of shadow and cut up the mutton and black bread with a pocket-knife; the girl gladly assisted, and ate like a wolf, bolting large chunks with great appetite. There was quite a cheery lot of brandy in the flask, and as we carefully packed up the remains of the meal, in case of a siege, we felt very much better.

Then down the wide white path from the houses came a man, an old, old man in Western garb. He tottered up, and we hailed him in all our known languages; French and Italian failed, but he responded to German, and started at once on his own autobiography. He was an old soldier, he had fought under Karageorgevich. Now he had retired here to end his days. "They" had sent him here, and "they" had made him dig his grave. It was waiting for him on the mountain side. He

was very lonely, and had no one to talk to. As soon as we could stem the torrent of his remarks, we asked him about quarters for the night. "Had we an introduction from the Archimandrite at Cetinje?" "No?" Then we had better go back where we had come from, and we had better start at once, if we meant to get to Nikshitje that night. We were appalled. He repeated obstinately, "You must go, and if you take my advice, you will go at once. I can do nothing for you. They," he admitted mysteriously, "cannot bear me. It is useless for me to ask them. They can speak nothing but Servian, and you will not be able to make them understand. They would have to send for me. Moreover, they are asleep." He pointed to "their" house. We asked when "they" were likely to wake up again, and he said it would be in about an hour's time. We doubted his statements, for his air was very malevolent, so as our little maiden was already coiled up on the ground fast asleep, we thought it would be just as well to rest until "they" could be appealed to. The old gentleman "who had no one to talk to" went off and indulged in an animated conversation with the cottage woman, while we dozed under a tree. When we aroused ourselves again, not much rested, we saw the shutters of "their" house were now open, so we marched up to the front door, knocked, and awaited results tremulously.

Nothing happened; we knocked a second time, and fled down the steps. Immediately the door flew open, and there was the Archimandrite of Ostrog himself, in long black gown, crimson sash, and high velvet hat—a little old man whose thin iron-grey

locks flowed on his shoulders. He came rushing down the steps and shook us by the hands, saying, "Dobar dan, dobar dan" (good-day), as heartily as though he had been expecting us and we had come at last. We said, "Dobar dan," also, with enthusiasm, and then the conversation came to an abrupt conclusion. He showed us with great ceremony into his sitting-room, and made us sit on the sofa, while he sat opposite on a chair. We felt acutely uncomfortable — not one single word of English, French, German, or Italian did the good man know. We made him understand that we had come from England, which amazed him, and that we had walked from Bogatich. Then we stuck hopelessly and helplessly, while he, undaunted, went on in his native language. It seemed as if our climb to Ostrog had failed, and that flight was all that was left for us. We got up and said "good-bye" politely. Our departure he would by no means permit. "Sjedite, sjedite!" he cried, waving us back to the sofa, and down we sat again, feeling much worse. A Montenegrin about six feet four inches in height, clad in a huge brown overcoat, answered his summoning bell, and presently returned with two glasses of cold water on a brass tray which he offered to us ceremoniously, towering over us and watching us with lofty toleration, as a big dog does a little one. He waited patiently until we had drunk every drop, collected the glasses, and silently retired from the room backwards.

A horrible silence ensued. We took out our watches and showed them to each other, in hopes that the Archimandrite would then understand that our time

was really up. But no. A fearful wrestle with the language followed, and lasted till the Big-Dog Montenegrin reappeared, this time with two cups of coffee. We obediently began to consume this, and the Archimandrite, despairing of ever making us understand single-handed, instructed his servant to fetch the gentleman-who-spoke-German. Through him we were at once informed that the Archimandrite offered us hospitality for the night in the house over the way. We were much amazed, and accepted gratefully. With apologies, he then inquired if we were married, and hastened to assure us that there was no disgrace attached to the fact that we were not. We were slightly dismayed when we were told we now had the Archimandrite's gracious permission to visit the shrine, and that we were to start at once.

We were put upon the right track and left to our own devices. We had been up since five, and had only had a scrappy, unhappy doze under the tree, so we told each other we would go to sleep on the first piece of ground that was flat enough. Having zigzagged up some way through the wood, we lay down on a piece of grass, and should have been asleep in a minute had not two natives appeared, an old man and a handsome lad. They seemed much interested and concerned. I merely said it was very hot, and hoped it would be enough for them. Not a bit of it. They started an argument. I said I didn't speak the language, so they shouted to make it clearer, and kept pointing up the path. What they meant I did not know. It was evident, though, that the Handsome Lad did not mean to be trifled with. He squatted alongside of us and shouted

in my ear, while the old man sat down and showed signs of staying as long as we did. So we wearily started upwards again, and the Montenegrins, delighted at having made us understand, went their way much pleased with their own cleverness. We dared not rest again, and soon reached the upper monastery of Ostrog, which was so strange and unexpected that the sight of it did away with all thoughts of fatigue at once.

The path ended on a terrace cut in the rock 2500 feet above the sea. The small guest-house stood against the mountain side, and a flight of newly made steps led up through a stone doorway to a series of caverns in the cliff face, cunningly built in and walled up to form tiny rooms, which cling to the rock like swallows' nests. The big natural arch of rock that overshadows them all is grimed with the dead black of smoke, and two great white crosses painted on the cliff mark the shrine. Straight above rises the almost perpendicular wall of bare rock, and far below lies the valley. This is the eagle eyrie that, in 1862, Mirko Petrovich, the Prince's father, and twenty-eight men held for eight days against the Turkish army of, it is said, ten thousand men. The Turks tried vainly to shell the tiny stronghold, and even a determined attempt to smoke out the gallant band failed. Mirko and his men, when they had used all their ammunition and had rolled down rocks upon the enemy, succeeded in escaping over the mountains, under cover of night, and reached Rijeka with the loss of one man only. It is a tale which yet brings the light of battle to the eyes of the Montenegrin and sends his fingers to

caress the butt of his revolver, and must be heard from Montenegrin lips to be appreciated. A hundred years before, thirty men held this same cavern against an army, and wild as these tales sound, the first glance at the place forces belief. Twice only have the Turks succeeded in occupying it. Once after Mirko and his men left it, and once in 1877, when Suleiman Pasha held it, sent the proud message to Constantinople that he had conquered Montenegro and that it was time to appoint a Turkish governor—and was soon in hot retreat to Spuzh, losing half his men on the way. The lower monastery has, on the other hand, been burnt and rebuilt some ten times.

We sat and stared at the scene of these wild doings. The black, smoke-grimed cavern told of the fierce struggle, and the great white cross of the holy man whose body rests within. Sveti Vasili (St. Basil), a local saint, was, early in the eighteenth century, Metropolitan of the Herzegovina. In his old age he sought refuge in the mountains from Turkish persecution, and passed his last days in this remote cavern cared for and reverenced by the Christian peasants. Shortly after his death they scooped out the rock and formed and dedicated to him the tiny chapel where his body still rests. His shrine is held in the profoundest veneration, and on Trinity Sunday (O.S.) pilgrims flock thither in thousands, tramping on foot from Bosnia, the Herzegovina, from Albania, even from the uttermost corners of the Balkan peninsula—a wonderful and most impressive sight. Not Christians alone but also Mohammedans come to the shrine of St. Vasili

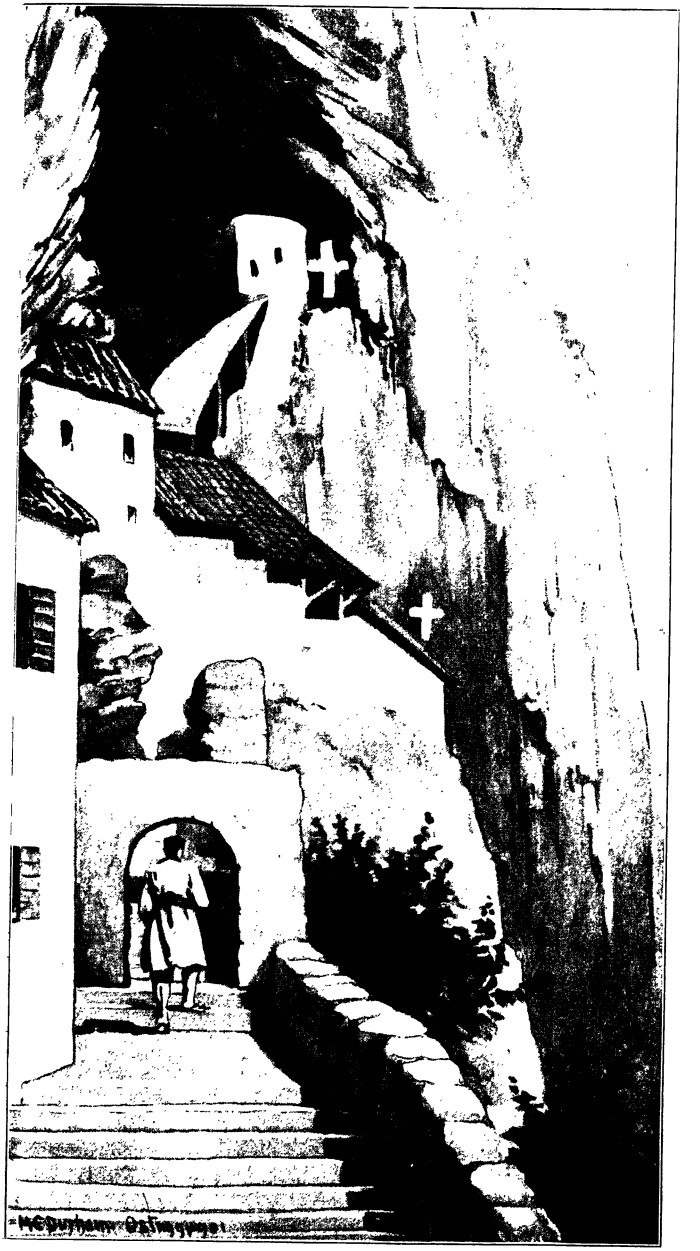
of Ostrog, for "four hundred years of apostasy have not obliterated among the Bosnian Mussulmans a sort of superstitious trust in the efficacy of the faith of their fathers," and they come in hopes of help to the shrine of the man who suffered for it. And so also do those strange folk, the Mohammedan Albanians. I have passed the night up there in pilgrimage-time, when the mountain side was a great camp and the greater part of the pilgrims slept by watch fires under the stars; but in spite of the mixed nationalities and the difference of religion, perfect order prevailed, and I saw many acts of friendliness and consideration between folk from very different parts.

The precious relics have always been removed in times of danger, and saved from the fate of those of the Servian St. Sava, which were publicly burned by the Turks. They were, of course, removed during the last war. The coffin is not a weighty one and the soldiers were strong, but it became so heavy as they were carrying it down the valley that they knew not what to do. This they took as a sign from the saint that they should stop. They awaited the Turks, and triumphantly defeated them. At the close of the war the relics were restored to the chapel without any difficulty.

As we sat and looked at the knot of little cliff huts, a figure quite in keeping with them came through the doorway and slowly approached us. A magnificent old giant, with a silver beard and long white locks that flowed upon his shoulders, and showed him to be a priest. A tall black astrachan cap was on his head, and in spite of the heat he wore

a heavy cloak of dark blue cloth lined with fur, a long blue tunic, and wide knickerbockers shoved into heavy leather boots at the knee. His high cap and his big cloak gave him great dignity, and he welcomed us with superb stateliness. Then, intimating we were to follow him, he conducted us to his residence. It was a narrow little cave fronted in with planks. Here we had to sit down while he fumbled at what was apparently a small cupboard door. He threw it open, and behold—an oil painting of himself, set in a gorgeous gilt frame that contrasted oddly with its rough surroundings. It was evidently a presentation portrait, and he sat down beaming by the side of it, for us to have every opportunity of admiring the likeness. We spread all our scanty stock of Servian adjectives of approval about recklessly, and the result was that from some mysterious corner he produced a black bottle and a small liqueur glass, opaque with dirt. He held the glass up to the light and looked at it critically; even he realised that it was unclean; then he put in his thumb, which was also encrusted with the grime of ages, and he screwed it round and round. No effect whatever was produced on glass or thumb, for the dirt in both cases was ingrained. For one awful second he contemplated his thumb, and I thought he was going to suck it and make a further effort; but no, he was apparently satisfied, and he filled the glass with a pale spirit, which we hoped was strong enough to kill the germs. We drank his health with a show of enthusiasm which seemed to gratify him, for he patted us both affectionately.

He then showed us up a wooden step ladder to



Upper Monastery, Ostrog.

a still tinier cavern, a dim cabin almost filled up by his bed, whose not over white sheets betrayed the unpleasing fact that Ostrog was still subject to nocturnal attacks and much bloodshed. In a glass case on the wall hung his two medals, one Russian, the other Montenegrin, and, next these, three signed and sealed documents in Cyrillic characters. He began reading out place-names in Montenegro, Bosnia, and the Herzegovina, pointing to his medals, and would gladly have "fought all his battles o'er again," if we could but have understood him. His great treasure he displayed last, a large and handsome walking-stick elaborately mounted in gold filigree set with plates engraved with the said names. His admiration for it was unbounded, and he handled it respectfully. The rugged old giant, and his trophies, standing huge in his tiny lair up in the heart of the mountains, the light from the little window falling on his silver hair and beard, the glittering filigree, the dim squalid background, his pride and glee over his treasures, and the royal air with which he showed them, conjured up a whole life-drama in one swift instant. He broke the spell himself by putting the stick carefully back into its case, and, bowing and crossing himself reverently before a little ikon of Our Lady, led the way out to the chapel.

The entrance was a low, narrow, rough-cut slit; he bowed twice and crossed himself, saw that we did the same, then stooped down and went into a small irregular cavern, its rough-hewn walls rudely frescoed with Byzantine figures. It was very dark; one small window, hacked through the cliff face, and the narrow doorway alone lighted it. Upon the rough

ikonostasis he pointed out the figure of St. Vasili in bishop's robes. Then slowly and solemnly he began lighting the candles, striking a light with flint and steel. It took him a long time, and his age was betrayed by his tremulous hands and evidently weak sight. When he had finished, and the cavern was a-twinkle with tiny flames, he approached the shrine. Removing the covering, he fumbled with the lock, opened it, and then threw back the lid slowly and respectfully. There lay the embalmed body of the saint; the slipper-clad feet, the embroidered robes, and the gold crucifix on the breast, only, showing. Modern science and ancient faith had combined for perhaps the first and the last time, and the face and hands of the saint were neatly covered with carbolised cotton-wool. I was jolted back into the twentieth century with a rough shock. The sense of smell—perhaps because it is a wild-beast one—brings up its trains of associations more swiftly than any other, and the life of the old world and the life of the modern one leapt up in sharp contrast.

To the old man, on the other hand, the scent was the odour of sanctity. He was filled with awe and reverence, and gazed at the body like one seeing a wondrous vision for the first time. He bent down slowly and kissed the slippered feet, the crucifix on the breast, and the cotton-wool over the face, crossing himself each time. Then, fearful lest we should omit any part of the ceremony, he seized us each in turn by the back of the neck, poked our heads into the coffin and held them down on the right spots. We followed carefully the example he had set, and completed our pilgrimage to the shrine

of St. Vasili. He slowly closed and locked the coffin, and rearranged the drapery upon it. Then we debated together as to how an offering was to be made. He, however, helped us out of the difficulty. He took a small metal bowl from the window, placed it reverently upon the coffin and counted some very small coins into it ostentatiously, clink, clink, then turned his back discreetly and began slowly extinguishing the candles. He allowed just sufficient time to carry out the approved ritual, and hurried back eagerly to inspect the bowl. It appeared that we had acted quite correctly on this occasion also. Coming out through the narrow door into the open air again, we prepared to go; but the old man stopped us, pointed upwards, and shouted for someone. The "someone" came, and turned out to be the Handsome and Haughty Lad who had so cruelly chivied us down below. He gazed at us with a superior smile, and in obedience to his orders led us up to a yet higher cavern, where he showed us a spring of very cold clear water. This is highly prized by the pilgrims to the shrine, who all bring bottles or gourds to fetch some away in. The Lad, I think, expected us to do so, and as he had, as he imagined, made us understand by shouting before, he tried the same system again with great violence. We hastily remunerated him for his trouble, in hopes of changing his ideas, and he was sufficiently mollified to shake hands with us. Whereupon we said good-bye, and left him.

Evening was drawing in when we reached the lower monastery, and service had just come to an end in the little church. The Archimandrite,

followed by his small congregation, came out as we approached. We were sleepy, dirty, and hungry, and the prospect of another interview in Servian before getting food or rest was almost too much for us. To our dismay, we were again conducted to the Archimandrite's sitting-room. Our relief was great when we heard the words, "Vous parlez français, mesdemoiselles?" and we were introduced to a tall man in the long black robes and high cap of the Orthodox ecclesiasts. Singularly beautiful, his long brown hair flowing on his shoulders, he stood there more like a magnificent Leonardo da Vinci than a living human being. He spoke gently and kindly in the oddest broken French, expressing himself in little rudimentary sentences, begging us to be seated and telling us we were very welcome; "for we are Christians," he said simply, "and is not hospitality one of the first of the Christian virtues? I, too, am a guest here to-night. But you who have come so far to see us, it is the least we can do for you. From England," he repeated, "alone, all the way from England to see Montenegro, quelle voyage! veritablement des héros! In Montenegro you are as safe, vous savez, as in your own homes, but the journey—all across Europe, that is another thing!" The Archimandrite, he explained, regretted that our room was so long in being prepared for us. "It is because we have had a pilgrimage here lately and have had to accommodate very many people. Therefore there was no place suitably furnished for you, but they are putting down the carpets, and it will soon be finished." We were horrified, and begged they would not take

so much trouble; but he would not hear of it. "Oh, it is a great pleasure to us all to know that in England there is such a good opinion of Montenegro that two ladies will come all alone into our country and trust us; that the English should wish to know us!" I felt like an impostor; it was embarrassing to be given hospitality as the bearer of good-tidings from Great Britain, but to our innocent-minded entertainer the idea seemed quite simple and sufficient. He had nothing but good to say of everyone. For the two small boys who came in with the usual cold water and coffee, he was filled with admiration—their build, their muscular limbs, their honest, open faces. "Montenegrin faces," he said, "ah! but they are beautiful my faithful Montenegrins! It is my life," he went on, "to help these poor people. I have a church, a little, little church, away among the rocks. It is there that I live. If I had known, mesdemoiselles, before, that you were travelling this way, it would have given me great pleasure to show it to you. But I did not know until yesterday"; and he added, with a smile at our astonishment, "Oh yes, in this country, vous savez, one hears of all strangers."

The conversation was broken off by the announcement that our rooms were ready, and we all went over in a solemn little procession to the house over the way, the two ecclesiasts, the four servants and ourselves, and were shown in with many apologies for the poorness of the accommodation. The dear good people were putting the finishing touches when we entered, and had arranged two large rooms most comfortably. The Archimandrite satisfied himself

that the water jugs were full, that we had soap, and that the beds were all right. Then both gentlemen shook hands with us and wished us good-night, and withdrew. An anxious quarter of an hour followed, during which we wondered whether we were going to be fed or not, and regretted that we had bestowed the remains of the bread and mutton on the girl; for we had been knocking about since five a.m., and it was now eight p.m. Then there came a most welcome knock at the door, and we were taken to a large dining-room and a good dinner. It was a solemn meal. We were waited on by four men, who came in and out silently, supplied our wants, stood at attention and gazed at us stolidly. The largest was about six feet four and built to match, but extremely tame in spite of his weapons and his size. I don't think he had the least idea how very small he made us feel.

Early next morning the Archimandrite and our friend were already about, and came to see us breakfast and to beg that we would write our names in the visitors' book. We said all that we could in the way of thanks to our kind entertainer; he murmured a blessing over us, we shook hands, and were soon wandering down the mountain side.

CHAPTER IV

NIKSHITJE AND DUKLE

NIKSHITJE is but two hours' drive from the beginning of the Ostrog track, over a mountain pass and down on to a big plain. Nikshitje, says the Prince, is to be his new capital, and work is going on there actively. That it cannot be the capital yet a while seems pretty certain, for it is a very long way from anywhere, and the foreign Consuls and Ministers, who at present lament their isolation from the world and all its joys at Cetinje, would all cry "Jamais, jamais!" in their best diplomatic French, if called upon to transfer themselves to the heart of the land. It is certainly very beautifully situated; the wall of mountains which encircle the big plain is as fine as any in the country, and it is neither so cold in winter as is Cetinje, nor in summer so hot and close as the low-lying plain of Podgoritza. But until there is a road or a railroad that will connect Nikshitje quickly with the coast, it cannot compete in importance with Cetinje. A line that would connect Servia with Antivari *viâ* Nikshitje, join the two Servian peoples, and give Servia a port for export, is so much against Austrian interests, both commercial and political, that Austria will under no conditions permit it to pass through any territory over which she has control. There is no

speedier way of drawing truthful political opinions from a mixed company of various nationalities than to design fancy railroads over tender territories. At present no line exists in the Balkan peninsula that runs from north-east to south-west. And in the present disgraceful state of all territory that is under Turkish "government" no new lines through any of the Sultan's property are probable. The love of the Montenegrin for Nikshitje is based partly on sentimental grounds; for the taking of Nikshitje, the biggest Turkish stronghold on their northern frontier, was one of the chief events of the last war. Nikshitje fell in 1877, after a four months' siege conducted by Prince Nikola himself.

That the Prince really intends Nikshitje to be the capital of his country is evident. We have a forecast of its coming splendour in the large and really fine church dedicated to St. Vasili, which stands well placed on a little hill, close by a solid and well-proportioned building, designed with a stern simplicity well in keeping with the Montenegrin spirit. Within, it is lofty and spacious, and the bare stone walls are hung with lists of those who fell in the last war. Russia found the money, and Montenegro the labour. The mouldings and capitals are all cut by Montenegrins, and the engineer that built it is a Montenegrin. Nikshitje has a right to be proud of it. At the foot of the hill on which the new church stands is a tiny little old church, the church of the Montenegrins in Turkish times. In those dark days it was almost completely buried under the earth for safety. Now, with the addition of a fat new tower, it shows itself in the light of day.

The battered ruins of the great Turkish fort that was once a thorn in Montenegro's side stand on the long low hill that overlooks the town, and a stone or two with Turkish inscriptions and a few Turkish guns upon the grass are all that tell of its former holders. Whatever the future may have in store for the Montenegrins, let us hope that it will always be remembered to their credit that they have played an heroic part in the freeing of Europe from the Ottoman curse. A tumbledown mosque and some dozen Mohammedan Albanian families are now the only traces left in Nikshitje of the Asiatic invader.

Beyond the town, the land is well cultivated, and maize, tobacco, rye, and potatoes flourish, provided there is sufficient rainfall in the summer. Montenegro at present needs, more than anything, some system of water storage. A superfluity of rain falls in the wet seasons, and the melted snow swells the streams to torrents, but this all flows away for lack of dams or cisterns, and in a spell of hot weather the ground is parched. In the summer of 1902 no drop of rain fell between the middle of May and the beginning of September; there was no corn for food, and no tobacco for export. The people in the mountains, who depend on the plains for corn, were in terrible straits, were reduced to eating fern, grass, and beech bark, and were only saved from starvation by buying foreign maize with the money that had been intended for road-making and other public works.

While Nikshitje, the capital that is to be, is slowly growing, Dukle (Dioclea), the capital that was, the birthplace of the line of Nemanja kings who led Servia to greatness, is slowly mouldering on the

plain of Podgoritza. Long prior to Servian days Dukle was known to the world. Already in the early years of the Christian era the Romans had conquered Illyria and organised it as a Roman province, and Dioclea, as it was then called, has come down to fame as the reputed birthplace of Diocletian. Some two and a half miles from Podgoritza, where Zeta and Moracha meet, lies all that is left of the old town. "The parents of Diocletian," says Gibbon, "had been slaves in the house of Anulinus, a Roman senator; nor was he himself distinguished by any other name than that which he derived from a small town in Dalmatia from whence his mother deduced her origin." Whether Dukle is or is not the "small town in Dalmatia," I cannot tell. It is, at any rate, known to be among the first towns taken from the Illyrians by the Romans. It would be interesting to learn whether it is not to a considerable intermixture of the aboriginal Illyrian blood that the Montenegrins owe their superiority to the other Serbs. Some theory is required to account for it, and as the strength of the Servian empire arose from this particular corner, and as the Albanians, their next-door neighbours, are believed to be direct descendants of these same Illyrians, this seems to be the most workable one. There is a certain indefinable quality best described as "gameness," and this both Albanians and Montenegrins possess to a marked degree. It is also the quality of the Herzegovinese, who are mountain men too, and it was in the mountains, we are told, that the aboriginal inhabitants lived after the Servian invasion.

Be this as it may, Dukle, by Podgoritza, was a

Roman town of some size, and was afterwards the capital of the early kingdom of Servia. It is a forlorn, lonesome, "sic transit" spot, inhabited by numbers of tortoises peering about with their aged, old-world little faces and wrinkled, leathery necks. Tesseræ work up through the turf, fine cornices and mouldings lie about among the brambles, and the live green acanthus flourishes near the stony leaves of big Corinthian capitals. One slab-paved road remains, all that is left of what appears to have been a forum, some fifty yards long, with the bases of columns strewn along it at intervals, and at the farther end of it the remains of a small building with a round apse. A man lives in a hut hard by and cultivates a few patches of ground among the ruins, which are so smothered in vegetation that it is difficult to form any good idea of the plan of the town. It was explored about ten years ago by some archæologists, but there is probably a good deal yet to be found, as the peasants still pick up many coins and odds and ends of bronze work. The remains of a small basilica church have been dug out, whose broken shafts and bits of marble chancel rails are strewn on the ground, and tesseræ are plentiful among the grass. The marble remains of the forum and many of the cornices and mouldings that are scattered about the ruins are Roman, but a large proportion of the houses, the foundations of which cover several acres, are, I believe, of a later date, and may belong to the old Servian town. A bas-relief of Diana—a mediocre enough specimen of art—lies among the bushes on a bank, gaining a strange pathos from her surroundings, as she stares with stony eyes, the only survivor of the dead capital. All around stand

the everlasting hills, keeping majestic watch over the ruins which have seen the passing of two empires, and the river tears along through a stony chasm hard by, and the lean rugged figures of the one or two peasants among the ruins only add to the loneliness.

But this place was once the centre of such learning and civilisation as the land possessed, and "the Monk of Dioclea" was one of Servia's earliest chroniclers. The now almost forgotten town is marked in the map of Ptolemy (*circa* 150 A.D.). It is mentioned as a famous town in 1162, and it was given by King Milutin as the residence for his son in 1317. After this date little or nothing is heard of it, nor is it known when finally it ceased to be inhabited and crumbled into decay.

CHAPTER V

Our Lady among the Rocks

"To drawe folk to Heaven by fairnesse
By good ensample, this was his busynesse.
For Christe's lawe and his apostles twelve
He taught, but first he followed it himself."

A rough jolt over the wide bare plain; a heavy rainstorm blurring the bleak mountains of the Turkish frontier; no living being in sight save an Albanian woman with her few sheep cowering under the lee of a bush; cut off from the rest of the world by the enshrouding mist, we drove over one of the desolate places of the earth in quest of the little church among the rocks. Of a sudden the sun burst through, hot and brilliant; the plain quivered, golden and glittering, through the rising steam; the clouds parted and rolled back, and revealed the mountains all around us, fiercely, vividly blue, and as lonely as the day they were created.

Two small rocky hills rose up out of the plain, and our driver pulled up suddenly. "You must go on foot," he said; "it is not far," and he pointed to a stony track round the hillside. Doubtfully we started among the rocks and wild pomegranates, till turning a corner we struck a well-marked footpath, and saw the tall black-robed figure of our friend awaiting us at the top of the ascent. "I saw a carriage across the plain,"

he said, as he came forward, "and I knew it must be you." He welcomed us cordially, and turned towards his little domain. A bare stone wall built up against the hillside with a big wooden cross at the top, and a tiny cottage with a patch of cultivated ground close by, were all that could be seen of it. All around were wild and untouched rock and bush. "My little church," he said, as he led the way to the entrance, "was not built by hands. It was made by God. His church among the rocks." He crossed himself, and we entered.

He lit a taper and held it aloft. We were in a long narrow cavern, water-worn, with traces of stalactite deposit on the rough walls. At the farther end the altar candles burned brightly, lighting up the picture of Our Lady over it, and making the rest of the cave darker by contrast. "See," he said, "it is veritably a church! Is it not in the form of a cross?" and he showed us how a smaller cave opened into it on either side, making a rude nave and transept. The walls at the chancel end were painted with saints and angels, quaint and stiff, their archaic Byzantine forms in perfect keeping with the rough surroundings, and therefore true decoration. "When I have celebrated the Messe here," he continued, "when I have prayed all alone in the silence, then holy things come to me, pictures, vous savez, and I paint them here upon the wall." He held up his taper and threw light upon a great head of Christ. "This is the last I have made. There is no paint left," he added simply. "Nor do I know really which is the proper way to use it. I cannot, I think, take long to learn. My poor attempts, they give pleasure to my people, and they understand."

He led the way into the tiny transept on the left. "Here, you see, I have made for them the Holy Sepulchre"; and we saw by the light of the little taper a bier covered with a black and gold cloth, and a painting of the dead Christ. "They come to me, the poor wayfarers, for consolation, so weary, so suffering. I tell them of Him. I bring them in here and I show them the wounds on His feet. Then they understand. So I can teach them. To help the afflicted, that is religion. Some days I write, songs of religion, of the visions that I see; for the light that is given to us we must employ to show the path to others." He looked inspired as he stood there, a majestic black-robed figure, the taper, like a guiding star, in his hands, the light of the altar candles falling on his finely cut spiritual features, the solitary sentinel of this Christian outpost. "The church of God, built by His hands in the wilderness; to care for it is all my life," he said humbly. He extinguished the lights, and we stepped out into the sunshine. By the side of the church he pointed out a second cavern in which rises a clear spring of water, the same, maybe, which carved the nave and transepts. It makes the hermitage possible in this otherwise waterless spot, and flows off underground to hew its way silently through the rock.

We turned to say good-bye to him. "But no!" he cried, "you have come so far to see me, I beg you will rest for a while in my house. When shall I again see visitors from England?" He led the way into his cottage; visitors, not only from England but from the outside world at all, are scarce with him. I think we called to his mind a whole host of recollections; for he started at once, and the

time flew as he unfolded the story of his life in little sentences, earnestly and quickly, from time to time drawing his black gown across his breast with a swift dramatic action that gave point to his speech. He had been educated in a Russian university, and thence had gone to Paris. He regretted not having visited London. "It seemed so far," he said; "now it seems that I was so near!" But all the time the mountains called to him. "I cannot live away from the mountains and my poor Montenegrins. In the great towns, it was here that I wished to be. I intended to come here and to make a large monastery. But my family did not wish me to lead the religious life. My grandfather was a rich man—not what in England you would call rich, but rich in Montenegro. When I became religious, he gave me none of the money, not any. I have not been able to carry out my plan. It was God's will. My work is here. It is to help my poor Montenegrins to keep their faith. Without faith what is a nation? Ah! I have travelled and I have seen sad things. But in your country, mademoiselle, they have faith. The Church of England and our Church, they have differences, that is true, but they are slight. We are all Christians; there are so many points upon which we can agree. We must not let those others separate us. Your Church has shown great friendship to ours. Your Archbishop has sent us a letter not long ago. It has given great pleasure. Your Church is a Church; you have deacons, bishops; but in Switzerland—the Protestants—that I cannot understand. It is sad.

"Savez-vous," he went on, "I know what a

war is. I was a soldier in our last war. We are all soldiers here, you see." "Where were you?" I asked. "It was in the valley of the Zeta—the Turks came down." He stared wide-eyed at a vision of horror and broke off. "It is too horrible to speak of—these scenes; it is all horrible in war. I have seen it. Pray God that we shall have peace. But a day of trial is coming to my poor Montenegrins. Ah, mademoiselle, you understand them. They are so uncivilised and so rough, but they are so good, so simple. You, who travel among them, know how good they are. You will tell them in England—will you not?—of my poor people. Civilisation brings knowledge and many, many wonders, but it does not bring happiness. These poor good people, they have no idea what life is out in the great world, and it is coming to them. And I know what it means, this civilisation. I have lived in Paris—in Paris, savez-vous," he said vehemently. "All I can do is to help them to keep their faith. Till now they have lived with God and the mountains. Here they come to me, the poor, the afflicted, they come to me for help. Some nights I give shelter to as many as fifteen wayfarers. Then they tell me their troubles, and I pray with them. Some of them," he admitted regretfully, "have not lived quite rightly. In the morning I celebrate the Messe in my little chapel, and then they go on their way comforted. On Sundays many people come, and I speak to them, here before the chapel, the words that are given to me. It is very little that one needs in this life. We have so short a time here."

A boy, his pupil and his only companion in his

hermitage, came in with coffee, and the giving and the accepting of this simple refreshment seemed to give our host great pleasure. He questioned us about our relatives, and told us of his own. "Once," he remarked quite casually, "I was married," but he did not pursue the subject. He told us of the days when there were only twenty houses in Cetinje—when the chiefs of the land used to meet in council with the Prince, all sitting on the ground in a bare shed where a sheep was roasting for their dinner; how the Prince used to sit under a tree and try prisoners; how there were no roads, no towns, only a few collections of thatched huts. All this only twenty years ago! The poetic, imaginative nature of the Montenegrin. "He lives with the things he imagines. Even now, you see how he carries his gun, his revolver, his knife! He likes to think that he is guarding his house and his land. The weapons are a symbol to him. No Montenegrin likes to go unarmed. In the evening, when he returns to his little cottage, his wife meets him. She takes his gun and puts it in the corner. His weapons are laid aside. It is all peace; he is returned to his wife and children. That is old life. Now it is even said that a railway will be made. But who knows? Where can there be money for such an undertaking?" Truly railway companies and all such things seemed impossibly remote as we sat in this lonely hermitage listening to the hopes and fears of the ascetic visionary. When we arose to say good-bye, he stood over us in the doorway and gave us his blessing.

We stepped out into the world again, and looked over the rough moorland plain. The Turkish

frontier fort shone white upon the mountain side some three miles away, and there was no other sign of life as we stared over the lonely land. He read our thoughts at once. "It is a wild spot, yes, and a rough journey that you have made to see me. Few strangers have yet been here. One day three of your countrymen came, but you are the first Englishwomen. It is lonely, and even a little dangerous. You must not try to cross the plain when it is dark, for there are bad men who rob and kill. Yonder, that is Albania. It is so easy for them to come across. Even last night there were armed men; they came up towards my little house and they threatened me with their guns." "And what did you do?" we asked eagerly. "I stood here," he said simply, "and I cried to them, 'The Lord God has said, Thou shalt not kill.' Then they went away," he added, after a pause, in a matter-of-fact manner.

What a scene! The fearless figure alone under the night sky, and the gang of human beasts shrinking awestruck down the rocks as they heard out of the darkness "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." We said farewell. He stood at the top of the path for a few minutes watching our descent, and as we turned the corner we saw his tall dark figure turning towards the little chapel "which is his life."

CHAPTER VI

ANTIVARI

ANTIVARI is not easily reached from Cetinje. You can retreat to Cattaro and then take the weekly steamer. If, however, you have come to Montenegro to see Montenegro, it is better to choose the 'cross-country route. I have been there more than once, but the first journey thither will suffice. We were raw to the country and knew nothing of the language, so everyone tried to persuade us not to go, or at any rate to take an interpreter. But unless a route is so complicated that a guide is absolutely necessary, I infinitely prefer worrying it out alone; and as for languages, everyone knows that one wants food, drink, and sleep. The only precautions we took were to ascertain that there was an "inn with three beds" at Prstan, the port for Antivari, and to get the hotel to telegraph for a couple of horses to meet us at Virbazar, and we started from Rijeka in the early morning, by steamer. Arrived off Virbazar, we clambered down into a large canoe, along with sixteen Montenegrins, to whom we were a deeply interesting sight, and proceeded very slowly up the river, for the boat was heavily laden with freight and passengers. Neither Montenegrins nor Albanians have much idea of paddling their own

canoes. They merely stab and prod the water at irregular intervals with wooden shovels, expending a good deal of energy with very little result; but they wobble along somehow. We speculated anxiously as to what we should do if the horses had not turned up, and were much relieved to see a respectable pair of steeds on the bank. Vir-bazar is a tiny village on an island on the river, and has no particular features save its bridge. This is a singular structure. It is built of stone, but is so narrow that it is only passable by foot passengers single file. Even if wide enough, though, vehicles would find a difficulty in tackling it, for it changes its style of architecture abruptly in the middle, and, having begun well and loftily, drops suddenly and proceeds to the farther bank with smaller arches and a narrower path at a much lower level. Whether rival architects started from opposite sides, or whether one-half is a "restoration" of the other, and if so which, I do not know. I think, however, it must have been evolved by Turks.

We picked our way across it, attended of course by a fair proportion of the population, and made our way towards the horses. The population objected strongly to our claiming them, but as we persisted, someone had the sense to go and fetch the horse-boy. He, a swarthy Albanian—a wiry, cheerful thing about twenty—produced from the recesses of his garments our telegram. This was read aloud, everyone was satisfied, our mysterious appearance was explained, and the "two good horses" were led up on to the high road. In Monte-negro one must always ride astride. Of course it

would be possible to take a side-saddle, but I do not think it would be any advantage. The horses are not accustomed to it, and the mountain tracks are very bad. It is much easier to balance on a scrambling horse when astride; it is possible to dismount in a hurry on either side, and it is far less tiring for a very long day's ride, both to horse and rider.

There is a very good carriage road to Antivari, but no carriages to go on it. The only diligence runs once a week; sometimes it fits the boat, and sometimes it doesn't. There is a bridle path which is a short cut, but is so rough that a good deal of it must be done on foot. The road winds up the Crmnitza valley—green, rich, and fertile, a land of vines, maize, and tobacco. Higher up, the mountain sides are well wooded. At the top of the pass the scenery is superb. There is always a strange fascination about the top of a pass. When once it is reached there seems to be no limit set to our wanderings; we enter a new land, and plunge into the beyond—the beyond that is ever a-calling. The top of the Crmnitza valley is crowned by the ruins of a Turkish fort; twenty-five years ago this was Turkish territory, and our horse-boy was a son of the conquered soil. He was a Mohammedan Albanian, and seemed to think he had got a most amusing job. He made the most violent efforts to talk to us, roared with laughter when we did not understand, and poured out torrents of conversation when we did. We plunged down the old bridle track, and scrambled over rocks and bushes along the mountain side. At one point he stopped us and treated us to an amusingly realistic pantomime of cutting off heads and

throwing bodies down the rocks. It was a pity we had not command of his language, for this pathless, rugged hillside, with the battered remains of another Turkish fortress on the shoulder below us, was a fine background for a gory tale. Far away below us, beyond the silver-grey olives on the slopes and the fertile plain, gleamed the blue Adriatic; a few cottages clustered on the edge of the bay, and the road led straight to them. "Prstan!" said the boy, and we thought we were nearly there; but there were weary zigzags before we reined up our tired beasts in the waning light by the edge of the sea.

A gipsy camp, a post-office, half a dozen dilapidated cottages, a harbour about the size of a pocket-handkerchief, the Prince's country house, and a lonely beach where the waves splashed—this was Prstan, and the farthest and smallest of the cottages was the "inn with the three beds." The beds are all in the same room, which is also the dining-room, and there is nothing of the stiff conventionality about the establishment that one finds in a hotel starred by Baedeker, but all is clean and the food is excellent, and Maria Bulatovich, the kindly hostess, speaks Italian.

We started betimes next morning to see Antivari. The local coffee stall—a packing-case set up on end with an Albanian coiled up inside it—was doing a roaring trade, and the gipsy camp hard by was getting up and shaking itself. Antivari lies some three miles inland. You don't see it till you are nearly arrived, as it is stowed away between two great mountain spurs. The road twists and twines through magnificent olive gardens, where huge hoary

giants sprawl in a thousand grotesque shapes ; you turn a corner, suddenly Antivari appears, and the first sight of it is very startling. On a rocky eminence in the midst of the hollow stands gaunt and grim the dismantled Turkish town—battlements, walls, roofless houses and shattered churches—just as it was left after the war, a terrible relic, the grey bones of a city mouldering under the sun and sky, like a gibbeted felon.

We climbed up the steep street of the modern bazaar, with its cranky little wooden shops and gay Albanian inhabitants, to the big gateway of the old town. A sentinel is always on guard here, but in response to the magic word "Engleske" he smilingly passed us in. It is a dead, creepy, ghostly city, strangled and throttled with a tangle of vines and brambles which rend the walls and wreathe door and arch. A forest of fig trees and cherry plums run riot in room and court, and find root-hole on the topmost battlements. Grass grows knee-high in streets that, even now, are thickly strewn with rusty fragments of shells ; beautiful pieces of mouldings and a window or two tell of the old town of the Venetians, and the remains of fresco still fade and crumble on the church walls. Man has departed, and nature has stepped in, and is surely and silently finishing the work of destruction. We wandered for an hour in this ghostly spot, looking over the battlements, a sheer drop into the valley below, wrestling with the vegetation, and haunted by a feeling that in spite of the blue sky and sunshine none of it was real.

Antivari fell in January 1878, after a long siege. The defenders made a gallant resistance, and, when



RUINS OF ANTIVARI.

forced to surrender, laid a train to the powder magazine. Prince Nikola had a very narrow escape from the ensuing explosion, and the already shattered city was ruined beyond the possibility of repair.

Antivari is marked on the map, but one's first impression of it is that there is now no such place, so scattered are the houses and so scanty the population. Yet it speaks three languages—Turkish, Servian, and Albanian; is divided by three religions—Mohammedan, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic; and has a Roman Catholic Archbishop all to itself. The bishopric is a very old one, established originally at Dioclea, but transferred to Antivari, some say as early as the tenth century. Antivari was Venetian till 1479, and the flock must then have been a large one; now it is reduced to some six hundred souls, all Albanian. At least, so they call themselves. But just as every Mohammedan tells you he is a "Turk," and every one of the Orthodox that he is a Montenegrin, so does every Roman Catholic say that he is an Albanian; and three men who in feature, complexion, and build are as alike as three individuals can well be, will all swear, and really believe, that they all belong to different races. It is not improbable that they are a blend of all three. Most of the inhabitants are Mohammedan. The district is but thinly populated, and is said to be fever-stricken.

Down below on the plain, among the scattered houses, are the ruins of the konak of the former Turkish Pasha, Selim Beg, whose tyranny is still fresh in the minds of the people. The Christians especially were his victims, and many are the tales of the tortures he inflicted. To one unfortunate man he

gave a thousand blows upon the soles of the feet. When Antivari fell, Selim Beg, who was as cowardly as he was cruel, fled in terror to hide himself from the victorious Montenegrins. Fate so ordained that he rushed for shelter to the house of this same tortured Christian. Terror-stricken, Selim recognised his former victim, and abjectly begged for mercy, and the man to whom he had shown none threw himself on his knees before the crucifix and in an ecstasy poured forth his thanks to the Lord, who had thus permitted him to witness the humiliation of his enemy. "He hath thrown down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree." He spared the life of his torturer, and Selim Beg, after making a servile attempt to gain the friendship of Prince Nikola, retired to Corfu, where, according to my informant, he died "like the beast that he was." This curiously dramatic tale, the truth of which is, I believe, undisputed, throws a strong light upon the Albanian and the sanctity of the "guest"—the man who begs shelter.

/ We returned to Prstan and Maria's hospitable roof, and all further explorations in the afternoon were put a stop to by the weather. In rushed Maria and shut and barred the door, for the wind was hurling the rain in sheets against the cottage, and we sat in semi-darkness, lit up now and then by a blaze of lightning. Suddenly there came a loud knocking at the door. I grappled with the iron bar, dragged it back with difficulty, and admitted a tall old Montenegrin, whose wet coat, dripping pony, and travelling-bag showed he had come to stay. His amazement at seeing us was quite funny. I thought of the third

bed and my heart sank. But Maria transferred herself to the kitchen, and gave up her room to the new-comer. It was evident from her excitement that she considered him to be of great importance. He was, in fact, a relative of the Prince.

We had a gay dinner that night. The little Austrian Vice-Consul, who was a Hungarian, turned up, and the old Montenegrin was resplendent in his best clothes, for he was going to the Palace that evening. He was a tall, thin, handsome man, with a most kindly face and exquisite manners, and was painfully anxious that we should have the best of everything the resources of the place could supply. He told us (the Hungarian translating) that he had met two English ladies once before, in 1865! It was a very long journey, he wondered how we had dared to come. When once in Montenegro everyone was safe—but travelling through all the other countries! The English, he had been told, wanted to see and know everything; they travelled everywhere. It must be a very expensive habit! It had perhaps cost us one hundred florins (about £8) to come this distance. We admitted that it had, and he seemed overcome by the amount. "And it takes not only money but *time*," said my companion. He laughed merrily. "Time! What is time? Time is nothing. You live, and then you die." The idea of reckoning "time" tickled him vastly. "Time," said the Hungarian, to show his superior knowledge, "is thought very much of by the English. I have been told that they have a proverb which says 'Time is money.'" We corroborated this report—to the astonishment of both men, for even the Hungarian

thought this was going rather far. The Montenegrin thought it one of the wildest statements he had ever met with, and shook his puzzled head, but his kindly eyes twinkled with fun.

I think I see him now as he wished us good-night—a resplendent figure in his green embroidered coat, his crimson and gold waistcoat, his dark blue knickerbockers, white gaiters and new sandals, bowing himself backwards through the little door with simple dignity, his tall lean form slightly bent by age—a splendid type of the Montenegrin of the old régime. I had a strange feeling of having known him years ago. As he passed from the room I recognised, with a sudden illuminating flash, Chaucer's

> "A knyghte there was and that a worthy man
> That from the timë that he first began
> To riden out, he loved chivalrië,
> Truth and honoure, freedom and courtesië.
> Full worthie was he in his lordës warre. . . .
> He was a very perfect gentle knyghte," etc.

And had he not too "fought often for his faith" against "a hethen in Turkeye"? The truth of the mediæval picture charmed me, and the knight armed with a white cotton umbrella went off in a shandrydan to pay his respects at the Palace on the beach.

The weather never cleared, so we saw no more of Antivari that time. Blinding torrential rain and fierce blasts of wind crashed on the cottage walls. The fat frogs in the pond sat up, and their hoarse shouts, "brek-kek-kek-kek-koax-koax," resounded in every lull of the storm. We waited for the only diligence, and returned by it to Virbazar, and had as travelling companion our old friend of the inn, who,

to our distress, would persist in occupying the small seat back to the horses, and was miserably uncomfortable in consequence. At last neither of us dared stir, as the slightest movement on our part brought an apology for the inconvenience he was sure he was causing us. To make up for this, he tried to tell us all about the road as we went along, though speaking Italian was a great labour to him. He had taken part in the siege of Antivari. "Ah!" he said, "that was terrible. All those weeks. And in the winter. They are brave men, the Turks." He pointed down the valley where, through rifts in the mist, we could see the stream. "The Austrian frontier," he said sadly. "Austrian. And we gave our blood for that land. It was ours. And they took it from us. They gave it to Austria. I do not understand it." I do not think that the affairs of the outer world entered into his head at all. Montenegro and abstract justice were all he wanted. Russia was a distant Providence who would assist the right to prevail. But the wheels within wheels and the shuffling of international politics were a mystery to his primitive, honest soul.

There were many things that puzzled him. We passed a village. "This is all Mohammedan," he said. "There is a mosque below. We have built them a school. It is a good school, but they will not go to it. They say they do not care for education! They are strange people, these Albanians!" He sighed and shook his head. He looked on the village school as the first step on the path of sweetness and light. I had a vision of the Board School child, the "penny dreadful," and the novelette with a paper pattern of the last new sleeve included. I think he

was double my age, but he made me feel very old. We passed a school; the sun had come out at last, and the playground was full of sturdy young Montenegrins. He smiled at them with pleasure, and I was glad to think that he cannot survive long enough to have his dream of enlightened Montenegro shattered. He said good-bye to us not long after, and we saw the last of him as he entered his modest little house on the mountain side.

The remainder of the drive did not take long. We were soon in Virbazar, and once again a cause of local excitement. By the help of a man who spoke a little German, we were made to understand that we could go for nothing in the common boat to the steamer, but that for a florin we could have a very good one all to ourselves. It would have been too unkind to disappoint them, and we were such rare birds! We delighted every one by accepting the offer of a private boat.

When the boat was ready, we did not feel quite so pleased. It was a canoe with two bent-wood chairs arranged in it as a sort of throne at one end, and looked remarkably topheavy. The crew, two tall youths and a boy, were in great glee at having secured such a job, and conducted us to our seats with much ceremony before a large crowd. Off we pushed, and made a lordly, if somewhat wobbly progress down stream. All went well till we were suddenly aroused by the steamer's hooter. Then our crew were seized with a wild and irresistible desire to make a rapid, showy finish to the voyage. "Really," said my friend, "it requires all my faith in Montenegrins to feel safe." The words were scarcely out of her mouth when round

swung the canoe in response to a violent stroke of the paddle, and out she shot, chair and all, as if from a catapult. I hadn't even time to grab at her. A vision of grey skirts, a splash, and she was gone! "Well, never mind; she can swim," thought I, as the waters closed over her. The next instant I had to hurl myself almost over the other side, to right the boat, as the two men, completely scared, both leaned out at once, and as nearly as possible capsized the whole thing. The boy came to my side, the men perceived that the foreign lady was not going to drown, and the panic passed over. Their idea of helping her in was remarkable—they grasped large handfuls and tugged. I believe they pulled her in by one leg. The misery and dismay on their faces when she at last stood up in the boat dripping and streaming were so unutterably funny that we both roared with laughter. They were greatly relieved at this, but most anxious to make her look respectable before going on board the steamer, and wrung her out with such vigour and muscle that I thought she would come to pieces. Then having picked up the chair and hat, they paddled in a subdued and gingerly manner to the steamboat, were shy about accepting the florin, and thanked for it repeatedly. The captain, when he learned our plight, laughed as though he would never stop, and put the one cabin and a bucket at our disposal. We improvised a costume out of two nightgowns, a waterproof, and a brush-and-comb bag, poured olive oil into her watch and brandy into her, and although it rained all the rest of the way back to Cetinje no evil results ensued to either of them. But the episode has become a legend of the lake, and two

years after I heard an Albanian retailing it to an interested audience. The point of the story was the extreme cold-bloodedness of the English, as shown by the heartless way I laughed at my friend's misfortune!

CHAPTER VII

Of the North Albanian

"The wild ass, whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings. He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver."

The difficulty of the "Eastern Question," as it is called, lies in the fact that it is not "a" question at all but a mass of questions, the answering of any one of which makes all the others harder of solution. Of all these, the Albanian question is the hardest to solve, and has not as yet received the attention that it calls for and will shortly compel. Few people in the West—none, I might almost say, who have not been to Albania—can realise that to-day in Europe there lives a whole race, a primeval lot of raw human beings, in a land that is not only almost entirely without carriageable roads, but in which in many cases the only tracks are even too bad for riding, the conditions of life are those of prehistoric barbarism, and the mass of the people have barely even attained a mediæval stage of civilisation.

When the Albanian arrived in Europe none knows, and authorities differ as to his possible relationships with other people, but there is no manner of doubt that he is the direct descendant of the wild tribes that were in the Balkan peninsula

before the Greeks and before the Romans, and have been variously described as Thracians, Macedonians, and Illyrians, according to the part they inhabited. They are described as having been fierce fighters and very wild, and they furnished Rome with some of her best soldiers. Nor were they lacking in brain power; men of barbarian Balkan blood arose who ruled their conquerors and provided the Roman empire with a list of emperors that includes Diocletian and Constantine the Great.

Empires have risen and empires have passed away, and the Albanian has remained the same wild thing. The might of Rome waned; the Servian, the Venetian, and the Ottoman have followed in turn. "Annexed" but never subdued, the Albanian merely retired to the fastnesses of the mountains and followed the devices of his own heart, regardless of his so-called ruler. The Albanian of to-day is nominally under Turkish rule, but nominally only.

The Albanian's position with regard to Turkey is a very peculiar one. The Turk, so his friends tell us, has many admirable qualities, but even those who love him best do not pretend that he has ever attempted to civilise, cultivate, or in any way improve the condition of, his subject races. Under the Turk all development is arrested, and nothing ripens. The Albanian, for the most part, remains at the point where he had arrived when the Turk found him, and except that he has adopted the revolver and breechloading rifle, he has not advanced an inch. He is the survival of a past that is dead and forgotten in West Europe.

His language has troubled philologists consider-

ably. It is a soft, not unpleasant-sounding tongue, full of double "shshshes" and queer consonant sounds; such queer ones that it fits no known alphabet, and he has never found out how to write it down. Quite recently several attempts have been made, mostly by foreigners, to tame this wild language to an alphabet, and three or four different systems have been evolved, all more or less unsatisfactory, as no alphabet unaided can cope with its peculiar sounds. One in which Roman letters are used and plentifully strewn with accents, both above and below, is the most favoured in North Albania, but the Turk does not allow Albanian as a school language, the mass of the people speak nothing else, and Albania remains a land without a literature, without a history, without even a daily paper. To possess and use an unwritten language in Europe in the twentieth century is no mean feat. It carries one back to remote prehistoric times, confronts one with blank unwritten days, and suggests forcibly that the Albanian is probably possessed of raw primeval and perhaps better-left-unwritten ideas. Our search for the live antique cannot take us much further. But the Albanians, in spite of their antiquity, are incredibly young as a people, and blankly ignorant of the outer world. They are still in the earliest stage of a nation's life history, and have not yet advanced beyond the tribal form of life.

At an early date—some say as early as the fourth century, but this seems doubtful — the Albanians became Christian. I have failed to discover what man or men succeeded in thus powerfully influencing this very conservative people. It is a remarkable

fact that, though all the other Christians of the Balkans early declared for the Eastern Church and all the Pope's efforts to reclaim them failed, the Christian Albanians of the North have remained faithfully Roman Catholic.

The mountains of Albania, like those of Montenegro, are a series of natural fastnesses, among which a small army of attack is massacred and a large one starves. Moreover, a large part of the land was not worth the expense of taking. The tribes were exceedingly ferocious, and would have taken a great deal of conquering, but as they had no leader under whom they could combine and make organised attacks, they were not the danger to the Turks that the Montenegrins were. Moreover, the fact that they belonged to the Western and not to the Eastern Church prevented them from making common cause with the other Christian peoples. Once and once only were they on the point of obtaining recognised national existence, and this was under the leadership of the great Skender Beg. But Skender Beg died in 1467, and as yet no one has arisen capable of welding the semi-independent tribes into a solid whole. The Turks purchase peace from them by leaving them to do as they please among their mountains. The Albanians purchase privileges from the Turks by fighting for them and supplying the Turkish army, as they did formerly the Roman, with some of its best soldiers. And Albania to-day remains separated into a number of distinct tribes, which are governed by their own chieftains according to unwritten laws which have been handed down orally from a very remote past. The Turkish "Government" has

practically no say in the matter. At any rate, what it says it has not the power to enforce.

The Albanian is ignorant and untrained, but he is no fool. His one ruling idea has been to go on being Albanian in the manner of his fathers. He perceived quickly all the points that would enable him to do so, and he seized upon them. The mountain people in the more inaccessible parts retained their Christianity. The Albanians who swooped upon the plains vacated by the Serbs found it greatly to their advantage to profess Mohammedanism, and both Mohammedan and Roman Catholic were ready to make common cause against the Christians of the Eastern Church. So indispensable have the Albanians made themselves to the Turkish Government that it has been forced to concede to them every license, lest it should lose their support. Far from making any attempt at civilising them, it has never scrupled to make use of their savagery in warfare, and in warfare the Albanian can be exceedingly savage. Never from the beginning of time has he been taught anything that the Western world thinks necessary; never in the majority of cases has the most rudimentary education come his way. His Mohammedanism and his Christianity he practises in an original and Albanian manner, and in his heart he is influenced mainly by traditional beliefs and superstitions which are probably far older than either. He purchased his freedom by making himself useful to the Turk, and the Turk has left him in the lowest depths of barbarism. The only schools that exist in the land are those of the Italian and Austrian Frati, and such civilisation as the Albanian possesses he owes to the labours of these devoted men. As

for travelling and means of communication, it seems probable that the roads to-day are far inferior to what they were in the time of the Romans. And this is the land of the only one of her subject races with which Turkey has been "friends." The deplorable state of Albania is an even stronger indictment against Turkish "government" than that of Macedonia. To-day the country is practically in a state of anarchy. Little or nothing is done in the way of cultivation; blood-feuds rage, and men are shot for quarrels that are family inheritances and originated for long-forgotten reasons in the dark ages.

Human life is cheap, very cheap. An ordinary Englishman has more scruples about killing a cat than an Albanian has about shooting a man. Indeed, the Albanian has many of the physical attributes of a beast of prey. A lean, wiry thing, all tough sinew and as supple as a panther, he moves with a long, easy stride, quite silently, for his feet are shod with pliant leathern sandals with which he grips the rock as he climbs. He is heavily armed, and as he goes his keen eyes watch ceaselessly for the foe he is always expecting to meet. There is nothing more characteristic of the up-country tribesman than those ever-searching eyes. I have met him many a time in the Montenegrin markets, in the weekly bazaar in his capital, and on the prowl with his rifle far in the country. Up hill or down hill, over paths that are more like dry torrent beds, it is all the same to him; he keeps an even, swift pace, and he watches all the time. Dressed as he is, in tightly-fitting striped leg-gear and in a short black cape, his appearance is extraordinarily mediæval, and he seems to have

stepped straight out of a Florentine fresco. His sash is full of silver-mounted weapons, he twists his tawny moustache, and he admires himself exceedingly. He walks with a long rolling stride, planting his feet quite flat like a camel or an elephant—a gait which gives him an oddly animal appearance. His boldly striped garments, with their lines and zigzags of black embroidery, recall the markings of the tiger, the zebra, and sundry venomous snakes and insects. He seems to obey the laws that govern the markings of ferocious beasts; his swift, silent footsteps enhance the resemblance, and his colouring is protective; he disappears completely into a rocky background. The black patterns vary according to the tribe he hails from. If you ask his name, he generally gives you his tribal one as well, and points over the mountains towards his district. He is So-and-So, for instance, of the Hotti or the Shoshi. Most men, whether Christian or Mohammedan, have their heads shaven; sometimes on the temples only, the rest of the hair standing out in a great bush; sometimes the entire head, with the exception of one long lock that dangles down the back. There are two distinct types of Albanians—a dark type with black hair, brown eyes, and clean-cut features, and a very fair type, grey or blue-eyed, taller and more powerfully built. To this class belong almost all the shaven-headed men with the dangling locks, a row of whom, squatting on their heels, look remarkably like a lot of half-moulted vultures. According to popular belief, the long lock is to serve as a handle to carry home the head when severed. A head, it seems, can be carried only by the ear, or by inserting a finger in the mouth, and

this latter practice the owner of the head, when alive, objects to!

But in spite of his wild-beast appearance and his many obvious faults, the Albanian is by no means all bad. I will almost say that he possesses the instincts of a gentleman. At any rate, he "plays fair," according to his own very peculiar creed. He boasts that he has never betrayed a friend nor spared a foe. It is true that "not sparing" includes torture and various and most horrible atrocities, but it is a great mistake in considering any of the Balkan peoples to make too much capital out of "atrocities." A century ago every race, including our own, considered the infliction of hideous suffering the legitimate way of punishing comparatively small crimes. At the risk of being laughed at, I will say that I do not believe the Albanian is by nature cruel. The life of the poor up-country peasant is hard and rough beyond what anyone who has only lived in a civilised country can realise, and the life of such a man's beasts is of necessity a hard one also. But though I have met him with his flocks on the hillsides and have watched him carefully in street and market, I have never seen the Albanian torturing an animal for the fun of the thing, as does the Neapolitan, the Provençal, and the Spaniard. The revolting "jokes" with lame and helpless animals which can be seen any day in the streets of Naples are not to be met with in the capital of the bloodthirsty Albanian.

I have trusted the Albanian somewhat recklessly, I have been told; I have given him plenty of chances of robbing me, and several of making away with me altogether; but he has always treated me with a fine



MOUNTAIN ALBANIANS IN MARKET, PODGORITZA.

courtesy, and has never taken a mean advantage. He is a brave man, and he is an intelligent man. When he gets the chance, he learns quickly and picks up foreign languages speedily. And when he succeeds in leaving his native land and escaping the awful blight of the Ottoman, he often shows great business capacity, and a surprising power of adapting himself to circumstances.

The ordinary Christian Albanian of the town is very different from the up-country savage, and is a pathetically childish person. He tries very hard to be civilised, but his ideas on the subject are vague. How far he is from understanding the prejudices of the twentieth century the following conversation will show. It is one of many similar. I was walking up the steep, cobble-stony bazaar-street of Antivari late one afternoon in the summer of 1902. The shop owners stood at their doors to see me pass. Presently a man came forward, a tall, fair, grey-eyed fellow. He spoke very politely in a mishmash of Servian and Italian. "I have never seen a foreign woman before," he said, "will you come into my shop and talk to me?" I followed him into his shop. As I was unmistakably from the West, he gave me a tiny box to sit on, and then squatted neatly on the ground himself, called for coffee, and started conversation. He was amazed at my nationality, and showed me some cotton labelled "Best hard yarn" among his goods. Otherwise "England" conveyed no idea to him. England, having no designs on Albania, does not count much as a Power with the ordinary Albanian, but is merely something distant and harmless that does not matter, whereas an eye is kept on

Austria and on Italy, and Russia is regarded with extreme suspicion.

"And you have come all this journey to see us!" he cried. "It is wonderful! I am a Christian Albanian. I am Catholic." Here he crossed himself vigorously to show that he really was, for in these lands your position in this world and the next depends mainly upon how this is done. "Ah, but you should see Skodra!" I told him I knew it well, and he beamed with pleasure. We discussed its charms and the unsurpassed magnificence of its shops. "And it is in the hands of those devils the Turks. Ah, the devils! I came here eighteen years ago with my father, because this is a free land. Here all is safe, but it is a poor country. When I was a boy I was bad. I went to the school of the Frati, but I would not learn. Now I know nothing, and I speak Italian, oh, so badly!" He rocked himself sadly to and fro with his big account-book on his knees. Son of the race with the worst reputation in Europe and born in one of Europe's worst governed corners, he lamented (as which of us has not done?) the lost chances of his youth and his lack of book-learning. To comfort him, I told him his people in Skodra had been very good to me. He cheered up. "Why do you come here?" he asked. "Why do you not travel in my country?" I said that I was told that it was a bad time and the country very dangerous. He considered the question earnestly, and looked me all over. Then he said seriously, "No; my people are very good to women, they will not hurt you. But there is no government, so the bad people do what they like. There are some bad people; Turks, all

Turks. But there is no fear. Truly they will take all your money, but they will not hurt you. That," he said simply, "would not be honest. My people are all honest. You must not shoot a woman, for she cannot shoot you. Now with a man it is different; you must shoot him, or he will shoot you first. Also you cannot take his money if you do not shoot him first." To all of which points I agreed.

"Truly it is a misfortune," he continued, "that there is no government. If we had only a king!" "Do you think you will have one?" I asked. He chuckled mysteriously. The air just then was thick with rumours of a Castriot descendant of the Skender Beg family who at that very moment was reported to be awaiting an opportunity for landing in Albania. Reports of his fabulous wealth were arousing much excitement in the breasts of his prospective subjects, but I fancy a rumour of their custom of "shooting first" must have reached his ears; for, so far, this middle-aged gentleman, whose life has been passed in Italian palazzos, has shown no hurry to take up his inheritance. My friend's ideas were vague and formless, and he could get no farther than "a king for Albania and death to those devils the Turks." After a little more talk, I got up to say good-bye. But he insisted upon my having more coffee first. "It is true that I am poor," he said, "but I am not too poor to give two cups of coffee to one who has come so far to see us. Some day in your country you will see some poor devil from Skodra, and you will be good to him because his people are your friends." Nothing could exceed the grace with which

he proffered hospitality to a stranger guest, but he saw no objection to robbery with murder if committed according to rule; and he prided himself on his Christianity. He shook hands with me very heartily. "A pleasant journey," he said. "Remember me when you meet a Skodra-Albanian in London. I shall never see you again—never, never." The sun was setting rather dismally, and with "nikad, nikad" (never) ringing in my ears and the gaunt ruins of the dead city before me, I felt quite as depressed as the Albanian. Truly the Albanian outlook is not a cheerful one.

In the larger towns, where Turkish troops are quartered and there are plenty of Mohammedan officials, the Christians are in the minority, and their cowed manner makes it fairly obvious that they have a poor time. But the Christians of the mountains very much hold their own. The Mirdite tribe in the heights between the Drin and the coast is entirely Christian and one of the most fiercely independent. The town Christian who has picked up a smattering of education from the foreign Frati, has had a peep at the outside world and vaguely realises the blessings of life in a well-ordered land, sighs for some form of civilised government. Some have even told me that they wish to be "taken" by somebody—"by Austria, or Italy, or you, or anybody. It could not be worse than it is now." But the mass of the people resent most fiercely the idea of any foreign interference, and cling fast to their wild and traditional manner of life. Whether Christian or Mussulman, the Albanian is intensely Albanian. A Christian will introduce you to a Mohammedan and

say, "He is a Turk, but not a bad Turk; he is good like me; he is Albanian." The Christian that the Albanian Mussulman persecutes is, as a rule, the Christian of another race. Between Christian and Mohammedan Albanian there is plenty of quarrelling, but then so there is between Christian and Christian, Mohammedan and Mohammedan. It is of the blood-feud, intertribal kind, played according to rule; for even in Albania it is possible, if the rules be not observed, for killing a man to be murder. When a common enemy threatens, a "bessa" (truce with one another) is proclaimed, and they unite against him. The chief tribes in Northernmost Albania are the Hotti along by the Montenegrin frontier and by the lake; the Shoshi and the men of Shialla and of Skreli in the mountains above the plain of Skodra; the Mirdites in the mountains between the Drin and the coast; and the Klementi on the Montenegrin frontiers by Mokra and Andrijevitza.

The Turks from time to time, when the Albanians have been more than usually lively, by various means (including treachery) have contrived to give the chieftains of one and another "appointments" in remote corners of Asia Minor, but with no results so far, except that the people, deprived of the only man who had any authority over them, became yet more unmanageable. Even the mildest of the town Christians takes a delight in pointing out in the bazaar the tobacco which has paid no duty and saying, "We pay no tax for tobacco; we are Albanian, and we do not like to." The Turks have been unable to enforce this tax, and have to content themselves by searching the baggage that leaves the country and

opening the hand-bags of tourists to prevent tobacco from leaving untaxed.

The Albanians seldom do anything they "do not like," and they are quick to object to any interference. Just now they have been objecting to "reformation" on Austro-Russian lines. The so-called reforms were the laughing-stock of everybody—Servian, Montenegrin, and Albanian—when I was out there last summer. For the Albanian's "unreformedness" has always been his chief attraction in Turkish eyes, and in order to give him every opportunity to behave in an "unreformed" manner, when the spirit moved him, the Turk in recognition of his services in the last war supplied the Albanian lavishly with weapons. Christians throughout the Turkish dominions have always been forbidden to carry arms. The Christian Albanian alone has this privilege. Every mountain man has firearms of some sort, many of them fairly modern rifles. It is one thing to give a man a gun and quite another to take it away from him. When the weapons were merely used upon the wretched unarmed Servian peasants in the plains of Old Servia, not a soul in any part of Europe save Russia paid the smallest attention; but when Stcherbina, the Russian Consul, fell a victim, it was a different matter, and the Turks found themselves in the unpleasant position of having either to offend Russia or to quarrel with their best allies. They proceeded to "reform" Albania on truly Turkish lines. They chased the Albanians out of the territory they had had no business to have swooped upon, and they arrested a few leaders as a matter of form. The Albanians were astonished and rather aggrieved, for

they had done very little more than they had always been given to understand they might do. Further interference might have alienated the Albanians altogether, but as for the sake of appearances and the "reform scheme" some non-Mohammedan officials had to be appointed, the Turks sent an Armenian and a Jew, called respectively Isaac and Jacob, to Skodra. Isaac and Jacob were shot in the main street in the day-time, and as far as I have heard their situations are still vacant. The affair caused some little amount of excitement, nevertheless the Albanians did not wish to resort to violence so long as the "Government" did not make itself disagreeable. There is an old tomb in Skodra, the last resting-place of some minor Mohammedan saint. Shortly after the deaths of Isaac and Jacob some mysterious writing was found upon the tomb. Though written in very ordinary charcoal, it was obviously of more or less divine origin, and the people anxiously waited the deciphering of the message. It proved to be merely a piece of a verse from the Koran conferring a vague blessing upon somebody. "Allah be praised!" said an old hodja, greatly relieved, "it has not told us to go and shoot any more reformers!"

There were a great many more soldiers in Skodra than before. I asked several people the reason of this, in order to see what they would say. They one and all said, with a smile, "The Turks want to reform Albania, but they are obliged to send the soldiers to the towns, because the people in the country do not like them!" The town swarmed with soldiers. An officer rushed at my old guide, whom I was employing to interpret for me in the bazaar, and abused him in

a loud voice till I interfered; a soldier seized and beat very severely a wretched little boy who begged of me, and my efforts on his behalf were of no avail; and these were all the results of the reforms that I saw or heard of in Skodra.

But the idea seems gaining ground that the Albanian in the event of a war may cease to support a dying cause and elect to play a game of his own. When, as must inevitably be shortly the case, Macedonia is under a Christian governor, Albania will be yet more separated from the present seat of government (Constantinople), and the situation will become acute. I heard a good deal about "the king that is to be." Many Serbs even expressed their opinion that the Albanians would be a great deal better if their independence were recognised; saying that at present they are responsible to no one; the Turk incites them to commit atrocities, and washes his hands of all they do; and that left to themselves the Albanians would develop into a fine people. That they have the makings of a fine people is probably true. That they are now capable of self-government is quite another thing. Unlike the other Balkan peoples, they have no past, no former empire. Their history is all "years that the locusts have eaten." What is to become of the Albanians? is one of the hardest of all the Eastern questions. Austria desires to have the answering of it.

CHAPTER VIII

SKODRA

SKODRA is the capital of North Albania. In our maps it is usually called Scutari—a name which causes it to be confused with the other and far better known Scutari on the Bosporus. In a French paper I once read an account of "the Prince of Montenegro's palace on the Bosporus" which described the Prince's country place at Podgoritza, near the lake of Scutari. But the French seldom shine as geographers.

Skodra can be reached from the port of St. Giovanni di Medua, at which a line of Lloyd steamers calls regularly. From thence a ride of nine hours, if you can find a horse, will take you by a very bad road to the town. But even from the Turks, who take a *couleur-de-rose* view of the resources of their land, I failed to learn that the route offered any attractions. It can also be reached by a steamer which, when there is enough water in the river, ascends the Bojana as far as Obotti, whence a barge will wobble you up to the town in an hour or thereabouts.

By far the prettiest and pleasantest route is that from Cetinje by the lake. The *Danitza*, the chief vessel of the Montenegrin squadron according to the

engineer, runs twice a week from Rijeka. It is a clean, tidy little boat built in Glasgow, and is very fairly punctual as to time. The sluggish stream meanders slowly in and out the hills; the channel of deep water serpentines through acres of water-lilies, white and yellow, whose leaves form a dense mat on the surface and a happy hunting-ground for the water birds—duck, moorhens, herons, spoonbills, and pelicans. It is a faerie river, with the magic of the hills upon it, all silent save for the flap of the herons that rise as the boat glides past. Half choked with reeds and weeds which grow rankly luxuriant and rot in tangles, it tells of the making of the fertile lands of Montenegro, for the plains are all ancient lake beds from which the water has retreated. One hears without surprise that fever haunts the river in autumn, but, judging by the healthy appearance of the folk of the neighbourhood, it cannot be of a very virulent type, and at no time of the year have I met with any mosquitoes.

At the river's mouth stand wretched shanties of rock and brushwood, the dwellings of the fisher-folk who reap, in the late autumn, a plenteous harvest. Vast shoals of small fish called "scoranze" rush up the lake from the sea, and are netted in such thousands that, dried and salted, they form one of Montenegro's chief exports.

We pass the island of Vranina and glide out into the great green lake, leave the heights of Montenegro behind us, and see at the farther end the "Accursed Mountains" of Albania purple in the distance. The waters of the lake, according to the Albanians, are endowed with marvellous curative properties. You



Street in Bazaar, Skodra.

must drink of them for a month, and then, no matter what is your disease, you "throw it all up," or else you die! — a severe kill-or-cure remedy upon which I have never experimented. We stop at Plavnitza and at Virbazar to pick up passengers, who come out in big canoes with long, upturned, pointed prows, and the deck is soon crowded with gay baggage and its strange owners, all of whom are usually anxious to make friends. You have only to show an interest in the women's babies and the men's weapons to secure entertainment for the rest of the voyage. "Show the lady your new gun," said a tall Albanian to a youth. He passed over a Russian repeating rifle. A woman who was standing near hastily got out of the way. The Albanian expressed contempt. "It might go off," said the woman. "Well, what if it did?" laughed the Albanian. "Look at me. I've been shot twice. It's nothing. Once I was hit here," he touched his shoulder; "and the doctor cut out the ball with a knife," he added with great satisfaction. "My brother died," said the woman briefly.

So on, in leisurely fashion, till at the end of the lake we see the Crescent flying from an antiquated warship—the red flag and the dying moon that we falsely call the "crescent," for it will never wax again. I confess that I never see it on the borders without a curious thrill. I was brought up to consider the Turk a virtuous and much injured individual. Now I never cross his frontier without hoping soon to be able to witness his departure from Europe.

A shattered fortress frowns on the hill, a row of ramshackle buildings lines the shore, a filthy crowd

fills the custom-house steps. Scutari-Albanese, Skodra at last. Time rolls back from the invisible boundary against which the centuries have beaten in vain, and before us lies the land of a prehistoric people and the life of past ages. Canoes big and little come paddling out in a scrambling hugger-mugger; Montenegro becomes, for the time being, a type of all that is most civilised in West Europe, and we leave it behind us on the steamboat.

The custom-house is a dark den, in which everyone shouts at once and tumbles over everyone else. Smuggle your dictionary, if you have one, in an under pocket; there is no knowing, says the Turk, what a book in a foreign language may contain, so away with them all. There are few things more deadly. Passports are, or are not, asked for according to the amount of political tension. I have heard of two individuals who "rushed" that frontier by the aid of receipted bills, the stamps on which gave them a pleasingly official air, and have twice myself crossed the Turkish frontier "when I hadn't ought." Anyone with an ounce of wits can, I believe. And really there is something to be said for a passport system that is warranted to exclude no one but the fools. The Persian who inspects the passports, on this occasion, merely asked for our names, which were too much for him. We gave him our visiting cards; he copied our Christian names letter by letter, then, exhausted by the effort, he added London as sufficient address, and the ceremony was complete. He is a humble youth, will accept twopence as bakshish, and be your dog for a florin. Like most Turkish officials, he exists, I presume, on the pickings of his office.

And the nation he loves the best in all Europe varies according to the nationality of the individual he is addressing.

One gets used to arriving at Skodra as one does to most other things, but the first visit is an amazement. It will be some time before I forget that day when we emerged for the first time from that custom-house. The captain of the steamer ruthlessly whacked off all the would-be porters except one small boy, and bade him take us to the carriage stand. Off sped the boy like a hare, threading the mazes of the bazaar, dodging round corners and plunging down dark airless passages, his bare feet gripping the pavement, we following hard on his heels, dazzled by sun-spots, blinded in the darkness, confused by the unwonted sights, and slithering on the slippery cobblestones which slope down to the gutter in the middle where the pack-asses walk and the muck accumulates. Finally, after a ten minutes' chase, he halted us breathless on an open space on the farther side of the bazaar, stowed us into the remains of a peagreen fly, and accepted sixpence with gratitude. Off we rumbled down a lane that, but for its wayfarers, might be English, so familiar are its hedges, ditches, bramble and clematis, and we reached the residential part of the town and a decent hostelry in about twenty minutes.

Skodra is not merely an interesting spot to visit from Cetinje; it also belongs rightly and properly to Servian history. From a very early period (it is said the seventh century) it formed part of the Servian territories, and it remained unconquered after the fatal battle of Kosovo. It was the capital of George Balsha, Prince of the Zeta, and was resigned by him into the hands not

of the Turks, but the Venetians, traces of whose architecture yet remain in the town. Though more than once attacked, it was not taken by the Turks until 1479, and then only after a siege of six months. Now the Turk holds Skodra, the Albanian calls it his, and the Montenegrin has never forgotten that it once formed part of the great Servian Empire. According to the Albanian, it is the finest city in Europe, and when he tells you so he is proudly speaking what he believes to be the literal truth. To him it is an ideal spot, the model of what a capital should be, and the centre of his universe.

The Albanian may be caught young, and tamed; he may wander into far countries; he does a good trade in Rome; he may even live years in England; but for him a glory always hangs over the capital of his country. He is rare in London; there are only two or three of him, and he was hard to find. I tracked him to a far suburb, and when he learnt whence I had come his enthusiasm was unbounded. The greatness and magnificence of his country made it not at all surprising that the whole of Europe coveted it, and he gloried in the fact. "Not that Russia, nor them Austria, nor nobody," he said, "was going to have it! English mans silly mans; no understand my people. My people all one week like that"; here he whirled his arms wildly round his head; "next week go back work. Olright. War with Turks? No, ain't going to be none." "Isn't the Turkish government a hard one?" I asked. "There ain't no government," said he gleefully. "What about the taxes?" "Oo pay?" said the Tame Albanian; "you tell me that." Money, he admitted, had to be raised at intervals, but

you always lived in hope that it would be raised in some other district, and if you displayed a proper amount of spirit it was. In the days of his youth he had fought for the Turks. "I Bashi-bazouk," he said with pride; "reg'lar army all them Mohammedans. I Catholic. I good Christian. I Bashi-bazouk." To us Bashi-bazoukdom and Christianity are odd yoke-fellows. To him, quite right and proper.

Head of a flourishing business in London, and clad in a smart overcoat and a billycock hat, he sat down cross-legged on the floor, and his eyes sparkled as he thought of the good old Bashi-bazouk days. To London he came because, as everyone knows, "there is lot of money in London." He knew no word of English and but little Italian; had scarcely any money; his entire stock in trade consisted of some native costumes and some silver filigree work. Failure would seem to have been inevitable, but the pluck and enterprise of the ex-Bashi-bazouk overcame all difficulties. "You think my country wild country," said he; "now I tell you—London; it big bad place. Five million peoples in London. My God, what a lot of criminals! In my country no man starve. He knock at door. 'What you want?' 'I hungry.' 'Olright, you come in.' He give him bread, he give him wine. In London you say, 'You git 'long, or I call a p'leece.'" Wherever a Christian Albanian requires help, he has but to knock at the door of another Christian Albanian and say so. No payment is ever thought of. "How should we live," said a man to me, "if we did not help one another?" Compared with Albania, London, even now in the eyes of the ex-Bashi-bazouk, is a vast and uncivilised

wilderness. Perhaps he is right. Nevertheless, he has found it an excellent place to get on in. His wife—"my Albanian missus," as he called her—had, he confessed, a very poor time. Knowing no language but Albanian, and sighing always for the sun and the shores of the lake of Skodra, she was near weeping when she heard that I had just come from the beloved spot. She wore a red cap with coins round it, and a medal dangled in the centre of her forehead. She seemed singularly out of place in a London back-shop. "By God," said her husband casually, "I'm sorry for that pore fem'le!" And he had a certain sympathy for her, in spite of his cheerful tone.

"Earth hunger," the fierce desire for a particular plot of ground, a plot which reason may point out to be barren, arid, lonesome, and in every way unlovable, but which is the cradle of the race, is and perhaps will always be one of the most unconquerable of human passions. The Tame Albanian says he means to end his days in "the finest city in Europe, Skodra."

It is not a salubrious spot. It is suffocating in summer and flooded in winter. It suffers from heavy rains, and lies low. Its one virtue is that it does not possess mosquitoes, but it makes up for this by being full of tuberculosis. Nevertheless, it grips one's imagination, it arouses the sleeping spirit of first one and then another long dead ancestor who lived in the squalid, glittering Middle Ages and before, and they point the way and they whisper, "Such and such we did, and this also—*do you not remember?*" and strange things that one has not seen before seem

oddly familiar; three or four hundred years ago, they or something very like them were part of one's daily life.

In the bazaar down by the river, with its maze of narrow crooked streets, its crazy wooden booths and its vile pavement, life goes on much as it did with us ages ago. Each trade has its own quarter, as in all Eastern bazaars. And narrow ways, called Mercery Street, Butchers' Row, Goldsmiths' Alley, in many an English town, still tell of the time when so it was in England, in days when timber was as cheap, streets as crooked and narrow, and pavement as bad as they are now in Skodra. And then in England, as now in Skodra, people wore colours—red, blue, green, yellow—and those that could afford it were brave with embroideries. Their wants were few, luxuries there were few to be purchased, and they showed all their worldly goods upon their persons in a blaze of gold and finery on high days and holidays. Skodra does so still, and so does every peasant and many a nobleman in the old-world Balkan peninsula of to-day. Gorgeous garments solidly made they are, for they will not go out of fashion next season, nor the season after, never indeed until Albania is "civilised," and when will that be? So the finery is made to last, and is worn and worn till it descends to "Petticoat Lane" and is bought by the very poor. And when the stitchery is all rubbed off by the friction of years, still the garment hangs together, and is worn until it finally drops off piecemeal in squalid rags. All these garments, however gorgeous without, are lined with coarse materials, often pieces that do not match patched together, for the Albanian ideas of dressmaking are old-world. The modern modiste

has invented cotton and linen costumes lined with silk or satin. Her ancestress, however, acted on the Albanian plan, and the beautiful silk and brocade costumes that have come down to us from Elizabeth's and Charles I.'s time are finished within with coarse and unsightly canvas.

Near the entrance of the bazaar are the workshops of the carpenters, who make and carve great chests to hold the clothes, gaudy things painted peagreen and picked out with scarlet and gold, degenerate descendants of the beautifully carved and coloured chests in which all Europe kept its clothing in Gothic and Renaissance days. The makers of the chests fashion, too, wonderful cradles, coloured in the same gay manner, and in them the babies are packed and slung on pack-saddles or on women's backs. In a land of rough travelling, a strong box in which to pack the baby is a necessity, and doubtless our ancestors used the solid oak cradles we know so well in a like manner. Any day in the bazaar is interesting, for the shopmen nearly all make their own goods. The gunsmiths fill cartridges all day long, for they are an article much in demand, repair rifles and revolvers, and fit fine old silver butts, gorgeous with turquoise or cornelian, on to modern weapons. The silversmith squats cross-legged on the floor with a tray of burning charcoal, some tweezers, a roll of silver wire, and a little box full of silver globules. He works silently, deliberately, with long, nimble fingers picking up the tiny globules and arranging them, snipping and twisting the little bits of wire, building up and soldering with great dexterity the most effective designs — designs with sides that match, but are

never quite symmetrical, like Nature's own work, satisfying the eye in a way that no machine-made article ever will. However rough his workmanship, his idea is almost always good, and he produces daring effects with glass rubies and emeralds of the largest size. In work of this sort the Albanian excels. When he comes to larger constructions, his trick of working by eye and getting balance by instinct is not so successful; his rooms are all crooked, his houses out of the square. Perhaps this is the inevitable outcome of his odd-shaped mind. It is rumoured that three-sided rooms may be found in Skodra, for the simple reason that somehow the builders, owing to a nice confusion of angles, could not squeeze in a fourth wall.

They are an honest, civil lot, these Skodra tradesmen; and though your money will probably fly from hand to hand and disappear round the corner, the change always comes back correctly in the end, and you pass the interval drinking coffee with the shop owner. If your purchases are many, he will kindly send out to buy a piece of common muslin in which to wrap them; for Skodra does not supply paper, and when you have bought a thing, conveying it away is your own affair. We in London are used to having paper included lavishly with the goods, but an old lady once told me that in her young days the fashionable drapers of London would lend linen wrappers to those who bought largely, and the said wrappers had to be returned next day. In this particular Skodra is not more than eighty or ninety years behind London.

To see the bazaar in all its glory one must go on a Wednesday; that is "bazaar day," and all the folk of

the surrounding country flock thither. "Which is bazaar day in London?" I have been asked any number of times by Serb, Montenegrin, and Albanian. And "Every day is bazaar day in London" is the one thing that gives them any idea of London's size. The five million inhabitants, railway trains, electric lights, and so forth, are all quite beyond their ken; but "bazaar every day" stuns and dazzles them, and at once calls up a picture of vast crowds and illimitable wealth. On "bazaar day" Skodra is thronged with strange types—costumes bizarre, grotesque, wild and wonderful, and the road from an early hour is crowded with flocks, pack-animals and their owners. Flocks as strange as their drivers, for the ram of the pattering drove of sheep is often dyed a bright crimson, and his horns instead of curling neatly round by the sides of his head are trained to stand up like those of an antelope with their tight twist pulled out to long spiral. His fashion is an even older one than that of his masters, for we find the ram with the same head-dress in early Egyptian frescoes. For some of these people it is three, even four days' tramp down to the market from their mountain homes, and over the rough tracks the women carry incredibly heavy burdens; not only the bundles of faggots or hides that are for sale, but the baby in a big wooden cradle is tied on the top. The men march in front with their rifles and look after the flocks. Firearms have to be left outside the bazaar. It is true that a good number of people are still privileged to carry them, but I have haunted the bazaar quite alone so often that I have ceased to believe in the many blood-curdling tales about its murderous possibilities with which travellers are



SKODRA.

usually favoured. Nor, when you once know your way, do I think any guide or kavass necessary. It is very dull with a kavass, for no one comes to play with you. I tried it once for an hour or so, and never again. But though you see no murders, you may see cases where apparently vengeance has been satisfied with mutilation, and meet a man whose nose has been cut off so lately that a bloodstained rag covers the vacancy. And the mountain-man swaggers up to the cartridge shop and fills the many spaces that have occurred in his belt since last he came to market.

I have no space to describe the dresses of the various tribes; the women with stiff, straight, narrow skirts boldly striped with black that recall forcibly the dresses upon the earliest Greek vases; the great leathern iron-studded belts; the women with cowries in their hair; the wild men from the mountains in huge sheepskin coats with the wool outside; town Christian women blazing in scarlet and white, masses of gilt coins, silver buttons and embroidery; Mohammedan ladies shapeless in garments which may be correctly termed "bags," or to be still more accurate, "undivided trousers," of brilliant flowered material, not only thickly veiled but with blue and gold cloth cloaks clasped over the head as well, shrouding the figure and allowing only a tiny peephole through which to see; poor women, veiled down to the knees in white, looking like ghosts in the dark entrances; Turks in turbans, long frock-coats and coloured sashes; little girls their hair dyed a fierce red and their eyebrows blackened. They all unite in one dazzling and confused mass which one only disentangles by degrees, and when I plunged for the first time into

that unforgettable picture, saw the blaze of sunlight, the dark rich shadows, the gorgeousness, the squalor, the glitter, the filth, the colour, the new-flayed hides sizzling in the sun and blackened with flies, the thousand and one tawdry twopenny articles for sale on all hands, I thought with a pang of the poor Albanian "fem'le" who was passing weary, colourless hours in a grey London suburb, and understood the sickness of her soul.

Of all the old-world things in the town—older than the neatly cut flints for the flintlocks that are still in use, older than the tight mediæval leg-gear—the loose tunic bound round the waist by a sash and the full drawers tied round the ankle, as worn by the common Mohammedan men and boys of the town (a very ordinary dress throughout the East) is the oldest. It is the dress of the men on the early Greek vases; of the Dacians on Trajan's column; of the captive Gauls in the Louvre; the dress, in short, of all the "barbarians," the "braccati" of the Romans. The Romans and the toga and the chlamys are all gone, and here, in the same old place, the barbarians are cutting their skirts and trousers on the same old pattern, and are very fairly barbarous still. But they have learned to shave their heads and to wear a white fez, and with this modification we at once recognise them as our old friend Pierrot, whose history points to the fact that he really did come from the Near East. Venice held all the Dalmatian coast and part of Albania. Venice was the home of masques and pantomimes, and among the existing prints of the pantomime characters is one "Zanne" in the familiar "Pierrot" dress. What more likely than that the

fool of the piece should be represented as a boor from a conquered province? To this day, in so-called civilised towns, an unhappy foreigner is still apt to be considered a fair butt by the lower classes. Zanne came to England, and figures among the sketches for one of Ben Jonson's masques.

Skirts with us are purely feminine garments, but the skirt of the barbarian has grown in Albania into a vast unwieldy kilt, and the Mohammedan Bey swaggers about in a cumbrous fustanella which reaches down to his ankle and sticks out like an old-fashioned ballet-girl's skirt. He cannot work because he wears the fustanella, and it is said that he wears the fustanella in order to be unable to work. Forty metres of material go to this colossal and ridiculous garment. The greater part of the fulness is worn in front, and sways clumsily from side to side as the wearer walks. The Greeks adopted it in a modified form, but it must be seen on an Albanian to realise its possibilities. The Albanians have rarely, as yet, succeeded in doing anything in moderation. After seeing what the men were capable of in the skirt line, I was not surprised that the shepherd-folk out on the plains began by asking my guide with great interest if I were a man or a woman.

But we must leave the bazaar, though many days do not exhaust its interests; leave the butchers' quarter, a harmony in pinks and blood-red, where the dogs lap red puddles, the butcher wipes a wet knife across his thigh, and the people run about with little gobbets of mutton for dinner, a fiercely picturesque place sicklied with the smell of blood; leave the "Petticoat Lane" of Skodra, where the cast-off finery

of Albanian ladies and the trappings of beauty are displayed alongside heaps of the most hopeless rags. Aged crones as antique as their wares squat upon the ground. The sunlight blazes on the gold stitchery till it sparkles with its pristine splendour; the hag in charge of it, Atropos-like, points out its beauties with a large pair of shears, while Lachesis spins a woollen thread alongside. I vow they are the Fates themselves selling the garments of their victims.

By the afternoon the crowds of country-folk are already reloading the pack-animals, decked with blue bead headstalls and amulets to keep off the evil eye, that await them at the entrance of the bazaar, where the gipsy smiths and tinkers work, half stripped, a-ripple with tough muscle, under little shanties made of sticks and flattened-out petroleum cans. How the land got on before the petroleum can was introduced it is hard to imagine. In the hands of the gipsies it is the raw material from which almost everything is made.

The peasants load their beasts—they are adepts at pack-saddling and you rarely see a sore back—and trail slowly across the plains towards their mountain homes. The bazaar is shut up, darkness comes on fast, and belated foot passengers pick their way with lanterns.

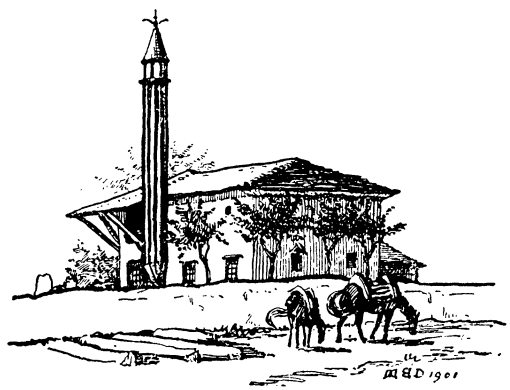
Night in Skodra is uncanny. The half-dozen tiny oil lamps do not light it at all. When there is no moon, the darkness is impenetrable and absolute, save perhaps for a long streak of light from the door-chink of the next shop and the lighted windows of the mosque opposite. The black silhouettes of praying figures rise and fall within them, but the mosque itself is swallowed up in the surrounding blackness.

A spark appears on the roadway, someone passes with a lantern and disappears. The street is dead still till a sword clanks and the patrol marches past. The lights are extinguished in the mosque. The darkness is dense and dead, and there is no sound. It is only nine o'clock, but all Skodra seems asleep.

Skodra the town, as distinguished from the bazaar, has not a great deal to show. It is a big town with some 40,000 inhabitants, and as all houses of any size stand in a large yard or garden, it covers much space. Here every man's house is his castle, and the high walls are not only for seclusion but for defence. Skodra, from time to time, receives a rumour that thousands of armed men are marching upon it. All the shops are shut, the guards are doubled on the bridges, and folk shut themselves in their houses. The phantom army does not appear, and in two or three days things are going on as before. "But it will come some day," said a man, when I laughed about a reported army of forty thousand that had never turned up.

The Mohammedan quarter has the air of being far more wealthy and high-class than the Christian. The houses that one gets a glimpse of through the gateways are large and solid. But the streets are lonesome and deserted. Now and then I met a couple of veiled ladies, who, if no man were in sight, usually strove hard to make my acquaintance, and partially unveiled for the purpose. But as I know neither Turkish nor Albanian, we never got farther than the fact that I was "a Frank" and a deal of smiling and nodding. Two in particular walked a long way with me, chattering all the time, and for the benefit of the

inquisitive, I must say that they were both very pretty girls. In Skodra not only the Mohammedan but the town Roman Catholic women go veiled, though the country-folk do not, and until married are often kept in a seclusion which to our ideas is little short of imprisonment — facts which throw a strong light upon the unlovely state of society which has made them necessary; for the etiquettes of society are usually based upon raw and unpleasant truths. It is



MOSQUE, SKODRA.

idle folly to ascribe Western and twentieth-century ideas to these primitive people, but the fact remains that the life of the average Albanian woman is an exceedingly hard one. That of the country-folk is a ceaseless round of excessive physical toil; that of the poorer town woman is, I am told, often spent at the loom from morning till night—labour that only ends when the Black Fate snips her thread.

Though the Mohammedans far outnumber the Christians in the town, the mosques are all small plain buildings, only saved from ugliness by the elegance

of their tall slim minarets, nor are there many of them. With a grotesque lack of a sense of the fitness of things, the Turkish army, when it has a washing-day, uses the largest graveyard as a drying-ground, and a shirt or a pair of drawers flaps on each tombstone. It was not until I saw this sight that I had any idea that the Turkish soldiers ever had a washing-day. A lean, unkempt, ragged lot of poor dirty devils with scowling faces, they look more as if returning from a disastrous campaign than as if quartered in the barracks of the capital. And the sight of them is enough to make one have no difficulty in believing the tale that they not unfrequently help themselves to mutton from across the frontier when the "Government" is discreetly gazing in another direction. Their powers of endurance in war-time are not surprising when their life during "peace" is taken into consideration. A fight in which you may loot all you want must be a pleasant holiday by comparison.

The Christian quarter of Skodra looks less flourishing, and there are crosses on some of the doors, otherwise the two quarters are much the same. The Roman Catholic townsfolk wear a special costume. That of the men is odd; that of the ladies perhaps the most hideous that has been ever devised. Their gigantic trouser-petticoats of purple-black material, in multitudinous pleats, fall in an enormous bag that sticks out all round the ankles, and impedes the wearer to such an extent that she often has to hold it up with both hands in front in order to get along. With her face veiled and the upper part of her body covered with a scarlet, gold-embroidered cloak with a square flap that serves as a hood, she

forms an unwieldy, pear-shaped lump—grotesque and gorgeous. The streets here are apt to be flooded in wet weather, and the side walks are high. Big blocks of stepping-stones, like those at Pompeii, afford a way over the road, nor do carts seem to find any difficulty in passing them.

The cathedral of the Roman Catholics is a large brick building, some fifty years old, with a tall campanile, standing in grounds which are surrounded by a high wall. Its great blank interior, owing to lack of funds, has not suffered much from "decoration." At the gateway the women loosen their veils and go into God's house with uncovered faces—beautiful faces, with clean-cut, slightly aquiline noses, clear ivory skins, red lips, and dark eyes with long lashes. There are benches in the nave, but a large proportion of the congregation, especially the country-folk who crowd in on feast days, prefer to sit on the floor; they spread a little rug or handkerchief, kick off their shoes and squat cross-legged on it as in a mosque; women with their breasts covered with coins that glitter as they sway to and fro in prayer; mountain-men with their cartridge belts upon them ready for use against a brother Albanian. A fine barbaric blaze of colour, scarlet and scarlet and scarlet again. The service begins; harshly dissonant voices, loud and piercing, chant the responses; and the deep sonorous voice of the young Italian at the altar rings out like the voice of civilisation over the barbaric yowling of the congregation. As he mounts the scarlet and gold pulpit there is a hush of expectation. The sermon, in Albanian, is a long one, and the crowd hangs breathless on his words. His delivery and his action are simple and



SHOP IN BAZAAR, SKODRA.

dignified, and I watch him sway his congregation with deep interest, though I can understand no word. He is working up to a climax, and he reaches it suddenly in a sentence that ends in the only non-Albanian word in the sermon, "Inferno." The word thunders down the church on a long-rolled "rrrr," and he stands quite silent, grasping the edge of the pulpit and staring over the heads of the people. There is a painful hush, that seems like minutes. Then he suddenly throws himself on his knees in the pulpit and prays. Violently moved, his flock prostrate themselves in a passion of entreaty, and those who sit on the ground bend double and touch the floor with their foreheads.

The barbaric gaudy congregation, the ascetic earnest young teacher, the raucous wailing voices that rang through the great bare church, made up a poignantly impressive, quite inexplicable whole. I gazed upon the praying crowd and wondered vainly what their idea of Christianity may be and what old-world pre-Christian beliefs are entangled with it. The Albanian clings to these through everything, and in spite of all their efforts the Frati have as yet made little or no headway against blood-feuds. The Albanian has never adapted himself to anything; he has adapted the thing to himself. He practises the Christianity upon which he prides himself, with the ferocity with which he does everything else. He fasts with great rigour, wears a cross as a talisman, and is most particular to make the sign of the cross after the Latin and not after the Orthodox manner. But his views are very material. "Have you got the Holy Ghost in your country?" I have been

asked more than once. And an affirmative answer brought the enthusiastic remark, "Then England is just like Albania!" The life of Benvenuto Cellini is interesting reading after a tour in Albania, for it represents with remarkable fidelity the stage in religious evolution to which the wild Albanian of to-day has arrived.

Difference of religion is usually given as the reason for the fact that the Albanian has almost invariably sided with the enemies of the other Christian peoples of the Balkans. One suspects, however, that it is rather "the nature of the beast" than the particular form of belief that he has chosen to profess that has cut him off, his fierce independence rather than his religious creed, and the more one sees of him the more probable does this appear.

There are very few Orthodox Albanians in Skodra. Such as there are wear the same dress as the Mohammedans, but the women are not veiled.

Skodra, except in the way of customs, possesses few antiquities, save the ruins of the old citadel which crown the hill overlooking the town. These are said to be of Venetian origin and to have been fairly perfect till some thirty years ago, when the local Pasha, having heard of lightning conductors, determined to buy one for the better protection of the tower, which was used as a powder magazine. To this end he chose a handsome brass spike, and then found he was expected to pay extra for a lot of wire. Being economical, he took the spike only, had it fixed to the topmost tower, and anxiously awaited a storm. It soon came! The handsome brass spike at once attracted the lightning. Bang

went the powder magazine, and the greater part of the citadel was shattered before his astonished gaze. The hill now is crowned with a heap of ruins, but as strangers are strictly forbidden to visit it, I presume the Turks have constructed something that they consider a fortress among them.

At the foot of this hill are the ruins of a small church. Big white crosses are painted upon it, and it is considered a very holy spot. Every Christian peasant stops as he passes it and crosses himself, and though all that is left are fragments of the walls, I have been told that a service is still occasionally held in it. The only other relic of past days in the neighbourhood is the fine stone bridge with pointed arches near Messi, about four and a half miles from Skodra across the plain. This is undoubtedly Venetian work. The stream it spans is a raging torrent in the wet season, and has wrought much damage in the town and devastated a large tract of the plain. The rest of this is covered with short turf and bracken fern, and grazed by flocks of sheep and goats. The herdsmen, shaggy in sheepskins and armed with rifles, the strings of country-people and pack-animals slowly tramping to or from market, and the blue range of rugged mountains make up a strange, wild scene. Nor, if you take an Albanian with you to do the talking,—for everyone "wants to know,"—does there appear to me to be any danger in wandering there.

Skodra is the capital, but it has no decent road to its port. It is situated on the outlet of the lake, but though a little money and work would make the Bojana River navigable for small steamers, and all the

shores of the lake would thus be put in direct communication with the sea, nothing is done, and this, which should be the chief trade route for North Albania and a large part of Montenegro, is of little use. Skodra's exports are not enough for Skodra to worry about greatly. Hides, tobacco, some sumach root and bark for dyeing and tanning, some maize and fruit, and a number of tortoises, which the Albanian finds ready-made, form the bulk of the exports of the neighbourhood. Skodra is one of the few capitals which you can leave with the certainty of finding it exactly the same next year.

CHAPTER IX

SKODRA TO DULCIGNO

I HAVE on one point, at any rate, a fellow-feeling with the Albanian. Skodra fascinates me. When I am not there—only then, mind you—I am almost prepared to swear with him that it is the finest city in the world, and a year after my first visit I found myself again on the steamer, hastening Skodra-wards, with the intention of riding thence to Dulcigno. Skodra greeted me warmly as an old friend. That exalted official the Persian beamed upon me and said that for Mademoiselle a passport was not necessary, the customs let me straight through, and I was soon settled comfortably in my old quarters. The Persian, because, so he said, of our long friendship, but really because he was aching with curiosity, called upon me at once in the crumpled and unclean white waistcoat in which he fancies himself, and chatted affably.

He comes, so he tells me, of a most exalted family; were he only in Tehran, instead of, unfortunately, in Skodra, he would be regarded with universal respect and veneration. As I have no idea of the standard required by Tehran, I condoled with him gravely, and accepted his statement. It was a great joy to Skodra, he informed me, that I should have come alone. No other lady had ever done so.

Only une Anglaise would; for the English alone understand Turkey — are her dear friends. Here his enthusiasm was unbounded. Upon Turkish soil every English person was as safe as in England. This was owing to the excellence of the government. "There is," he said, "no government like ours." I told him the latter statement was universally believed, and pleased him greatly. He soared to higher flights. It was astonishing, he said, and most annoying, that false accounts of Turkey were published by foreign papers. He would go so far as saying that they never told the truth. It was even said that in parts of Turkey there had been considerable disturbances lately. Parole d'honneur, this was quite untrue. Never had the land been in a more tranquil or flourishing condition, and as a proof of his assertion he told me that his information was entirely derived from official sources.

Now at this time, "according to foreign papers," Russia, aided by Turkish troops, was vainly trying to force a Consul into Mitrovitza, encounters between troops and desperate villagers were reported almost daily from Macedonia, trains on the Salonika line had been more than once "held up," and the governor of the very district we were in had been shot at some months before. But he burbled on of the beauty of the British Government and of the support it always afforded in the hour of need. Everything desirable, including liberty and equality, flourished under the Crescent, he said. At this moment a poverty-stricken little gang of ragged men tramped past, bearing in turns upon their shoulders a long battered old coffin, from which the paint was almost worn away.

They stopped to shift it nearly opposite us. It was lidless, and the dead man's white face, his knees, and his great sheepskin stood above its edge. He lay in his clothes just as he died. The Persian, with ill-timed merriment, pointed to the corpse. "A dead sheep, Mademoiselle!" said he contemptuously. He addressed some remark in an unknown tongue to the mourners. The coffin-bearers passed sullenly. "A dead Christian," I said to him sharply. "Yes, yes, a Catholic," he admitted. I stared hard at his shifty eyes; he hastily dropped into politics again, and I thought about equality.

Not being desirous of emulating Miss Stone, and as the Persian for imaginativeness rivalled his fellow-countryman, Omar Khayyam, I collected advice from various quarters. Great as were the joys of Skodra, Dulcigno was my object; but I did not seem to get any nearer arriving there. Everybody combined to try to frighten me off the ride. Having played about Skodra for over a week, however, I persuaded myself that the Albanian was a friendly and much maligned being, took all the responsibility upon myself, and decided to carry out my plan. I fixed the matter up with a rush. Dutsi, the man who was to guide me, turned up early in the morning with a sturdy pony; I said farewell, and started through the town on foot. It was no use my mounting, said Dutsi mournfully, till we had passed the passport place; the Turks were very bad about passports—*diavoli*, in fact. This with a gentle air of resignation, as if it were highly possible it would not be worth while to mount at all. We walked along the banks of the Bojana till we came to its point of union with the Drin. Over the

Drin is a big wooden bridge with a fantastic arch of wood across it, and on the bridge stood soldiers in the dirty rags that the Turks call a uniform. "Your passport," said Dutsi hurriedly. I produced it; but as none of the authorities could read anything but Turkish, it was useless. Dutsi looked anxious. "They want your name," he said, and looking at the passport-case, which is stamped "Mary E. Durham," he read out "Marie" with triumph. Everyone was satisfied. I entered Skodra as "Edith of London"; I left it as no less a person than "Mary of England." Great and obvious are the blessings of the passport system. I gave a twopenny bakshish, and we passed on to the bridge. Dutsi was a changed being; his spirits rose as soon as the Turks were left behind. He told me he was much attached to the English, and that now I might mount.

After an hour or so of enjoyment, the road got worse, and then rapidly worse still, and fuller and fuller of water. The Bojana was in flood, and the waters were out. My beast splashed through water almost up to his belly, and Dutsi took circuits through people's maize fields. Then it got so bad that we left the track and laboured fetlock-deep through ploughed land, and saw ox-carts bogged to the axle in the sea of mud that was all that was left of the road. And after a little of this, the track was lost altogether, and we wandered round through tracts of mud and streams, forced a passage through an osier bed only to come to a swirling sheet of water, tried back, and finally made for a hovel and hallooed for help. The owner came out, took us over his own grounds, and started us again on something like a path, which

soon disappeared. Dutsi, however, now knew the direction, and the pony was extraordinarily clever at climbing greasy banks, boring his way through the willows on top, and scrambling over the ditch the other side without even once "pecking." We came to some low hills, and got on to dry ground at last. Then Dutsi discovered to his distress that my umbrella, which he had tied to the back of the saddle, was gone. This was a sad loss, but it was evidently gone beyond recall. Dutsi in despair laid the blame entirely on those devils the Turks, who made such devils of roads, and were such devils to the good Christians that they were unable to improve the country. "Oh, the devils!" said Dutsi; "they have lost your devil of an umbrella." This relieved his feelings, and when I pointed out the inky clouds that were rapidly rising and said we had better hurry, he remarked piously, that though it looked like rain he believed that, in consideration of the loss of my umbrella, God would not permit it, for He does not like the Turks. Thus comforted, we proceeded, over low ground again, splashing over fields that, properly drained, should be magnificent water meadows, but were liquid slush in which great yellow spearwort flourished. At last we came to the river's edge and the ferryman's hut.

A great barge was dragged alongside the bank and the pony persuaded to enter it. I sat on the edge and curled up my toes, for the bottom was covered with water, and we were soon off. The boat was towed some distance up stream and let loose, and the force of the current combined with skilful steering swept it across. Dutsi was now happy; we should

have a "buona strada" all the way! He began telling me of a noble and wealthy Englishman, one X. of the Foreign Office, to whom he had acted as guide in the spring in a shooting expedition, one of the best and kindest signors that existed, and we progressed slowly over the "buona strada," which was like a dry torrent bed, for we were now back among the limestone rocks again. Presently we arrived at a stream with a plank across it. "The frontier, the frontier!" cried Dutsi, and, as we set foot on the other side, he announced that we were in a free and Christian land, Montenegro! Now, he said, we would rest and eat some bread. So we sat down under a tree, and I discovered that the improvident creature had brought nothing more filling with him than a few cigarettes. As my chances of getting to Dulcigno depended entirely on him, I supplied him with two of my three eggs and three-quarters of my loaf, and we were just setting to work when we heard a loud "tom-tom-tomming." Out of the bushes came a gang of seven very black gipsies, four muzzled bears, and a loaded ass. Between them they carried five rifles and seven revolvers, and they certainly looked the "Devil's Own." The pony snorted and stamped at the bears, and would have bolted had he not been tied fast; we hadn't a weapon between us, and Dutsi looked so green that I thought "all the fun of the fair" was about to begin. "Dobar dan," said I, through a mouthful of egg, for it is always as well to be civil. They made no answer, but scowled upon us and went surly by, single file, the boy who was in charge of the bears beating his tambourine rhythmically the while. As soon as the last of them had disappeared round

the corner, Dutsi announced that they were very, very bad and all Turks (*i.e.* Moslems), and that now we must have a long rest. He was obviously afraid of catching them up.

Meanwhile the storm clouds were rapidly catching us up. We waited some ten minutes. I insisted upon starting then, and came upon the gipsies almost immediately, for they were making the bears dance in the yard of a lonely cottage on one side of the road. Dutsi caught the pony's head, led him round silently on the grass and behind some bushes, and we passed unseen, to his great relief. As he was very tired, I dismounted and gave him a ride. The free and Christian road was no better than the heathen one, but we got on very cheerfully for some way. Then the floodgates of the heavens opened, and, in spite of the loss of my umbrella, the rain came down in sheets. Dutsi most gallantly offered me his, but as I had a mackintosh I begged him to keep it for himself, and remounted and rode through the worst rain I was ever out in. Luckily we had just arrived at a decent road, and we took shelter under the first large tree. The whole landscape disappeared behind the grey torrent, and out of it suddenly rushed the wildest figure I have ever seen—an old, old woman, tall and lean, clad only in a long pair of cotton drawers tied under her armpits. Her lank wet hair streamed from her head like long black snakes, and she stood out in the rain and waved her arms madly round like mill sails, as she poured out a torrent of Albanian. "She wants us to go to her house," said Dutsi. "It is over there," as she pointed into the rain, "half an hour away! I tell her, 'No, thank you.'" Still the old

woman gesticulated and shouted. "Falé miners" (thank you), repeated Dutsi over and over again in a deep sing-song. She made a last effort. "One million times in the name of God, she asks us to come," said Dutsi, with a smile. "She says she can do no more." Nor could she, apparently, for she disappeared again into the rain as suddenly as she had come. "It is better to sit here in the dry," said Dutsi. "How far is it to Dulcigno?" I asked. "Two hours at least," said Dutsi. I wondered miserably whether the saddle-bags were water-tight, and thought of my only change of clothes; and as there was no prospect of food, and I had only had one egg and a little bread since early morning, I attacked my Brand's beef lozenges and blessed the maker.

When the storm lifted, we started again, and through sun and storm arrived in a heavy shower in sight of Dulcigno just as that most melancholy sound, the clink of a loose shoe, caught my ear. I suggested the best inn to Dutsi. He said dismally, "There is only one," and we climbed the hill and entered the town,—a row of houses, a forge, a mosque, and some shops,—and to my dismay pulled up at a tiny Albanian drink-shop. "Ecco l'albergo," said Dutsi. I jumped off the pony and hurried in, out of the downpour. I was streaming, Dutsi was streaming, the pony had cast his shoe, and we had been nearly nine hours instead of five and a half on the way. It was a case of any port in a storm. The stripey-legged owner welcomed me effusively in broken Italian, and led me through into an earth-floored kitchen and up a few wooden steps to a "molto bella camera" over the shop, talking excitedly. It was a minute apartment, quite

unfurnished, except that a trouser-legged lady was curled up fast asleep on a heap of mattresses on a sort of divan of packing-cases. "My wife," said he, giving her a poke, whereupon she jumped up like a jack-in-the-box, threw her arms round my neck, and kissed me three times. Dutsi appeared with the saddle-bags. He glanced round the room appreciatively, for it was the sort of place he felt at home in, and said it was "dosta dobra" (pretty good), also that the people were very good and all Christians. Then he very considerately suggested that I had better change my clothes and would perhaps prefer to be alone, and they left me. My "change," wrapped in a sheet of waterproof and in saddle-bags, was quite dry, and my mind relieved on this point was free to contemplate the possibilities of the establishment. One window had once had glass in it, the other never. Except the heap of bedding, there was nothing in the room but a rifle, a cartridge belt, and a picture of St. George. The rain was falling in sheets; seeking for other quarters would result in soaking my only dry clothes; moreover, I was tired. I decided to stay in shelter for the present, and descended to the "kitchen."

The floor was of earth and sloped up, for the house was built on the hillside. In one corner Dutsi, my host, and another striped gentleman were all squatting on their haunches round a splendid wood fire which blazed on a big slab of stone; Madame was making coffee, and Monsieur lemonade. A place was made for me at once, and I joined the squatting circle. They were most anxious about my health, felt me to see if I were really dry; and Madame, as

she was unable to make me understand, kissed my hands and face. The fire had been lighted expressly for me, said Monsieur, and now they would all enjoy it. I appealed to Dutsi in an undertone about the possibility of better accommodation, but he was positive about this being the only inn. A room in a private house could be found perhaps by the sea, but that was half an hour away; moreover, these were most excellent people, and had lent him a coat and a pair of shoes. Their hearty friendliness filled me with trust from the first; the extreme primitiveness of the place attracted me. I said to myself, "You wanted to see the Albanians, and the Lord has delivered you into their hands. This is a unique opportunity," and I settled in and tried to behave like one of the family. Dutsi took a tender farewell of me, and begged me to give his love to X. of the Foreign Office, that bravest, noblest, and most admirable signor in the whole world, and to tell him that he (Dutsi) was praying God night and day to protect him and bring him back to Albania. Then the rest of the company, whose curiosity had been aroused, were told of the glories of X., and the fact that I was his compatriot counted greatly in my favour; for in these out-of-the-way corners the reputation of the Empire depends entirely on the conduct of the two or three individuals who happen to have represented it, and the responsibility upon them is heavy indeed.

Dutsi departed, and I felt a bit lonesome; but the company rejoiced over me like children over a new kitten. They patted and stroked me, and broke off little pieces of bread for me, and, as I could not understand Albanian, grunted and burbled over me like

friendly guinea-pigs. The place was thick with pungent wood smoke, which escaped from a window near the roof. The rafters overhead were black and smoky, the walls rough stone; there was a heap of logs and brushwood in the farther corner, and a few pots hung on pegs. Otherwise there was nothing. In England, even in Anglo-Saxon times, my ancestors had tables and chairs. I sat cross-legged by the blazing logs with streaming eyes, and wondered which century I was in. And the firelight danced on the only up-to-date thing in the room, the barrels of a rifle and revolver and the brass tops of the cartridges in the belt of the man next me. For living, we can go on as before with the same old things, but when it comes to killing we really require something better. From time to time Monsieur retired to the bar to deal out rakija to customers, and the fame of my arrival soon spread. If the customers were of lowly standing, they were invited in to see me; if, on the contrary, they were great men, Montenegrin captains for instance, Monsieur asked me if I would be so good as to step out and speak to them. These were all huge, all courteous, all friendly, and all unable to speak anything but Servian. Rain still poured, but as everyone who came to see me took a glass of something, trade was good. One gentleman who spoke Italian was such a tremendous swell that I asked him if there were any better hotel in the place. This surprised him, and he replied that there was no other, and the cooking here was excellent. Having interviewed some half-dozen captains and a lot of shaven-headed up-country Albanians, I retired to the kitchen again, and began

drying my wet under-garments one by one — an operation that interested Monsieur so deeply that he insisted upon helping, and singed them freely. In came, in a dripping overcoat, a strapping, cheerful, great Montenegrin, who hailed me joyfully in Italian, sat down, and, smiling gleefully, remarked in English, "a cat, a dog, a 'orse, a 'and, a man," and some dozen other words. Everyone looked on in admiration. I returned in Servian, to his delight, and he explained to me that he was kavass to the British and Foreign Bible Society in Constantinople, and was home for a holiday. His friendliness was unbounded; he insisted that I was to breakfast with him next morning, and demanded to know what I was going to have for supper. He knew all about the English, he said, and I must have roast beef. Monsieur retired to a corner and came back with the carcase of a lamb and a caldron. The kavass was greatly opposed to this; Monsieur was much excited; anything I required he was willing to try! A great debate ensued. They appealed to me, and I chose the lamb and the pot, for the mere idea of an Albanian culinary experiment alarmed me. So Madame fetched a hatchet, and the lamb was chopped in chunks on the hearthstone and put into the caldron with a sheaf of onions, and I reflected that I had at least secured mutton broth. The kavass was greatly disappointed, as he wished to show them how to make a real English dinner. I thanked him for his trouble, promised to breakfast with him, and he took his leave.

As it had now ceased raining and was still light, Monsieur proposed that we should go for a walk. The town is a large one, the shops built of wood,

many in Turkish style. We went into quite a number, not to buy anything, but just so that the people could really have a good look at me, and I shook hands with them all, Monsieur the while swelling with pride. Throughout the walk he expatiated on Montenegro and the joys of living under the government of the Prince; so good, so just. Here a man was free. They were saved from those devils the Turks. He was himself an Albanian of a Skodra family. "You are Catholic?" I said, for nearly all Skodra Christians are Catholics. "Oh no," he said, "now I am a Montenegrin, of the Church of Montenegro. Oh, what good people!" We got under shelter just in time, and he showed me his other means of gaining a living. He was an umbrella-mender, and also he embroidered the gold patterns on the tops of caps. "I am always at work," he said, "and this house is my own." Everything he possessed he admired and valued. As for his wife, he informed me she was one of the best women in the world, and he called upon me to admire everything she did. God had not given him a son, and this was, it was true, a grief to him, but then "I have so much else," he said cheerfully, "a house that is warm and dry, and a good wife and plenty of friends, and a good daughter." The daughter had last year delighted her father by making a most excellent marriage. She had married a Montenegrin, and lived in Podgoritza. His shop was a chilly open shed, his kitchen an English peasant would have considered an inferior coal-hole, and he was so pleased with them that I was ashamed of having doubted whether they were good enough for me.

I returned to Madame and helped stir the pot.

Monsieur shut up and barred the outer shop, some other men appeared, and we sat down to supper. We each had a basin, a spoon and a fork, and used our own knives. We all stood up while they crossed themselves; then Madame uncovered the caldron, and we squatted round it and set to work. The broth, being the stewing of a lamb, was excellent, and as my friends greatly preferred the meat with all the goodness boiled out of it, there was plenty for me. On my account there were extra luxuries, and all were pleased. We dipped out of the caldron and offered one another the tit-bits. When the lamb's head was fished up, Monsieur was grieved that I should not have had it, and pulling out the eyes and tongue, offered me them in his hand. In order to make me understand exactly what the morsel was, they put out their own tongues and waggled them about. I said I had had quite enough and thanked him, and they divided the delicacies carefully between them, each taking a bite.

A discussion took place, and then Monsieur produced a little picture, an ordinary, crude colour-print of the Virgin. It seemed to bother them greatly. Monsieur evidently admired it, his friends doubted its orthodoxy. There was something written under it that alarmed them. "Ask the lady," said one of them in Servian. "Do you know Latin?" said Monsieur. "Oh yes," said I, for I am always willing to oblige, if possible. "She knows everything," they said, and the little picture was handed to me. Under it was written "Ave Maria, etc." "What language is that?" said the first man eagerly. "That is Latin," said I. "Latinski!" they cried in horror. Instantly,

as though it were infectious, the poor little picture was whipped out of my hand and poked into the fire. Monsieur shoved it down with his foot. The Roman Catholic Madonna flamed up, and everyone breathed freely again. Monsieur made an apologetic explanation, but his friends were obviously shocked at finding such a thing in a respectable house. Oddly enough, in spite of my acquaintance with the wicked language, it did not seem to occur to anyone to doubt my orthodoxy.

Madame, however, had evidently something on her mind which she wanted to tell me, and held an Albanian debate with the company. Unable any longer to bear the cross-legged attitude, I had retreated, when I had eaten enough, to the bottom step of the little ladder that led to the upper room, and watched the strange scene. The smoke eddied in wreaths round the room and drifted out above; the farther corners were quite dark. The bizarre group squatted round the fire; the trouser-legged woman voluble and eager; the sandal-shod, mediævally-clad men, their clean-cut profiles silhouetted against the blaze, or outlined with red light, handed round a tiny pair of tongs with which they picked out fragments of burning wood and lighted their cigarettes. All were interested. I wondered what it was all about. Monsieur turned and explained. His wife, he said, liked me very much; their only daughter was married; they were lonely. Would I stay with them for always and be a daughter to them? Now I had seen what the house was like; they would all be very good to me, and we should all be "molto contento." Everyone waited anxiously for my reply. They were quite serious about it, and I replied in the same spirit, that I had a

mother and that, naturally, I must return to her. They inquired her age and where she lived, and then agreed that it would be impossible for her to live alone, and that I was right, though they lamented the fact. Then they told me their ages and asked mine, and we were all equally astounded; for they had regarded me as a very young thing, and I had put them all down as at least twelve years older than they were. I have no doubt that they were speaking the truth, and that it was the roughness of their lives that had so aged them, and Monsieur was really not more than forty, and his wife forty-two.

About nine o'clock the company from outside all left, having first stood up and crossed themselves and wished each other good-night ceremoniously. Monsieur lit a tiny lantern, of which the glass was grimy, and led the way up the steps to the "molto bella camera." Here there were three heaps of bedding in a row. "This," said he cheerfully, "is yours, this is my wife's, and this is mine." I had been quite Albanian for some hours. Now the West arose in me and would not be gainsaid. I murmured something about the other room. It was my host's turn to be scandalised now. Horrified, he exclaimed, "The gentleman in there is not married!" and called for his wife. They talked it over, and then he kindly said that he and his wife could sleep with the other gentleman if I really preferred it; "but," he added, "you are not married, you will be all alone." Then he gathered up the bedding in a bundle, they wished me good-night, and left me with a sackful of dried maize husks on two packing-cases, and a wadded coverlet. He returned almost immediately to ask if

I should like a key, which, he said, was quite unnecessary. I reflected that if he meant to burgle me he would do so, key or no key, so I thanked him and said I was sure it was not needed. This gave him great pleasure, and he told me repeatedly that his house and all he possessed were mine. Then he left me, and at once through the thin partition wall I heard three flops as the three lay down on their mattresses. I followed the Albanian plan, curled up on the packing-cases as I was, and slept for nearly nine hours without stirring.

When I woke, quite refreshed, the sun was streaming through the cracked shutters. I heard my neighbours shake themselves and issue forth, so I shook myself and issued forth too. Monsieur, Madame, and the gentleman-who-was-not-married were all flat on the floor blowing up the fire. They were enchanted to see me and hear I had had a good night, and shook hands enthusiastically. Except that their hair was a little rougher, they looked just as they had the night before, but by the bright morning light I saw that Madame's dirty grey jacket was really purple silk with a silver pattern, and had once been very gorgeous. Washing was my chief idea, and I told Monsieur I should like some water. He replied the coffee would be ready in a minute. I said it was for my hands, so he fetched half a tumblerful and poured it over them. As they had not been washed for twenty-four hours, it made very little difference. I indicated a tiny tin basin. Madame understood at once, and filled it for me. I took it to my room, and she followed. Her delight and astonishment when she found I had taken the precaution of bringing

soap with me were really beautiful, and the sponge was an article she had never seen before. She immediately called to her husband, and he and the gentleman-who-was-not-married hurried to see the sight. They danced with glee when they saw how the water ran out of the holes, and were all seized with a wild desire to try it. This I steadily refused to understand in any language. Owing, indeed, to the scarcity of water and the quantity of spectators, the wash was hardly satisfactory. They forgot the sponge in the joys of seeing me brush my teeth. A tooth-brush was a complete novelty. Monsieur, whose teeth were as white as a dog's, begged to be allowed to use it only for a moment, but just then the coffee opportunely boiled over, they rushed to the rescue, and I was saved.

I was then reminded of the invitation to breakfast with the Montenegrin kavass, and was hurried off to his house. In spite of his brave attire of the night before, his top-boots, his green embroidered coat, and his gold waistcoat, his mansion was only one degree more civilised than the Albanian's. The ground floor was used as a shed. We ascended a step-ladder to the floor above, where he stood beaming, and conducted me at once to the bedroom. The outer room, or kitchen, was quite bare, with smoke-grimed rafters, and a heap of firewood and a few pots and pans in it. The fire blazed on the hearthstone in the corner, and his wife was making coffee. He introduced me to her, and told her that I was English and must have a large cup with milk in it. He swelled with pride about his knowledge of the English, and introduced me with ceremony to the company

five men and a woman, who had, it seemed, all been invited to meet me. The top-boots, a rifle, a cartridge belt and a revolver hung on the wall, and of course the patron saint of the family. There were two iron bedsteads, a table, a chair or two, and a bench. I sat on the bench, and the Albanian on one of the beds, which he admired very much. He then favoured the company with the details he had learned about me the night before—my age, my brothers and sisters, etc.—all of which appeared to interest them greatly, as did also the plan of adopting me as a daughter, which they strongly urged me to accept. The kavass, however, did not mean him to do all the talking, but fetched a key and unlocked the chest in which he kept his best clothes and other valuables. From this he extracted a good pair of laced-up boots and handed them to me with delight. They were stamped inside with the name of an English maker, and were nearly new. He had scarcely ever worn them, he valued them so—had bought them in Constantinople for two pounds "sterline." They made quite an impression on the company, and I expressed my great joy at beholding them. His wife brought in the coffee, black for everyone but myself. Mine was a large bowl full of boiled milk with a little coffee in it. The kavass showed it to the company and explained that, besides that, the English always ate a little piece of pig with an egg on it. This so fired the Albanian's imagination that he leaped up with the intention of scouring the neighbourhood for fragments of pig, and I had some difficulty in checking the pig-chase. Whatever was cooked for me I knew I should have to eat, and boiled milk and bread were at any rate

safe. They all begged me to make a long stay at Dulcigno. I could spend the evenings at their respective houses, and they would all be glad to see me. As, however, it was a fine day and the weather had lately been most unsettled, I determined to take advantage of it and ride to Antivari while it was possible. I therefore thanked everyone, and said I should like a horse and guide that day at eleven o'clock. Then an odd complication ensued, for they only knew Turkish time, and by Turkish time twelve o'clock is sunset, nor could I make them understand. They settled the matter, however, in the simplest way by saying that they would get the horse at once, and let it wait till I was ready. "Two gentlemen," said the Albanian, were also going to Antivari, and as their private affairs were not urgent, they too would wait and accompany me when I pleased. So, everybody being satisfied, I thanked the kavass, shook hands all round, and went off to have a look at Dulcigno by daylight.

The bay, with the old town on the promontory and its Venetian walls, is very beautiful. The town stretches down the valley and round the bay, and several mosque minarets tell of the Turk. The Mohammedan women here wear an odd and hideous great hooded cloak of coarse brown woollen stuff bound with red. In this they slink about like bogies, and the Moslems, both men and women, have a furtive and rather ashamed appearance, very different from their swagger in Skodra. In the old town, pieces of carving built into walls and well-hewn stones are all that is left of the Venetian occupation. Dulcigno fell into Turkish hands in 1571, and though

Venice made two attempts to recapture it, Turkish it remained. It was taken by the Montenegrins in 1877, restored to the Turks by the Berlin Congress, and finally handed over to Montenegro by the Powers in 1880. Dulcigno has a fine bay, but as it is not yet connected with the interior by a decent road, there is not much done in the way of traffic.

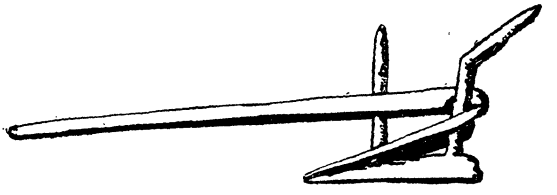
When I returned, I found a white pony and three men awaiting me. One was the guide, the others the "two signori" who, I had been told, were going my way; fearsome objects. Both were cartridge-belted and be-weaponed, and looked like two half-moulted birds of prey perched each in a heap on the edge of the doorstep. They fixed me with their grey hawk's eyes and snorted when introduced. I went into the inn and asked for my bill. Monsieur was coy about it. He looked me all over and considered how rich I was. Then he said, would I think three francs too much? He was delighted when I paid it without a murmur, and thanked me repeatedly. I took a tender farewell. Madame embraced me three times, and matters having gone so far, with a final effort at being Albanian, I kissed her three times, shook hands with numerous stripey-legged gentlemen, tied my bags to my saddle, and mounted.

The scenery was magnificent and the path bad. Rock, rock, almost all the way, either very steep up or very steep down. The white pony climbed like a cat; all he bargained for was to have his head loose. I hitched the reins on the saddle peak and let him have his own way. The three Albanians shot ahead, walking swiftly and silently with a long, swinging stride. Neither the quality of the ground

nor its steepness made any apparent difference to them, nor did they trouble about me in the least, and I often lost sight of them altogether, for one cannot hustle a horse over wet rock. Nothing, however, bothered the white pony; he was used to heavier weights than myself. When we came to a series of smooth steep inclines, he simply spread out his legs and tobogganed in the neatest manner, gathering his hoofs together at bottom and starting down the next one so easily that I did not think it worth while to dismount. The country was almost uninhabited, though fertile and wooded. Wherever cultivated, it appears to yield well. Olives and figs flourish, and I noticed a few fields of flax. Then below us the Adriatic and the bay of Antivari blazed blue, we zigzagged down a very steep hillside all loose stones, I saw the ruined town up the valley and the Prince's palace upon the shore, and felt at home again. We reached the plain and a good road, and a carriage dashed round the corner at a smart trot with the Archbishop in it. He waved and hailed me at once, and roared with laughter at my turn-out and escort, which would really have done admirably at home on Guy Fawkes Day. The "two gentlemen" disappeared quite suddenly by a short cut to the town, without even a farewell snort, and I never saw them again. Why they accompanied me at all I never fathomed. They may have conversed with my guide when they were ahead, in my presence they scarcely spoke a word even to each other. When we got to the cross roads, I turned the white pony Prstan-wards, and was soon welcomed by Maria in the little cottage on the beach. I had been

told the ride was a six hours' one, and we had done it in six and a half, which was not bad.

For the benefit of such travellers as wish to see Dulcigno and who do not crave to understand the domestic arrangements of the Albanians, I ought to add that it is possible to find decent rooms in private houses in the Montenegrin part of the town.



MONTENEGRIN PLOUGH.

PART II

OF SERVIA

"The Standing is slippery and the Regress is either a Downfall or at least an Eclipse; which is a Melancholy Thing."—BACON.

CHAPTER X

BELGRADE

SERVIA is only some thirty-six hours distant from London by rail, but for England it is an almost undiscovered country. Nor do the other nations flock thither. I gathered this on my journey on the main line from Agram to Belgrade through the crown-lands of Hungary, over endless plains and miles of floods. Guards and ticket-collectors alike agreed in telling me that it was impossible for me to go to Belgrade. "You will require a passport," they said. And when I said that I had one, they replied sadly, "It is probably not good." "Belgrade," said an old lady in the corner, "and you are English! Oh, then you are the new school inspector. You have come, have you not, from an English Society to report on Servian education? Two other ladies have been already." "Perhaps I shall meet them," I suggested. "Oh no," said the old lady cheerfully; "that was when I was a girl. It was about 1864 that I saw them. Naturally I thought you came for the same purpose!" As I had no mission from the Government, she agreed with the guards that the expedition was impossible, and I was soon left alone in the carriage. As Agram had refused to book me farther than Semlin, I did not feel particularly cheery about it myself. Semlin

opined I was a governess, and made no difficulty about booking me on! The train crashed across the iron bridge over the Save, and we arrived. It was half-past ten at night when I alighted in Belgrade—alone, friendless, and knowing nothing of either country or people except what I had gathered from a few books, mostly not up to date. Guide-book there is none, and a little of the language was all that I had to rely upon to see me through a strange land.

The first Servians I encountered were the two soldiers who take the passports, which have to be reclaimed next day. I grasped this fact and passed through, with some satisfaction, as I heard behind me the wrathful voices of several Italians and Germans who were fiercely refusing to part with their papers, and were being shouted at in Servian. Thinking it would wound their pride to be offered female British assistance, I left them to fight it out, and was the first, in consequence, to get through the "Customs." Then I rattled uphill through the dark deserted streets, where the night sentries with great-coats and rifles were already on guard, and arrived at my hotel.

My only letter of introduction was a failure, as the addressee was abroad; the British Consul, whom I had been specially told to inform of my proceedings by the Servian Minister in London, had not yet arrived, and the secretaries at the British Ministry were quite new. This is a fate that pursues me. When I arrive at a place for the first time, the Powers that arrange such things always give the Consul a holiday, or appoint a new one who has not yet learnt the language. But having never yet failed

to find friends on my travels, I did not worry about my possible fate up country. Several things began to happen at once. "Where," said I to the waiter, when he brought me my coffee on the very first morning, "where am I likely to see the King and Queen?" He looked at me with a peculiar expression. "You want to see our King?" he said. "You won't see him. He dare not come out of the konak. He is probably drunk," he added contemptuously. I made no remark, for there was none that it seemed expedient to make, and though I haunted the neighbourhood of the konak industriously, each time that I returned to Belgrade, I never saw either King or Queen. This was in the summer of 1902.

Belgrade (Beograd = "The White City") is most beautifully situated. For a capital to be so placed that the enemy can shell it comfortably from his own doorstep is of course ridiculous, but for sheer beauty of outlook Belgrade is not easy to surpass. Perched on a hill, at the foot of which Save joins Danube, it commands westwards a wonderful expanse of sky and stream and willows, with a pale mauve distance of Servian mountains, while opposite lie the rich plains of Hungary and the little town of Semlin. Belgrade is a new town, a quite new town, and no longer deserves the name of "The White City," its general effect from a distance being dark; but the name is an old one, and "white" is a favourite Servian adjective. It is a bright, clean town; the houses, seldom more than two storeys high, look solidly built; there are plenty of good shops, and the streets are wide and cheerful. It looks so prosperous and the inhabitants so very much up to date, its soldiers are so trim, its

officers so gorgeous, and the new Government offices are so imposing, that one is surprised to find that the country, owing to mismanagement, is financially in an almost desperate condition.

There is little wheeled traffic in the streets, nor is this a wonder, for the pavement is indescribably vile. "Ah, but you should have seen it in Turkish times," say the Servians, and they do not worry about it; for they have two lines of electric trams, and your Servian is not a pedestrian. Coming as I did, straight from Cetinje, I spent the first few days in wondering whether the very dark, short people who crowded the trams of Belgrade, for lack of energy to walk up the street, were really blood-relations of the long-legged giants who stride tirelessly over the crags of Montenegro with never a sob. I never saw a Servian who looked as if he took exercise because he liked it. Neither did I ever see any attempt at an athletic sport. On the other hand, wherever I went, people expressed amazement that I could find any pleasure in travels that entailed so much exertion. I have never met folk that walked so slowly. I used to try not to pass people in the street, and vow it is as difficult as to win the slow bicycle race. An average Serb seems to think two miles an hour sharp going; his ordinary pace I cannot pretend to estimate, and when he has nothing particular to do, which is often, he sits down and plays cards. In my whole life I do not think I have seen so many cards as I did in Servia. In the cafés, hotels, and restaurants the soft slither and plap-plap of the painted pasteboards and the tap of the chalk as the players write the score goes on from morning till night, and

forms a running accompaniment to every meal. When asked what struck me most on arriving in Servia, I often referred to this habit, and astonished my questioners. "We are obliged to play cards," they said; "chess is too difficult, and we cannot afford billiard-tables." In public, very little money changes hands, it is merely a matter of a few coppers, a way of killing the time that hangs so heavily on their hands; for Servia, in spite of the West European look of its capital, has not yet learned to be in a hurry.

Card-playing has comprehensible attractions, but the Servians are possessed of a quite original vice which is not likely to lead other folk astray. They drink too much cold water, and they drink it till they are pulpy. An average Serb drinks enough cold water for an English cow. I doubt whether the language contains an equivalent for "bad training," for when I tried to explain the idea it created surprise. A doctor told me he had never heard the theory before. To him it seemed a natural and wholesome habit; moreover, he added, "there is plenty," and seemed to think it was rather wasteful to leave any unswallowed. To me it explained the lack of activity; the nation is water-logged. All day long and every day the Serb calls for a glass of cold water, and when he has drunk it he calls for another. Perhaps owing to this he has little space left for alcohol; at any rate, I never saw a drunken man, even amongst the peasants returning from market.

Belgrade, in fine weather, is a very agreeable town to do nothing in for a day or two. But its historic fortress, its beautiful garden, and the woods

of Topchider are all too well known to require describing. One mosque only, and that a dilapidated one, tells of the departed Turk. The mass of the inhabitants (60,000) are Orthodox Serbs, and a colony of Spanish-speaking Jews lives in the low-lying quarter called Dorchol. I think I saw the whole colony, from the tiniest beady-eyed baby to the stoutest grandmamma, for they flocked to see me pass as though I were a coronation procession. Unaware that a foreign woman travelling alone in Servia was a unique event, I wished them "good day" cheerfully, and went my way.

The "old konak," a rather mean-looking building painted a raw cream colour, and standing in a small garden with sentry boxes in front of it, has since acquired hideous fame. For in it, but a year later, did Alexander's ill-starred reign come to its awful end. Belgrade was so civil to me, there was such perfect order in the streets both by day and night, all was outwardly so quiet, that even now I find it hard to realise that that ugly yellow house has been turned into a shambles. That the King would have to leave and at no distant date was obvious, but I believed it would be by the usual route, and as I watched the swirly yellow Save hurrying along below, I murmured, "There's one more river, one more river to cross." It is a marvel that Servian rulers continue to dwell within sight of the Save. It is the most "men-may-come-and-men-may-go" river in all Europe. But in Servia, though you may flee from the Save, you can never lose sight of the political situation, which is a parlous one. Servia is too small to stand quite alone. Without, she is surrounded by Austria, Turkey, and

Bulgaria. The first is slowly squeezing her, preparatory to swallowing her whole, should a favourable chance arise; the second yet holds the heart of the old Servian Empire; and with the third Servia's quarrel dates from the seventh century. Internally Servia is torn by parties who differ as to which of the Powers it is advisable to propitiate, and these parties dance to external wirepulling.

Things being as they are, it is small wonder that the Serb suspects everyone that crosses his frontier and believes he has come for obscure political reasons. I entered Servia cheerfully unaware of this, and soon learnt that the police were watching my movements. Belgrade, like Montenegro and Dalmatia, took me for a Russian, otherwise I neither knew nor cared whether Belgrade thought about me at all. Wishful of learning the language and of seeing things Servian, I determined to go to the theatre, and in the old happy days, when I was as yet guileless and unsuspicious, I stopped and began to slowly decipher a playbill at a street corner. I had struggled through but little of it when I was approached by a policeman on duty, a picturesque personage in a brown uniform with red braiding. He touched his cap to me and said most politely in very fair French, "Our language, Mademoiselle, is very difficult for une Anglaise. Permit that I assist you," and proceeded to translate the bill. Surprised and pleased, I asked myself, "Which of our own bobbies could thus assist a foreigner?" and being accustomed to be called Russian, I asked, "How did you know that I am English?" "Oh," he replied cheerfully, "Mademoiselle only arrived here on Monday, and I, you see, am in the

police. Naturally I know. Also the officer at the custom-house has stated that Mademoiselle knows some of our language, and that is most unusual in a foreigner." As a freeborn British subject, I was considerably taken aback to find that the police were so well informed about me. Immediately and rashly I said to myself, "When in Rome do as the Romans. I too can ask questions." There was something about the policeman that was oddly familiar; he was a tall fair man, quite unlike the short dark type that I was beginning to recognise as Belgrade-Servian. So I said to him, "Yes, I am English. Where do you come from? You are not a Serb of Servia." "Ah no," he said, with a sigh; "I am far from my people. I come from a quite little place of which Mademoiselle has never heard. I come from the neighbourhood of Kolashin." This at once enlightened me. Foolishly proud of my knowledge, I laughed and replied, "Kolashin? Oh yes, in Montenegro, near the Albanian frontier. You are Crnagorach!"

It was his turn to be astonished now, and he almost leapt with amazement. He broke into his native tongue. "You know my fatherland! You know my fatherland!" he cried in great excitement. "You have been there! Have you seen my Prince, our gospodar Nikola? Have you seen Prince Danilo? Prince Mirko? the Princesses Milena? Militza? Have you been to Podgoritza? to Ostrog?" etc. "Yes, yes," said I to everything. "Bogami! Bogami!" (Oh my God!), he cried. Then he took a long breath, pulled himself together, and started a torrent of the most fluent French. "Mademoiselle," he said, "I will tell you everything. I came from Kolashin twelve years

ago with a comrade. He also is a policeman; he is now in the next street. As soon as he arrived here he married a Servian woman, and he has been unhappy ever since. I, Mademoiselle, am unmarried. I detest these Servian women. They are bad, Mademoiselle, they are unfaithful! I would not take one on any account, and I cannot afford to go back to my own country for a wife. But you, Mademoiselle, you are half Montenegrin; you have the heart of a lion; you know my country; you have seen my Prince; you speak my language! Unfortunately, Mademoiselle, I must remain in this street,"— here I mentally offered thanks to the powers that had rooted him to this spot, —"but on Sunday afternoon I shall be free. I shall come to take you out to Topchider. We shall have something to eat; soon we shall become good friends; soon we will be married. I am a very good man, Mademoiselle," here he smote his chest. "The British Consul can learn all about me from my captain. *You* can teach English in Belgrade, and *we* shall soon be very rich. But," he added very seriously, "you are staying at the Grand Hotel, a most expensive place! You must not stay there. I shall tell you of a much cheaper one, and on Sunday we will go out together!" He paused, rather for want of breath, I fancy, than for a reply, the favourable nature of which he took for granted. I seized the opportunity. "Thank you very much," I said, "but I am leaving Belgrade to-morrow, and I have no time." "Oh, but why, Mademoiselle? You have only been here a week, and it is a so charming town! Restes, je te prie, jusqu'à Dimanche, jusqu'à Dimanche!" "Impossible!" I cried; "adieu, adieu!" and fled round the nearest

corner. As I left for Nish early next morning, I saw him no more, and on my subsequent return to Belgrade dodged, with the speed of a pickpocket, whenever I saw a tall policeman looming in the distance.

CHAPTER XI

SMEDEREVO—SHABATZ—VALJEVO—UB—OBRENOVATZ

SMEDEREVO from the Danube is a most impressive sight. A huge brick fortress surrounds the promontory with castellated walls and a long perspective of towers; a grand mediæval building lying grim on the water's edge, a monument of Servia's death-struggle with the Turks. Built in 1432 by George Brankovich, son of Vuk the traitor of Kosovo, it was Servia's last stronghold, and its makers, in defiance of the Crescent, built the Cross in red bricks into the wall where, now the tide of invasion has at last ebbed, you may still see it. And all the nineteen towers still stand.

Having landed, and reflected that I could not escape for many hours, I walked up the main street and I prayed that the populace would prove friendly. It was — very. I had not gone far when I was marked by the policeman. He was much perturbed. He walked all round me at a very respectful distance, and discussed with everyone on the way what he had better do. Finally he came up and asked me in Servian, if I spoke it. "Very little," said I, and volunteered that I was English, which caused him to call up reinforcements. By this time a fair audience was collected, for the hope of seeing some one "run in" will gather a crowd anywhere. Having ascertained

that I understood German, he called up a man to speak to me. The man, pleased with the importance he was gaining, poured out a long string of mysterious noises which resembled no known tongue. Then he turned to the policeman and said, in Servian, "She doesn't know German." The policeman was in despair, and so was the populace. "Speak Servian slowly," I said. "Where do you come from?" "London." "Where are your friends?" "In England." "What are you doing?" "I have come to see Servia." This pleased him very much. "Have you any brothers?" "Yes." "Where are they?" I supplied the information and other family details. Finally he summed up the evidence, and imparted to the surrounding multitude the information that I had come all alone to see Servia and the Servians. This, he said, was "very good." He touched his cap and smiled affably, and the assembly broke up. All this amused me, but I lived to see the day when these interviews became a weariful burden.

I had luckily hit on the day of a great cattle and pig fair. The open space between town and fortress was filled with peasants and their beasts, great grey draught oxen, sheep, horses, goats, and, above all, the staple product of Servia, pigs. The Servian pig is a great character. He rules indeed large tracts of country. He is cared for, tended, and waited upon. I have seen a large sow walking with dignity down the middle of the road, followed by a number of human retainers, each carrying one of her piglets like a baby in arms, while she set the pace, stopped to grubble at anything that interested her, and looked back from time to time with her beady little

eyes to see that her infants were being properly cared for.

Here in the market the pigs were the most important personages present, and knew it. They are great woolly beasts, some of fair complexion, beautifully curly as to their backs. Their snouts are long and unringed. Being of a highly practical nature, the first thing they did on arriving at the market field was to dig themselves cubby-houses. Those that were lucky enough to find a hole full of water sat in it, and were supremely happy. Some quite small mud-holes were packed with pigs lying on the black ooze and crammed together like sardines in oil. All talked incessantly. There were hundreds of tender babes wandering about, but the families never got mixed. The little ones are longitudinally striped, like young wild boars, and very elegant. Their mothers found mud-holes if possible, and the children sank in up to their eyes. All were extremely tame. If the owner of a pig family wished to shift camp, he strewed a few beans to start them with, and the whole lot followed, conversing cheerfully, and rearranged themselves neatly whenever he chose to sit down again. The mud-coated ones lay and baked in the sun, like live pork pies, till their mud casing was hard and bricky.

While I was absorbed in pigs, a gentleman came up, took off his hat, and launched me into the language again. He knew a very little French, and with that and Servian extracted the same information as the policeman had done. But he went farther. "Had I been into the fortress?" was his next. I have a great respect for frontier fortresses in all parts of the world,

and it had not occurred to me to do more than examine it from a distance. "It is the only thing to see here; I will take you over it," he said. I gratefully accepted the offer, imagining the place was now public like the fortress of Belgrade, and we approached the gate and were saluted by the sentry, who made no objection. Passing in, I found to my astonishment that it was full of soldiers, and very much the reverse of a public promenade. My friend, who seemed to be a well-known person, asked the first private we met for the Commandant. "The Commandant," he said, "is over there, with the artillery." Off we started in search of him, and were soon hotly pursued by an apologetic soldier, who explained that no foreigners were admitted. I suggested retreating, but my escort would not hear of it, and, quite undaunted, took me over to a party of very smart officers who were sitting at a table under some trees. To them he introduced me with a flourish. They leapt to their feet, made most elegant bows, and were all struck dumb with amazement. My friend then persisted that, as I was English and had come so far, I ought to be shown the fortress. None of them could speak anything but Servian, and were very shy. I said all I could to them in answer to their questions and tried to say good-bye, as it was obvious that their orders did not allow them to take foreigners round. Moreover, it did not seem to me that there was anything of further interest to me to be seen. I was inside and had a good view of the huge walls and towers, the great open space they surrounded, and the rough irregular masonry they were built of. To send for the Commandant, as my

friend urged, seemed absurd. I got up to go. However, after a whispered debate, the officers asked me if I would like to see the view from the walls, and one of them volunteered to take me. He hustled me with elaborate care quickly and guiltily past the artillerymen, who were taking a gun to pieces, and must have been inventing horrible secrets. Poor things! they might have explained it all to me without my being any the wiser. I remembered Dreyfus, and could scarcely help laughing at the ridiculous position I had managed to get into. The wall was soon ascended, and the view over the Danube certainly very fine, but I felt sure I ought to depart, so skipped quickly down again; but the poor officer in spurs took a long while arriving at the bottom. We returned to the gate, and I endeavoured to thank him; he shook hands in an elaborate manner, saluted, and I emerged from George Brankovich's great fort, which has been besieged by Servian, Turk, and Hungarian, but never before, I believe, surprised by the English. My friend kept repeating, "You are English, and they ought to have shown it you," and was very much vexed.

Smederevo has no other sights, and Shabatz on the Save was my next experiment in towns. It can be reached by a local boat from Belgrade, also by rail. Let no one, however, be persuaded into taking the train unless he wishes to realise thoroughly, once and for all, the joys of living upon a hostile frontier. The train journey was an hour and a half shorter than that by boat, and I imagined that to book from one town to another in the same country was a simple matter, though I was aware that the frontier

had to be crossed, so I walked cheerfully down to the station. I asked for a ticket to Shabatz, and was, as a result, immediately conducted to the station police bureau, where a youth in a light blue coat was busily stamping passports and inquiring into everyone's past and future existence. My advent upset the dull current of everyday routine. I said I wanted to go to Shabatz, thinking to smooth matters down, but it only created more excitement. The pale blue youth put everything aside in order to fathom the mystery of my movements. Servian frontier police are funny and amusing people. They spare no pains to unravel plots; I hope they will find one some day as a reward for their efforts. If, instead of only myself, there had been say forty or fifty tourists in Servia, the entire land would possibly have been disorganised, trains delayed, criminals left unarrested, and burglaries committed, while the police officials were straining every nerve to ascertain the number of brothers and sisters, and past, present, and future actions of the visitors! I did my best to assist their plans, and have in fact provided them with the materials for a fairly accurate biography of myself, should one ever be required. Its excessive dulness went a long way towards soothing their agitated nerves. Pressure of business forced the pale blue youth to stamp my passport and let me go while his appetite for details was yet unsatisfied, and I hastened to buy a ticket for Shabatz. This was impossible. I could only book across the river to Semlin. By this time I was really interested in frontier existence, and began to regard the trip as a sporting event. Feeling righteous and bold as a lion, being armed with a stamped passport and a ticket, I

walked down the platform only to be stopped short by sentries. The pale blue youth from the office came flying up. Having hurried up through his business, he intended learning a little more about me while yet there was time. As he spoke nothing but his native tongue and was fluent and excited, we did not get on very well; but I imparted my proposed plan of seeing Servia to him, and he stood on the step of the carriage till the train started. Hardly were we off when another officer turned up. He took the passport and wrote my name in a little book, but had unfortunately no time to ask more than three or four questions.

At Semlin we were quite busy. First we went through the customs, and then we had to go and find our passports. The stout and smiling police official selected mine, and without venturing to pronounce my name cried, "The English one." More conversation, this time in German. I told him that I had made nine journeys with that passport without its ever being looked at, and now it had been stamped twice in an hour. This pleased him, and he pointed out that it showed how superior the Hungarian police are to those of other nations. Then I re-booked, and learned that I had to change trains! My fellow-passengers dazed me with Magyar. They none of them agreed as to where I must change, but were all convinced that I had been wrongly informed by the railway guard, and when I arrived at last on the banks of the Save and saw the ferry-boat, I felt as if I were returning to a well-known and civilised land. Even Servian is better than Magyar.

Hurrying to the boat, I was checked suddenly by

crossed rifles. Magyar again. As I could not understand a word, I was conducted between the rifles to a police bureau hard by. Here it was explained that I had endeavoured to evade the sentries. I was regarded with extreme suspicion, and the officer assumed a fine air of standing no nonsense. He poured out a torrent of Magyar. As I did not understand him, but wished to convey the idea that it is a waste of time to try to scare British subjects, I laughed, held out my passport, and said "Good morning" in four languages. Of course he chose the worst, Servian, and as he had apparently never seen an English passport before, said it was not correct. So bad did he consider it, in fact, that had I been coming into Hungary, he would have detained me if possible; as I was only going out of it into an enemy's country, he had not so many qualms about letting me loose. He began to inscribe me as "Salisbury" in the police-book, and was annoyed when corrected. Then he required my age, which I truthfully stated. Finally I held up my fingers for him to reckon it up on, but, for reasons best known to himself, he preferred to put it down according to his own fancy, some years too young, and did so defiantly, with the air of a man who will not let himself be taken in. He tried to get my home address, but gave it up as too much for him. At last he stamped the passport, and told me to be quick. I dashed on board, and the boat started. The transit only takes some five minutes, but the passengers and crew found time to interview me, and then huddled up at the other end of the boat, presumably to show the Servian police they were not mixed up in the affair.

Shabatz had lately had a revolution. An enterprising personage disguised as a general had, not many weeks before, crossed the stream and had called out the police and garrison with a view—rather a confused one, I believe—of causing them to do something in favour of Prince Peter Karageogevich. The imposture being discovered, he found himself at the wrong end of a revolver, where he speedily expired; but Shabatz had not yet got over its surprise, and as it could not read my passport, thought it best, though I was not really disguised as a general, to be careful. I had only hand luggage with me, but this had four books in it, which I was told had to be examined, and "if in a foreign language, a reason must be given for importing them." The fact that they were all dictionaries, however, caused so much amusement that I got happily through.

I was in Shabatz at last. Before they drown, people are said in a few moments to live through a lifetime. It was only four and a half hours since I had left Belgrade, but into that short time had been compressed the experiences of a whole Continental tour. I had encountered three languages, studied the peculiarities of two nations, been in four police bureaus, two custom-houses, three trains and a boat, and bought two tickets in two coinages; all very amusing for once in a way, but hardly a good way of encouraging traffic on the line. Without these games the journey could be done in a couple of hours. They are, however, absolutely necessary, the Servians assured me, on account of the extreme wickedness of the Hungarians. The Hungarians, on their part, were the first to begin, and were, they tell me, driven

to it by the depravity of all nations except themselves. The Hungarians, according to themselves, suffer a great deal for righteousness' sake.

Shabatz, when I had run the frontier gauntlet successfully, received me very kindly; for the Servian, when not soured by politics, is a most kindly creature. The town was quite accustomed to English tourists, for it had had no less than two in the last six years, but I was told that I was the first lady of any nationality that had ever toured round alone. Servia had, in fact, not been aware that it was possible for a lady to do so. I was not at all pleased to learn this, as I knew that, in the future, wherever I went I should be an exciting event, and from the detailed account I received of the proceedings of the two fellow-countrymen who had visited Shabatz in recent times, I foresaw that all that I did would be considered typically English for the next twenty years. Shabatz, however, was very pleased with my plan, as it showed I knew the country was safe and displayed great confidence in the inhabitants. Mad though my proceedings were undoubtedly considered, they gave Servia the opportunity of showing she was trustworthy, and she rose to the occasion. Shabatz opined that I was "emancipated," but thought that now England had a King instead of a Queen, the liberty of women would probably be curtailed.

All Servian towns are much alike. They have wide, clean streets; solid red-roofed little houses built of stone; a church which is unlovely, for the modern Serb has no gift for church architecture; a school, which is often a handsome and very well-fitted building; a town hall, or something more or less equivalent to one;

and a market-place. The houses in the suburbs all stand in their own gardens, and there are plenty of clipped acacias in the streets. And in every town a few tumbledown timber shops and shanties are almost all that is left of Turkish times. Shabatz is no exception to the general rule, and I left early next day for Valjevo.

It was a ten and a half hours' drive in a burning sun and a cloud of white dust, through miles of very fertile and most English-looking country, with English hedges, English oak trees, and English post and rail fences. My first experience of travelling inland in Servia was a very fair sample. There were days when I sighed for the drivers of Montenegro and their wiry ponies, but I always reflected that it was the Servians that I had come to see and that I was seeing them. The Montenegrin is always anxious to get to the journey's end, but the Servian never seems to care whether he arrives or not, provided he can get enough black coffee on the way. He slugs along, takes innumerable rests, and is disappointed if you won't go to sleep in the middle of the day at a wayside inn. Nothing hurries him up; he looks at his watch and says it isn't dark yet, and lets the horses stand still while he rolls his hundredth cigarette. The horses are like the driver, and seldom trot unless urged to, though they are generally in fair condition. But the average Servian does everything in a leisurely manner, and horses and driver but follow the national fashion. I thought at first I was being taken along slowly because I was a foreigner, but I found that when I had native fellow-travellers we went slower still. Though my driver was a slug, he was always a

very amiable and honest one, and he more than once offered to pay for my drinks.

Valjevo is a large town (20,000 inhabitants), very prettily situated in well wooded country. Everyone was anxious to forward my plans. One gentleman most kindly made me out a tour for the whole of East Servia, drew me a map, and wrote the distances and fares upon the roads. Servia just now has a bad reputation in England; I owe it to Servia to say that in no other land have I met with greater kindness from complete strangers. Valjevo is a smart place, lighted by electric light. The crowd of fashionable ladies and swagger officers who were listening to the military band in the Park would not have looked out of place in the Rue de Rivoli or the Row. My new acquaintances were delighted to hear that I had learnt Servian in London. When I said that my teacher was a Pole, their joy was dashed, but they agreed that it was better than if I had learned from "a dirty Schwab" (*i.e.* German). The idea that the whole of London had to depend on one Pole for instruction did not seem right to them. Five million people in London and only one Pole to teach them! That Pole must be very rich! They were anxious to export native teachers at once, but I assured them that the Pole had all the pupils.

Valjevo is a garrison town, and this brings us to the subject of the Servian army. There is, of course, compulsory military service; this is for two years (with six years in the reserve), and is under the circumstances very necessary; moreover, to Servia the army means Old Servia, and Old Servia is yet to be redeemed. But self-defence is one thing and the

military tournament another, and to the non-military outsider it appears that much of Servia's money is spent upon outward show, and that she is like one that walketh in silk attire and lacketh bread. Endeavouring to make a brave show in the eyes of Europe, she is being eaten out of house and home. She builds a noble War Office, and has not the wherewithal to pay her officers; and while she masquerades like the great Powers, the resources of the land, as they are at present, are strained almost to breaking point. Though inland Servia cries for capital and would pay good interest on it, Servia puts her money into military display. I have seen few armies more smartly uniformed. "Tommy" is very fine; but his officers are gorgeous. There seems no end to them; every garrison town—and that means every frontier town of importance and a good many inland ones—is filled with them. Surely no land was ever so hopelessly over-officered. One wonders if there are privates enough to go round. I was told, on good authority, that there are more officers in training in the military schools of Servia than in those of our own country. Not all, however, that glitters is gold, as I learnt at a garrison town that shall be nameless.

I arrived late, tired and hungry, at the inn. The innkeeper and his wife were most anxious to accommodate me to the best of their ability, and called in the local money-changer to act as interpreter. The fame of my arrival spread like lightning through the place. Scarcely had the money-changer and the innkeeper left me alone, when a captain, in his anxiety to have first chance, introduced himself to me in such an impertinent manner that I had to speak

to him very severely, and he fled covered with confusion.

Next morning early came the money-changer. He said the innkeeper was very much vexed, and feared that I had been annoyed by one of the officers; which one was it? I did not know, as they all looked alike to me, and a whole lot of them were having coffee at the other end of the room; so I said, "It was a tall ugly one, very ignorant and very young; I will say no more about it, because he knew no better." The money-changer grinned, and I felt sure that the remark would be repeated. Then he said, indicating the uniformed group, "It is very unfortunate that it should have occurred, for these gentlemen wish to speak to you, and they have asked me about you." "Why?" said I. He grinned again. "You do not understand them," he said. "It is true they are very ignorant, but they are perfectly honest. You need not be afraid. Ils ne desirent pas vous dire des choses sales, *seulement* ils desirent vous marier! It is such a chance as has scarcely ever occurred. And Someone-avich has an English wife! She is *very* happy. What shall I tell them?" "Tell them I have no money," said I. "That is no use," said he; "what you call not rich, they call wealth. Perhaps what you spent coming here even would be enough for a 'dot.'" "That is spent," I remarked. "But you have some to return with." "Oh, tell them I don't want to marry them," I said, rather vexed, for the man stuck so fast to the point that I began to think he had been promised a percentage on the deal. He laughed. "Oh, that is no use; ces Messieurs are so handsome they believe that you would think

differently if you would only speak to them." I tried again. "Well, tell them my money cannot come out of England." "Oh," he replied, "ces Messieurs don't mind where they live; they will leave the Servian army and live in England—or America. Perhaps Mademoiselle lives with her father and mother? They wouldn't mind that at all." The idea of "them" —for it seemed "they" had to be taken wholesale —arriving at my suburban residence was too much for me, and I roared with laughter. He looked at me, saw his percentage was hopeless, then he roared also.

"Well," he said, "now I'll explain. I'm not ignorant, like they are. I've been in Egypt and Malta and Gibraltar. I've met hundreds of English ladies travelling as you are, and I know how funny this must appear to you. I'll tell you how it is for them. They have sixty or seventy pounds a year, and not one of them has been paid for six months. They play cards with the tradespeople in hopes of winning enough to buy tobacco. I do wish you would point out to me the one that spoke to you last night; I think it is perhaps the one I lent ten francs to yesterday. The innkeeper is very pleased to see you, because he knows you will pay. When these poor boys get their pay, it will all be taken from them at once for their debts. That is the situation. Then you come, as it were from the heavens! They hear you are English. It is seen at once you have no ring on your finger. It is evident, then, that you hate all Englishmen. On the other hand, you like Servia, or why should you have come? My God! they think, what a chance! Not twice in a hundred years! But one of them was undoubtedly

too hasty." He went on to inform me that a very nice one could be had for about forty pounds a year.

I gazed upon the enemy's entrenchment, decided that I was hopelessly outnumbered and that flight was the only way, mobilised my force of one man and two horses, and retired in good order while yet there was time, slightly humiliated by the feeling that Britain was flying from a foreign army, but bowing graciously to such of its representatives as were kind enough to salute as I passed.

And as I left and passed through the rich valleys and grassy uplands, and thought of the many kind friends who had helped me on my way, I was grieved that a land with so many possibilities and so much that is good and beautiful in it should be brought, by bad government, to such a pass that the officers are reduced to hawking themselves upon the streets. But all this I was to learn later. At Valjevo I merely looked at the officers and admired.

My journey to Obrenovatz, the next town on my route, was amusing, as I shared a carriage with a "commercial," a Jew who among other things was agent for a life-insurance company. He was on his return journey, and we halted from time to time at various houses, that he might, if possible, reap the results of the seeds he had sown on his outward march. Everywhere he preached the benefits of life insurance. He suggested at last that I should insure for the sake of my fiancé! When I said I hadn't one, he saw a fresh opening for business. He had, he said, married his own daughter extremely well. He enlarged upon the highly successful nature of his own marriage, and told me about Someone-avich who had

married an English wife who is exceedingly happy. Finally, worn out by his fruitless exertions, he fell asleep.

At eleven we put up at Ub, and I had plenty of time to amuse myself. Sitting on the bench by the inn door, I made folded paper toys for the children, and soon had a semicircle of tiny boys round me. A little gipsy girl looked on at them with superb contempt. As soon as they had cleared off, she sailed up and seated herself by my side with the air of one conferring a favour. She was a slip of a thing, nine years old, but with the self-possession of fifty. "I am ciganka" (gipsy), she said. "Where do you come from?" I told her, but she had never heard of my native land. She was brown as a berry, and had on nothing but a dirty old scarlet frock which had shed its fastenings. She dangled her skinny brown legs and fixed me with her sparkling black eyes; her hair, she told me, was far superior to my own; in proof of her words, she took off the yellow handkerchief in which her head was swathed and offered for inspection a small and most filthy plait of coal-black hair in which were fastened three or four coins, which she pointed out with glee. It was, in fact, the savings bank in which she had just opened an account. I at once produced a nickel 2d., which she accepted with much satisfaction. A man on the next bench threw down a cigarette end, and she pounced on it like a cat on a mouse. When she returned with it, she looked cautiously round to be sure that no one else could see, and then, sheltered by my skirts, she extracted from inside her frock a handkerchief tied up in a bundle, and displayed with great pride a mass of cigarette

ends and other valuables. I duly admired; the new one was added to the collection, and it was all stowed away again with great precaution. Then she tried to look unconscious. Muttering something I didn't understand, she peeped in at the inn door. The floor was richly strewn with cigarette ends. She slipped in and crept round the room swiftly and silently. The lady of the inn and most of the other people saw her quite well; I don't think they had the least objection to her clearing the floor of rubbish. She preferred, however, to consider it as a dangerous raiding expedition, dashed from cover to cover quite scientifically, collecting as she went, and sneaked out again with her spoils, the spirit of all her horse-stealing ancestors twinkling in her eyes. She displayed her loot to me, for she took it for granted that I was a sympathetic soul; and as there is reason to believe that one of my forefathers sold horses in Queen Elizabeth's reign, it is possible that we may have had ideas in common.

By the time the carriage and my travelling companions were ready, I had interviewed several other people, and felt quite at home in Ub. It was hot on the road. Both the "commercial" and the driver felt it very much, and stopped at all the wells and drank quantities of cold water, and as a natural consequence perspired a great deal. When they had had seven or eight drinks to my one, they began to get anxious about me, and when they found I had been playing about the streets of Ub instead of going to sleep as they had both done, they were still more astonished, and foretold that by the time I reached Obrenovatz I should be exhausted. We arrived there

safely, however, at about 2.30 without my expected collapse.

Obrenovatz was fearfully excited by my arrival, and produced a commercial (a Hungarian) who spoke English, in order to extract a full and particular account of me. My fame had flown before me, for he had seen me a few days ago in Shabatz, had gleaned a few facts about me, and Obrenovatz had already learned that there was an Engleskinja loose in the land, though it had not hoped to see me. When I went out for a walk, all Obrenovatz stood at the door to see. Such notoriety was embarrassing. However, I succeeded in concealing my feelings so effectually that in the evening the conversation turned mainly on the cold-bloodedness of the English nation. Nothing surprised them! nothing upset their equanimity! "Fish blood," they said, "fish blood and steel!" And the insurance agent recounted how I had only had one drink on the road and had remained quite cool all the day, though he and the driver felt the heat badly; here he gave an unnecessarily realistic description of the state of his shirt.

Obrenovatz is remarkable for nothing but its hot sulphur springs and its well-arranged bath house, where it hopes to work up a rheumatism cure. I returned to Belgrade by boat, nor, save the floating watermills and the timber rafts that drift from the forests of Bosnia and Servia down the Drina to the Save and thence to the Danube, is there much to see upon the river.

CHAPTER XII

Nish

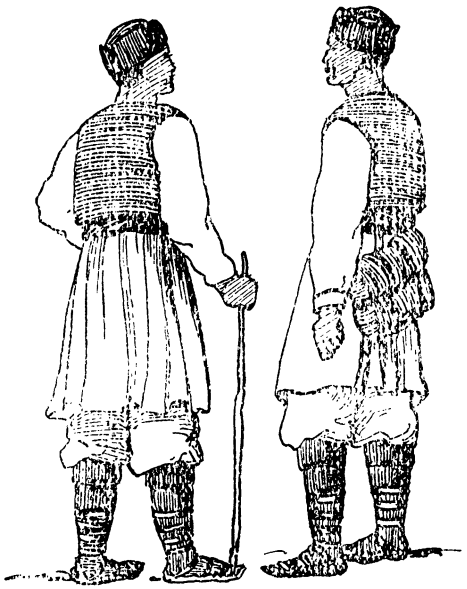
From Belgrade to Nish, down the valley of the Morava, the mark of the Turk is still upon the land, and a minaret tower shoots up from more than one little town by the rail-side. The train rushes into Stalacs, where the two Moravas join, and we are on the track of recent fighting—fighting that we can all remember; we are in the valley which was the scene of poor Milan's unsuccessful attempts, when in 1876 he resolved to take his part in that uprising against the Turks which had already been begun by the Herzegovinians. Near Alexinatz we cross Servia's old frontier, and enter the land that was Turkish twenty-five years ago.

I arrived at Nish, and found myself in a new and more oriental Servia. Nish, like other places, was surprised to see me. The hotel hoped I was leaving to-morrow, as it feared the police, and got more and more nervous about harbouring me as I stayed on. Nevertheless, I liked Nish. Its position on the highways both to Bulgaria and Turkey make it strategically and commercially important, and it is gay with soldiers and with peasants from all the surrounding districts. The Turk has not yet quite left; closely-veiled women shuffle furtively down the

streets, and both men and women have an apologetic and subdued appearance, very different from the swagger of the Mohammedan on the other side of the frontier. The new Servian town lies one side of the river Nishava, and the old Turkish one and the big fortress upon the other.

I saw Nish at its best, for I had the good luck to light upon a great fair and cattle market, and spent the day wriggling between buffaloes' horns and horses' heels, with a dense crowd of strange folk and their wares, who trailed into the market field in a ceaseless stream from early dawn. The buffalo is the favourite draught animal here, a villainous-looking beast with a black indiarubber hide, a sprinkling of long bristles, a wicked little eye, and heavy back-curved horns; but his appearance belies him, he seems extremely tame, and grunts amiably when scratched. Goats, sheep, pigs, horses, and cattle, all were equally tame, having been probably all brought up with the family, which was a good thing, as they were none of them penned, and the greater number not even tied up. Their owners were just as friendly, and showed me everything. A mounted patrol rode round at intervals, but did not seem necessary; good-nature and friendliness prevailed everywhere. There was plenty of food both for man and beast. The hot-sausage man ran about with his goods in a tin drum. The cake man sold his from a large wooden tray placed on a tripod. The roast-meat man brandished his knife over an impaled lamb roasted whole, which sent up a rich odour and oily swirls of steam in the sunshine. Under little huts, built of leafy beech branches, cooks were grilling

kebabs on long skewers, over a heap of charcoal embers; there was a great run on iced lemonade, and a crowd was always waiting its turn at the well. The women were extraordinarily gaudy; not content with their brilliantly orange or scarlet sashes and white dresses, they pinned great bouquets of flowers,



SERVIAN PEASANTS.

bunches of peacock's feathers, and tufts of feathery grass to their bodices and white head-dresses, already a-sparkle with coins and dingle-dangles. The peasants took to me quite naturally, and offered me young pigs and buffaloes without any idea of the difficulty I should have in getting them home.

The officer, however, in charge of the hut in the

middle where the market tolls were paid, was much mystified. "Mademoiselle doubtless speaks French?" he asked politely. "Yes," I said. "Then please tell us from what land you come," he begged, "for we cannot imagine. Mademoiselle is perhaps Russian?" he hazarded. "No, English," said I. "Bogami! is it possible? English, and in Nish! Where are your friends?" "In England." "You are alone in Servia? Bogami, Mademoiselle, but you have courage!" "Oh no, I haven't," said I, "only I am English." Then he laughed and repeated my remark to his friends, and they all appeared to be highly amused. I went on, "Besides, Monsieur, your country is doubtless civilised?" "Perfectly," said he, "perfectly; there is no danger, but no one knows it. How have you learned this in England? We are a Balkan state, and all the world believes the Balkan states are wicked. If I can assist you in any way, pray command me." I told him I was not needing help and thanked him for the offer. "No," said he gallantly, "it is we who owe thanks to you, for you pay us a great compliment." He saluted and withdrew, and I returned to my quest after things old-world and Servian.

A man was driving wire hooks into wooden bats, and his wife squatted near and carded wool with them with great dexterity to show how well they worked, and not far off a great trade was going on in big wooden chests, rough-made boxes on legs, pegged together with wood, stained crimson and decorated with a scratched curly pattern that showed white on the coloured ground. And the gipsies were selling troughs and bowls of prehistoric simplicity hacked

and dug out of chunks of wood without much attempt at symmetry, and very thick and clumsy.

The horse market was very full. There were some showy little beasts whose outstanding plumy tails and slim legs showed their Eastern blood. A tall snaky Albanian was riding them bare-backed, and held only by a halter, through the thick of the crowd. He rode slowly along till he had bored a passage of sufficient length, then turned suddenly and came back *ventre à terre*. Every bare space of ground was used to gallop horses across, and it was a case of a cloud of dust, a hammer of hoofs, and everyone for himself.

At midday and past, when the sun blazed overhead, the air was thick with dust and rich with billy-goats, and the bulls were roaring and the stallions squealing insults at each other, the people who had finished eating hot sausages in the sun thought it an admirable opportunity for beginning to dance. The bagpipe man appeared, and struck up at once one of the odd monotonous airs for the "kolo"; men and women joined in a long line, each holding the next at arm's length by the sash, and were soon serpentining in and out and round and round, surrounded by a suffocating crowd of lookers-on. The Albanian was showing off a roan stallion, a red-hot beast, which he managed beautifully almost entirely by his knees. Its apparent docility tempted a young officer to mount. He picked up the curb, drove in his spurs, and in another moment the squealing, plunging animal was in mid-air, over the dancers. The scattering was great, the roan appearing at intervals high above the crowd. No one was hurt, the

interruption was only temporary, but the roan did not change hands that time at any rate. Nothing will stop a Servian from dancing the kolo.

All the animals had been supplied with green forage, for the Servians are kind and careful of their beasts, and now the draught oxen were being taken in detachments to the river to drink. As each pair of oxen returned from watering, it was yoked and set off on its homeward journey, till there was a processional frieze all along the road. The market slowly dissolved, and by four o'clock there was not much of it left but débris on the field.

Nish is a bright and attractive town, with about 20,000 inhabitants. Two slim minarets show that it was once Mohammedan, and a fat new church, bloated with cupolas, proclaims its orthodoxy. The buffalo carts in the streets, the variety of peasant costume, the wild luxuriance of crimson roses in the Park, the pretty wooden trellis bridge over the river, the number of houses still remaining with screened windows, the silver filigree workers and the veiled women give it picturesqueness and a dash of the Orient; but you must not tell it so, unless you wish to hurt its feelings. If a long pedigree be a claim to respect, Nish deserves much; for Nish, as Naissus or Nissa, existed before Servia, and quite early in the Christian era was a considerable town in Upper Moesia. It claims to be the birthplace of Constantine the Great, and the claim is very generally admitted. Constantine's mother, the celebrated St. Helena, the discoverer of the True Cross, was the daughter of an innkeeper at Naissus, while his father was of "Illyrian" blood.

I looked with interest at the Albanians who cantered through Nish with a lot of half-broken ponies, and with interest also upon the stout daughter of the inn, but I did not feel that either were destined to disturb the balance of Europe.

Nish was part of the kingdom of Stefan Nemanja in the twelfth century, and Servian it remained till the Turks took it in 1375. Though not freed till 1878, Nish made a gallant struggle for liberty in 1809, when the general uprising was taking place—all the characteristics of which are now being repeated in Macedonia.

The "chela kula" (tower of skulls), on the Pirot road, is a grim monument of the times. A little Servian stronghold near this spot, commanded by Stefan Sindjelich, resisted successfully for a short while. Then the Turks brought up a large force and "rushed" the place. As the Turkish soldiery were pouring in, Sindjelich seeing all was lost, fired his pistol into the powder magazine and blew up self, friend, foe, and the whole place in one red ruin. The Turkish losses were very heavy, and the Pasha, enraged at losing so many men over such a hole of a place, commemorated his costly victory in a manner most hateful to the vanquished. He ordered the heads of the dead Serbs to be collected, paying twenty-five piastres apiece for them, and obtained over nine hundred. These were embedded in rows in a great tower of brick and cement, the faces staring horribly forth, till the flesh rotted and nothing but the bare skulls remained. From time to time these were removed and buried by patriotic Servians, but the ruins of the tower still stand to tell of Turkish

vengeance and to keep alive the hatred of the two races. By order of King Alexander Obrenovich, a chapel has been built over it. Four skulls yet stare from the sockets where the Turk placed them. An inscription in several languages tells of Sindjelich's heroism.

A polite young officer, reeking with carbolic from the military hospital hard by, admitted me to the chapel, and doubted which language to point to. I need hardly say English was not one of them, for in Europe except in the most beaten of tracks English is one of the least useful languages. As soon as it was known in Nish that I was English I was asked to go to someone's office to translate an English business letter. "It is impossible to trade with England," said the man; "many of their goods are better than those of Austria, but they will not write in a language that we can understand. We wrote them in French, and begged them to reply in either French or German. They have replied for the second time in English. This is the first and last time that I do business with England." I, of course, went to the office at once, but was too late. The letter had just been posted to Belgrade for translation. This I gathered was a fair sample of the proceedings of British traders in this country. The profits that are to be made in the poverty-stricken states of the Balkans are not great, but such as they are they are all swept up by the ubiquitous Austrian bagman.

Nish tries hard to be Western, but, as I walked about it, I grinned to think of the man who had written in English to it. Even the hotel has so many peculiarities that the solitary traveller from the West is well amused observing them. Like other

hotels, it provides beds and drinks and food, but the latter also flows in freely from the streets, and the hotel does not seem to care from whom you buy. All day long the bread-roll man runs in and out with his basket; or two or three bread-roll men, if there is much company. The Servians rarely seem tired of eating rolls, and eat them all day long. Next in frequency to the bread man is the salad man, with a tray of lettuces and a big bunch of onions. The cake man does a good trade in the afternoon. But the oddest of all is the hot-stew man. He appears in the evening with a large tin drum slung round his neck, in which is an enamelled iron soup tureen. Such a cloud of steam rolls out when he lifts the lid that I think there must be heating apparatus in the drum, but he wears it next his stomach and does not appear unduly warm. The pockets of his white apron are full of not over-clean plates, and a formidable array of knives and forks bristles about the drum's edge. His customers take a plate and clean it with their handkerchiefs, serviettes, or the tablecloth, and then select tit-bits from the pot, and the man returns later and removes the plate, knife and fork, when done with. If you do not care for stew, there is the hot-sausage man, whose wares look singularly unattractive; and, lastly, there is a man who sells very dry nuts. Except for wine and beer, you can get your whole meal from wandering caterers; the supply seems unfailing. Servian food and cooking, I may here note, is on the whole very good. It is peppery and flavoursome; mint, thyme, and other herbs, and the very popular "paprika" (a mild variety of red pepper), are largely used, and the soups are meaty

and nourishing. A fourpenny plate of kisela chorba (soup with lemon juice in it) often includes half a fowl, and is enough for a meal.

Having explored the town and seen all the shops, I wandered about and waited for people to do something Servian, nor had I long to wait.

Servia is striving to be Western and striving to be up to date, and this is the side she shows to the world from which she was for so long cut off. In her heart she cherishes old, old customs, whose origins are lost in dim antiquity, and one of these is the commemorative funeral feast. When we wander through the outskirts of Pompeii or visit the tombs on the Latin Way, we look at the stone benches and recall vaguely that the Romans here held banquets in honour of the dead; but the banqueters are dead and buried and the feasts forgotten. It all belongs to a distant past and is hard to realise, it seems so far away. But the Christian Church in early days adopted many of the existing rites and ceremonies of pagan times, and the Orthodox Church has clung tightly to its old traditions. So much so that the Orthodox Church of to-day is said to bear far stronger resemblance to the Church of the fourth or fifth century than do now the Churches of either England or Rome.

And from the time of the Turkish invasion till the nineteenth century the mass of the people of the Balkans stood still and had no communication with the outer world. The Macedonian peasant still sacrifices sheep on ancient altar stones, and the Servian reads the funeral feast in the Christian graveyard.

Quite early in the morning solemn little parties of women and children were walking down the streets carrying big baskets and trays covered with clean white cloths; I followed, and we crossed the railway line and turned to the cemetery on the hillside. Round the gates sat the lame, the aged, and the blind; each with his wooden bowl, his bottle gourd and bag. "A Bagge and a Bottle, he bar bi his seyde," sang Langland in England in the fourteenth century; thus did the folk of Piers Plowman gather alms. Within the gates, in the big graveyard, through the long thick grass and by the rose-tangled headstones went each little party to the grave it sought, and the wailing of the death-songs arose on every side. The women brought little girls with them and taught them how to honour the dead. They lighted little beeswax tapers stuck into the grave, and they filled a green earthen pot with incense and lighted that too. Then they stood round, and one began the long-drawn, melancholy cry, "Kuka mene, kuka mene!" (Woe is me, woe is me![1]) and beat her breast and clasped her hands, swaying to and fro, as she sang the verses of the song; the other mourners joined in, the song became a heart-breaking wail, she caught her breath in long sobs and she threw herself on the grave, clasping the cross at its head and weeping bitterly. When the lament was finished, they spread their white cloth on the grave and arranged the meal, for it was a real meal, not merely a symbolic mouthful; a large bowl

[1] Kukavichiti = to lament, to cry like the cuckoo; for in Servia the cuckoo is not the depraved bird that it is with us, but is a bereaved woman who wails ceaselessly for the dead.

of the favourite hash (gulyash), and another of rice, which steamed as it was uncovered, a large loaf of bread and perhaps cheese, and a handkerchief full of cherries.

The very poor sat on the ground. Those that were wealthy engaged a priest to pray with them by the graveside. There were wooden or stone benches and tables built up by some graves, and sometimes railed in. It was a dull day ; the crimson roses were shedding petals everywhere, the tapers twinkled like glow-worms in the grass, and the thin blue smoke curled from the censers. The air was heavy with the mingled scent of dying roses and incense, there was a hum of prayer, and the minor notes of the long laments rose and fell, swarms of pigeons and grey hooded crows soared round and, settled on the grave-stones near, greedily waited to pick up the crumbs of the feasts. It was a strangely impressive scene. Forty days after the funeral does this feast (the dacha) take place, then after six months, and then yearly, either upon a Saturday, a Sunday, or a Saint's day.

As each group of mourners left the graveyard, they distributed food among the beggars at the gate. Their bowls were heaped with stew and rice, their bags stuffed with bread, and their gourds filled by means of a funnel with a mixture of all the various wines. The tapers were left to twinkle out in the grass, and by the middle of the day the graveyard was deserted.

CHAPTER XIII

PIROT

I LEFT Nish, in a chill wet fog, at 4.30 a.m. by the only quick train in the day. It was full of sleeping men, and I stood in the corridor that I might not disturb them. Scarcely anyone got in besides myself, and the train rushed on over the plain of Nish, plunged into the mountains, began to climb the valley of the Nishava, and entered the pass of Pirot. The scenery is of the kind that the Germans call "wild-romantic." The defile is extremely narrow and the rocks high and steep; there is but room for the stream and train at the foot of them. It is like travelling through a deep cutting, but is considered very fine. The earth is dark red, like anchovy paste, and gives the river such an unpleasantly gory appearance that one half expects it to steam, and the station at the top of the pass is called Crvena Reka, "The Red Stream."

"What is the name of this station?" asked a stout man in Servian.

I replied.

"What is . . . ," he began again, and stuck fast. "Sprechen Sie Deutsch?" he ended rather feebly.

We conversed for some minutes. Then "You come from Nish?" he said.

"Yes," said I.

"You speak German very well for a Servian. I did not know that the ladies learned foreign languages."

"I am English."

"Dear God!" he cried, and came out into the corridor to have a better view of me. "You are English and you come from a town in the middle of Servia! Ach! how dangerous! Now I am a man. I am making a pleasure trip to Constantinople with my friends. *We* should never think of stopping in a country like this. We are travelling straight through from Vienna."

"I also am making a pleasure trip, but it is possible that the same things are not interesting to us. I am going to Pirot."

"My God, how English! Look you, Fräulein, your nation does things that are quite fearfully silly, and it succeeds because the things are so unexpected that no one is prepared for them. You are like your own army, some day you will walk into an ambush."

"But it always comes home when it has done all that it meant to do," I persisted; for I never allow the Empire to be scored off if I can help it.

Then he told his friends of the strange wild beast he had found in the corridor, and they looked at me cautiously and discussed the propriety, or perhaps I should say the impropriety, of my proceedings in awful whispers, with many Teutonic invocations of the Deity, until I had a hail-Cæsar-we-who-are-about-to die-salute-thee feeling, which became less and less dignified as the West Balkans themselves came into sight. We reached Pirot, and I descended from the train in a state not unlike "funk."

No one else got out, and I crossed the rails, with the eyes of all the officials upon me. As the gentleman in the corridor had remarked, Pirot, unprepared for such an event, was temporarily paralysed. I walked straight to the exit and held out my ticket to the man in charge. He promptly blocked the door and, though he wore a revolver, called for help. There now being need of immediate action on my part, I began to enjoy myself. I offered him my passport by way of soothing him, and mentioned my nationality, but it made him more agitated. He told me to "come," conducted me back into the station and shut the exit door. Then he left me in a small office and told me to "wait." I waited. Nothing happened. I remembered the ambush I was to fall into, and thought it would be better to meet the enemy in the open, so went in search of it. It was holding a council of war on the railway lines. I walked into the middle and said, "Please, I want to go to the Hotel National." The shot told, and the enemy scattered in all directions. The first who rallied was a young officer, who spoke a very little German. He was very polite, but said I must state how long I meant to stay. He added that there was a train in the afternoon by which I could depart. As I had not yet seen the place, I did not know at all what its attractions might be, so I repeated, like a lesson, a simple and pleasing little Servian composition I had made up the day before. "I am English. I travel that I may see Servia. Servia is a very beautiful country. Everything is good. I learn the language. The Servian language is very beautiful." Seeing how perfectly innocuous I was,

the officer promptly said it was all right, but I must deposit my passport in the station and reclaim it on leaving. I was not to leave Pirot except by train. By this wily ruse he saved the Servian nation from the possibility of my negotiating with Bulgaria in some lonely spot upon the frontier. I thanked them, escaped from the station, called a cab and drove to the town.

The Hotel National, though the best in the place, was not cheering. It was a large bare barrack, with a billiard-table in the middle, and a pale-brown, skinny boy of about fourteen was its only apparent manager and proprietor. I never saw another. He showed me a dree bedroom somewhere at the top of a wooden ladder. A piece of torn sacking was nailed over one side of the window. There were two beds, neither clean, and a man's coat and other garments lay on one of them. The youth collected them, and considered the room ready. I thought we would not begin to disagree at once, so I descended the ladder again and had breakfast, for it was now eight o'clock and I had had to leave Nish on one small cup of coffee. I then felt exceedingly brave, and reflecting on the importance to an army of the commissariat, went out to explore Pirot.

It was Sunday. Of all Continental nations Servia's Sunday is the most Britannic, and there was no buying nor selling of any kind, and scarcely any life in the place. It is a largeish town, with about 10,000 inhabitants; a street of modern houses, a maze of little tumbledown Turkish mud hovels in gardens, and a mosque—a dilapidated, melancholy collection as a whole. For Pirot, taken by the

Servians in 1877, was taken by the Bulgarians in 1885 and looted, and is not yet healed of her wounds

Pirot is very poor, miserably so, and many of the people have a starved and wretched look. But poor though it is, Pirot is important, owing to its situation on the way to Sofia and Constantinople. It is an old, old town on an old, old trade route, and it remains simple and childish. I was perfectly frank with it, and I told it I meant to see all I could, and wished to draw and perhaps to photograph. And the virtuous inhabitants who had questioned me were shocked; "for," they said, "we have a fortress, and only yesterday a stranger was arrested for attempting to photograph it. At this very moment he is in prison, and we do not know what will happen to him." I asked the criminal's nationality, and learnt that he was a Bulgarian. Being in Servia, I was horrified at his iniquity, but, being English, did not wish to be turned from my purpose. I explained that I wished only to note things characteristically Servian, such as the costumes of the peasants, the houses, and so forth. "In short," said a gentleman, "you are making geo-ethnographical studies." This struck me as a remarkably luminous idea; I should never have thought of it myself. I said I was, and everyone was very pleased.

As it was Sunday, I went to the church, and the church gripped me at once, for it is unpretentiously barbaric. There is an arcaded porch frescoed with bizarre, colossal archangels, not a bit like people; I entered, and it was all as picturesque as it ought to be, with a blue haze of incense through which gleamed the great gold ikonostasis. All was

primitive, as befits the oldest form of the Christian faith in Europe.

The service was just over; some women in front were kissing a holy picture before leaving. Round the gate was a little group of the poor and afflicted, all either blind or horribly maimed, who were waiting for their usual dole. As the congregation began to file out of church, two bakers with loaves and rolls hurried up and set their trays opposite the gate. As they left, folk bought pieces of bread and distributed them in the wooden bowls which the suppliants held out. It was pitiful to see the anxious quivering fingers of the blind feeling the crusts before transferring them to the bag each one wore for the purpose, and the eager eyes of those who could see, as they watched expectant. I had no idea of the price of bread, so I laid down the smallest coin I had, and received such a huge loaf in exchange that I knew that I was behaving with the vulgar parade of a Carnegie or a Vanderbilt. I dealt round the bread rather shamefacedly, for I felt unpleasantly as though I were feeding animals at the Zoo, and escaped hastily from a storm of blessings, with a new idea about the power of twopence to relieve misery.

I walked through the town. The remains of a mediæval castle at the foot of a hill struck me as a suitable subject for a drawing, and I crossed the road to find a point of view. As I did so I ran my eye over the castle and became aware suddenly that there was a sentry in front of it, and that behind it rose innocent-looking grass slopes that mean mischief. It was the fortress, with which I had promised to have nothing to do, and I retired hastily, filled with sympathy for

the incarcerated Bulgarian, who, after all, was perhaps only making geo-ethnographical studies.

By the afternoon I was an accepted fact in Pirot and had several friends. By Monday morning Pirot was ready to show me everything.

Pirot is the only town in Servia which carries on a beautiful and original local industry, and its rugs and carpets deserve to be far more widely known than they are. They are hand-woven, and the process is incredibly simple. Four roughly hewn tree stems, or big branches, are pegged together into a frame, which either leans against the wall of the house or is supported by struts, and a sufficient number of strings is bound across it. The woman squats on the ground in front of the frame with her shuttles of coloured wools beside her. With the fingers of her left hand she pulls up the requisite number of threads with great swiftness, slips the shuttle beneath them with her right, and, with no pattern to copy from, carries out very complicated designs with astonishing speed and precision. When she has put in some dozen threads, she takes up a heavy wooden mallet with a row of teeth in it and with a few blows drives the threads very tightly together. Thus she works hour after hour for a franc a day. The colours most largely employed are scarlet, indigo, black and white, with sometimes touches of green and yellow in the border; the designs are bold and effective. The weavers, dark women with coins plaited in their hair, were cheery and friendly, and always asked me in to have a look. An ordinary-sized rug takes about a fortnight to make, and many of the big carpets occupy several women for months. I was glad to hear that the

Town Council, which looks after the carpet trade, is on the look-out for good old designs for the workers. Also that it had forbidden imported dyes, as these were in many instances found not to be permanent, and the wools used are coloured by local and traditional methods. Pirot is justly proud of a medal won in the Paris Exhibition, and the trade, if carefully looked after, should greatly increase. I made one bad mistake; I suggested that the work was of Turkish origin. My friends would not hear of this, and declared that it was Servian, purely Servian. I felt crushed, but am by no means sure that they were right.

There is not entertainment for more than a day in Pirot, and the hotel accommodation is lean. I said good-bye that evening. At the station I met the gendarme who had originally blocked my passage. Now he regretted my departure. He seemed a childlike and simple personage, not at all intended by nature for a policeman. He carried my bag in for me, and beamed with joy when he felt its weight. "May I open it?" he asked. When he found the weight was entirely caused by three dictionaries and an old pair of shoes, he was disappointed. "I thought it was all English gold!" he said.

As the time for the departure of the train drew near the gendarme grew anxious. Something weighed heavily on his mind, and that was that he had to write the name of each departing passenger in the police-book and did not know how to manage mine. He wrote down everyone else, and then shook his head despairingly. He restored me my passport and explained that he could not read the

name on it, for it was printed in "Latinski." I boldly offered to write it myself in the sacred volume. He was incredulous of my powers. It must not be written in Latinski, he said. I promised, took the pencil and wrote my name very large in Cyrillic; he was delighted, and everyone came to see. "It was a great wonder," they said, and they all wanted to know where I had learnt it.

"In London," said I.

"Of a Serb?"

"No, of a Pole."

"Of a Pole! That is impossible."

"But it is true."

Then a superior person explained to me, "It is impossible that you should have learned these letters of a Pole, because Poles are Roman Catholic, and these letters are Orthodox." I stuck to my statement. Then the superior person, who even spoke a little German, had a bright idea. "This Pole," he said, "was Catholic, but has now become converted." And this explanation amply satisfied everyone, for it is obviously easier to change one's religion than to learn the alphabet belonging to an opposition one—if you are a South Slav.

My leaving Pirot was very different from my arriving. Now they said it was a pity I was going. The stationmaster thanked me for trusting a Balkan state, and I promised to look in next time I was in the neighbourhood.

CHAPTER XIV

East Servia

At Nish the hotel received me on my return with much friendliness, but, though evidently anxious to oblige, was quite unable to give me any information as to East Servia, and prayed me to return to Belgrade by train. This not suiting my ideas at all, I started from Nish at 5 a.m for Zaichar, and trusted the unravelling of the route to luck and my driver, one Marko, a stolid and friendly being.

Servia is an amazing land. The more I saw of it the more struck was I with its great fertility and its great capabilities, its rich and breezy uplands and its warm well-watered valleys. Corn, vines, tobacco, green crops, and every variety of fruit grow luxuriantly even with the present most primitive methods of cultivation. With knowledge and a little capital Servia should be a rich land. Unluckily both are wanting; the lamentable political differences which tear the kingdom make both almost impossible of attainment, and the small minority of plucky and intelligent men are struggling against almost impossible odds.

Nish had suspected me vaguely, but the farther I got up country the more forcibly did I realise that Servia was a raw quivering mass of politics, and that a change of some sort was imminent. Being

provided with no letters of introduction, no one knew to which party I belonged, and I was cross-questioned and re-questioned with a persistency that, to put it mildly, was fatiguing. Before I had realised the extreme state of political tension, I rashly revealed, in reply to a straight question, that I had come direct from Cetinje, and was at once supposed to be supporting the possible succession of Prince Mirko to the Servian throne.

"If you say such things," said a man to me, "you must expect to be suspected, because we have no heir to the throne."

"But what is that to me? I have no wish to occupy your throne."

"Why have you come here?"

"To see Servia."

"Why do you wish to see Servia? Have you ever spoken to Prince Mirko?" and so on and so on, a long string of questions directed towards finding out which of the possible successors to that rickety seat I favoured.

I replied, "I am English, and naturally I prefer the Prince of Wales," and laughed so much that to my no little relief everyone else did so too, and the examination came to an end. By and by people began to confide in me, and I got used to "I tell you this that you may know the truth and tell it abroad. You are English, and I trust you not to say that I told you, nor that you heard it in this town." It was pointed out to me that had I come provided with introductions I should have been spared much annoyance. That is true. But I should not in that case have "seen Servia," nor—for my tormentors

always ended by being amiable—should I have learnt how kind the Servian can be to a friendless stranger.

I drove through this beautiful and sunny land much harassed by the pity of it all. Marko was a cheerful companion, and did his best to amuse me. He pointed out that there were always at least three women to one man working in the fields and that the "man" was usually a boy. Men, he explained, did not like working in fields. Moreover, the women did it so well that he seemed to think that it would be a pity to dissuade them. And so long as there was enough to eat, why trouble? For a man it is much better to be a "pandur" (policeman), especially in a large town. Then you do nothing in the streets, and are paid for it; also you wear a revolver and a uniform. Even this delightful career has its drawbacks, for it means a lot of standing and walking about. Best of all is to be a "gazda" (head of a large household or family community), then you tell all the others what to do, and you spend your leisure elegantly in a kafana. A coachman's lot was very hard and ill-paid. Thus Marko, and his astonishment was intense and genuine when I walked up all the hills. I think he ascribed this act of folly to the fact that I was a woman, for he pointed out that the women in the fields had to tramp long distances to work. They have a hard time of it, poor things, for they carry their tools and their babies with them; and babies rolled in shawls and slung up hammockwise dangle like gigantic chrysalids from the branches of the trees round the fields where their mothers toil. "Hush-a-bye, baby, on the tree-top; when the wind blows, the cradle will rock," is true in Servia. Probably our

own nursery rhyme dates from days when field labour in England was in just such a primitive state.

We made no long pause save at Kniazhevatz (= "Prince's Place"), a little town that was formerly almost on the frontier, and was burnt to the ground no less than three times in the nineteenth century by the Turks, the last time in 1876. It consists mainly of wooden frame houses with mud walls and big eaves and balconies, and the streets are straggly and irregular. This makes it quite the most picturesque town on that side of Servia. What the Serb likes is a perfectly straight street in which all the houses are as much alike as possible. This is, however, also the modern Parisian's idea, and some people admire Paris, so perhaps the Serb is right.

I was supposed to "rest" at Kniazhevatz, but did nothing of the sort. I had not long swallowed my lunch when I was told that "a gentleman who spoke German" wished to talk to me. He and his friends had previously interviewed Marko. He now offered to show me the town. I accepted, and we started. His idea of "showing the town" turned out to be to walk me up and down the main street and let loose a perfect torrent of questions about me and my affairs. I grasped this fact, and ran my eyes over him. He was youngish, fair, and far too stout for his years. A Teutonic ancestor somewhere, I thought. I replied cheerfully to his questions, and walked at a fair pace. When we arrived at the top of the street again, I did not turn back; I pursued bye streets and side streets, and walked on the sunny side of the way. I reckoned on his being in very bad condition, and he was; moreover, he had just dined solidly. The more

personal his questions became, the faster I walked. Till a week or two ago I had been panting after tireless Montenegrins, now the situation was reversed; the perspiration stood on his brow, and he had not yet discovered what I was worth in pounds sterling. He asked if I did not find the sun too hot, and I replied that I liked it. He kept up manfully, and inquired the incomes of my father, my brothers, and my brothers-in-law. Baffled on these points, but still persuaded that I was a multi-millionaire, he suggested that I should remain permanently in Servia; this with noble disinterestedness, for he was already another's; but in the middle of the good old tale of how Someone-avich had married an English-wife-who-was-extremely-happy, he was forced for lack of breath to suggest that there was no need to walk fast. "No," said I, "it is very foolish to walk fast, for then one can see nothing." As there was rising ground before us and the "going" was very bad, I forced the pace slightly, his questions died away, and I brought him back uphill to the hotel a limp and dripping thing, with the great problem still unsolved. He threw himself into a chair and called for beer. I jumped into my carriage, which was by this time ready, and drove off without enlightening him. "That man," said Marko, "wanted to know everything, but I told him nothing." As Marko knew nothing at all about me, I was not surprised.

We arrived at Zaichar late at night, after a fourteen hours' drive. Zaichar had little to detain me. Beyond the motley crowd of Bulgarian and Roumanian peasants—for this is very much a borderland place—there is nothing to see. Some villages in the

neighbourhood have scarce a Serb in them. Gold is found not far off at the Maidan Pek, and I was strongly urged to go and see the diggings. By way of an attraction, I was told that I should find specimens of every race in Europe there except English, and as by no means the best specimens of humanity haunt gold diggings, I thought that a herd of them loose upon the Servo-Bulgarian frontier might be more than I could grapple with single-handed. So I contented myself with looking at some small nuggets in a bottle. The mines, I was told, pay fairly well, and enough alluvial gold is also found in the bed of the river Timok by the peasants to make the search worth while. The Timok forms the frontier for a considerable distance, and as a river is a clearly marked line that all can see, the frontier is a quiet one, and no "mistakes" occur upon it.

We started for Negotin as a heavy thunderstorm cleared away and a big rainbow overarched the sky. "When the old people see that green and red thing," said Marko, pointing to it, "they say, 'Now we shall have good wine and maize.' Red for wine and green for maize." It was an uneventful drive over land that once produced Servia's best wine, and is now but slowly recovering from the phylloxera. As we approached Negotin, Marko became more and more uneasy. He told me repeatedly that the people of Zaichar had asked him all about me and he had told them nothing; merely that I was English; otherwise nothing at all! This he considered very meritorious. As he knew nothing more about me, I did not see the extreme virtue of his reticence. However, as he was dying for information and I was going to part with

him in the evening, so should be no more bothered, I thought I would gratify him, and told him the number of my brothers and sisters, etc., all of which gave him infinite satisfaction. We arrived at Negotin the best of friends.

Negotin stands in a swamp; there are water-meadows and marshes full of frogs and reeds all round it, but I saw no mosquitoes, and the town did not look unhealthy. There are about 6000 inhabitants, a new and unlovely church, and a newly-erected bronze statue to Milosh Obrenovich, but the chief glory of Negotin is the monument to Hayduk Veljko, —Veljko, the popular hero, the story of whose career casts a fierce light on the condition of Servia less than a hundred years ago, and makes one wonder not that Servia should be, as some folk say, so backward, but that in so short a time she should have reached such a high point of civilisation.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Servia was resolved no longer to tolerate Turkish tyranny, the land was overrun with bands of desperate men, who sheltered in wood and mountain, lived on plunder, and perpetually harassed the enemy by guerilla warfare. They called themselves Hayduks (brigands), and they gloried in the name. To-day, just one hundred years later, the same conditions exist in Macedonia, and the causes are the same. Dreaded, beloved, and admired, these Hayduks were the heroes of the peasants, whom they alternately protected and oppressed; their names and deeds were sung in songs, and they cast a halo of glory round the profession of brigandage which has only lately faded from it. The greatest of all was

Hayduk Veljko. Associated with Karageorge at the beginning of the uprising, his extraordinary lawlessness and ferocity made it impossible for him to work in co-operation with any plan or person. With a gang of followers, he carried on war in East Servia on his own account. Insatiable for plunder, he would risk his life for a few piastres, but what he had he would give away lavishly. He boasted that he grudged his goods to no man, and that it was better for no man to grudge his goods in return. When the Russians reproached him with calling himself "Hayduk," he answered, "I should be sorry if there were any greater robber in the world!" Drunk with blood and the lust of battle, he prayed "Give us war in my time, O Lord!" for though he was kind enough to wish Servia peace after his death, the joys of the insurrection quite obliterated for him its object, and any form of government was intolerable to him. He was a terror to the Turks, whom he was always surprising, and his reputation was so great that it excited the jealousy of the other Servian leaders. He and his men held all East Servia, and without further assistance kept the foe at bay. Negotin was his stronghold. The Turks, enraged by the heavy losses he repeatedly inflicted upon them, determined to destroy him, and besieged him with a force of 18,000 men. Undaunted, he made sallies at night, harassing the enemy, slaughtering many, and retiring into his fortifications with slight losses. But his garrison gradually became smaller. When he saw that it was impossible to hold out much longer, he was forced to humble his pride and send for help to Karageorge. Alas!

Karageorge had no force to spare, and the other leaders were reluctant to help. Hayduk Veljko had always wished to stand alone, they said, and he might do so now. The Turks were reinforced by artillery, and Veljko's fate was sealed. They battered down his towers; the buildings within the walls were smashed: still the garrison held out and sheltered in the cellars. Hayduk Veljko grew desperate; every scrap of metal, spoons, lamps, even coins, were made into bullets, and no help came. When at length it came by the Danube, in the shape of a ship full of men and ammunition, it was too late. Veljko was dead. His prayer was fulfilled, and he did not live to see peace. Making his morning rounds, he was recognised on the redoubts by a Turkish artilleryman who fired at him. He fell terribly mangled, and with his dying breath urged his men to stand firm. They buried his body at night, and tried to conceal his death from the enemy; but the spirit which had animated them had fled, and the garrison, which had not before thought of retreat, held out for a day or two only, and then escaped at night across the marshes. A panic ensued among the Serbs of the district when they learnt the death of Veljko, nor do the other Servian leaders seem to have realised what a power Veljko was till it was too late. The Turkish army pursued the fugitives, and for the losses that Veljko had inflicted upon them exacted an awful vengeance at the first place they came to, the little town of Kladovo, where they impaled the men alive, captured the women, and immersed the children in boiling water, in derision of baptism.

Such is the story of Hayduk Veljko. His was

a strong soul blackened by the terrible times into which he was born, and in spite of his many faults he played a great part in the freeing of Servia. His monument, an obelisk with commemorative lines and the date of his death (1813) on the four sides of its base, stands in a little flower garden. His portrait, fierce with black moustachios and a scarlet fez, is carved and painted on the stone. I spelt slowly through the inscriptions; the old woman, caretaker of the spot, came out and picked me some roses. "He was a very good man," she said; "here are some roses from his garden." Poor plucky barbarian, whose ambition it was to be the greatest robber in the world, he had come to this—roses and a very good man!

I took the flowers and strolled back; I looked at the older people and reflected that they had heard these things from the living mouth, for their grandfathers had seen them. Yet with these traditions barely a century old the land is now orderly and peaceful; in this short space of the world's history it has leapt from savagery to civilisation. It has yet far to go, but it has done much.

When I returned to the inn, I found the landlord beaming. "You have two brothers and five sisters," he said. "It is so pleasant to know all about one's guests!" Marko had lost no time in spreading short biographies of me, and had done his work effectually. He parted from me with regret, for with recollections perhaps of Veljko, he had overcharged me liberally, as I learned when I was older and wiser; barring this slight defect, he was a most agreeable travelling companion, and, as he himself pointed out, "gave me Servian lessons for nothing."

The landlord was all friendliness. He knew all about the English, and he told me about Someone-avich - who - married - an - English - wife. "She is so happy," he added rapturously, "and he is now just like an Englishman!"

"What does he do?" I asked.

"Do? He does not do anything. He sits in Idepark like an Englishman."

"She must be an American," I said firmly; "Englishwomen are not rich enough for that."

Radujevatz, on the Danube, the port for Negotin and the last station before reaching the Bulgarian frontier, is but a couple of kilometres away. I returned to Belgrade by boat. All the world and Cook go down the Danube, so it needs no description. My guardian angel was as kind as usual, and gave me two most courteous Servian artists as travelling companions. There is nothing like a "brother brush" for help in need, and as a general rule my sketch-book is a great passport and finds me more useful friends than does my Foreign Office one. These two gave me lessons in the language and told me of their fatherland. That I should have come so far to see it pleased them greatly, but they were both, especially the elder man, very sad about it, and told me mournfully that I could scarcely have come in a worse period of its history. "Our old patriarchal system is dead, and we have nothing to replace it. Our people have had thrust upon them too suddenly Western ideas which they do not understand; we are in the most critical period of a nation's history, the half-educated period. The nations that criticise us passed through this period so long ago that they have forgotten it." He

talked of the Great Empire and of Kosovo and of the black years that followed. "Look at the few old churches that the Turks have left us. In those days we were not behind the whole of Europe. Our past was heroic; our future looks black. I am an old man, and I shall die with all my hopes disappointed. No one in the West knows how we have suffered. I, of course, remember when the Turks still occupied our forts." They sang me snatches of Servian ballads—all monotonous wails over the slaying of someone by the Turks, ending in a cry for vengeance. I commented on their unrelieved melancholy. "Ah, Fräulein," said the elder, "it is the suffering of five hundred years, and it is your nation that keeps the Turk in Europe. The Crimean War was a blow to us, and the Berlin Treaty was only a shade less bitter. They did not consider us as peoples. They marked out the Balkan peninsula into *spheres of influence* awaiting the pleasure of the great Powers, and we are in the Austrian sphere. England has never troubled about us. Russia is our only friend; Russia could save us, but she is too busy in the Far East. The only other land situated as we are, with no outlet to the sea, is Switzerland. All Europe takes care of Switzerland. We have no one to help us in the whole world."

We reached the Iron Gates. The stream was enormously swollen, and we steered up the middle, a huge wide swirl of water eddying and coiling with terrible rapidity. The boat began its upward climb, shuddering and trembling violently; it seemed to be straining every nerve, and the deck vibrated underfoot. Beyond and above gleamed the line of smooth water,

and the panting vessel struggled into it and regained its breath. As I stood in the bows and watched the struggle and heard the tale of Servia's woes, Servia seemed to me like the struggling boat, with the melancholy difference that there was no strong hand at the helm to save her from shipwreck.

This was, however, the boat's supreme effort. We lay off Orsova all night, were more and more behind time next day, and did not lounge up to the quay at Belgrade till very nearly midnight. Belgrade was fast asleep when I walked through the silent streets that were entirely deserted save for the sentinels standing motionless at the street corners with rifle and revolver. Belgrade, I had been told in West Europe, was a gay, reckless, dissipated capital. In outward appearance it is about as wild as Little Peddlington. Appearances may be deceptive. I do not know.

CHAPTER XV

The Shumadia and South-West Servia

Everyone said I must go to the Shumadia, because it is the "heart of Servia," the centre in which arose her struggle for freedom. So to the Shumadia I went. Having read in a German book that it was quite impossible to explore that part of the country without a guide and letters of introduction, I took only as much luggage as I could carry easily in one hand and set out by train for Kragujevatz. As the best-laid plans are apt to go wrong, I left this expedition entirely to Fate. People like being trusted; often, in fact, serve you much the better for it. Fate did this time. She put me into the carriage with a gentleman who most kindly furnished me with an introduction that took me round all the rest of Servia. That I should have been thrown on the land quite unassisted distressed him. "You must yourself see," he said, "that if your Consul and Minister have given you no letter, it looks very bad. But that is the way your country behaves. If you had been German, for example, you would have had plenty of letters." This astonished me; my new friend, on the other hand, seemed still more astonished that I had got so far letterless. Servia loves letters of introduction and is not happy without them. From this time forward I made a sort of triumphal progress,

was passed from town to town, and received so much hospitality and kindness that Servia and the friends that helped me on my way will ever remain in a warm corner of my memory. I changed my plans from day to day, and I went wherever the police captains and the district engineers advised me; nor can I wish anyone better guides than these gentlemen. They lent me maps, they planned my routes, they took me walks, they hired my carriages, found my guides and horses, and drove my bargains. What they were pleased to consider the mad Englishness of my enterprise appealed forcibly to their sense of humour, and my various adventures made them shout with laughter. I cannot repay their kindness, but I certainly amused them.

The Shumadia takes its name from "shuma," a forest; the woods of Servia were the last shelter of a desperate people and the rallying-point of the nation. If it be true that "all that is most Servian is in the Shumadia," it is here that we should look for the type of the race. The peasant of the Shumadia is tall, fair, and blue- or grey-eyed. He is more strongly built and more active than his brethren in other districts, and is more like the fair type of Montenegrin than are the men of any other part of Servia. The race question in the Balkans is so exceedingly complicated that I cannot attempt to unravel it, and can only note marked types where they occur.

So much for the peasant. The country now is no longer a forest, though well supplied with woods and trees; it is a most fertile district, and is better cultivated and far more enterprising than any other part of Servia.

Kragujevatz, Milosh' capital, is a very go-ahead place, and next to Belgrade is Servia's most important commercial town, busy and flourishing, with some 14,000 inhabitants. It has a fine gymnasium and a large girls' school, both handsome and spacious buildings very well fitted; the girls' school built by private gift. All trace of the Turk has been wiped out of the town, but the relics of Milosh are carefully preserved. His konak, a medium-sized whitewashed house, now forms part of the officers' quarters. The old church stands near, a small plain whitewashed building with a wooden annexe for the women, who were not then admitted to worship in the main body of the church—which shows forcibly how deeply the Turk had set his mark upon the Servian people. By the church stands the long low whitewashed shed that was Servia's first parliament house. Milosh, like Karageorge, took care to assemble his parliament very seldom and to pay little or no attention to it then. Kragujevatz otherwise is brand-new, and here as elsewhere it is easy to see that the Servians have done more in fifty years for the improvement of the place and the conditions of life than the Turk did in four centuries. Much yet remains to be done, nevertheless a journey from Servia into Turkey is like stepping off the pavement into the sewer.

On leaving Kragujevatz I left the railway. None exists in West Servia, which has to rely entirely on ox-carts for the transport of its produce. Carriage travelling in Servia is, as I have said before, but slow work. But it gives one excellent opportunities of seeing the country. The start must be made early. The man usually suggested 4 a.m., but I made it 5 when

possible. The peasant was always on the road or already at work; for he, like the coachman, likes to take his time about things, and has to get up very early in order to spread a six or seven hours' job very thinly over sixteen. This gives him ample leisure to lie under a beech tree and play upon a wooden pipe (a double pipe it is, too, two pipes with one mouth-piece), but in spite of the old proverb it has not yet contributed much either to his wealth or wisdom. He is descended from a long line of forefathers who lived oppressed by foreign rule in troublous times, when the accumulation of property would have been labour in vain and would have but enriched the pocket of Pasha or Janissary. He sees no object in exerting himself; it is unjust to call him lazy. He is undeveloped; his wants are so simple that he can satisfy them easily without working up to his full power, and he has no ideas beyond. He walks, thinks, and acts in leisurely fashion, and appears to be slow to wrath and very good-natured. The spare time which remains upon his hands unfortunately is not always harmlessly employed upon the penny whistle, for your Servian peasant is a great politician. Slow to grasp a new idea on this as on all other subjects, and with no traditions of good government behind him, he is eternally dissatisfied with the government he happens to be under. For centuries "government" in Servia meant "the Turk" and was a thing to be resisted or at least evaded, and the Servian peasant still ascribes every evil to it. So the corn waited while the reaper sat in the shade and discussed the latest scandal about Queen Draga. "If our women," said a Serb to me, "took to politics like yours do, I

do not know what would happen. All work would be at a standstill."

Very early in the day, even before the peasant has begun politics, the coachman is ready to rest at a "mehana" (inn), and in spite of all my efforts I became acquainted with the interior of a vast number. The bare whitewashed room with fly-blown portraits of Milan and Natalie, and new and gay ones of Alexander represented as about forty, and Draga as, say, five-and-twenty; the boarded floor; the rush of chickens in at the door when they heard the refreshments coming; the cavern in the brick wall where the little copper pots of black coffee are heated in glowing charcoal; the miniature glass bottles about three inches high, in which the slivovitz (plum brandy) is served; the white-kilted, sandal-shod men who sat round on rough benches and consumed it; and the host and hostess eager both to serve me and to find out all about me, made up a homely and not unpicturesque scene. And a plateful of white curd cheese covered with clotted cream (kaimak), a lump of rye bread, some onions, and some thin red wine, are a breakfast a Prince would not disdain, after driving for three hours with nothing but a thimbleful of black coffee inside him. By midday every inn has dinner ready, and supplies food, which is generally far better than the outside of the den leads one to expect, at a very cheap rate. The penny wine of the country is good of its kind, and shows that Servia only requires science to become a first-class wine-growing country. The untravelled Serb has at present but vague ideas as to what West Europe considers first-class wine. "Our wine," said a Serb to me, after I had tasted a

thin red variety, "is not so well known as it ought to be. We send a great deal of this to Marseilles and sell it very cheap. The French probably sell it as the best champagne, at a high price!" which showed he had much to learn as yet about vintages.

I had long days upon the road, but was never lonely. All the country life of Servia dawdled past; living pictures of which I never tired. The school children, who often have to tramp a great distance, are out early, carrying their books and inkpots. In bad winter weather they are often unable to return, and are put up at the school for many nights. Or there will pass a gang of Albanian horse-dealers, their tight striped leg-gear, their scarlet sashes and shaven heads looking outlandish even in this out-of-the-way spot. Sitting high on their saddles, they amble smartly past, driving a herd of ponies in front of them. The Albanian does not let the grass grow under his feet, and his movements are full of nervous energy.

Wildest of all in appearance are the gipsies—brown untamed animals, long, lean, sinewy, and half-clad. As a matter of convenience they adopt the dress of the country they happen to be in; their individuality they never change. The Servian looks down on them with contempt; they are the lowest of the population. "Tsiganin! do this," shouts a Serb to any of the swarthy young rascals who are hanging about the street corner, and the boy obeys like a dog. But the gipsy is fiercely proud of his race. "You are English, but I am a Gipsy!" said an old woman to me, with indescribable majesty, as she drew up her head; the coins glittered in her filthy elf-locks, and she fixed me with her eagle eyes. She took the black pipe from

her mouth and waved it round her head till she was wreathed in blue smoke, and she smote her bare breast dramatically. "I am a true Gipsy," she repeated. In a piece of a dirty shirt and half a petticoat, she looked like an empress. Yet the savage who possesses a hut, even the wild beast with a den, is a more civilised being. Without any kind of a tent, much less a cart, will they camp; some poles propped against a bush and covered with an armful of fern are often their only covering from the weather, and a couple of lean unhappy bears may share with them the bundle of filthy rags that is their bed, for your gipsy is a great showman. I once passed a group encircling a caldron, asquat and eager for the pot to boil; they turned as I drove by to look at me, and I saw, with something of a shock, that one of the party was a huge blue-nosed baboon. He wore about as much clothing as the others, and it was not till I saw his face that he was distinguishable from his friends. The cavemen and the prehistoric lake-dwellers cannot have lived less luxuriously than do these strange wild folk now, in Europe in the twentieth century. When I met them upon the road, they seemed to have walked out of another age, another world. Untrustworthy and dishonest are the mildest terms applied to them, and they are said to be responsible for a large proportion of the crime of the land. More extraordinary than their filth and their savagery, more wonderful than their superb vitality, is their marvellous gift—a gift that amounts to genius—for playing stringed instruments. It is in the blood to such an extent that there are fiddlers in every gang; it seems as natural for a gipsy to fiddle as for a fish to



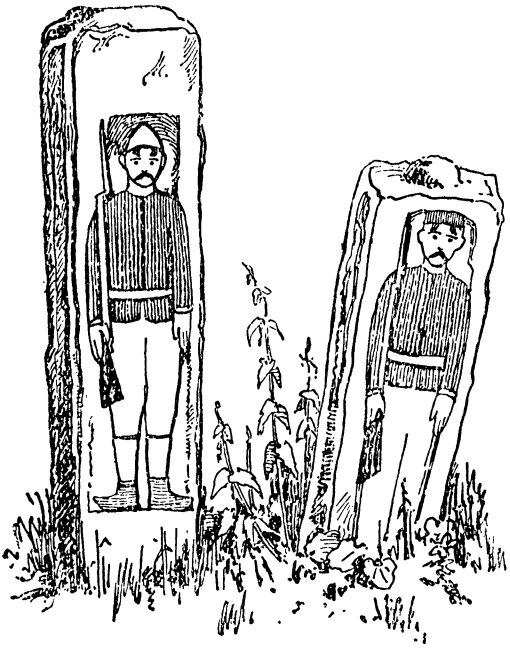
TRAVELLING GIPSIES, RIJEKA, MONTENEGRO.

swim. I am not speaking of those who wear civilised garments and perform in the large towns,—many of these are known to fame,—but of the ragged ruffians who fiddle for their own amusement on the road, by the camp fire, or sprawled under a tree, and who display a command of the instrument and a technical facility that tends to confirm the theory that music is the least civilised of the arts. I have seen a child, of certainly not more than ten years, perched on the top of a loaded waggon, executing the wildest runs, turns, and flourishes upon his fiddle with an ease and certainty that the industrious student of a conservatoire does not attain to after years of labour, the ease and certainty of a singing skylark. But he and his associates were such that it was disgusting to pass on the lee side of that waggon. How these people have attained this art is an insoluble mystery; that it belongs pre-eminently to them as a birthright is shown by the curious fact that most of the world's fiddlers hail from gipsy-haunted lands.

And these strange wild things, with life running fierce in their veins, passed in their turn, and I was alone with the dead.

By every roadside, even by lonely mountain tracks, stand the monuments of the soldiers who have fallen in war—tall stones, sometimes solitary, sometimes in groups of two or three, almost all carved in very flat relief or incised with a rude full-length portrait of the dead man, painted in bright colours. Some of these stones are small, others five or six feet high. With a blue coat and black moustachios, with his arms and fingers straight and stiff by his side and his feet turned out at right angles, stands the soldier,

staring straight in front of him with round black eyes, and presents arms to the passer-by. Upon the older stones, he wears a scarlet tarboosh and carries a sword; upon those put up since the last war, he carries a gun and wears the present uniform. An



inscription tells how he met his death: "For the Glory and Freedom of his brother Serbs." The monument is usually near his home, but sometimes on the actual spot where he fell. To the Serbs these stones are an everyday sight. To me it seemed sometimes that I was the only thing left alive out of the slaughter and was passing constantly through the ranks of a phantom army awaiting the trumpet call.

Their grotesque and childish simplicity added a strange pathos. Thus I travelled through a land green as our own, with oaks and beeches and fern, and everywhere the print of war was upon it, and through storm and sun and wind and rain I passed from town to town.

Chachak, on the Morava, stands on flat land down by the river. I drove through the ford by moonlight and entered the town with a terrible clatter, but, having come properly introduced, I met with a very hospitable reception. I was travelling to see Servia and the Servians; that was now a recognised fact. Should I like to see something truly Servian? It was fortunate that I had arrived this night, for I was in time to see four murderers shot on the spot where they had committed their crime! I was urged to go, and offered special facilities. Taken aback, I listened, speechless, while the plan was unfolded. I was to rise very early and to drive for three hours up the mountains with the condemned men and the file of soldiers who were to carry out the sentence. The words called up before me a picture of the grisly little procession crawling uphill in the grey of the dawning. Adding up the pros and cons rapidly, I said to myself that it was my duty to see everything, but searched my brains for a decent way out of it. Then I recollected that if I went, for the next fifty years it would be said that all Englishwomen were in the habit of seeing men shot before breakfast. Gripping thankfully at this idea, I said I had rather not accept the invitation; I had not come so far to see Servians killed. My reply caused disappointment, and I was strongly urged to go. The murder had been a peculiarly atrocious one, so that I need not

mind seeing the punishment; for the murderers, after cutting the throats of their victims, had gouged out the eyes and otherwise barbarously mutilated the corpses. Twenty men had been arrested, the last gang of Hayduks on that side of Servia. Four were to die to-morrow. Moreover, my route lay that way, and there was nothing at all to be seen in Chachak. My coachman listened anxiously for my decision, but was doomed to disappointment. I did not go.

Chachak is proud of being the first town taken from the Turks by Karageorge. It is a bright and enterprising place, and dreams of constructing an electric railway that shall connect it with the world. It boasts a church that was church, then mosque, and is now church again. At least so I was told, but I believe myself that it was born a mosque and that the old bells belonging to the former Christian period, which were found recently when digging the foundations of one of the public buildings, belonged to an early church long since destroyed and forgotten. I spun out the resources of Chachak as long as I could, and my coachman hung about, buoyed up by the hope that we should yet be in time. I even found the horses harnessed and ready, waiting for me, a most unusual event in Servia, and he started off at a great pace for the first and last time in that land. He had a pleasant, smiling face, and was very civil, and as he looked at his watch every few minutes, I marvelled that he should crave so ardently to see red blood run in the sunshine. To have once seen it hurrying down an Italian gutter was enough for me.

So we drove on through woods that I knew were

beautiful, but they gave me only a sickly feeling of being on the track of death, and the farther I got, the less I liked it. In starting, I had calculated that I was late enough, and then began to wonder if there was any limit to the lateness that a Servian is capable of.

When we arrived at Markovich, the village nearest the top of the pass, I saw the soldiers stopping outside the inn to cheer themselves with rakija on their homeward march, and I knew that the deed was done. An officer rode up, touched his cap and told me politely where I should see the graves; he expected me to be disappointed, but I was greatly relieved. We reached the top of the hill, a large grassy plateau, and there were the four raw heaps of damp mould. A peasant was patting down the last one, and a stake had been driven in at the head of each. My coachman pulled up and said regretfully, "We are only three-quarters of an hour too late!" "Drive on," said I, cutting short the details of how they had stood in their graves and been shot down into them, and as the peasant shouldered his spade and turned away too, we left them alone on the hilltop.

At Pozhega we had to put up the horses for an hour and find food for ourselves. The landlady—a stout woman with a good-natured face—was considerably exhausted, having been to the top of the hill to see the men shot. She had risen very early and had walked all the way, but there was a great crowd, and much to her annoyance she had not got a good view of the end. Nor could I make her understand that I had purposely avoided the sight myself.

From Pozhega it was but a few hours' drive to Ushitza, my next stopping-place, the prettiest little town that I know in Servia—a place that no traveller in the country should omit to visit. It sprawls through two wooded valleys in a mountainous country as beautiful as anyone need wish to see. It is hospitable and cheery, and should make an excellent centre for a sportsman, for I am told that the surrounding mountains are well supplied with game birds, that there is no lack of wolves and bears, and no difficulty about procuring permission to shoot. I clattered up to the inn, and it received me with characteristic simplicity; its landlady asked if I wanted a place as chambermaid, and was much mystified, for it seems that she had never before seen a lady travelling alone. Laughing over this, I gave my letter of introduction to the master of the establishment and asked him to have it delivered at once. It seemed a simple enough request, and I sat down to some coffee without any anxiety, unaware that he had stowed the letter away carefully behind the rakija bottles in the bar and had sent the potboy to tell the gentleman that his sister had arrived! He turned up in a great hurry, much mystified, as his only sister lived in America and had shown no symptoms of visiting him. The innkeeper then produced the letter and explained that, as the gentleman was a Bohemian and possessed the only pair of blue eyes in the town and I also was a blue-eyed foreigner, it had never occurred to him to doubt our relationship. I had a gay time in Ushitza. The schoolmasters, the head of the police, and other local authorities all came to call on me and devise plans for me, and we drank beer festively by the

market-place, for as I was the first Englishwoman in Ushitza, health drinking was necessary.

Ushitza is plucky and enterprising. It not only makes plans, but it carries them out. It is blessed with good men at the head of affairs. For all the world over, in spite of the old saying, the voice of the people is very seldom the voice of a god; it is far more frequently simply a "row," and in most places we find that all good work is due to the brains and energy of a few individuals, and not to the collective wisdom of the mass, except in the sense that the mass has had the wit to know a good man when they see him and to follow his lead.

Ushitza, poked away in a lonely valley in a far corner of Servia, has a very good school, well fitted with modern apparatus, maps and diagrams and plaster casts; is well lighted by electricity, and has started an electric cotton and linen weaving factory, which is the pride and joy of the town. Three years did it take in the making; every bit of the machinery had to be imported from abroad and carried over the mountains on ox-carts, but in spite of all difficulties it is well started and beginning to pay its way, and Ushitza, like Chachak, is trying to find the ways and means for an electric railway.

Ushitza was Ushitza in the glorious days of the Servian Empire, and was the seat of its first archbishop, the great St. Sava. Stefan VI. transferred the archbishopric to Ipek (Petch), that lies in Stara Srbija waiting to be redeemed; but Ushitza worked out her own redemption in 1862, and after severe fighting evicted the Turk, and is once more the seat of a bishop. The Djetina, a tributary of the Morava,

rushes past the town from a narrow valley, where leaps the fall that works the 150-horse-power electric engines, and high on the opposite hill tower the ruins of the big castle that once guarded the town. Fortified by the Turks, it was taken by the Servians and blown to pieces, and its shattered walls hang perilously on the precipice edge. I was told it was a Turkish building, but I scrambled all over it, and believe it to be a Servian mediæval castle belonging probably to the palmy days of the Empire.

Everything else in Ushitza is new, except the stone bridge over the river, which is mediæval, and the big Roman altar stone found in the neighbourhood that stands in the entrance of the school; but the town, though so new, is very picturesque. I left Ushitza with regret, for it was very good to me. I said good-bye for ever and ever, promised to send picture post-cards of London, and was soon again on the road.

Ivanitza was my destination, and my midday halt at Arilje, where I arrived cold and damp in a heavy rainstorm. The police captain and the priest were kindly folk and offered to take me to see the church. According to tradition, it is the oldest church in Servia, and is said to have been built to the memory of one Aril, a Christian priest martyred by heathen Servians early in the ninth century. It is a cruciform building with a central dome, a very flat apse, the usual narthex, and is barrel-vaulted. My guides could tell me nothing at all except that it was "very old." I suggested thirteenth century, which astonished them. That the building itself had anything to say on the subject was a new idea to them. After a little discussion with the priest, the captain said that someone

had said it was of the time of King Milutin, and added naïvely that they did not know when that was. Milutin (Stefan Milutin Urosh) reigned from about 1275 to 1321. This date fits in with its appearance, but not with the tradition that it is the oldest church in Servia. Probably it is a later building on an old site. It is old and dim enough, at any rate, to have seen the Great Servian Empire and the rise and the fall of the Ottoman. Frescoes stiff and Byzantine in style cover its walls. Big saints in long straight white robes with bizarre black patterns stand in a row along the walls, and a king (Milutin himself) in a high crown and a long cloak decorated with large discs of gold. The faces have been scraped out by the Turks, and the whole of the paintings are dim and faded, but they are scarce examples of early art, and appear to have never suffered restoration. I am sorry that I allowed damp, cold, and general discomfort to prevent my staying to draw them.

We pushed on through the storm along a richly wooded defile through which tears the Morava, and arrived chill and stiff in the evening at Ivanitza, where the mere sight of the inn made me feel much worse. As it was not possible to get anything to eat till supper-time, and as the bedroom offered me was uninhabitable, and as both my letters of introduction were to gentlemen who only spoke Servian, I wondered why I had come. It was too wet to go out, so I sat in the doorway and drew the shops over the way, and soon forgot all the surrounding circumstances. I was aroused by the most cheery police officers, in very smart uniforms, who came in answer to my letters of introduction, and who were extraordinarily

amused to find me already settled down to draw. They brought the burgomaster, called for drinks, and in the approved fashion each stood me a glass. When the doctor, who spoke German, turned up and tried to stand me one on his own account, I cried off. My Montenegrin sketches here were the topic of the day; for the nearer you get to the frontier the more beloved and admired is Montenegro. Central, Eastern, and Northern Servia seem to dislike it. Everyone here wanted to hear both about the place and the people, and I sat in that little low-ceiled, dark, messy, stone-floored room filled with officers and peasants, and explained things as best I could, the company all helping me out with the language. The rain poured in torrents outside and splashed in at the open door; everyone offered me tobacco, which I declined; and there was a good deal of glass clinking. Helped out by German and the doctor, I told tales of Skodra, which Ivanitza thought was a place perilous. And we talked of the virtues of the Black Mountains and the sins of the Turks. The two oil lamps made the black corners blacker and threw odd shadows of fur-capped peasants on the walls, and as I looked at my surroundings, saw the white kilts, the leathern sandals and the uniforms, and heard the clank of sword and spur, I wondered to which of my ancestors I owed the fact that I felt so very much at home. Presently two men slunk in who were greeted by a roar of laughter. "How are the Turks?" cried everyone. Chaff flew much too thickly for me to see my way through it. When it cleared, I was told that the two had strayed over the frontier, had been caught by the Turks, and, as they had no passports

upon them, were promptly put into prison. There they had stayed some days, and they had only just been released. Everyone treated this as a huge joke except the victims, who looked extremely silly. There was more in the episode than met the eye, for in the course of the arrest shots had been exchanged, and two Servians—a shepherd and a border patrol man—killed. My officers told me seriously that I was to keep off the edge. Never having lived on a ruddy frontier, I was much interested. All my life I had heard of the value of our "silver streak," but I had to go to a public-house in South Servia before I realised it.

The fact that I had come so soon after the affair of Miss Stone charmed everyone, as it conclusively proved that England had a high opinion of Servia. I was, as someone naïvely stated, the most remarkable event since the war. An English officer had ridden through the town three years before, but he had had an interpreter and had carried a revolver. Also two Frenchmen had once passed that way. That was Ivanitza's complete visitors' list for the last twenty years. I was the first who had tackled it alone and unarmed. When a fresh arrival turned up, he was told "She is English; it is not a joke; she really is"; and I was shown to some children as a unique specimen: "Look at her well; perhaps you will never see another." Yet the country is so beautiful that it only requires to be known to attract plenty of strangers.

Having first asked me if I were quite sure I had a room that I could sleep in, they all wished me good-night. I said the room was good enough, and went

to find out if I had spoken the truth, through into the stableyard. It was pitch dark and the rain was falling. I called for a light. Something came out of the night, and I followed it up a rickety ladder and on to a wooden gallery. It thrust a tallow candle into my hand, and struck a match. The light revealed a lean, hairy man, bare-legged, bare-chested, and sparsely clad in dirty cotton garments. Clasping the candle, I followed him into a very small room. It was a different one from the one I had been shown on arriving. There was an iron bedstead in it, covered with a wadded coverlet, and there were three nails in the wall. Otherwise, nothing; not even a chair. The gentleman produced an empty bottle, stuck the candle into it, put it on the window sill, wished me good-night, and was going. "The room is not ready," said I firmly. He looked round in a bewildered manner and said it was, and shouted for female assistance. A stout lady panted up the stairs, beaming with good-nature. She apologised for the room. The best one contained four beds and they had quite meant me to have one of them, but unfortunately a family had arrived and taken all of them! It was most unlucky! I assured her that I did not mind having to sleep alone. But this room was not ready. She glanced round, appeared to realise its deficiencies, rushed off, and returned in triumph with a brush and comb. I thanked her, but said that what I wanted was some water to wash in. She seemed surprised at this, but went off again, and came back this time with a small glass decanter and a tumbler. I ended by getting a very small tin basin and a chair to stand it on. The seriousness of my

preparations then dawned upon her, and of her own accord she brought me two towels and a little piece of peagreen soap stamped, in English, "Best Brown Windsor." I had met this kind before. It is, I think, made in Austria.

The room proved to be quite clean, and I fared much better than I had expected. They were all as kind as possible, and in return I was as Servian as I knew how to be, except that I never patronised the well in the stableyard, which is, I believe, the proper way of getting up in the morning—presuming that you are dirty enough to require washing. The stray officers who rode up without even a saddle-bag and passed the night at the inn were, as far as I could make out, satisfied with waxing their moustachios in the morning and having their boots polished, and the effect was much better than one would have expected. Of course you are washed when you arrive. This is, most likely, the survival of some Eastern reception ceremonial. It is a little surprising at first, but you soon get used to it. A girl or a man—the latter is usually my fate—invades your bedroom, shortly after you have been shown to it, with a little basin, a bottle of water, a towel, and a cake of the "Best Brown Windsor." He holds out the basin solemnly and dribbles water over your outstretched hands, for it is very dirty to wash in standing water. When he thinks your hands are clean, he gives you the towel to dry them. Then you have to hold them out again, and he pours more water on them; this you are supposed to rub on your face. This being accomplished, he retires, taking the apparatus with him. In the old days, it is said that foot-washing

was part of the ceremony, but I am glad to say that this has now gone out of fashion. When asking for water, it is always necessary to add "that I may wash," for the Servian invariably imagines that it is for internal application and brings it in a tumbler. These remarks apply, be it said, only to the inns in the villages; in the larger towns the arrangements are quite civilised as a rule, and quite clean.

Ivanitza was so kind to me, and so beautiful, that in spite of its primitive accommodation I stayed on. As long as the food is good, one can stand rough surroundings well enough. The long street of picturesque, tumbledown wooden shops straggles along the valley; the West Morava tears through a wooded deep-cut gorge, and the cloud-capped mountains tower around. It is a lonely and lovely spot, and one that I shall never forget.

On Sunday afternoon there was a little festival, and we sallied forth to a meadow about a mile and a half away. An ox-cart or two brought chairs, tables, beer, bread and cherries—all that Ivanitza required for a happy afternoon. I myself formed no small part of the entertainment, as all who had not yet made my acquaintance had now the chance of doing so.

The priest arrived on horseback with his vestments in his saddle-bags. He made a little altar in the middle of the field with three sticks and a board, spread a cloth on it, and planted a green bush by the side. Then the men stood round close to it, and the women stood behind very much in the background, and the service began. The incense curled thin and pale against the dark background of mountains that ringed us round, and the peasants, in

their gayest and best, sang the responses heartily, while the oxen chewed cud alongside. Suddenly down the narrow valley the sky turned dark and red; everything was blotted out by a dense storm-cloud that burst overhead almost immediately. The priest picked up his petticoats and books, and we all fled precipitately to a group of cowsheds a couple of hundred yards away, and crowded into them.

The one I ran into was so dark that we could hardly see one another. I climbed out of the mud into the manger and held a sort of reception. I answered all the usual questions, and then they tried to find out my accomplishments by asking, "Can you do this? can you do that?" etc. I did all my little tricks, and felt like a circus. Finally it was suggested that I should sing—a thing I never do in public at home. The ever-increasing darkness suggested "Abide with me," and I started boldly. When, however, I got as far as the words "and comforts flee," they struck me as being so ridiculously appropriate to the circumstances in which I found myself that I ended abruptly by laughing, which made the audience think that the song was a comic one and beg to hear more of it. But the storm was passing over, and though the rain was still falling and the water standing in pools, the devoted priest hurried out to finish the service; out rushed everybody from the sheds and plashed back to the meadow. By the time I arrived on the scene it was all in full swing, the incense rising and the sun struggling through a cloud-rift. As soon as it was over, music struck up and the kolo dance began, and, regardless of the wet, they frisked and splashed through the deep and sopping grass.

Even the doctor thought it was all right. When he told me later that he had a great many patients, because the place was so damp, I was not surprised.

The weather did not seem likely to improve, and the police officer told me with a grin that whenever I said I wanted to go they hoped it would rain; now that I knew everyone I had better stay, and he called upon his friends to describe the horrors of my proposed route. But as I could not stay on indefinitely, I asked him to find me a man and a pony, and decided to risk a wetting. The start had to be made at 5 a.m., too early to see what manner of a day it was likely to be, and it is but a chilly hour at best. A border officer saw me off, and assured me I should find friends wherever I went, which cheered my rather depressed feeling that I was leaving all my friends behind me.

I had come to the end of the road, and the onward track was very much a plunge into the unknown. The mist was thick and clammy as we struck up the mountain path, but was beginning to clear slowly. It was not a bad road at all. A Montenegrin pony would have laughed at it, and a Montenegrin man have done it on foot; but my guide was a Servian and therefore required a mount, and the beasts were fat and sluggish. My baggage consisted of a small hand-bag and a little bundle. These I had carefully made of equal weight, meaning them for either side of my own saddle. Regardless of the fact that I was by far the lighter weight of us two, the Serb insisted on putting them on his own saddle and on tying them both on the same side. Consequently, as the girths were very loose, his saddle kept turning round. This he strove to prevent by sitting crooked! As he

obstinately persisted in this plan in spite of all I could do, he was perpetually re-saddling. I broke a switch from a bush, stirred up my pony and rode ahead in hopes of hurrying him ; but all in vain, for I came to the end of the path in about half an hour, saw before me an endless succession of wild and apparently trackless valleys and mountains, and had to wait my guide's arrival. He appeared at last, crawling along quite happily, and at once hopped off to take another futile pull at the girths. This time I succeeded in getting a better arrangement of the bags, which saved the twisting ; but the saddle still slipped towards the beast's head going downhill, and towards its tail going uphill. Moreover, both animals were weak in their hind fetlocks, and we had to dismount pretty often. Luckily I had a pocketful of black bread handy, and as there seemed no prospect of ever arriving at a feeding-place, I gnawed crusts as I rode over that lonely land—land that has an awful magnificence, for it is untouched by the hand of man. Silently we went through huge and dripping beech woods, dim with fog wreaths, where great trees lay and rotted where they had fallen, and silently out over rich grassy uplands where no flocks feed. Deep valleys lay below us, and mountain peaks rose all around. For miles and miles it was absolutely lonely, there was no sign of a living thing and no sound save the squelching of our horses' hoofs in the deep wet leaf-mould. In a dip of the hills we came upon two most primitive villages, collections of wooden wigwams with high pitched roofs of twigs and branches; through their open doors I could see that they were mere unfurnished dens. Wild-looking, ragged people squatted in the doorways, who stared

like startled animals as I passed. Nothing more primitive in the way of a village could exist. It seemed the kind of place that the Romans might have come upon when they conquered ancient Illyria, and I drew rein. My guide, however, was so determined that I should neither stop nor dismount that I thought he might be aware that its customs were Illyrian also, and I yielded regretfully to his request, for the first time, to hurry on.

At midday we reached another collection of huts, the village of Mlantza, not quite so primitive as the last one, but all of wood. A man with a revolver and cartridge belt, one of the gendarmerie, was resting here and nursing his rifle. Two very tall and incredibly ragged men came out of a hut, and at my guide's request made us some black coffee and boiled us some eggs. We off-saddled, and our ponies were soon blowing themselves out with grass and water, and there seemed every prospect of the girths fitting better after lunch. My guide said we must rest an hour, and inquired the way from the man with the rifle. I wondered that anyone knew it, for there was no track to be seen anywhere. There are not enough people even to wear a footpath. And folk live and die in these lonely spots, and a grave, quite fresh made, with a gaudily painted gravestone, stood close by. One or two men, black-eyed, barefooted, and in clothes that were torn to ribbons, sauntered up. None of them made an attempt to speak to me, and they scarcely exchanged a word with my guide. They were too far removed from the outer world to take any interest in it. They seemed part of the wild, dumb rocks and forests, and only the cluttering of the

hens that came to pick up the crumbs I had dropped broke the heavy silence.

My guide re-saddled the ponies, and we started off again. Downhill most of the way, often very steep, and there was a good deal of dismounting and leading to be done. For some way the rocks were all of green serpentine in wildly contorted strata. A very tiny church stood high on a ledge, far up the mountain side, that looked quite inaccessible from below; one of those built as a retreat by the early kings; a lone wilderness in which some soul had wrestled with temptation, or more probably striven to expiate guilt. And this and the primitive wooden huts of the morning were the only buildings I saw on that long ten hours' ride, until at last, in the valley below, the little white church and the monastery of Studenitza came in sight.

Down past the back of the monastery buildings we joggled, and round to the door of the little inn, where I dismounted thankfully, stiff and somewhat dazed. The kindly peasants who thronged the little bare room made a place for us, and refrained from questioning me till I had eaten a huge meal of rye bread, red wine, onions and kaimak, which was all that the place afforded, and I ate with an appetite that delighted everyone.

Revived and cheered by the food, the wine, and the company, I arose when the inevitable interview was over and strolled across to the open gate of the monastery. Within the walls lay smooth green lawns from which arose the little lily church, its white marble pale gold with age; beyond were the quaint wood and plaster buildings of the monastery, with wide

wooden balconies and tall bell tower. Little acacias, clipped to round balls, were ranged stiffly along the paths, the air was heavy with the scent of lime blossoms, and a stillness so dead that it seemed supernatural hung over all. I stole quietly round the church, which was shut, and saw no living creature.

As I was returning I came face to face with an armed youth, a picturesque figure who, but for his weapons, looked very mediæval in closely-fitting black leg-gear of the Albanian pattern and a very short straight jacket. His feet were shod with leathern sandals, into the straps of which were twisted long spurs; his rifle was slung on his back; the bright green cord to which his revolver was fastened hung round his neck, and his cartridge belt was well filled. He stood up straight, a lithe slim young thing, saluted with great style, and told me that he was a "pandur" (gendarme), had been sent over from Rashka to take care of me and to escort me thither when I was ready to go. Meanwhile he was entirely at my service. His captain had received a telegram about me from Ivanitza and had sent him at once. He added that Rashka expected me and wanted to see me. I was greatly astonished. I had intended going to Kraljevo. The pandur looked grieved. He thought evidently that he should have failed in his duty to his captain if he did not produce me at Rashka. Impelled largely, I confess, by a wicked desire to have such a very good-looking fellow at my beck and call, I was inquiring the means of arriving at Rashka, when the pandur said suddenly, in an awestruck whisper, "Gospoditza, here is the

Archimandrite!" and there was the Archimandrite himself advancing slowly down the path towards us.

A very beautiful old man, with a kindly, benevolent face, tall and stately in his black robes and high velvet hat. His long grey hair flowed over his shoulders, and he fingered a string of amber beads as he came along. The pandur bared his head, dropped on one knee reverently and kissed the hand extended to him, and I wondered miserably whether it would be foolish or polite to follow his example. The Archimandrite relieved me at once by shaking hands with me and welcoming me to Studenitza. Anyone who had come so far, he said, must be his guest. It would have been grossly rude to refuse such a kindly-meant invitation, but I accepted it with fear. To the manners and customs of a Servian inn I was now accustomed. The primitive building outside the monastery walls suddenly seemed to me to be a homelike and wholly desirable resting-place, and the monastery was a strange unknown world. The pandur, on the other hand, was filled with joy. "This is very, very good," he whispered to me; "they are very rich here"; and we followed the Archimandrite over the lawn to the long low guest building on the other side, up a wooden staircase and along a long blue-and-white corridor, to a room at the end which he offered me. It was a beautiful room, luxuriously furnished. I accepted it gratefully, and the pandur whispered his admiration and enthusiasm. He was sent off at once to fetch my bag from the inn, and the Archimandrite, who was greatly overcome at learning that I had come on horseback from Ivanitza, begged that I would rest myself. To-morrow, he said, I

should see all, and was at liberty to draw what I pleased. At what time would I have supper? He added with a little smile, "I fear that to-day I cannot feed you well. We are monks here, and it is one of our great fasts." (It was that of SS. Peter and Paul.) He knew no word of any language but Servian, and waited patiently while I looked up words in the dictionary. I told him I would eat whatever they had. "But no," he said, and he shook his head; "those of our own Church do not keep these fasts as they should. For us monks it is our duty; but for you, who are a stranger, it is different." His words I can give, but not the charm of his manner, nor his simple dignity and his courtesy. His amber beads clicked as he went.

And when he had gone there was a great silence, and I sat at the window and stared at the little white church and at the mountain that rose up just behind it. The world beyond was a vague, far-off recollection; part of a previous existence. I felt that I had passed all my life in that lonely hollow among the hills, and then wondered whether I had any right to be there at all. But I did not wish to ever forget the scene, and in spite of the old man's recommendation to sleep, I coiled up on the window-sill and began a drawing.

Time passed like a flash, and the light was rapidly dying, when I became aware of the clink of spurs and the clicking of the amber beads, and the Archimandrite followed by a servant and my pandur, bearing lamp and supper, came in a little procession down the corridor. I had not realised till then that I was to sup with the Archimandrite himself. He

was distressed that I remained standing, and spoke to the pandur, who hurried away, and returned with a big and throne-like arm-chair. Meanwhile Nikola the servant spread two newspapers on the table, put the lamp in the middle and arranged the plates and dishes. Then he placed a small cane-bottomed chair and stood attention by it. My pandur drew himself up by the arm-chair, the Archimandrite motioned me to it ceremoniously, murmured a blessing, and took his seat. He tucked his large table napkin under his chin, spread the other end of it on the table and stood his plate upon it, thus making a bridge from food to mouth. Foolishly, I did not imitate him, but put mine on my knees. Now the tablecloth was a product of Western civilisation, of that make called "tapestry" in Tottenham Court Road. It was black-and-yellow, and round the border were pyramids, palm trees, camels, Arabs and damsels—a very secular tablecloth. It was greatly treasured by the old man, and the centre only was protected by newspaper. He was distressed to see that I did not know how to use a table napkin, but he was far too polite to say so. He murmured something to Nikola, and before I had realised the mistake I had made, Nikola returned with another newspaper, which he put under my plate. Then the meal began. "Nikola, serve rakija," said the Archimandrite, and Nikola filled two little glasses with slivovitz and put them before us. "This," said the Archimandrite, "is from our own plums," and he raised his glass and bowed gravely; I raised mine; he clinked with it. "God give you health," he said, and drained his glass. I drained mine, and restrained a violent desire

to gasp as the spirit went down like a red-hot poker, for it was the fieriest liqueur I had ever met. "Nikola, serve the rakija," said the Archimandrite again, and we repeated the ceremony. I left some at the bottom of my glass. He pointed this out, and waited patiently. I swallowed it. "Nikola, serve the rakija," said the Archimandrite a third time. "No, thank you," said I timidly. "Three times is Servian," he said pleasantly. My glass was filled. "God give you health," said I bravely; we clinked, and the ceremony was completed.

With a burning gullet, I began dinner. There was no sign of anything else to drink. Bread, cheese, kaimak, onions and poached eggs were spread before me, and a dish of haricot beans and a lettuce before him. "You had better see what I eat," he said, with a funny little smile; "your friends in England will wish to know how an Archimandrite in Servia lives."

I had my dictionary and struggled hard to follow his conversation and to reply, but was sometimes entirely lost, for the strain after the long day was almost more than I could stand. A very great many English, he told me, had been to Studenitza. I was surprised. He counted upon his fingers, and said that since 1865, including myself, there had been eight. "Yes," he said gaily, "here we know the English very well, and your Church is not unlike our own." Feeling quite unequal to discussing theology in Servian, I did not rise to this remark. "At any rate," he said cheerfully, "we both dislike the Pope." "How old are you?" asked the Archimandrite. I told him. "And you are not married?" he said. I agreed. "That, Gospoditza," and he bowed to me, "is very

good—it is the best"; and the pandur smiled a little smile under his moustache. Nikola removed our plates, and appeared with three small trout on a dish. Very excellent trout, fresh from the river, which the Archimandrite shared with me with great relish. But he seemed anxious and had little private housekeeping whispers with Nikola, and produced large keys furtively from his flowing garments. The good man was certain I had not had enough. I assured him I had had plenty; but Nikola returned presently with a small mutton ham, off which he chipped pieces which he offered me. Meanwhile my pandur had removed my knife, fork, and plate. The Archimandrite remedied this by taking his own fork, wiping it on the newspaper and presenting it to me ceremoniously. I accepted it in the spirit in which it was offered and ate as many of the little pieces of meat as I could manage, thereby pleasing my host a good deal more than myself, and the meal was concluded.

It was a dry meal. We now began to wash it down. "Nikola, serve the wine," said his master. Nikola appeared with a bottle of red wine and two small tumblers. The Archimandrite uttered pious wishes for my welfare, we clinked and drank together. I perceived very shortly that politeness did not permit him to take more while there was any left in my glass, and hoped that he was not very thirsty. He, on his part, tried to encourage me by saying that it was excellent wine and not at all strong, and the latter part of the remark fortunately was perfectly true.

When I thought we had nearly done, Nikola again went on a mysterious errand, and returned with two

young monks to whom I was introduced. The two younger men were more interested in the outer world than the old one, and I had to work the dictionary hard. Then came more wine, fortunately not much, for we all four had to clink with each other and utter polite wishes, and this occupied time and made a little go a long way. Obedient to the Archimandrite, we raised and emptied our glasses simultaneously with military precision.

Each day of my life seemed stranger than the last, and I wondered how much longer this one was to be, for I had begun it at 4 a.m. When at 9.30 they arose and wished me good-night, I was more grateful to them than for anything they had yet done for me.

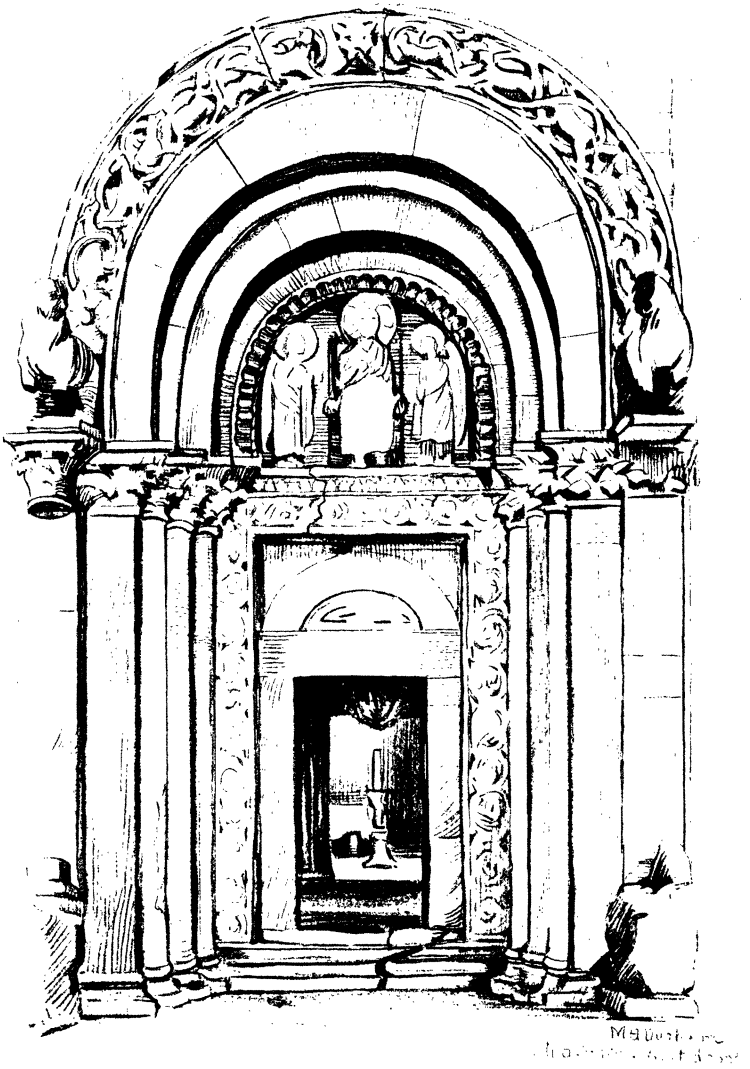
Towels, curtains, bed linen, all were pious offerings to the monastery. Each was embroidered with the donor's name and a motto, and the cushions were covered with beings who looked painfully like Cupids but were doubtless Cherubim. But none of these interesting facts did I discover till the next morning, when the monastery bell clanged loudly at four o'clock and woke me up. I struggled with a desire to sleep for several days, but as I had to see the church, draw it, and ride to Rashka, I got up at five and went out into the corridor. All the land was hidden in a dense white mist. The moisture clung clammily to tree and wall, and fell heavily, plap, plap, to the ground, and I shivered in a thin cotton shirt. Nikola appeared almost immediately with coffee and milk and bread, and my pandur with my coat, and, by the time I had breakfasted, the Archimandrite was waiting below to show me the church.

The old man unlocked the door, and he, I,

and the pandur went in. We entered a narthex, a late addition to the church which spoils its proportions, and saw before us the original west front of the building, all of pure white marble, and the exquisite doorway—a square-headed door surmounted by a lunette with the figure of the Virgin between two angels in high relief, and framed with the most delicate mouldings upon which the fanciful monsters and arabesques of Byzantine art interlace, and the invention and execution are alike perfect. A small detached pier standing upon the back of a grotesque beast, as in the early churches of the North Italian towns, stood on either side of the door and supported the projecting upper mouldings; but they have both been sadly mutilated, for the Turks occupied the Imperial monastery (Tsarska Lavra) and stabled their horses in its church. To do them justice, however, they did not treat the building more cruelly than our own countrymen treated our own cathedrals, and much of the carving is as clean cut as when Stefan Nemanja raised it, in 1190. The Archimandrite sighed over the mutilations, but was pleased at my delighted appreciation of his church. We passed into the old building, through the little old narthex, into the body of the church. This is entirely frescoed, but the paintings are all newly restored, except those just inside the door, where great figures of weird Byzantine ascetics, the hermit saints—Onofrio, Marcus, Peter Antony, and Alexis—show grimly in the original fresco, and a rude painting of the Last Supper with fragments of some other subjects still cling to the walls. The north and south doors have also been beautiful, but they have suffered more severely than

that of the west. Of the windows, one only is intact; the others have been adequately restored. The present dome, a recent and very poor attempt in plaster, is to be shortly replaced. Again the old man bewailed the destruction wrought by the Turks. "And it is your own country that has helped them," he said sadly, and shook his head.

He showed me the treasures of the church, the shrine of St. Simeone (King Stefan Nemanja) and the great silver casket, adorned with reliefs of scenes from the saint's life, presented by Alexander Karageorgevich, in which to worthily preserve the sacred relics. He called the pandur to assist him, and together the young soldier and the Archimandrite unfolded with exceeding care the splendid crimson velvet covering for it, a gift from the then reigning king (Alexander Obrenovich), destined to cover the shrine on the saint's day. The Archimandrite looked at it lovingly, the pandur with awe and amazement, and then they tenderly put it away again, while I wondered over the much detested king who had presented it, and the king who had died seven hundred years ago and had wrought so well for his land that he is yet revered in it as a saint. In spite of time and the Turks, the Imperial monastery still preserves many of its old treasures, church vessels and vestments. A magnificent crimson-and-gold one, the Archimandrite told me, undoubtedly belonged to St. Sava, and it may have done so; but a gilt censer, also said to be the saint's, one of the church's precious relics which he looked on with believing eyes, betrays both by design and workmanship that it is of a later date. There was a very old reliquary, also the property of



CHURCH, STUDENITZA. WEST DOOR.

St. Sava, and there were three or four old manuscript books, and all he handled with a simple pride that was pretty to see. The last cupboard that he unlocked was perhaps the most interesting of all to me, for it contained a mass of votive offerings, most of them personal ornaments, splendid specimens of Turkish, Albanian, Bosnian, and Herzegovinian work, things barbaric and beautiful, choice examples of the finest native work, some of it undoubtedly very old. The last of the treasures was locked up again, and we left the treasury.

Then the pandur and the Archimandrite had a little discussion, and the kind old man told me that the ride to Rashka was a long one, that I had better stay until to-morrow, then I should have time to draw the church and to rest. I was his guest, and he begged I would stay. The church should be left open, and I might draw what I pleased. I accepted the more gratefully as the sky threatened rain and it was damp and cold. He instructed the pandur to bring a table and chair into the church, and then I was left to my own devices. The time flew, and when I heard the clink of spurs on the marble floor, and the pandur saluting said, "Are you hungry?" I merely said "No," and went on. When, however, he reappeared in about twenty minutes and repeated his inquiry with an anxious face, I looked at my watch, realised I had been working for four hours, and hastily followed him to the corridor, where the poor Archimandrite was pacing up and down by the table, evidently wanting his dinner badly, and much relieved by my appearance. The forms observed were much the same as on the previous evening, and he talked of the sad state of

"our people" in Macedonia and Old Servia, and lamented that the quarrels of great nations should cause the suffering of little ones. "Between your country and Russia we can do nothing. You keep the Turk in Europe." A portrait of Peter the Great hung on the wall. Here, as everywhere else in Servia, I found Russia the Serbs' only hope of salvation.

I spent the afternoon drawing the monastery buildings. It was very still, and the plash of the tiny fountain and the clink of the pandur's spurs as he hovered about me were the only sounds. The air was heavy with lime blossom; now and then a long-haired, black-robed monk glided silently by, and it was all unreal and dream-like. As evening drew on I heard the clicking of the amber beads, and the Archimandrite appeared. "You are always doing something," he said; "you have no rest. They say all the English are like that"; and he instructed Nikola to bring me a glass of slivovitz and a plateful of jam.

Nor did his kindness and courtesy ever cease, and his stately black figure bowing farewell was the last I saw of him as I passed through the monastery gates in the early morning and rode out into the world again with my escort.

This time I made good progress, for the pandur was no slug. I followed him up a torrent bed, over stock and stone, in a pretty straight line to the top of the mountain ridge, where we struck the high road, and after resting the horses an hour, rode easily down into and along the valley of the Ibar. The nearer we got to the frontier the more conversational the youth became. He pointed out the ruins of two churches burnt by the Turks, and then cried, "See, here they

are!" as a cart full of turbaned men creaked down the road. "Turks!" he said with contempt, "all Turks!" As a turn in the road revealed a hill at the end of the valley crowned with a building, "There is the Turkish fortress," he said, "and the frontier." "That is all Turkish?" I asked, pointing ahead. "It is Old Servia" (Stara Srbija), he replied firmly. I was on the edge of the coveted land, and the cartridges in my companion's belt were meant for those who hold it. Rashka is a tiny village on the very edge. We pulled up at the inn door, and the pandur went off to report me to the authorities. They arrived almost at once, the Nachelnik and the police captain, reinforced by the doctor, who spoke a little French, and a friendly youth who spoke some German. I was dimly aware of questions in three languages, blinked at them helplessly, and said that I was going to sleep. At which they all laughed, wished me good repose, and left me. By the time I had slept off Studenitza and the ride, the pandur had reported that I drew, also that I had been in Montenegro. Consequently, when I reappeared, I had a festive time over my sketch-book with the authorities. Pictures "done by hand" were quite a new idea.

Rashka, a tiny place, was founded in 1846. It is only the fact that it is on the very edge that makes it a place at all. It feels itself very important, and its talk is of Turks, and of Macedonia and of Old Servia. That I must cross the line and be able to say that I had been in Old Servia was taken for granted. It was discussed as seriously as though it was a raid we were about to make. Having the permission of the police and having reported our proposed expedition to

the Nachelnik, who saw no objection to it, the doctor and the gentleman-who-spoke-German escorted me through a sentry-guarded gate to a wooden bridge guarded at one end by a Servian and at the other by a Turkish soldier. We explained that we had come to see Someone-Effendi, and were allowed to pass. On this side the river there is nothing but a custom-house, a coffee-shop, and a cottage or two. From the bridge the track winds to Novibazar, which is but three hours distant, and, on the hills above, two fortresses guard it. I could get there and back in a day, and imparted the notion at once to my companions, who were horrified, and thought that the chances of returning were extremely remote. The Servian frontier regards the Turk as hopelessly untrustworthy. It has had, at any rate, plenty of opportunity of judging.

We waited humbly the appearance of Someone-Effendi, quite on our p's and q's. The enemy soon appeared, rather grubby, in a tarboosh and a scrubby European overcoat. My presence was explained. We were all very polite to one another. I was irresistibly reminded of the meeting of two dogs who approach each other growling from opposite sides of the road, decide not to bite, wag stiff tails and pretend to be glad to see one another, while their bristles stand up on their backs. Chairs were brought, we were asked to sit down, and the inevitable black coffee appeared. Then I was told that as I was in Turkey I must see the coffee-shop, and we adjourned thither.

The owner of it, a burly handsome fellow with a yellow moustache and eyes as blue as an Anglo-Saxon's, sprawled, picturesque in black-and-white striped costume, on the bench in the balcony. He was

friendly, and we had more coffee and some sticky sweet stuff, while he smoked cigarettes in a holder the mouthpiece of which was a fine lump of amber and the stem black wood and silver filigree. "He is a Turk," said my companions. "He doesn't look like one," said I; for every Mohammedan calls himself a "Turk," and this one was like a fair Albanian. They repeated my remark to him, upon which he laughed and said that he did not speak Turkish. He wore a very handsome silver chain round his neck, and that and the cigarette-holder attracted my attention. "Those are from Skodra," I said. He beamed. "You know Skodra!" And he vowed gleefully that of all cities in the world Skodra was the finest, and appealed to me to support him. My companions were incredulous, they had never been there. The statement that I had been there twice satisfied him, and he smiled at me frankly, for now we knew that we had the same tastes. "You have seen the bazaar?" I nodded. "Oh, that is fine, very fine," he said. The bazaar would indeed have been a suitable background for him; I could imagine him cheerily filling up the gaps in his cartridge belt, and even more cheerily fighting on the Turkish side against all and any who should wish to force Western ideas into that and other happy hunting grounds.

Drinks differ in all lands, but everywhere it is correct to offer and accept too much of them; so we drank an inordinate quantity of coffee, said farewell to the Effendi, and were soon safely off the premises and in our own territory.

The captain took me a walk along the Servian frontier by the river's side, a rich and beautiful land

ablaze with a wonderful variety of wild flowers; only the two Turkish fortresses kept in mind the fact that the green land across the narrow stream was one of the sorest spots in Europe. The captain's tale of a boy who had been shot not long before by the Turks was concluded as we came in sight of the last fort, and we turned back. I think we went about three miles and took an hour over it; but the captain was very warm, and all his friends agreed that the English walked at an alarming pace.

By request, I made a drawing. It was of the frontier, the Turkish custom-house, and the fort-capped hill. It was supposed that it would annoy the Turks greatly if they knew, but they didn't. "And where," I asked, "are your forts? I have only seen Turkish ones." "Oh," was the cheerful answer, "forts are for defence—we are only going forward!"

Rashka was very hospitable. It gave me coffee; it gave me wine, beer, jam, water, eggs and bacon; it entertained me to the best of its ability. I was sorry to leave it, but time pressed. The diligence said it would start at 5 a.m., but did not do so till 6; I hung about waiting. It was a perfect morning; the mountains were blue on a pale lemon sky, and the grass was hoary with dew. "What a beautiful day!" I said to a man who was standing by the inn door. "No," he said gloomily; "to-day is Kosovo Day. That was a bad day for us." It was June 15 (O.S.). In the churches throughout the country there were solemn services in memory of the defeat in 1389, and there in front of us was Stara Srbija across the river.

The diligence proved to be a springless cart with

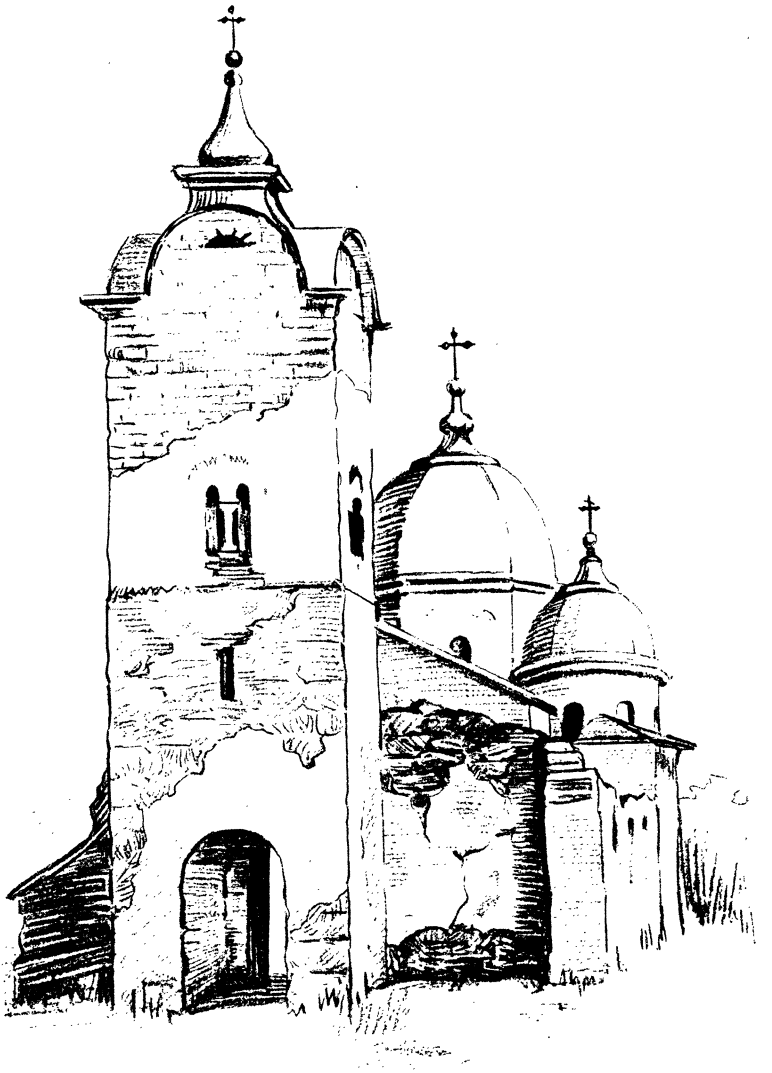
a basket-work top, and as the horses were poor and the roads bad, we were eleven and a half hours upon that road, instead of eight, as I had been promised. It was dark when at last the crazy vehicle jogged painfully into Kraljevo.

Kraljevo ("The Town of the Kings") did not receive me amiably. I crawled into the hotel stiff and sore, was awaiting soup, and had just sent off my letter of introduction, when a severe personage in black arose from a little table at the other end of the room and made straight for me. Striking his hand heavily on the table to compel my attention, he said very loudly, "You have come from Rashka?" He spoke Servian, and did not even stop to inquire if I understood it. Having a clear conscience and an introduction to one of the leading men of the town, I returned his stare and said "Yes." "You will leave here to-morrow morning," he asserted. "No," said I firmly. We paused for a moment. "Have you a passport?" he asked. "Yes," said I. "Show it me at once." "It is a very good passport," I remarked, spreading it on the table; "it is English." I watched with some amusement his vain and elaborate pretence of deciphering it. Then he said, "When are you going?" "I don't know," said I. He chose to imagine that this meant I did not understand, so he shouted the question at me again very aggressively. As I meant him to know that it was no use chivying the English, I said, "Perhaps Monday, perhaps Tuesday, I do not know." "You will leave to-morrow early," he said. I reflected that if I did not stand to my guns the next British subject would have a bad time; so I said firmly, "I will not. I am

English, and that passport is good." He looked at it again, reflected that, if it were good, things might become awkward, threw it down, and left abruptly. "Good-night," said I, but he did not respond.

Shortly afterwards the two gentlemen to whom I had been recommended came on the scene. They were so anxious to help me in every way that I did not betray the fact that I had already had a skirmish. But the landlord did. Next day I learned that my aggressor was the Nachelnik (burgomaster) himself, and that my new friends were extremely angry with him. He was introduced to me and told by whom I was recommended. He looked at me suspiciously, shook hands in a guarded manner, and spied furtively at my sketch-book, which was lying open on the table. I immediately offered it him for inspection, but it did not reassure him at all. Greatly to my surprise, however, he volunteered to take me for a drive in the afternoon. As I was quite used to being suspected, I only thought the episode funny; but my two acquaintances were so much upset about it that I was sorry they had been told.

Kraljevo still figures on most of the maps as Karanovatz, and has only recently been re-named. Zhitza, the monastery church where the kings of the Nemanja line were crowned, is once again Servia's coronation-place. A melancholy monument of former greatness, it stands upon rising ground about a mile and a half from the town, and a long straight avenue, fit background for a royal procession, leads up to it. The church itself, built in 1210 by St. Sava, still stands. Here he crowned his eldest brother and announced him as Prvovenchani, the "First Crowned."



Coronation Church, Kraljevo.

Of the monastery founded some years later by the said Stefan nothing now exists but a few rocky masses of wall. The Turks wrecked the royal building, the richest monastery in Servia, and left the church in ruins.

The church is Byzantine in character, with a large cupola and two smaller ones (all three restorations), and a round apse. It is barrel-vaulted, and has two tiny chapels. The walls are still covered with old frescoes, for fortunately the monastery is too poor to afford re-decorating. It has been frescoed twice. The upper layer, which shows strong Italian influence and might indeed be by an Italian hand, dates from the sixteenth century—an interesting fact, as it shows that though under Turkish rule, the monastery must then have still been fairly rich. The lower layer, which is visible where the upper is broken away, I believe to be contemporaneous with the church, but could get no information at all about it. Half the building has been restored and roofed. The other end is entirely in ruins; its tall tower only is well preserved.

In the side walls of the ruins are blocked-up openings. I was told they were doors, they looked like windows. Where the blocking stones are loose, you can see the fresco that clings to the sides and sills—fresco of the earlier kind, showing that the openings were blocked previous to the re-painting of the walls. One of these openings was built up at each coronation, I was told—a curious custom that requires explanation. All that I could learn was that the "doorways" proved the "fact," and the "fact" accounted for the "doorways." Six kings of the old days were crowned here, it is said. The

first was Stefan Prvovenchani; who the others were I have failed to learn. The personages of Servian history are apt to loom large through a fog of uncertainty and to elude all attempts at exact information. The tradition of coronation has been revived, and Alexander Obrenovich was here crowned king. It was just a week before the day appointed for the coronation of Edward VII. when I stood in the roofless ruins of the hall of Servia's kings, and I felt glad that we were at the other end of Europe when the Turks came. In the archway under the tower are some fairly preserved frescoes, and a crowned figure, said to be a portrait of Stefan Prvovenchani himself, stares from the ruins of the building raised to glorify his line. The likeness, I take it, is a purely fancy one.

These were the last old frescoes I saw in Servia. All of them tell the same tale, namely, that judging by the architecture, the costume, furniture, and various articles for domestic use that appear in them, the Servians of those days were not behind Europe in general civilisation. My guide, a friendly young monk, knew naught of architecture, and his ideas of history were but vague.

As we came out of the church, up came a second monk, a young man with a dark flat face, coal-black hair, and a strange Eastern cast of countenance that seemed oddly familiar to me. He greeted me at once, and began a long tale of how he had met me at Ostrog, in Montenegro, the year before. The other monk and my Servian companion cried, naturally astounded, "This gentleman says that he knows you!" It turned out that he was a pupil

of the monk at the chapel of Our Lady among the rocks, by Podgoritza. "You too," said he to me, "know him"; and he spoke of him with great affection and reverence, and accounted him holy. I was deeply interested to find that the gentle ascetic of the Albanian frontier was revered in Central Servia. That I, a Londoner, should be the one to bring news of him seemed to me not a little strange. But to the black monk there was nothing strange about it. "He said that God guided your footsteps," said he, and he added, as an explanation to the others, "She is the friend of the Montenegrins." After this, I had to go and take jam and water and coffee with the Archimandrite, and tell how I had been to the little chapel that very Easter and had received the hermit's Easter greeting. I said good-bye to the kindly, simple-minded monastery, and I returned to the worldly suspicions of civic life.

The Nachelnik never appeared in the afternoon, and I determined not to say anything about it. But when my friend and champion reappeared, he asked me point-blank as to how the Nachelnik had behaved on the afternoon's drive, and there was no help for it. He flew off in a rage to attack the Nachelnik. He came back even more angry. The Nachelnik had said that he had decided he would not be mixed up with the affair and had then turned the tables on him and questioned him as to all I had done in the morning. "What did she do? Where did she go? With whom did she speak? What did she draw? Did she talk politics, and what did you tell her?" "I told her," he said furiously, "that the Servians are fools and that it is a waste of her time to come and

see them. And she shall stay if she wishes, and draw anything she likes!" He begged me not to think that they were all so ignorant. The Nachelnik of Kraljevo was in fact the only official in Servia who was unpleasant to me, and even he succumbed more or less to a British passport.

I left Kraljevo pleasantly enough, for the last person I saw as I rattled out of the town was the young black monk smiling and waving his hand.

CHAPTER XVI

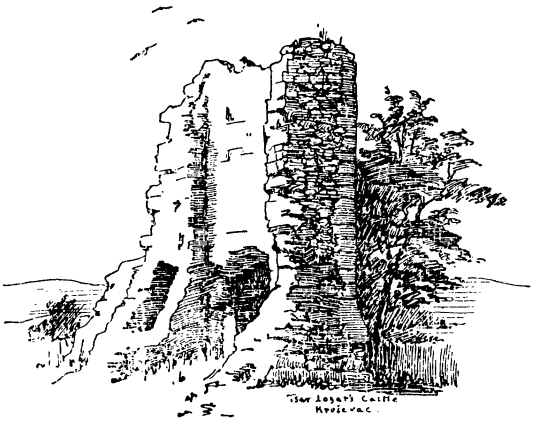
KRUSHEVATZ

UPON the eve of the day when Tsar Lazar was to go forth, says the ballad, his wife, Militza the Empress, spoke to him, saying, "O Tsar Lazar, thou golden crown of Servia, to-morrow thou goest to Kosovo and with thee thy chieftains and thy followers. Not one man dost thou leave behind thee at the castle who may carry news to thee at Kosovo and return again to me. Thou takest with thee all my nine brethren, the nine sons of old Yug Bogdan. O Tsar Lazar, I beseech thee, of my nine brothers leave me one of them."

And Tsar Lazar answered, "O Militza, my lady and my empress, which one of thy brethren dost thou wish should remain with thee in the white castle?" And she said, "Leave me Boshko Jugovich." And he answered, "O my lady Militza, speak thyself to Boshko Jugovich the barjaktar (standard-bearer), and bid him, with my blessing, yield up his standard and remain with thee."

Now when the white dawn broke and the gates of the town were thrown open, the lady Militza went down, and she stood before the gateway, and behold, there came the soldiers upon their horses, rank upon rank, and at their head was Boshko the barjaktar upon a bay

steed, and he glittered with gold, and the golden fringes of the standard hung upon his shoulders. Then the Empress Militza turned towards him, and she seized the bay by the bridle; she stayed her brother by the gateway, and softly she spoke to him, saying, "O my brother Boshko Jugovich! the Tsar has given thee to me, and he gives thee his blessing. Thou shalt not go to the fight at Kosovo. Thou shalt yield up thy banner and remain with me at Krushevatz." But Boshko



TSAR LAZAR'S CASTLE.

the barjaktar replied unto her, "Go thou to the white tower, my sister. Not for all Krushevatz would I return with thee, nor will I give up my standard, that all men may say 'Boshko Jugovich is afear'd; he dare not go to Kosovo to shed his blood for the cross and to die with his fellows.'" And he spurred his horse through the gates. Then followed old Yug Bogdan and seven sons in battle array and all in order, and they would not look upon her. Then behold! the youngest, Vojina Jugovich, and he led the Tsar's grey

war-horse, which was decked and trapped with gold. And he too denied her, and he urged the steed through the gateway. And when the lady Militza heard his words she fell down upon the cold stones, and her soul fainted within her.

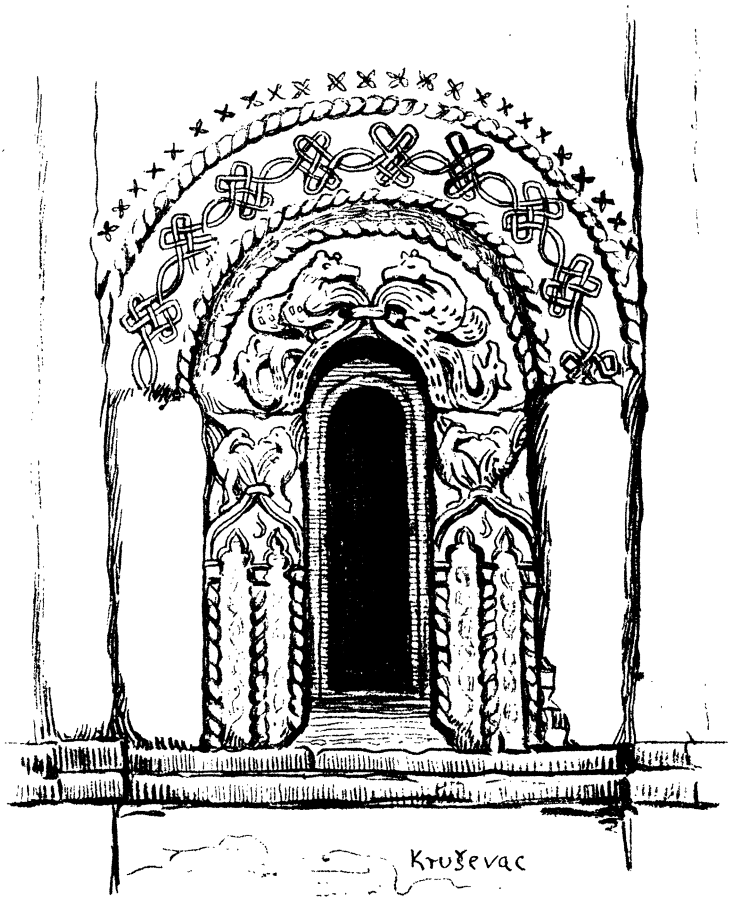
And lo, there came Tsar Lazar himself, and when he saw the Empress the tears flowed down his cheeks. He called to his faithful follower, Goluban, saying, "Goluban, my trusty servant, alight from thy steed, take my lady by her white hand and lead her to the tower. May God's blessing be upon thee! Thou comest not with me to the fight at Kosovo, for thou shalt remain with my lady here in the white castle." And when Goluban heard these words the tears ran down his face. He alighted from his horse, he took his lady by her white hand and he led her to the tower. But he could not withstand the desire which burnt in his heart; he mounted his horse and he rode to the fight at Kosovo.

When the next day dawned, there came two black ravens from the wide field of Kosovo, and they settled upon the white tower. And one of them croaked, and the other cried, "Is this the tower of the mighty Lazar?" The Empress Militza heard them, and she stepped forth from the white castle, crying, "God save you, O ye ravens! Have ye seen the meeting of two mighty armies?" And they answered her, saying, "God save thee, O Empress. We have flown from Kosovo field. We have seen the meeting of the mighty armies, and the leader of either is slain. Lo, lady, here comes thy servant Milutin, and he sways in his saddle from right to left; for he has seventeen wounds upon him, and his blood streams upon his steed."

And the Empress called to him, "O Milutin, why hast thou deserted thy Tsar at Kosovo?" But Milutin answered her, "Take me from my horse, O lady; wash me with cold water; give me red wine, for I am sorely stricken." And she did as he begged her. And when he had come to himself a little, she prayed of him, "O Milutin, what has come to pass upon the field of Kosovo? Where is the glorious Tsar Lazar? Where are old Yug Bogdan and his nine sons?" Then the serving-man began to speak. "Lady, they all lie on the field at Kosovo by the cold waters of the Sitnitza, and where Tsar Lazar fell there are many weapons broken, and the Serbs lie thick around him. And old Yug Bogdan and his nine sons fell in the front of the fight: all are dead, lady, and the last that fell was Boshko Jugovich. Milosh is dead that slew Tsar Murad, and dead also is Banovich Strahinja that fought knee-deep in blood. All lie dead on the field at Kosovo; all save Yuk Brankovich, whose name be for ever accursed. He betrayed the Emperor; upon the field of battle he betrayed all glorious Lazar!"

On the hill in the midst of Krushevatz there stands one shattered lonely fragment of the white castle up against the sky — all that is left of Tsar Lazar's palace. But time has worked its revenges, and the Turkish mosque that was built of its stones in the town below is now too but a heap of ruins.

The church, which dates from the days of the Great Tsar Dushan (*circa* 1350), alone has survived the warring of the nations. Used as a powder magazine by the Turks and all the interior decoration destroyed, the



CHURCH, KRUSHEVATZ. SIDE WINDOW OF APSE.

exquisite details of its tracery still make Krushevatz worth a journey; its delicate pierced work, round windows laced with stone, strange monsters and wild Byzantine fancies — in a word, its barbaric imaginativeness, struck me as more characteristic of its land and times than anything I met with in Servia.

Here as elsewhere the restorations are not skilful, but Servia should always be deeply grateful to Alexander Karageorgevich, who with such means as he could command saved her most interesting monuments from complete ruin. Better an unsatisfactory roof than no roof at all.

For a brief time, during the first reign of Michael Obrenovich, Krushevatz was again the capital. Now it is merely an industrious and flourishing country town, and a most friendly one. No one suspected me, although I came with no letter of introduction, nor was I cross-questioned about personal and political matters.

From Krushevatz I drove to Stalacs, and at Stalacs is a railway station. Ponies, post-waggons, carriages and mountain tracks, and the life of the old world were all left behind, and I was soon whirled back to Belgrade, where the pale blue youth in the police bureau welcomed me back, and forbade the officials in search of town dues to open my bundle. And when for the goodness-knows-how-manyeth and last time he stamped my passport, that I might leave Belgrade altogether, he remarked cheerfully, "And now, Gospoditza, please speak well of us. Tell all your friends to come to Servia, and come back yourself."

Postscript

Recent political events make it necessary to add a few words to the account of Servia written in 1902. That the King was not popular I was aware before I went to Servia, but I was unprepared to find things at such an acute stage. Through all the land I did not hear one good word spoken of him. That he was more fool than knave was the best said of him. For him there was nothing but contempt. What was said of Draga by an exasperated people it is impossible to repeat. The hatred of her was deep and bitter. As to the truth of the accusations, I have no means of judging. I can only say that they were believed not only in Servia, but in Montenegro, and by the Serbs of Old Servia. And everywhere I heard of Peter Karageorgevich, so that there was no possible doubt as to who would be the successor. I was even asked by partisans of his to write up their cause in England. The only English tourist, I was told, who had lately written about Servia, had done great harm by writing up the Obrenovich. People were very bitter indeed about this, and begged me to tell England the true state of things. That the King must go, and that at no distant date, seemed certain. That his fate would be so terrible, I had no idea. Nor would it have been so, I believe, but for his headstrong obstinacy.

His father, in spite of his many and glaring faults, never entirely lost the affection of the army. He was of the handsome, dashing, jovial type that wins popularity, but the unfortunate Alexander had none of his father's redeeming points. His short and

luckless reign, which began with an act of treachery, was a series of hopeless blunders; he had five *coups d'état* and twenty-four Ministries. His fatal entanglement with Draga Maschin was the beginning of the end. Heedless of the entreaties of both his parents and blind towards the duty he owed his country, he paid no attention to the prayers of friends, relatives, or statesmen, and married her in July 1900. He never saw either his father or his mother again, and his country never forgave him. To save a revolution, I was told it was prepared to do so even then, in the eleventh hour, if he would divorce Draga. The people viewed with growing dismay the elevation of her relatives, and the rumoured scheme to make her brother heir provoked the final outburst. The truth about what took place in the early hours of June 11 will probably never be exactly known. Those who took part in the tragedy were too drunk with blood and passion to give a coherent account, and there are at least half a dozen versions. Nor does it greatly matter. The fact remains that the mass of the Serbs desired the removal of the King and Queen; it was effected, and many of those who shuddered at their awful end said, "Since it is done, it is well done." More than this, very many hailed it as a holy and righteous act, a cleansing of the temple, a purification, a casting out of abominations; nor could I make any of those who were of this opinion see it from any other point of view. The King and Queen, they held, had sinned against the laws of God and man, and were justly executed. "They could have been tried," I said. "They could not. One or other of the Powers would have intervened, to further its own

plans." This is probably true. "They could have been expelled," I said. "We have tried that too often," was the grim reply; "with an expelled monarch in an enemy's land, there is no peace. Their guilt was known. Alexander could have abdicated any time in the last two years. He had his choice, and preferred to remain on the throne. The Court was no better than a house of ill-fame, and the Servians who tolerated it were a scandal to Europe." And this they honestly believed.

In Montenegro I found the view taken of female virtue was curiously Old Testament. It is the pride of the Montenegrin that a woman may travel by day or night in his land alone and in perfect safety. But Draga they considered to have overstepped all right to protection or consideration. "All such women ought to be shot," said the elder of a large group of men briefly. The others agreed, and I saw by their eyes that they meant it. Things look so different from the other end of Europe that I caught myself reflecting that, after all, two penn'orth of cartridges would save us many most unsavoury proceedings in the Divorce Court, and settle matters once for all about as fairly. Only those, and they are few, who have travelled in West Europe knew how the deed would be regarded there, and understood the terrible nature of the step. These foretold that the reign of King Peter would be brief and troublous.

It is idle to speculate about the future. It is equally idle to pretend that the events which have raised King Peter to the throne of his grandfather can be regarded in the light of an unmixed blessing to the nation. The crime of blood-guiltiness always

has to be atoned for, and the Serbs must work out their own salvation. Meanwhile it must not be forgotten that they cannot fairly be judged by twentieth-century standards. Servia has had nearly four centuries of Turkish rule. While West Europe was advancing in humanity, civilisation, and the arts of peace, the people of the Balkans rotted helpless under a ruler who, whatever other good qualities he may possess, has never yet done anything to improve the lot of the peoples under him. And should these people sin, and sin heavily, those nations who have helped to keep the Turk in Europe, and so to prolong their degradation and demoralisation, are not innocent of all share in the causes of their crime, and have no right to throw stones.

PART III

MONTENEGRO AND OLD SERVIA
1903

"If a man be Gracious and Courteous to Strangers, it shews he is a Citizen of the World and that his Heart is no Island cut off from other Lands, but a Continent that joynes them."

CHAPTER XVII

KOLASHIN—ANDRIJEVITZA—BERANI—PECH

WE are apt to speak of the Serbs of Servia as "the" Servians, and to forget that modern Servia is a recent state mapped out arbitrarily by the Powers, and that the truest representatives of the Great Servian Empire are the Montenegrins, who for five centuries have fought "the foe of their faith and freedom" and have lived for an ideal, the redemption of the nation. It has been said that every nation gets the government that it deserves. If so, Montenegro has deserved greatly. Instances, it is true, have not been wanting of the Serb tendency to split into parties, which has been so fatal to the Serb people and now threatens to ruin modern Servia; but in the hour of need Montenegro has always found a strong man to guide her and has had the sense to trust to his guidance. She can point with pride to a line of Petrovich princes who, even in the darkest and most hopeless days, have striven not only to maintain freedom, but to train their people worthily as a nation. And herein lies the main difference between Montenegrins and Servians. The Montenegrins during all these years have been learning to obey, while the Servians have learnt to oppose all forms of government. The subjects of Prince Nikola are disciplined and self-

respecting; of those of King Peter it has been not inaptly remarked that where there are four soldiers there are five generals.

We have seen the Montenegrin in his towns, let us follow him into his mountains.

Kolashin (with a long "a") can be reached in one day of sixteen hours from Podgoritza. It is better to make two easy ones of it and to enjoy the way. With a very dark youth, one Boshko, and a chestnut pony, I left Podgoritza at five one morning in June. Up we went through the wild, rugged valley of the Moracha, where the green water hurries between huge limestone crags, and on up, up, over loose stones, till by midday we were in an aching wilderness of hot limestone on the crest of the hill and were following the direction of the Mala Rjeka ("Little River"), a tributary of the Moracha, which flows in the valley below. One tree with an ink-black shadow cooled us for an hour. Boshko then began to discuss our chances of shelter for the night. Ljeva Rjeka, the usual halting-place, was bad, he said; moreover, he knew no one there. His own home, on the other hand, was not far. It was not "very good," but "pretty good." Would I sleep "kod nas"? (*chez nous*). I looked at Boshko, reflected that "kod nas" would have interesting peculiarities, and decided to risk it.

We started off again. I had three loaves of rye bread on my saddle, and milk, boiled and tasting strongly of wood smoke, can be got at every cottage, so that there was no fear of starvation. Goat, sheep, and cow milk is the staple food of the mountain people. We fell in with several caravans, and in company with a long string of men and beasts went

down a green and fertile valley till we came to a point where the telegraph posts which had hitherto accompanied us and bound us to the outer world went one way and Boshko indicated another. "Our house is yonder." "Is it far, thy house?"—"One hour and a half." "And Ljeva Rjeka?"—"One hour." We left the caravan, the path, and the telegraph posts, forded the stream and struck into a trackless wilderness—that is to say, that only a native could have found the way. It was far too bad for the horse to carry me over. On we scrambled. After an hour of it, I asked, "How far?" "Yet one hour and a half," said Boshko cheerfully. It grew late and chilly; there was no sign that any human being had ever been this way before, and we were over 3000 feet up. We trudged on almost in silence for another hour. Then again, "How far?" and again, "Josh jedan sahat i po," said Boshko thoughtfully, looking for landmarks in the waning light. I bore up as best I could. To the third "How far?" he replied, "It is now but a little way." We walked another hour, and then made a rapid descent over loose stones into a forlorn and darksome valley fenced in by cliffs, the pony floundering badly. A white church gave promise of habitations. "My village," said Boshko, pointing to some scattered hovels, "Brskut." He proposed calling on the priest, "the handsomest popa in Montenegro." I, however, would not then have turned from my path to see the handsomest man in the world. "Kod nas" proved to be almost the best house in the valley.

We arrived at 7.30. I was so glad to see anything with a roof on that I did not even shudder at the sight of it. It was a shanty of loose stones. The

family's room was reached by a wooden ladder, the cattle shed was below it. "Mother" came out to greet us, and was at first struck speechless by the sight of me. She reminded Boshko that they had no beds, to which he replied airily that it was of no consequence. I went up the ladder into pitch darkness. Someone lit a pine splinter in the ashes of the fire and dragged up the only chair. This serves as a sort of throne for the head of the family. It is large with widespread arms, and has legs not more than three or four inches high, to suit the comfort of gentlemen used to sitting cross-legged on the ground. "Mother" most kindly took my boots off and set a huge wooden bowl of fresh milk on my knees. People came out of dark corners, blew up the fire, slung the caldron over it, threw on logs, and as many flocked in to see me as the place would hold. It was a narrow slip of a room, about twelve feet by six, with the hearthstone at one end of it, and a barrel that served as larder. The smoke surged round the room. Father, mother, brother, brothers-in-law, sisters, sisters-in-law, uncles, and friends all shook hands with me and bade me welcome. They were all bare-legged, and their clothes were dropping off them in rags. I was vaguely conscious of a mass of faces haloed in wood smoke; several huge warriors towered up to the roof; a very courteous and aged veteran, to whom the chair probably belonged, was smoking his chibouk by my side, then I nodded forward and should have been asleep in a minute, but they woke me by laughing. Not only had they the excitement of seeing me, but we had brought the latest news of the death of the King of Servia, and the conversation was lively as

they supped. Here as elsewhere, they said the deed was "strashno" (horrible), but that it was a good thing he was dead. But in most instances the extreme loyalty of the Montenegrins for their own Prince caused them to express disgust for the officers who betrayed their King while "still eating his bread."

Supper over, we went into the next room and went to bed. They gave me a large wooden bench against the wall. I put my cloak under me and my waterproof over me, and a man took off his strukka, folded it, and put it under my head. They swept the floor, spread sheets of thick felt, stripped the children and rolled them in pieces of blanket, took the cartridges out of their various weapons; I heard a murmured prayer, they lay down in rows on the floor, and the whole twelve of us were very soon asleep. I don't think I stirred till I was wakened by the family getting up, and found the owner of the strukka waiting to take it from under my head. I woke to a horrified consciousness that I had not wound up my watch. But it was still ticking, and said 3.30 a.m. I slept sweetly till six, then washed my hands and face in the stream in Montenegrin style, and returned to have breakfast with Boshko, who, in elegant *déshabille*, was loading his revolver on the doorstep. His mother had captured and washed his only shirt and was now drying it at the fire, so that the upper part of his person was in a very airy condition. We breakfasted amicably out of the same bowl, and "Mother" boiled me a glassful of sugar and milk so sweet that I could hardly swallow it. But I had to, for it was meant for a great treat. Boshko was so pleased with his home comforts that he proposed we should stay "kod nas"

for several days, and I had some difficulty in tearing him away.

It was half-past seven before he got into his shirt and saddled the pony. "Mother" kissed me when I left, and refused at first to take any payment, as she said I was a friend of Boshko. Poor thing, she had done all she could for me, and had even given me the last of their precious sugar. When the money was really in her hand, her joy was great, and she thanked me over and over again. We started in pouring rain. "You had better not mount," said Boshko cheerfully, and made straight for what looked like an inaccessible cliff. The path was the worst I have ever tried. We crawled up an awful zigzag. It was as much as he could do to urge the pony up it; twice it was near rolling over, for the streaming rain made the foothold precarious. Then I slipped over the edge, and Boshko was badly scared, but when I stuck on a bush and crawled up again, he proposed that we should add four hours to our journey by going to see a very beautiful lake which he vaguely said was "over there." I refused; we scrambled up about 1000 feet, and found ourselves safely on the top. We were soon over the pass and descending the other side into a magnificent wooded valley through dripping grass. The pony sat down and slid, and at the bottom we struck the proper track again. Boshko took stock of the heavens, foretold speedy sunshine, and suggested taking shelter meanwhile at the nearest house. He was a casual young thing, with no idea of either time or distance, and loved exhibiting me.

We were warmly welcomed in a big wooden châlet, and passed an hour with the most delightful

people. The teacher, the captain (a beauty), the priest, and some dozen friends sat in a ring round the heap of logs that blazed in the centre. They made room, and insisted on boiling milk for me and roasting an egg in the wood ashes, because I had come so far to see them. "Where is King Peter?" was the topic of the day. His election was not generally expected in Montenegro. Most folk I met thought the Serbs would proclaim a republic. I never could resist laughing at the idea of a Servian republic, and was snapped at rather fiercely for doing so one day. "Why do you laugh? It is not a joke." "I laugh because everyone in Servia will wish to be President. That will be a joke." There was a solemn silence. Then someone, with a twinkle in his eye, said, "There is no doubt she *has* been in Servia!" But nobody liked the remark. The Montenegrin is hurt if things Servian are criticised by an outsider. The Servian, on the other hand, usually tries to glorify himself at the expense of his relations, and speaks of the Montenegrins as a savage tribe. In this he errs fatally.

A youth in an exceedingly bad temper came in, sat down and explained his wrongs—an affair of florins—at the top of a most powerful voice. The roof rang with his wrath. The company took it most stolidly, blew clouds of smoke, and let him finish. An elder then argued the matter through to him. All nodded approval. This annoyed him, and he fairly bellowed. Someone pointed him out to me with a smile, drew one from me, and cried out at once, "The Gospoditza is laughing at you!" which had the effect of stopping him suddenly. Then the girl who was sitting next

me gave me a little poke, and looking up, said with a pleasant smile, "He is my husband; he is always like that!" and she seemed as much amused as everyone else. Nor did she display any emotion when he strode out still bubbling.

The rest of the journey along the beautiful valley of the Tara was easy and uneventful, and we reached Kolashin early in the evening. Kolashin is tiny, primitive, and most kindly. Rich grass meadows surround it; wooded hills, thick with fir and beech, ring it round, and over them tower the rugged blue peaks of the mountains; a new Switzerland waiting to be explored. Timber is cheap, the houses are wood-roofed with shingles which bleach to a warm silver-grey, and the upper storeys of such houses as possess them are mainly of wood. We pulled up at the door of a small drink-shop. Boshko, in great form and very important, explained me volubly to all inquirers. We went upstairs into a big guest-room; Montenegrin, inasmuch as it contained bedsteads and rifles and a long divan; Western, for it had a table and several chairs; altogether sumptuous and luxurious as compared with "kod nas." To Boshko it was a sort of Cecil or Savoy. Mine host, ragged and excited, his wife, a dark lean woman with anxious eyes, a girl from next door who was always referred to as "the djevojka" (maiden), and Ljubitza, the thirteen-year-old daughter and maid-of-all-work, flocked in with rakija and suggestions. The telegraphist and another man, who were regular boarders, came to help. Then the djevojka came straight to the point. "Which bed shall you sleep in?" she asked. I had been wondering this myself, for it is undoubtedly

easier to be Montenegrin by day than by night. The telegraphist, one of the goodliest of Montenegro's many handsome sons, came to my rescue. "She is a stranger and does not know us," he said; "perhaps she will wish to sleep alone." To the surprise of the rest of the company, I rose at once to this suggestion. "You are just like the Italian Vice-Consul at Skodra," they cried. "He came here once for ten days' shooting, and he had a room alone all the time!" There was luckily a second apartment, and I was soon installed in great state, and all the company too. My letter of introduction to the Serdar produced a profound impression. The simple-minded folk seeing that the envelope was open, thought it public property, and read it joyfully aloud. It was couched in complimentary terms. "What a beautiful letter!" they cried, and as the room was pretty full, I was thus favourably introduced wholesale. As for the jovial Serdar, nothing could exceed his kindness. He and the doctor, much-travelled men, asked me as to my journey and where I had slept *en route*. "Brskut" overpowered them, for they knew the sort of life to which I was accustomed. After Brskut, it did not matter where I went. "Lives in London and has slept at Brskut 'kod nas'! You are a Montenegrin now," cried the Serdar, and he and the doctor roared with laughter. But another man, who knew only Montenegro, could not see where the joke came in.

Kolashin, as I have said, is primitive, but that it should be civilised at all is greatly to its credit. Thirty years ago this out-of-the-way corner was under Turkish rule and as wild as is Albania to-day, for the whole energy of the people was devoted to

wresting the land back from the Turk. Three times did they take Kolashin, three times were they forced to yield it again to superior numbers. The grim persistency of the men of the Kolashin district succeeded, and since 1877 Kolashin has become the fourth in importance of Montenegrin towns. Cut off from the world by the lack of a road, snowed up for nearly four months of the year, its resources are at present unworked and unworkable, but its magnificent forests and its fine pasture should spell money in the future. Montenegro has been blamed for not opening up more speedily her newly acquired lands. It is possible that the delay is by no means an evil, for it has saved the people from being overwhelmed by a mass of Western ideas for which their minds are as yet unready; ideas which, ill assimilated and misunderstood, and forced with a rush upon Servia, have worked disastrously in that unhappy land. The men of Kolashin are huge and extremely strong, and are good hewers of stone, road-makers, and builders, when shown how to set to work. With their splendid physique, they require a good deal of labour to work off their steam and keep them out of mischief. Inter-tribal blood-feuds are not yet quite extinct, but the rule of the present Serdar is fast putting a stop to them; the place is growing under his hands, and the people look up to him as to a father.

The Serdar took me to the "weapon show" of the district. The battalion, 500 strong, was drawn up in a meadow outside the town, three companies of stalwart fellows, each company with its barjak (colours), a white flag with a red cross. A row of hoary old war-dogs had come out to sun themselves

and see what sort of a show the younger generation made; grand old boys—long, lean, sinewy, with white hair and bright deep-set eyes, their old war medals on the breasts of their ragged coats; some of them arrayed martially for the occasion with silver-mounted handjars, or flintlocks, thrust in their sashes. And about the Serdar's popularity with young and old there was no mistake. He introduced me to the old soldiers. The Montenegrins' pride in the veterans who have helped to redeem the land is very touching. "Look at him," they say, pointing to an old, old man who is sitting almost helpless at his door. "He is a 'veliki junak' (great hero); "he fought," etc. etc. To be thought "veliki junak" is every man's ambition. "Junashtvo" (heroism) fills a large place in the mind of the Montenegrin, who is brought up on tales of the cool daring and extraordinary pluck of his forebears. "Be a brave boy, like Milosh Obilich," I heard a mother say to her little boy who was crying; nor can I easily forget the mighty youth, clean-limbed, clear-eyed, and the pink of courtesy, who told me with great earnestness that he wished to be "a hero like Hayduk Veljko!"

Every man is a soldier. The "weapon show" takes place ten times a year, either on a Sunday or a saint's day. Marching and formal drill are hateful to the mountaineers, but they love their guns like their children, and it is the pride and joy of every man that he is always ready to fight for his country. The Serdar's five hundred were, so he told me, all splendid shots. As we were leaving, one of the veterans came forward and said that they thanked me for coming so far to see them, and thought I was "very brave."

"Very brave" is what the Montenegrin likes best to be considered, so it was the poor old boy's prettiest idea of a compliment.

Every thing at Kolashin was kind to me but the weather. I was storm-bound for many days, and riding over the mountains was impossible. I resigned myself till the clouds chose to lift, and tried to see Europe through the eyes of Kolashin; and learnt much of the earth and the bareness thereof; and how little it requires to make life worth living, provided there are no Turks about; and of people who live looking death in the face on bloody frontiers; and of simple, honest souls who have lived all their lives among these mountains, who burn with a patriotism that only death can destroy, men the guiding star of whose existence is the Great Servian Idea, who would lay down their lives cheerfully any day to help its realisation. The nearer you come to the frontier, the more do you feel the ache of the old wound. "Old Servia" lies but a few miles away crying to be saved, and such is the force of environment that you find yourself one day filled with a desire to sit behind rocks and shoot Turks for the redemption of that hapless land.

My companions all regarded Kolashin as a great centre of business and civilisation, for they had come from far wilder parts. My hostess was born at Gusinje, the stronghold of one of the fiercest Arnaout tribes. "It is a beautiful town," she says, "larger even than Kolashin; but you cannot go there; they will shoot you." She and her friends spent a happy hour turning out the meagre contents of my saddle-bags, pricing all the articles, and trying some on.

That none of my clothes were woven at home amazed them, "all made in a fabrik," they could scarce credit it. It seemed too good to be true. What with spinning, weaving, and making, they said they had hardly time to make a new garment before the old was worn out. More and more women came to see the show, and their naïve remarks threw a strange light upon their lives.

The family's hut was a windowless, chimneyless, wooden shanty, devoid of all furniture save a few lumps of wood and a bench, and the rafters were black and shiny with smoke. Plenty of light came in, though there was no window, for no two planks met. A Singer's sewing-machine, which sat on the floor, looked a forlorn and hopeless anachronism, for all else belonged to the twelfth century at latest. Certainly the huge and shapeless meals did—the lumps of flesh, the lamb seethed whole in a pot, and the flat brown loaves of rye bread. A Montenegrin can go for a surprising time without food, can live on very little, but when food is plentiful his appetite is colossal. These worthy people used to serve me with enough food for a week. Because I could not clear it all up, Ljubitza used to run in at odd intervals with lumps of bread, bowls of milk, glasses of sliva, onions, and other delicacies, to tempt my appetite. My window gave on the balcony, so there was room for many people to look in, see me eat and urge me to further efforts. When they assembled also to see my toilet operations, about which the ladies were very curious, I had to nail up my waterproof by way of protection. Whereupon a baffled female opened the window. The establishment possessed one tin basin,

which I shared with the gentlemen in the next room. I captured it over night and handed it out to them in the morning on the balcony, where they took it in turns to squat while Ljubitza poured water over their hands and heads and they scrubbed their faces. It is not the thing to wash in your room in Montenegro, and my hostess thought me very peculiar upon this point. And in spite of the "lick-and-a-promise" system, folk always looked clean.

On market day the inn was crammed. Supper in the big room went on till ten o'clock. Ljubitza hung around the door of my room and suggested that there were two beds in it, did I still prefer sleeping alone? I said very firmly that I did, whereupon her mother came and threw out sketchy suggestions of a similar nature. For in these parts no one ever thinks of undressing to go to bed, and it never occurs to anyone that you could wish to do so. The "guest-room" is made to contain as many as it will; mattresses are spread on the floor and coverlets supplied; nor did the regular boarders seem to have the least objection to sharing their room with ten or twelve strangers. But there are no "strangers" in Montenegro. You ask a man all his private affairs to begin with, address him as "my brother," and call him by his Christian name. Nor in spite of the overcrowding are the rooms ever stuffy, for all the windows, and possibly the door too, are left open. Not even the tiny cottages are close. At Cetinje one day I met two excited Frenchmen who had just been over the barracks, and their astonishment was so great that they imparted it to me. "Figure to yourself," they said, "two hundred men slept in there

last night and the air is as fresh as upon the mountain! But it is astonishing! Parole d'honneur, if you but put your nose into one of our casernes, you are asphyxiated, positively asphyxiated!" And I, who am acquainted with the rich, gamey odour of the French "Tommy," had no difficulty in believing it.

Life up at Kolashin is mainly a struggle to get enough to eat and a roof overhead. In the lamb season meat is cheap and plentiful. Corn comes chiefly from the lower plains, and there is often lack of bread; in the winter folk fare very hardly. Even in fat times milk and maize-flour boiled in olive oil form the staple food of the peasantry. Nature is quite unthwarted by Science; only the very fit survive, and those have iron constitutions.

A good deal has been written about the very inferior position of women in Montenegro. Some writers have even gone as far as saying that the Montenegrins despise their wives, apologise for mentioning their existence, and do not allow them to appear in company at all. My own experience does not bear out these reports, which possibly originate in the fact that most books on the Serb people have been written by men, and that centuries of experience of the Turk and his methods have implanted a deep distrust of every foreign man in the heart of the wild Montenegrin, both man and woman. Men I had never seen before used to say to me, "Good-night. Sleep safely, I shall be near," and I regarded it only as a formula until one night it was varied by "Good-night. Lock your door to-night. There is an Italian in the house!" But their belief in each other seemed to be great. The women were always

telling me what wonderful men their husbands were, and the men were equally complimentary about their wives. They laid great stress on the part which the women had played in Montenegro's struggle for freedom, saying that the Montenegrins were fine soldiers because not only their fathers but their mothers were heroes. The conditions of life have been such that until twenty-five years ago defending his home and his flocks took up almost the man's whole time. All other work fell naturally to the women. The work is certainly very heavy, but so it was and is in every country where there is no labour-saving machinery. The women themselves do not appear to regard it as at all unfair. At any rate, they constantly advised me strongly to settle in the country and do as they did. It is very usual for many members of the same family to live together. The real thorn in the side of a Montenegrin woman, then, is a sister-in-law who does not do her full share of the work. "Is your sister-in-law good?" was a stock question. "Very good." The fervour of the immediate reply, "Thank God. How fortunate!" was most enlightening.

Kolashin was hospitable, and pressed me to stay indefinitely. Boshko, gorged with lamb, was in great glory and in no hurry to go. But one day the clouds lifted, the mountain tops showed clear, and I issued marching orders. Armed with two letters of introduction to Voyvode Lakich, the head man of Andrijevitza, we started in the grey of the morning in the company of a ragged Mohammedan Albanian and a young Mohammedan tradesman from Podgoritza, a great swell, who Boshko assured me

was one of his dearest friends. He rode a showy white pony and gave himself airs. Boshko admired him hugely, and referred to him always as the Turchin. Boshko had a great faculty for hero worship, and recommended several of the objects of his admiration to me as likely to make suitable husbands. All being ready for a start, the inevitable rakija appeared, and I had to drink stirrup-cups with the friends I was leaving. I thought two sufficient. "You must take the third," said one of the regular boarders, "for the Holy Trinity." "She does not know about the Trinity," said someone hastily in an undertone; "they do not have the Trinity in her land." The surprise and delight of the company on learning that we did was great. We all swallowed a third glass with enthusiasm, and I said adieu. Alat, my chestnut, was very cheerful after his long rest, but the steep path soon tamed him. We went up a thousand rugged feet quickly, Alat hurrying after the Turchin, who sang, shouted, and rode recklessly. Boshko panted behind. We drew rein at the top of the ridge and awaited him. The ragged man kept up with never a sob. Below, around, above, lay wild and wooded mountains and bare peaks. "Which way?" said the Turchin. "Knowest thou, O Boshko?" "Not I, so God slay me!" was his cheerful answer; "I thought that thou knewest!" "By the one God, not I." "This way or that, as there is a God above me, I know not." And so on and so on. The Turchin, a reckless, feckless young thing, burst out laughing, dug a spur into his pony and swung him round, whipped out his revolver, fired it over my head out of pure light-heartedness, and saying, "We will go this way; God

grant it does not lead to the frontier," plunged into a wood on the left. "God grant it doesn't," said Boshko fervently, for he had a mighty respect for frontiers.

The track was mud and loose rock. We dismounted and filed through the wood, winding higher and higher up the mountain side. From time to time all three men halloed to herdsmen above and below us, to learn if we were on the right track. Some said we were and some that we were not. The Turchin said it was less trouble to go on than to go back, but that we should probably arrive at Berani of the Turks, and then "God help us," which terrified Boshko. The ragged man observed the peaks carefully and said he thought he knew. Then down came a driving, drenching mist and hid everything. The Turchin shivered and got into a great-coat. I struggled, streaming, over slippery stones, and the loose ones bounded down the mountain side. At last we came to a wide level where the track branched, the fog lifted, and the ragged man was certain of the way. The rain was bitterly chill, snow lay in patches on the ground, and the aneroid registered 5200 feet. Above us rose the bare peak of Bach. We were on good turf, could mount again, and Alat was as tame as a snail. The ragged man steered us cleverly across country, and the sun came out. We put up at a bunch of incredibly wretched huts, mere lean-to's of planks, so low that one could only stand upright in the middle. The people, who were in rags that barely held together, brought us milk in a wooden bowl, out of which we all three ate with wooden ladles. For the Turchin, being Albanian,

had no scruples about feeding with unbelievers. A very aged woman, ninety years old, crouched by the fire, which was stirred up to dry my wet clothes. When I wished to pay on leaving, the master of the house flared up. He was a magnificent-looking fellow, who bore himself right kingly in spite of his rags. "I am a soldier," he said; "nothing is sold in my house." I had to leave with thanks and handshakes, for they would take nothing at all, and I felt ashamed of having eaten their food, they were so poor. We tracked down to Andrijevitza, which we reached about four in the afternoon. The scenery when the mist rose was grand. Great snow peaks above and flowery grassy slopes below, with all the wild charm of an undiscovered country upon them.

Andrijevitza is a tiny, tiny place (2200 feet above the sea), nestled in a valley on the banks of the Lim, which hurries down from the lands of Plava and Gusinje, and is here joined by a little tributary. I put up at the baker's shop, a funny little house built on a slope. It accommodated a cow in the basement and fowls in the roof. These began to scrattle and peck about four in the morning, you woke with the feeling that they were raking for corn in your head, and the baker's wife, who kindly let me share her bedroom and saved me from the general guest-room, used to hammer on the ceiling with my umbrella by way of quieting them. Life at Andrijevitza is somewhat rough, but I fared exceedingly well; for the kindness, courtesy, and hospitality of everyone more than made up for the barbaric simplicity of all domestic arrangements. Nor did it ever occur to anyone that

I was not living in the lap of luxury, for I had every comfort that money can buy—in Andrijevitza. Compared with Andrijevitza, Kolashin is large and wealthy. Andrijevitza is poor, proud, honest and self-respecting—and it has a right to be proud, for it is the very last outpost of civilisation in that direction. The border and the Turk are but four miles away, the men of Andrijevitza are fighting frontiersmen, and their head is that "veliki junak," Voyvode Lakich.

Voyvode Lakich—the eagle-eyed, grey-headed warrior, the beloved of his people, a terror to the Turks—is a type of all that is fine in Old Montenegro. One of a long line of fighting men, his honest eyes, his hearty laugh, and the simple dignity of his bearing command entire trust at first sight, and the respect with which he is regarded tell that he is a born leader of men, a Duke (dux) in the old sense of the word. His courtly old wife called on me at once with her daughter-in-law, and proceeded to welcome me in the orthodox style with glasses of rakija. Poor old lady, she was really no more addicted to raw spirits than I am, and gasped between each glass; but in spite of my efforts the proper forms had to be observed, and we duly swallowed the three glasses required by Christianity and the laws of hospitality. She marvelled greatly over my journey, for she herself had never left the neighbourhood. Her nephew, she said, was a great traveller; "he had been to Nikshitje, Podgoritza, and Cetinje." She was the great lady of the land and much respected, but has lived a life of toil and poverty and danger compared with which the life of our own "working classes" is one of pampered luxury. I do not think that there is any-

one in Montenegro whose soul is imperilled by great possessions. When I had once left Podgoritza, and the world, behind me, my two small saddlebags were regarded as an inordinate amount of luggage. "You have quite enough clothes on. What can you need these for? Leave them here, and call for them on the way back." No one travels with more than can be tied up in a pocket-handkerchief, and what that minimum consists of I have never rightly fathomed.

Life at Andrijevitza is earnest; it is either quiet to dulness, or it is filled with very grim realities. For the Albanians across the border are an ever-present danger. The Powers of Europe, represented by many worthy gentlemen, met at Berlin in 1878, and together they swept and raked the Turkish Empire and bedded it out into states. Now, it is no light task to plant out nationalities about which you know little, in a land about which you possibly know less. Nor was the welfare of the said nationalities quite the only thing that absorbed the Council's attention. It is therefore not very surprising that the nationalities most concerned were not best pleased with the results. The nearest brothers of Montenegro are in Old Servia, but the uniting of the Serb peoples did not fall in with Austria's aspirations. Montenegro cried for bread and her brothers; she was given, largely, stones and Albanians. Gusinje and Plava were included in Montenegrin boundaries, and trouble began at once. Order was only restored by substituting Dulcigno for this robbers' nest. Gusinje and Plava were left to the Albanians, but the corrected frontier was not delimited for some time, was the source of much fighting, and to this day is not strictly observed. As someone

picturesquely observed, "it floats"—mainly on blood. And the representations made on the subject to Constantinople by the Montenegrins have not been more successful than any other representations made in that quarter unbacked by ironclads. At Andrijevitza not only the Crimea but the Treaty of Berlin are writ up very large against us. And the apathy of England towards the suffering of the Balkan Christians is a bitter thing to all the Serb peoples. Down on a frontier with the enemy almost in sight, the feeling becomes intense. "Your people have been our enemies," said someone, "and you know it, but you have come alone all the way here among us. When you go home, you must tell the truth about us. It is all we ask of you." For that England can be really aware of what life under the Turk has meant for the Balkan people, none who have lived that life can credit.

The peasants and flocks had not yet gone to the upper pastures for the summer, and until they are there, travelling on the border heights is dangerous for solitary wanderers, owing to constant Albanian incursions. The murder of a Montenegrin herd-boy last year gave rise to a good deal of fighting, and at Mokra, on the very edge, things were still "not good."

Owing to the farce of Austro-Russian reform, and other reasons, Gusinje was apparently just then in a supersensitive frame of mind. I gave up Gusinje reluctantly, and planned to see Berani on a market day. The valiant Boshko was reluctant. "We must go without a revolver," he said, "and I do not know the road." "We go freely to market," said I. "O

Boshko, thou art afraid." "I am not afraid," said Boshko indignantly, "but I dare not." So I consented to his engaging a second man, and relieved his mind. When the moment for departure came, he divested himself mournfully of his beloved six-shooter, hung it on a nail next my spare skirt, and looked ridiculously nude and ashamed.

We rode with a long string of pack-beasts on a good track down the valley of the Lim. Before we had been going an hour, grey clouds swept down upon us and rain began; but everyone vowed it would be fine, and I foolishly pushed on. A guard of dirty Nizams cowered at the entrance of a loopholed shanty, and a Turkish "kula" (blockhouse) was perched on the hill on either side of the valley. The telegraph wire, which had hitherto run trim and straight between upright and regular poles, now drooped in limp festoons from one crooked "clothes-prop" to another. We were in Turkey. No place looks really jolly in the rain, but in many lands rain means new life, hope, and plenty. In Turkey it is grey desolation; the untilled land, the wretched Christian peasantry, the squalid huts, sodden and soaked, seem all rotting together in a land whereon the sun will never shine again. We splashed on. No one took any notice of us, for we were going to market. The Turkish block-houses, "half an hour apart" along the frontier, were left behind us. We slopped past a yellow guardhouse and more gaunt Nizams and rode into Berani, a small town of, for the most part, crooked houses of timber and mud, a wide main street, a large market-place, two wooden mosques, and a fortress.

The inn, kept by a Serb, was far better than the

look of the place led one to expect. The man was from Ipek and his wife from Novibazar, and they welcomed me warmly, A visit from a foreign Christian was an unusual event, and the question was what course it would be most diplomatic to pursue with regard to the authorities. I was begged not to seek them, but to leave them to hunt me, if they thought fit. A Czech who had come about a fortnight ago had gone straight to the Kaimmakam, had been promptly ordered back across the frontier, and a guard had been set to watch the inn and see that he did not leave it except to return whence he came. Mine host hoped I would not bring the police upon him. "But I have a letter and a passport," I said; for, with the blood of the dominant race in me, the idea of sneaking in corners from the Ottoman eye was most unpleasing. To the Christian subjects of the Ottoman it seemed the only natural and sensible way of acting. "What is a letter or a passport?" they cried; "here you are with the Turks." There was a marked unwillingness on the part of everyone to take me to the Kaimmakam, and the Czech's plan had failed, so I decided, by way of experiment, to see Berani before I was hunted out of it. Meanwhile they pointed out the great man to me through the wooden grating that covered the window. He went into his official residence, and it was suggested that we should now go out. It was interesting to see how entirely suitable this furtive way of setting about things was considered.

The rain had ceased, and the market was crowded with Montenegrins and the Serb peasants of the neighbourhood. In this part of the country the peasantry is all Serb and Christian. The Mo-

hammedans are the army of occupation that holds the land, the Nizams, Zaptiehs (police), and officials, and a certain amount of tradesfolk in the town. These latter are in many cases the descendants of Mohammedanised Serbs, as is also the Kaimmakam himself. The most remarkable fact about Berani is that the Montenegrin national cap is on sale in the main street. That this is permitted is astonishing, for it does not take one long to see that the Christian population is heart and soul with the Prince. In the course of the last war Berani was taken several times and was held by the Montenegrins. The people's hopes ran high. "But," they say, "it lies in good land, so the Council of Berlin gave it back to the Turks. See the fine meadows and the fields that should be ours! And but little grows in them, for they gave it back to those devils."

Down came the rain like a fusillade, and I spent a cold, damp afternoon in the public room of the inn. A man who said he was German was waiting to interview me. He was a watchmaker by trade. He started at once on the death of King Alexander. Which of the Powers did I think had brought this about? Did I think it would affect the future of Old Servia? He was so anxious to know my opinion on the subject that I had none. "Servia" was the only word that the Serbs at the next table could understand, and it made them nervous. They ordered drinks and got me into their circle as soon as possible, asking, "What have you told him? He is a dirty German. He will denounce you to the authorities." They were a frank, hospitable, kindly set, of whom I afterwards saw much. I did my best to convince

them that the manner of Alexander's death was worse than a crime—for it was a blunder; but though we remained very good friends, I never succeeded.

I went to Berani on purpose to see Giurgovi Stupovi, the monastery church of St. George; for in Turkey you should always have a harmless and suitable reason for travelling, and I watched the rain dismally. It looked like the Deluge, and forty days of it would have settled the Eastern Question as far as the Turk is concerned. Monastery hunting was out of the question. I went upstairs, sat cross-legged on a divan to warm myself, and nursed the cat for the same purpose. My hostess did her best to entertain me and called in any number of her friends, and I began to make the acquaintance of the women of Old Servia, of whom I was to learn more later. These women came to see me whenever they had the chance; I was a stranger and quite a new sight, and no matter what I was doing or how tired I might be, they questioned me with pitiless persistency. Such interviews on the top of a long day's ride are wearisome to the last degree, but in travelling in these lands there is only one road to success, and that is, never to lose patience with the people under any circumstances. They were extremely ignorant; England conveyed no idea to them. Beyond their own immediate surroundings they knew nothing at all, and their mental horizon was bounded by Turks. I asked no questions, and let the information dribble out unaided. Omitting a mass of childish and personal questions, the conversation was always more or less on this pattern:—

"Hast thou a father?"

"No."

"Did the Turks kill him?"

"No." This caused surprise.

"Hast thou brothers?"

"Yes."

"Glory be to God! How many Turks have they killed?" for my male relatives were always credited with a martial ardour which they are far from possessing. The news that they had killed none caused disappointment. Then

"Is thy vilayet (province) far off?"

"Very far."

"Five days?"

"More."

"God help thee! Are there many Turks in thy vilayet?"

"None."

"No Turks? Dear God, it is a marvel!" And so on and so on. Attempts to start a new topic brought back the old one. "What a pretty child!" elicited only "He has no father. The Turks killed him." And all these things are trivial details; but "little straws show which way the wind blows," and their dull "everydayness" is more eloquent of helpless suffering than are columns of disputed atrocities. And through it all these people cling with a doglike fidelity to their Church and the belief that the God of their fathers will one day give them back the land which should be theirs. I remember few grimmer things than these wretched women and their Turk-haunted lives.

Tired out, damp and chilled right through, I shrank from facing the ceaseless downpour, and to the great

relief of my two men, stayed the night at Berani. The trouser-legged landlady made me a very respectable bed in a room with a lock on the door. Supper—which was always on the point of coming, but did not arrive till ten o'clock—consisted of a great chunk of flesh in a large tin dish full of funny stuff. The lady tore the shoulder-blade off with her fingers and offered it me to begin on. It was a failure as a meal. I dismissed the whole company, to their infinite regret, locked the door, ate all my "siege ration" of chocolate, went to bed, and slept like a log. In the middle of the night a violent attempt to open the door woke me. I was too tired to worry at first. Then I cried, "What is it?" No answer and stillness. It was pitch dark, and there were no matches. In a little while the attempt began again. Then I recognised that the sound was inside the room, and grasped the situation. The cat I had been nursing was shut up inside the room, and her two kittens were squealing outside. She was making wild efforts to get to them. I let her out, and saw by a flickering lamp that the rain was streaming through the roof and the whole landing was a lake. Next morning my landlady said the cats had frightened her very much in the night. Midnight noises were more alarming to her than to me, and probably for very good reason.

It was still drizzling when I left Berani early for the monastery, which is but a little way outside the town. The church is celebrated as being the oldest in the Balkan peninsula. It was built by Stefan Nemanja, the first of that line of Nemanja kings who led Servia to glory. He ruled from the middle of the

twelfth century, abdicated a few years before his death (which took place in 1195?), and retired to Mount Athos. He was canonised, and as St. Simeone is still greatly revered. The old monastery was burnt by the Turks, but the church, wrecked of all decoration and robbed of its treasure, still stands. It is a long, barrel-vaulted building, with an apse at one end and a narthex at the other. The masonry is rough, coarse, and irregular. A Roman gravestone is built into the wall upside down near the side door. Inside no trace of wall painting remains, but one piece of an inscription in which Stefan's name appears. All is forlorn and melancholy. A large assembly of folk were there to welcome me, and we had to retire to the monastery and partake of rakija. The most interesting figures were the head of the monastery and a wild-eyed priest, whose long grey locks were twisted up under his cap. He wore striped Albanian leg-gear and had a revolver thrust in his sash, though Christians are forbidden to carry weapons in Turkey. He rode off on a pony, and had presumably leaked in over the frontier and evaded the authorities; but I thought it would be useless to ask questions on such a delicate subject. We returned to Andrijevitza by another road, thus avoiding Berani and the guard at its entrance, which seemed to me a very unnecessary precaution, but pleased my guides extremely.

At Andrijevitza I found the Czech of whom I had heard at Berani, a Professor of botany who was making a detailed study of the flora of Montenegro, a good-natured, jolly man, who was a good friend to me, and to whom I am indebted for several interesting pieces of information. Commenting on the number

of vipers which are to be met with on the hillsides, he told me that the people all still believe in the existence of serpents of enormous size, fabulous dragons in fact. A man once told him that he had seen one, 20 metres long, and swore "By God, I saw it with these eyes." Nothing would convince him that his eyes had deceived him, and his comrades firmly believed the tale. They have many medicinal herbs, the secret of which they jealously guard. One plant in particular they consider an infallible cure for snake-bite, but he never succeeded in inducing them to show it him. It would lose its power, they said, if they told. Cats all know it, and go off and eat it if bitten.

The Montenegrin flora, which includes many plants peculiar to the district, had never been completely worked before, and beyond the frontier was quite unknown to science. He was wild to plant-hunt there, but his encounter with the Kaimmakam had been so unpleasant that he had reluctantly given up all hopes of doing so for the present. The Kaimmakam, he said, and the Voyvode were friendly enough a short time back, but the political situation was just then strained, and I had been lucky to escape an interview.

Everyone wanted to know how I had fared, and I was asked round to the Voyvode's house. The baker's lady took me. We went up an outside staircase into a tiny room with a hearthstone and an iron pot in it, and from this into another room, where the Voyvode's lady welcomed me cordially. Her daughter-in-law and her son came in, followed by the Voyvode and his secretary, the kapetan. It was a tiny whitewashed room with a bare wooden floor, a

table, three wooden chairs, and a bench—quite devoid of all the comforts of an English labourer's cottage; and portraits of Prince Nikola and the Russian and Italian Royal Families were the only exceptions to its Spartan simplicity. Hospitality was the order of the day. Rakija was produced, a plate of cheese and another of little lumps of ham, and a fork. All clinked glasses, took it in turns to eat little bits of ham off the fork, and were very festive. I have seldom met more charming people. The Voyvode was loud in his contempt for Boshko, and vexed that I should have had to pay a second man. This sealed Boshko's fate. He was, though well-meaning, quite incompetent as a guide. I paid him off and dismissed him. Alat had to go too, and the saddle, as Boshko dared not return without them.

Events followed thick and fast. Sunday was Kosovo Day, and Monday market day. A crowd of strange beings flocked in from Gusinje, wild mountain Albanians, with heads swathed in white cloths and restless, watchful eyes. But the bringing of weapons to market has been lately forbidden, and they had nothing more lethal upon them than well-filled cartridge belts, with which even the little boys were equipped. Our interest in one another was mutual, and I spent most of the morning in the market and down by the river, where they were selling and slaughtering sheep and goats, and the purple puddles were so suitable to the scene that they ceased to be revolting. Gusinje, being forbidden, fascinated me exceedingly, and I was charmed to find a Gusinje man had put up for the night at my hostelry. Djoka was his name; he was as stripey as a tiger; his sun-

tanned face was baked and weathered into lines, and his dark brown eyes glittered and sparkled. "Art thou Christian or Mohammedan?" he was asked when his "visitors' form" was being filled in. He looked up lazily from the bench where he was a-sprawl, and "By God, I know not," was all the reply he vouchsafed. We entertained one another for most of the afternoon. He had never seen drawing done before, and his interest was intense. He asked to be drawn so that people could see his new cartridge belt, and posed with a view to showing as much of it as possible. "But I must have a gun," he said. The idea of lending a Gusinje man a rifle even for the purposes of fine art was scouted by the Montenegrins, and we had to do without. He sat motionless and unblinking for twenty minutes; then unluckily the onlookers told him it was quite finished. He jumped up, and so many came to see that further sitting was impossible.

The Botanik and I consulted him about going to Gusinje. He was in high good humour, for his portrait pleased him greatly. "We only want to see," said the Botanik. "I pick flowers and make them into hay, and the lady will draw you pictures. We will make no politik." "Thou art a man, and they will not believe thee," said Djoka firmly; "and for thee, lady, it is better not. Perhaps there is danger, perhaps there is not. In Gusinje there is no law. Next year thou shalt come, and thou also." "Why will it be possible next year and not now?" I asked; but Djoka merely stared straight in front of him with a blank face and repeated what he had said before. And his final good-bye to me was an oracular "Next year, O lady."

Meanwhile, outside in the street people were busy putting up flags, for it was the eve of Prince Danilo's birthday. Night fell—it grows dark early in these valleys—and one Marko rushed in to say the Voyvode wanted me at once. We flew to the market-place, where flared a huge bonfire ringed round by all the men of the neighbourhood, squatting or standing in an expectant circle. On one side sat the Voyvode, with the priest on his right hand and all his officers round him. There was a table in front of him with five glasses and a huge flagon of rakija. Place was made for the Botanik and for me on the Voyvode's left. He turned to me. "My falcons!" he said in a voice of love and pride, as he glanced round his men. There was a blue-black night sky overhead with never a star in it. The petroleum-fed bonfire leapt into a waving banner of flame and threw hot light on the faces of veterans, stern frontiersmen, and eager boys, illuminating weapons, blue and crimson uniforms, medals and gold stitchery in one brave blaze. The kapetan, who was sitting next us, whipped out his revolver, fired it overhead, and the fun began. Anyone who felt inspired burst into song, and anyone that chose joined in. The village rang with national ballads shouted at the full pitch of huge voices, with the wildest enthusiasm, and a running fire of revolver shots marked time barbarically — ball cartridge, of course. Anyone who, carried away by his feelings, fired all six barrels in succession, was loudly applauded. The glasses were filled, and the rakija flowed with embarrassing profusion. The Montenegrins are very moderate drinkers, but it was etiquette for every man of rank to drink with the guests. The five glasses

flew from hand to hand, and the Botanik and I were hard put to it as one captain after another filled a glass to us; for to refuse is an insult. "Drink," said the Botanik desperately, "drink. What must be, must." From time to time the fire was fed, and, as it blazed again, one youth with a wild yell would challenge another to dance. Leaping up into the air like young stags, they dashed into the middle of the ring, dancing madly a kind of Highland fling, with the flaming bonfire as background, yelling savagely the while they drew their revolvers, leapt higher and higher, and on the top of the leap fired over the heads of the shouting crowd, who in their turn beat time with a volley of bullets; while against the darkness of the night, fire flashed from the muzzles of upturned weapons all round the ring. "Take care, brothers! take care!" cried the Voyvode at intervals, when the angle of fire was dangerously low. And as each pair of youths finished their dance they threw their arms round each other's necks and kissed one another heartily on both cheeks before making room for another couple. When both cartridges and rakija were about exhausted, the Voyvode stood up. "Enough, brothers! Enough!" and he started the national hymn, "God save Montenegro," which was sung with a wild fervour about which there was no mistake. Glasses were filled for the final toast, and we drank to the Gospodar and all his family, and to the speedy restoration of the ruler of Great Servia to his rightful throne at Prisren. "Now, my falcons, go!" said the Voyvode. The party abruptly dispersed, and the bonfire died away.

But the wave of patriotism had surged too high to

subside at once. The musical talent of the neighbourhood flocked to the guest-room at the baker's, the gusle passed from hand to hand, and each man in turn vied with his comrades in long historic ballads. Those who meant to go home brought their rifles with them, "for it is dark"; those who meant to stay hung up their revolvers and took their belts off. How those fellows sang!—sang till the sweat glistened upon their brows, their faces flushed, and the veins stood out upon their throats. Nor did there seem to be any end to the number of verses each man knew. The gusle has but one string, and as a musical instrument it is about as poor a one as has ever been devised; it wails monotonously on one or two minor notes varied only by a curious trill that recurs perpetually, but to the Montenegrin it is what the bagpipes are to the Highlander. It calls up all that s Montenegrin within him. They sang of Kosovo and of the Servo-Bulgarian war and of the border fights of the neighbourhood. The song ended often in a yell of triumph, and the singer threw himself back exhausted by the emotions he had lived through. Djoka, the man from Gusinje, took his turn and varied the subject of song by singing the sorrows of a Turkish woman whose husband the Montenegrins had killed. He sang in a clear high voice, and manipulated the gusle more skilfully than any other man I have heard. "Dost thou hear the wailing of the cuckoo till the city echoes to her woe? The snow is falling and the earth is frost-bound. That that thou hearest is no cuckoo; it is the voice of a woman that cries for her murdered man," etc., and the Montenegrins retorted with a similar song in which

the conditions were reversed. When everyone had sung himself hoarse we suddenly discovered it was one o'clock in the morning. The boy began hastily strewing mattresses, and I retired into the back bedroom with the baker's wife, to find there the tired-out Botanik, who was sleeping the sleep of exhaustion and had to be aroused.

Next morning at nine o'clock there was a solemn service in the little church. The "heads," in gala costume, marched in front and the rest of the village trailed after. I could not follow the prayers accurately, but the name of Prisren recurred many times, and the church was filled with kneeling warriors who prayed with painful intensity for the redemption of Stara Srbija. For the saving of Old Servia and the union of the Serb peoples is the star by which the Serb steers, the goal of his desires, the ideal for which he lives and is ready to die. We walked out serious and very silent into the sunshine, and the emotional strain was visible on many faces. The Voyvode introduced me to an officer who had arrived that morning and explained my tour to him briefly. "We want you to see Old Servia," said the Voyvode. I was formed up in line with the "heads," and we marched back to the village, and on the way they talked of Stara Srbija and of Stara Srbija. "It was the heart of our empire, and you must see it," said the officer. This was a new idea to me and soared beyond my wildest plans. That hapless corner of the Turkish empire was left after the last war to be ravaged by the Albanians. Until the Russians insisted upon forcing a consul into Mitrovitza, none of the Powers knew or cared what was passing in that dark corner,

and travellers were denied access. My map ceased at the Montenegrin frontier, and beyond was a blank. I pondered the question till we arrived at the village.

The market-place was arranged as on the night before; we took our seats and repeated last night's entertainment, minus the bonfire and revolvers, for the Voyvode said that more firing would make the Albanians think that fighting was taking place and bring them over the border in force. Patriotism was hotter than ever, and "the falcons" sang "Onamo, onamo," "Yonder, yonder let me see Prisren," with great energy. We drank all the proper healths, we sang the national hymn, and the party broke up. This time, however, the "heads" adjourned to the Voyvode's and took the Botanik and me with them. The little room was quite full of men in festal garb covered with gold and medals; we ate hot mutton and little bits of ham with our fingers, and drank rakija. The Voyvode proposed my health, said I was like the swallow that flew south, and that, like the swallow, I must come again next year. And they all drank to me but not to England, though I noticed that they drank to Bohemia as well as to the Botanik with much warmth. Then they turned their attention to urging me to Stara Srbija. I consulted the Botanik. "Go," he said; "the only danger is from Albanians, and they never touch a woman." I looked at all the "heads," and trusted them. The Voyvode said he would give me a letter that would take me over, and the kapetan that he would find me a man and a horse. The "heart of our empire and the throne of our kings" began to exercise an irresistible fascination

over me. I said I would start that very afternoon, and did. I was to ride to Berani, thence to Pech (Ipek), thence to Dechani; from Dechani to Prisren and back to Andrijevitza across country—or rather, I was to try to do so, but the whole expedition was pleasingly vague, as it depended entirely upon "circumstances," that were all Turks, and therefore uncontrollable. Everyone was full of enthusiasm, and told me above all things to go to Dechani, the most holy shrine in Stara Srbija. My belongings were then overhauled, for it was necessary to ride as light as possible. I tipped all my things on to the bed. Quite a number of people came to help. My idea was chocolate and underclothing. The Montenegrins thought otherwise. One stalwart fellow took my second skirt off the wall. "This," he said, "is very pretty and not heavy. Take it. Then if you meet any foreign consuls you can walk about with them." This bright idea pleased everyone, for your Montenegrin dearly loves "to peacock." They selected a scarlet silk necktie to complete the conquest of the consuls, and considered that this was all the outfit that was absolutely necessary. The kapetan arrived with the letter, the pony, and the guide. "I give you this lady to take care of," he said; "you will protect her and serve her well, or when you come back you will go to prison." I laughed. "I am not joking," he said sternly. I mounted with my gay light-heartedness rather dashed, waved "good-bye" and started. The pony was a wiry one, the wooden pack-saddle padded with a cape quite comfortable, except that loops of cord were its only stirrups, and the clean, honest eyes of Radovan, the man to whom I had been handed over, filled

me with trust from the first. The road to Berani was now lonely. Near the border a man on horseback suddenly clattered across the valley. "Woman," he shouted, "stop!" "Go on, and do not speak," said Radovan; "he is a Turk, and a bad one. If he wishes to ask something he knows that he should ask me." The Turk drew alongside. "Woman, answer me. What is the time?" Radovan looked at the sky and gave the approximate hour. The Turk took no notice but shouted at me again. After this he said a good deal in a language I did not understand, and rode away. Radovan laughed. "I know that man," he said; "he wanted to see if you had a good watch."

We reached Berani, and this time, as there was no market to explain our errand, were challenged at once and told to wait at the inn. The inn was amazingly excited at hearing my proposed route, and foretold failure. No foreigner had been passed through for many years. I awaited a summons before the Kaimmakam with anxiety. "There he is!" they cried, and I was suddenly shouted for to be interviewed in the middle of the main street. He was a long, lean, morose individual, who snapped, "What do you want?" in Serb, and was taken aback at my errand and nationality. He was doubtful, very doubtful. Inspired by previous experience of Turkish ignorance, I tried a bold bluff that was not "bakshish," and rather to my own surprise I scored a sullen permission. Having successfully played the empire, I gave him the Voyvode's letter. "Voyvode Lakich," he said, "h'm, Voyvode Lakich, Voyvode Lakich." He tore it open, read it, smiled grimly, indicated that he had had quite enough of me for the present, and turned

away with my passport and the letter, muttering "Voyvode Lakich" as he went. The inn and its customers were exultant. "You will be quite safe," said a woman; "the Turks will not dare touch you. They are afraid of your friends across the frontier, and know you would be nobly avenged." She believed this piece of nonsense, poor thing, and her chance remark threw a swift sidelight on a dark life where "safety" depends on power of revenge. My host, hostess, Radovan, and I passed the evening together round a pan of food. They were in high good-humour, for I was expected somehow to champion the Christian cause! If England only knew she could not fail to act! "The Turks," said my host, "killed my father before my eyes when I was fifteen"— His wife, with a cry of alarm, shut the window lest he should be overheard.

I had planned to start early next morning, but had no such luck. My passport had not been stamped. This was explained by the fact that the gentleman to whose department it belonged had lost a daughter. He intended to weep all day, and could not be interrupted. I protested, and was told that two or three days could make no difference to anyone, and was kept in a pleasing state of uncertainty as to what was to happen.

Late in the evening I received orders to start next morning at four with some traders and a zaptieh as escort. Radovan disguised himself as a Turkish subject, and we started punctually in the grey dawn. It was very cold, and the entire landscape was blotted out by driving rain. We crossed the Lim by a wooden bridge full of holes, which a portion of the

Turkish army had been trying to mend by stuffing sticks into them. Half blinded by the rain, we breasted the hill and waited on the top for the "drushtvo" (company) and the zaptieh, who soon appeared like ghosts out of the fog. The track was pretty bad, the landscape quite invisible, and we rode through a wilderness in a ceaseless downpour. The way was enlivened only by murder stones, which were pretty frequent. "That's the Bohemian," said the zaptieh. "Who shot him?" said someone. "God knows," said the zaptieh stolidly, "how should I?" We slopped on. "Those were traders," said the zaptieh presently (there were two stones this time). "Were they robbed?" asked one of the drushtvo, a trader himself. "By God, I know not. There was nothing on them when they were found." And so on and so on. At eleven the weather cleared quite suddenly; the clouds rolled away and disclosed scenery that was startlingly magnificent. We had been mounting all the time and were on vast uplands. The huge peak of Kom of the Vassoievich towered from Montenegro and a border blockhouse showed clear on a ridge. "That's Mokra," said the zaptieh, and he laughed and tapped his rifle—an unnecessary pantomime, for the land told its own tale.

It is "a land that is not inhabited." There are miles and miles of the richest pasture, where no flocks feed,—they would cost the herdsman's life,—rich valleys where no man dwells, and great lonely forests of stately fir trees. We were in Arnaoutluk (Albania), a land where nothing is done and where under Turkish government nothing can be done. A few most wretched shanties—Albanian, of course—were the only

human habitations I saw. The Albanian hordes who till lately had held the district and completely blocked the trade route had been for the time being driven back, and now the road was once again practicable. Radovan spoke Albanian fluently, as did also the zaptieh. We got some smoky milk and some coffee at an Albanian hut (which stank frightfully, for the walls were covered with raw ox-hides nailed up to dry), and sat on the floor and drank out of the same bowl while a party of weird wild men sprawled round and asked questions. They kindly threw logs on the fire that I might dry my clothes, and only charged fivepence for our refreshments. Then on, and we passed through Rugove, a small Albanian village consisting of a handful of cottages and a wooden mosque, a sinister spot, the scene of the recent arrest of some revolutionary chieftains and a good deal of bloodshed, and plunged into the valley of the Bistritza, thickly forested with fir trees. The steep hillside was a tangle of roots or streaming with liquid mud, through which I slithered on foot for some miles, and the pack-animals staggered along with difficulty, pecking and stumbling. We got ahead of the drushtvo, but as the light was beginning to wane the zaptieh called a halt, and we waited for them. I had been told ten or twelve hours would take us to Ipek, and my heart sank. When we joined forces everyone was dead tired. Poor Radovan was so done that I begged him to ride my pony, but he refused, and the track was soon such that I too had to walk.

It was an extraordinarily wild and impressive scene. The cliffs on the opposite side rose in a perpendicular wall, there was a night sky overhead,

and the moon came out and glittered on the torrent that spouted and roared below. It was pitch dark under the trees, and numberless tiny fireflies flashed and disappeared. We staggered and scrambled over the rocky path, which was too narrow in many places to let one animal pass another. I walked ahead with the zaptieh, who uttered loud yells to warn any other caravan of our approach. We heard yells ahead, and the narrow valley echoed with unearthly howls. We met, and as we were all cross and tired, we backed, scrambled, and shouted, in a tangle as each party tried to make the other give way. I divided the last lump of dry bread with the zaptieh and Radovan as we tramped out from under the trees, and the valley was wide and bare. On the steep cliff was an inscription in Turkish with a great blot of crimson under it —only paint, but it showed mysterious in the moonlight and struck awe into all beholders except myself. As no one could read it they called a halt, began to discuss its probable meaning, and were in no hurry to start again. I walked on and the zaptieh followed, and we came to the end of the gorge. "Pech very soon," said the zaptieh; "ride, lady, ride, the way is good." I mounted reluctantly, for it was not, and very nearly came to grief in consequence.

At last, after sixteen and a half hours on the march, we clattered over a stony breakwater by the river's edge to the big iron-faced gates of the monastery, which is surrounded by a high stone wall. The zaptieh banged the heavy knocker, the gates were opened cautiously, I slid from my weary beast, and we entered. Here were some long white buildings, a fountain, and a group of men sitting on the ground.

The Iguman came forward to welcome me. He proved later to be a friend indeed, but now he and the others were too much overcome by astonishment and curiosity to think of anything else but satisfying it. They gave me a chair, a rickety hard thing, and I sat stiff and tired in the chill moonlight and enumerated my brothers, sisters, and other relatives in answer to a flood of questions. One man who was gnawing a piece of meat kindly offered me a clammy lump by way of refreshment. Radovan asked if we could have some hay for the horse, and was told there was none at all and none could be got till the next day. I was so sorry for the poor brute that I forgot my own fatigues. It was turned loose in the monastery enclosure to pick up what it could, but as that had been fed over by geese the fare was very scanty. The Iguman meanwhile was arranging for me. It was lucky that there were other guests in the house or I should have fared hardly, for it was the fast of SS. Peter and Paul. As it was, supper was just ready. The company was most kind to me, and, when I had fed, the Iguman conducted me to the room which was reserved for the Vladika when he visited the monastery. It had a proper bedstead in it! I wished the Iguman "good-night," tumbled into bed without further investigations, and did not find out till next morning that I had not only the Vladika's room but in all probability his sheets also.

The Iguman came early to see me, gave me a lump of sweet stuff and a tumbler full of boiled milk and sugar for breakfast,—for no one in these parts thinks of eating anything solid before midday,—and we went out to see the churches. The Patriarchia of

Pech, formerly the seat of the Archbishop of Servia, was, to the grief of the Serbs, made dependent on the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1766 by the Turkish Government. Of the four little churches neatly fitted together to form one large, irregular, dome-sprinkled building, three, including the Church of the Virgin and the Saborna Crkva (cathedral), were built by the Patriarch Arsenio, and are, I was told, nearly eight hundred years old. The fourth and smallest, St. Nikola, was added later by the Patriarch Makario. The churches are entered by a portico, the tiled roof of which is supported on wooden posts and which leads into a long narthex. The Saborna Crkva is by far the largest. Nor is it easy to give an idea of the interior of any of these churches. The general effect, made up of a mass of extraordinary detail, is old-world and barbaric in the extreme. The walls are entirely covered with frescoes of the most primitive description, a jumble of fierce colours toned by age into a rich harmony. Quantities of cut glass chandeliers hang from the roof, and from these again dangle numbers of ostrich eggs. Dim gilt ikons and holy pictures, blackened by the tapers that with pious zeal are stuck on their frames by a blob of hot wax, hang on the walls. Reading desks, taper stands, candlesticks, all are of the most early pattern and the rudest make. A curious seat, under a canopy hung with dingle-dangles, is the throne upon which was crowned Stefan Dechanski, the Sveti Kralj. And this curious primitive art, that now looks exotic, Eastern, foreign, once swayed the art of all Europe. We find its traces in our own Norman architecture; we find them in the early churches of Italy. It reached its highest stage

of development in St. Sophia, and St. Mark's, Venice, but it is now dead and done for. Art is no exception to the rule, that all things are blighted in the land on which the Turk has laid a hand. After his arrival all further development was arrested.

The monastery covers a good deal of ground. There are long rambling guest-houses for the crowds that come on pilgrimage days, rooms with long fixed tables spreading out into a large round at one end for the accommodation of those of high degree. One of these buildings is of the same date as the church. Timbered, wide-eaved, and picturesque, it is a wonderful relic of mediæval days. This was doubtless the sort of accommodation Chaucer's pilgrims put up with. Pilgrims in those days were as ready to sleep in rows on the floor as they are in the Balkans now, and their luggage was doubtless brought down to the same irreducible minimum.



IPEK, OLD SERVIA.

CHAPTER XVIII

To Dechani and Back to Podgoritza

Having shown me all over the monastery, the Iguman suggested that Dechani was only three hours' ride, and that, as my pony was fed and refreshed, I could easily ride over in the cool of the afternoon. Dechani was his joy, and no English traveller had been allowed to go there for twelve or fifteen years. Though my interest in the churches of the Patriarchia pleased him much, "You must see Dechani," was his constant cry, and he spared no pains to get me there. But my passport had been taken off to the Sud (police bureau) by the zaptieh, and without a passport even a three hours' ride was, I was told, an impossibility. It is one thing to give up a passport and quite another thing to get it back. It was a Friday, moreover, the Turkish holy day, and the passport department refused to act till the evening. I proposed to employ the afternoon by a walk through Pech, and evoked a chorus of dismay and horror. Radovan said briefly, "It is better that thou goest not"; the monastery people prayed me not to go. And the reason was "the Nizams." It was Friday, and the streets would be full of them. The fear of the Christians as to the fate of a woman among Nizams off duty amounted to terror; they offered instead to take me up a little hill

whence I could see the town in safety. They would not hear of my going to town with only one protector, and as, in event of "a row," the blame would probably fall most heavily upon any local Christian mixed up in it, I gave up my plan reluctantly.

Now the Nizams were part of the much-vaunted Austro-Russian reform scheme, and were supposed to be there in the interests of the Christian population.

The story of Old Servia is one of uninterrupted misery. The suffering of the Christian peoples in the Balkans is no new thing. It began with the advent of the Turk, and will continue while he remains. As long ago as 1690 the intolerable lot of the Serbs of Old Servia induced no less than 37,000 zadrugas (family groups, including uncles and cousins) to migrate to Hungary. The Albanians then spread over the vacated lands, which they have been permitted to harry with impunity ever since. A small unarmed Christian population "regulated" by Albanians is not merely unable to rise, it is unable to cry loudly enough to be heard, and there was no foreign consul to make reports. It was not until the Russians (who with extraordinary diplomatic skill lose no opportunity of winning the love of the Slavs of the Balkans) forced Stcherbina into Mitrovitza in 1902 that any light was shed upon the condition of this hapless land. The Albanians promptly shot him. The Christians regard him as the man that died to save them, and cherish his portrait. Until Stcherbina came they lived in a state of terror, and all that the tax-gatherers spared the Albanians looted. Owing to his death, the Government had sent the Nizams to subdue the Albanians.

There were some 30,000 Nizams quartered in and around Pech, I was told, and from the "safe little hill" the vast camps around the town were very visible. It was only the presence of these troops that made it possible to go from one place to another; the pass I had ridden had been open a bare two months. The situation, as I found it, was that the people lived in present terror of the Nizams and in future terror of the Albanians, who would return as soon as they were withdrawn. The town had to feed the troops, and bread and hay were dear. All Friday afternoon Turkish officers came sight-seeing to the Patriarchia, dashed into the courtyard, shouted for someone to hold their horses, were supplied with coffee and tobacco, and were conducted round the churches by the Iguman. Gangs of Tommies, too, swarmed in, and the monastery people, who, I noticed, never let them enter the church unattended, were quite tired out. By request I sat well apart on the farther side, for "the Turks will say bad things to you." Knowing no Turkish, I thought this would not matter; but as the others could not see things from this point of view, I spent the afternoon with the various Christian visitors who came in. Among these were a schoolmaster and a young theological student who came from Dechani.

By the evening, as nothing had been heard of my passport, the Iguman became very anxious; folk seemed to think there was going to be trouble, and told me that the Pasha was a "ljuta zmija" (a fierce serpent). A final message to the Sud brought the reply that the passport and two zaptiehs would arrive at the monastery at eight next morning. Eight came

and passed, and nothing happened. The monastery decided I must go myself to the Sud. The Iguman, another monk, the schoolmaster, the theology student, Radovan, and the pony all came too. I was very much ashamed of giving so much trouble, but they would not hear of my going with less escort. We first went round outside the town, as "our Catholic brethren" wished to see me before I left. They were Franciscans, mostly Italian, and were exceedingly civil. Their house was far better found and evidently much wealthier than the Orthodox establishment, and the rakija which they pressed upon me with lavish hospitality was most alarmingly strong. I was glad to find that the representatives of the two Christian Churches were on very friendly terms, and was given to understand that the Frati were the only people who had any civilising effect upon the Albanians. Unfortunately, their flock is but small, the mass of the Albanians here being Moslem.

From the Catholic house we went through the town. It is a fairly large place, too dirty to be picturesque. Filthy and awful with a frowsy squalor, it swarms with street dogs, dogs that explain why the dog is called an unclean animal in the East, great wolfish beasts, a mass of unhealed scars, scabby, covered with mange, hairless, horrible. The shops are all mean little booths with little in them and nothing of interest; water, fairly clean, flows in a channel down all the main streets. Most of the houses are built of mud, and are mere hovels. The pavement, of course, is vile, and there are a dozen or more small mosques. It was bazaar day, and crowds of filthy, ragged people were swarming in, but

seemed to have little for sale. Weapons had recently been prohibited in the town, so, said the Iguman, there was now no danger on bazaar day. Of well-armed zaptiehs and of Nizams there was no lack—the place swarmed with them.

At last we arrived at the Sud, went into a yard full of zaptiehs and armed men, were sent into an office by the entrance, and told to wait a little. We did. A man came in and said he knew nothing about an English passport. The Iguman and I were sent up a ramshackle wooden staircase on to a large landing crowded with awful filthy people, stinking and a-buzz with flies, wild-eyed and apparently half starved. The air was hot and heavy, and the constant clamour of imploring voices ceased only when from time to time a zaptieh bounced in and bellowed. Streaming with perspiration, I pulled out my handkerchief, and with it a little hard crust of the day before yesterday's bread. A man snatched it almost before it touched the floor, and bolted it like a wild beast. It was terrible; but I dared not offer money, nor show that I had any. At last an official asked us into an office, a stuffy den, but better than the Inferno outside. Clerks who tried to look European on chairs, but spoilt the effect by sitting cross-legged, were scratching backwards writing, and passing it through "buttery hatches" with desperate energy. We were told to "wait," and were given coffee. The Iguman up till now had shown no signs of impatience. "They must give you permission; you are English," was his constant cry. Now he began to ask questions of everyone that came in. And no one had heard of an English passport. I

told him I would give up Dechani. He replied that the Turks were always like this, "and you must see it, you must."

Then we were ordered to another office. This belonged to a very great personage, the Pasha himself, I believe. After a hurried and whispered conversation between several people, I was told to wait outside the door. A voice was loudly raised within, and the Iguman came flying out. We were to return to the first office again! We went. It was crowded, and we were told to wait.

By this time I felt so strongly that Oriental methods did not suit me at all that I said "No, thank you" to coffee, and told the official that if he did not give me my passport at once I would go back to Berani without it. This great linguistic effort amazed him so much that he explained the delay. They had sent a telegram about me, and were awaiting the reply. A voice from the crowd said suddenly in French, "Mademoiselle is without doubt English! They do not know what to do about you. They are afraid to stop you, but they dare not let you travel farther. They have sent for instructions to Uskub. I too am waiting for my teskereh, but you will have yours first; you are English. No one here understands French; one may talk. If you had been here a few weeks ago you could have gone to Uskub, and met the newspaper correspondents. Now they are all gone." He came nearer, and added in a lower voice, "They think it is all over, and it has not begun." I was aware of this, and hastily squashed his remarks on such a dangerous subject. The official was occupied in bellowing at the crowd of poor wretches

who were applying for passes. And they were all told to wait. One luckless boy who had two women with him cried out wildly that they had nothing to eat, that they wished to go to work as reapers, and had waited many days. "By God, it is true," cried a voice from the crowd; but the official only bellowed at him, and he had to give place to the next applicant. They were all Serb-speaking peasants in the last stages of misery. Finally, I was told that my passport should be sent me very soon, and that I was to go.

We went to a house in the Christians' quarter of the town, where the men who had accompanied me were waiting with many others. Everyone was absorbed in a handful of newspaper cuttings that had just been brought in a dirty, much-worn envelope. They contained an account of the Servian murders. It was the 6th of July, and till then no details of the affair had come through! Even then the accounts were so meagre that they appeared to be some of the first published. They were grim and brief. "Death of Queen Draga," ran one. "Queen Draga is dead. The circumstances of her death are not exactly known, but there were many revolver wounds in her body." A piece of journalism which requires some beating.

Two mounted zaptiehs clattered into the yard at one o'clock, and I was told to start at once. They were to take me to Dechani and bring me back. I was to go nowhere else, and the Pasha would keep my passport. I had hoped to push right on to Prisren from Dechani, but was outwitted. As for returning across country to Andrijevitza, that, I was

told, was out of the question. The Albanians were up, and even with an escort of Nizams we should probably not get through without a fight. We set off for Dechani at once. The school teacher and the student both rode with me, and the former most kindly lent me his horse, a very good one. We rode over the undulating plain, and they showed me where Kosovo lay, where Mitrovitza, and where Prisren. The two zaptiehs, both Moslem, were apparently as much interested in Kosovo as were the Christians. One, Yakoub, was a Bosnian, and his Mohammedanism sat exceeding light upon him. He was delighted with the job of riding about with me; his discourse was all of the Montenegrins, and their great valour, and of that hero, Milosh Obilich, who slew the wicked Sultan Murad. "He was a veliki junak! Come with me, and I will show you his grave," said Yakoub enthusiastically. But he wore the Sultan's uniform, and of his two uncles one was a Pasha and the other a Kaimmakam! He was a fair-haired, blue-eyed young fellow bubbling with animal spirits, singing songs and making his horse plunge out of pure light-heartedness. The conversion of his forefathers, doubtless for the sake of peace and quiet, to Islam had placed him in the class of the rulers and not of the ruled. It therefore naturally never occurred to him to doubt the superiority of Mohammedanism, but the heroes that he cherished in his heart were all Christian, and belonged to the days of Tsar Lazar and the great Servian empire.

The ride was a short and easy one. The land is rich and fertile but little cultivated, for it is constantly liable to be raided. Such crops as there were,

were splendid, and the grass grew thick in the fields. It was hard to believe that the country had been impassable two months before, or that there was any present danger, but the few peasants who were going our way clung to our party carefully; all the houses, and there were very few, were more like blockhouses, had no windows on the ground floor and none larger than loopholes above, and Yakoub thought it necessary to assure us every few minutes that nothing would happen to-day. The monastery, which lies about 1500 feet above sea-level, appeared as a white church surrounded by outbuildings at the entrance of a magnificently wooded valley, through which flows a small river, the Dechanski Bistritza, the one slope rich with stately chestnuts and the other fir-clad. Robbed of its broad lands, which have been swooped on by the Albanians, who at the time of my visit made further progress up the valley impossible, it lies precariously on the bloody edge of things, and only the wonderful white marble church tells of its former glory. It was being used as a military outpost, and twenty-five Nizams and an officer were quartered on the monastery, which had also a guard of its own, a set of Mohammedan Albanians, who were said to be very loyal. They looked like a wild-beast show, spoke nothing but Albanian, had the most elegant manners, and I was never allowed outside the monastery gate without a couple of them.

Dechani dates from the palmy days of the Servian empire, and is its finest monument. The church, built by a Dalmatian from Cattaro, is of white and dull red marble, striped in the manner familiar to us in Italy, and would be a fine building anywhere.

Here, a unique specimen in a land almostly entirely given over to barbarism, it is looked upon as something almost miraculous, and is regarded with a veneration which has not improbably worked upon the superstitious souls of the Albanians and saved it from destruction. And to the Serb it is an outward and visible sign that this land is his. Though it has been the Turk's for five hundred years, he has set no such mark upon it. Roughly speaking, he has spent those five centuries in camping out on it temporarily as an army of occupation! Nothing is more surprising about him than the speed with which all visible signs of his existence can be wiped out, but the stain he has left upon the souls of the people is, alas! harder to erase.

Stefan VII., King of Servia, known on account of his pious works as the Sveti Kralj (holy king), built Dechani in the first half of the fourteenth century. Mediæval Servia, like the rest of Mediæval Europe, was a place were careers were apt to be brief, bloody, and brilliant. The Turks did not find a highly civilised people and overwhelm them with barbarism. They found a people who, though steadily progressing, were no better than their neighbours, and they arrested their further development. Stefan VII.'s career as king was covered with glory — he subdued the Bulgarians and was successful against the Greeks— but it came to an abrupt and untimely end. He was murdered in 1336 in his castle, Zvechan, near Mitrovitza. It is said by some that he was strangled by order of his son Stefan, whose nickname, Dushan, has been interpreted to mean the Strangler (dushiti, to strangle). But the patriotic Serb, who cannot bear to cast a slur

on the maker of great Servia, states simply that he "was murdered," and derives Dushan from "dusha," the soul, Stefan the Soul of the nation. The dead king was canonised as St. Stefan Dechanski and is extraordinarily celebrated as a miracle worker. His death is pictured upon his shrine; two men tug the ends of a cord that is twisted round his neck, and an angel fetches his soul. He is, I was told, exceedingly good, and it is of no use to approach him in prayer if you have any bad thought in your heart. He helps the poor and performs the most marvellous cures. The belief in his power is far spread, even Yakoub had a sort of sneaking respect for him, and I was bidden to prepare my mind for the visit to the Sveti Kralj even before I had left Berani. Nor does he, alone, protect the church. Once a Turk stole a jewel from a picture of the Holy Mother of God. Shortly afterwards he was found dead and unwounded! Then the jewel was found upon him, and it was known that the Holy Mother of God had slain him, for to die of anything but a wound was clearly a great marvel. I stood by the shrine of the murdered Sveti Kralj in the church that he had built, and thought of Alexander and his end as reported in the dirty newspaper cuttings of that morning. The school teacher talked of Stcherbina's death at Mitrovitza, and the old world and the new seemed very close together.

The whole interior of the church is elaborately frescoed. All the faces that are within reach from the ground have been poked out, but those above are very well preserved. The line of Nemanja kings that covers one wall of the narthex is especially interesting. The magnificent old Ikonostasis is of carved and gilt

wood (cleverly restored). Its pillars are all wreathed and twined with plants, birds, and beasts elaborately coloured and carved in very high relief, and the whole mass of brown gold and colour is very rich in effect. The floor is paved with white and dull red marble, and the piers which support the roof are in several instances monolithic. The tomb of the Sveti Kralj's sister Helena (also, I believe, canonised) stands in the body of the church, and a big cross from Russia, recently presented

The two marbles from which the church is entirely built were quarried in the immediate neighbourhood. It is thirty metres high to the base of the cupola. Doors and windows are all elaborately and splendidly carved, and the whole is in such a wonderfully good state of preservation that it is small wonder that the people have deep faith in the protecting power of the Sveti Kralj, and believe that in the whole world there is no building quite so beautiful. The treasures of the monastery are all dispersed, and its books and MSS. relating to the old kings of Servia are scattered. The folk at the monastery are now miserably poor, and toil in their few fields for a bare living. The feeding of the soldiers quartered upon them strained their resources sadly.

Having seen the church, I was taken to see a spring of effervescent mineral water which rises on the bank of the river opposite the monastery, and is considered a great wonder. To get at it we had to walk up the valley for about ten minutes and cross a bridge. The student and the schoolmaster took me, and the two Albanian zaptiehs and Yakoub came too. It was very hot, and they all felt the heat much more

than I did. When we had duly drunk of the water and cooled a bit, Yakoub remarked it was a pity to go all the way back in the sun, when the monastery was so near; if the lady would only take her boots off, we could all cross the river. This tender care for his own comfort was very characteristic of Yakoub. The student asked me timidly if I had ever done such a thing. I had. They were delighted, and we all took to the water. It was very much deeper and swifter than I expected, and the bottom very slippery. I narrowly escaped having the bath that I was greatly in need of, but we all got through, climbed the hedge into the monastery orchard, and lay out in the shade. Yakoub being warm, took off his cartridge belt, threw down his rifle, strewed his weapons about, bared his chest, spread a wet handkerchief on it, and sighed with satisfaction. Weapons as worn by him were certainly uncomfortable. He had a large revolver and a sheath-knife with a blade some ten inches long shoved down inside his trousers, and could not bend till he had fished them out. He gave me the lot to play with, and took my lock-backed pocket-knife to examine in return. His knife was a beauty, with a broad, deeply grooved blade, "for the blood," he explained. It tapered to a fine point, slid into a leather silver-mounted sheath, and had belonged to his grandfather. He pointed out its fine edge, spat on the blade, and shaved the tip of his chin delicately.

The Albanians contributed their silver-mounted revolvers to the collection, for they were most anxious to assist in entertaining me, and the conversation ran entirely on murdered monarchs. Yakoub was in his element. He ran through all the recent assassinations,

including that of President M'Kinley. "And not one in England!" he said regretfully. Not wishing to be out of it, I contributed Charles the First. No one had heard of him, and it excited great interest. "How did you kill him?" asked Yakoub eagerly. "We cut his head off." He roared with laughter. Shooting is a death for soldiers and gentlemen; head-cutting is a way of triumphing over a contemptible foe. The idea of cutting off a king's head pleased him so that he passed it on to the Albanians, whose faces became wreathed in smiles. "But we killed one," said Yakoub, for he felt that I at present held the record, and did not wish to be cut out. "We killed Abdul Aziz like this," and he turned up his sleeve and prodded the veins of his arm with his knife tip. Alexander's death struck him as very humorous, but he disapproved most strongly of the shooting of Draga. He pondered some minutes on the list of dead rulers, then he cried suddenly, "I would not be a king; if I could, I would not be a king! A king lives in a prison. Everyone wishes to kill him. He is always afraid. Day and night he is afraid. I would be like thee, O lady. I would have enough money to live, and I would see the world. Thou goest everywhere, seest all things, and no one wishes to kill thee. Thou art a woman, but men serve thee. By God, that is a marvel!"

We returned to the monastery, and I went to evening service in the church. The tiny congregation consisted of the half-dozen men of the monastery and a few Christian peasants. I was put in a conspicuous place, had a special censing all to myself, and felt much embarrassed. The evening was exhausting, as the whole party, zaptiehs and all, took it

in turns to keep me company and ask me questions, and displayed endless patience in making me understand and reply. I did not get supper till half-past nine, and then, dead tired, begged the company to leave me. They all left but the student, who had been specially instructed to look after me. He was a very civil, gentlemanly youth of Servian blood, with a sad face and a timid, hunted air. He waited till the footsteps died away down the corridor; then he said anxiously, "Lock the door to-night. The Nizams will come. They are very, very bad; all from Asia." I had, of course, intended to lock the door, Nizams or no Nizams, and thought he was nervous, so did not pay much attention to this. As he left, Radovan came in. He looked all round, tried the iron window bars, the lock, and the staple the bolt shot into. "All is strong," he said; "lock the door and turn the key twice. The Nizams will come in the night. They have been talking about you. They are devils. All from Asia. They have long knives." He drew his finger across his throat, dropped his head on one side, and gave a clicking gasp so horribly realistic that I suspect it was studied from nature. "They will do 'that,' just for what is in your saddlebag. They will say the Christians have done it, and the officer will believe them." Radovan was in grim earnest. He waited outside till he heard the lock shoot twice, said "Sleep safely," and left me. I had no weapon of any kind, and was excessively tired, so I decided that there was no object in sitting up to have one's throat cut, and that violent surgical operations are better performed under chloroform. I slept heavily till morning, and shall never know if

that door were tried. Personally, I think that the danger was exaggerated. People, after all, are mainly governed by expediency, and killing a British subject was really not worth the trouble. I tell the facts as they occurred, to show the estimation in which the army of the reformers is held. To put the position briefly : no man's life or property is considered safe from the Albanians, and no woman's honour from the Nizams, in "Old Servia." Savage as are the Albanians, I have been told repeatedly that they never assault women.

Next morning I woke up and shook myself, and the student brought a quarter of a pint of water, and kindly superintended the washing of my hands and face. The arrangements were all primitive : towel and table-napkin were one and the same, and the spoon and fork were cleaned on my pillow ; but then it is a great thing to have a spoon, fork, or pillow at all.

I went down into the yard and began drawing. Out came the Turkish officer, a young lieutenant. I was scared, for Turks are said to disapprove of all drawing, and I feared to lose all my notes. As luck would have it, he had never seen anybody sketch before, and was childishly delighted. He looked at everything I had done, and then wanted to see a drawing made. Yakoub, the enterprising, at once suggested sitting for his portrait, and did so. The lieutenant was now enthusiastic, made no objection to my little camera, which I had hitherto carefully concealed from all but Christian eyes, and would, I believe, have let me photograph him had I dared ask. He left to drill his men, but his curiosity soon

brought him back again. This time we had a formal interview in my room. The monastery people attended humbly, the officer came in style with several zaptiehs; there was much saluting and salaaming. Radovan stood in the background and listened. I alone knew that he was a Montenegrin. The lieutenant was quite a young fellow—small, slim, and dark, with clean-cut, good features. He was smart and dapper as to his uniform, and wore tight, shiny boots of a most unpractical nature. He spoke nothing but Turkish, of which I know no word. He had never before, I believe, talked with a foreign lady, seemed to find my unveiledness most embarrassing, and spoke with his eyes discreetly cast down. He preferred speaking sideways over my shoulder. In striving to understand him I once looked him squarely in the eyes, and he turned his head abruptly.

The conversation was sufficiently droll. Yakoub stood at attention and translated. Turkish is a flowery tongue. The lieutenant began glibly with many bows and smiles, using his hands to gesticulate freely. He had very good hands and neat joints. After some minutes he paused. "The officer says," said Yakoub briefly, "that it is a great pleasure to him that you have come." "I thank the officer very much," said I. Yakoub enlarged this into a speech three minutes long, punctuated with salaams and gesticulation, and the lieutenant again expressed himself as highly delighted. He himself was from Stamboul, and was in this part of the country for the first time. It was a great wonder to him to find it so savage. He hoped I did not think all Turkey was like this. In Constantinople it was very different.

There all was good; Christians and Turks lived together as friends, and there was no danger, "no more than with you in England." I accepted this statement, and thought of the Armenian massacre. "The officer," said Yakoub, "hears that you have been before among the Albanians. He sees them for the first time. He wishes to know what you think of them." "They are brave," I replied, "and intelligent, but they are wild, they know nothing, and they live like animals." I dared not add, "They have no government and no law." This, edited by Yakoub, met with great approval. "The officer says that is true. They have great intelligence; they must have schools in all the towns and villages. There will be schools, and all will be reformed." It occurred to me that the Turks, having held Albania for some four centuries, might have thought out some plan of the sort before, but I merely replied that schools were truly necessary. The officer was great on reform. The Sultan of Turkey, the King of England, and the Emperor of Germany were, he said, the only sovereigns in Europe who had intelligence, and, between them, all would soon be reformed. I was overcome with the company with which we were classed, and struck dumb, but Yakoub expressed the delight which I ought to have felt. There was much more of reform, of which the lieutenant seemed very sanguine. Already all was very well. He was young and enthusiastic, and I felt sorry for him, for I knew of the storm that was about to burst in Macedonia, and had already been warned to travel in no train on Turkish territory, more especially in none that contained troops. And all

the time, the people of the monastery sat round and said nothing, and all the while the lieutenant babbled on. Then to my surprise Yakoub said, "The officer wishes you to see everything. Take as many Nizams as you wish, and go to Gusinje if it is pleasing to you, and thence back into Montenegro." This was a handsome offer, and I wanted badly to go. But the officer did not propose to come himself, and I remembered the warnings of the night before. My passport was in the hands of the Pasha at Pech, and I felt I was responsible for Radovan. If Radovan were detected as a Montenegrin in the heart of Albania, it might cost him his life; if anything happened to me he had been promised prison. I glanced at him for a casting vote, and the haggard anxiety of his face left no room for doubt. I thanked the officer, and said I should return to Pech. Whereupon he gallantly said that he would escort me thither, and I returned in great style with five zaptiehs and an officer. Conversation was difficult, for he considered it polite to ride so that his horse's head was level with my knee, and Yakoub had to ride by him and shout it all on. He pointed out that I was being well taken care of, and begged that I would tell my people of the reformed state of the country. I must therefore emphasise the fact that it was possible to ride for three hours without being shot at, for this he admired greatly. He was exceedingly kind, and said he would see that I had zaptiehs to take me back to Berani. When we came to the parting of the ways—for he was going to the camp and I to the monastery—he suddenly rode up alongside, and with a valiant attempt at being European,

looked me full in the face, shook hands rather shyly, said, "Bon voyage, mamzelle," and clattered off. We rode through the Christian side of the town, and the people came to their doors and said, "Welcome, lady," as I passed. Yakoub followed me in high good-humour, to say that the officer had promised him the job of escorting me to Berani. This had been manœuvred by Radovan. "Yakoub," he said, "is a Turk, but he is a good Turk. He has no money. Give him a bakshish, then he will come to Berani with us."

The gay Bosnian, with his crude views and the schoolboy glee with which he accepted his "tip," was such an amusement to me that I was glad of his further society. His conversation was often quaint to excess. At the monastery he was severely Turkish. They offered him a glass of wine, which he refused with contempt. "I am a Turk! I drink no wine," and the conscious virtue upon his countenance was a sight to see. He, however, expended my gift on copious libations of rakija, which he tipped down like so much water, and he came furnished with a large bottleful in his saddlebag for the return trip. Rakija, it seems, is not mentioned in the Koran. Not that what is or is not mentioned in it seemed to trouble him. I spent almost the whole of three days with him, and I never saw him make the least attempt at a prayer. The foreign Nizams, on the other hand, prayed about the country freely. But he was very certain that he was a good Mohammedan. He told me one day, with a wicked grin, that he was on the side of the Boers. "Why?" I asked. "Because they are Turks," said Yakoub promptly. The student and the school-

master were present, and we all roared with laughter. Yakoub was disconcerted. "What are they, then? Catholic or Pravoslavni?" "Prodesdan," said I. This was a blow to him, for it seems that "Prodesdan" is quite the lowest form of Christian. "But war is always between Turks and Christians," he objected; "they must be Turks. How many mosques are there in the Transvaal?" "None." He thereupon lost all further interest in the Boers. He came from near Prijepolje, and had great contempt for Bosnians who live under Austrian rule. As for the Austrians —he made a face and spat. But in spite of his Turkish sympathies he had acquired none of the Turk's imperturbability, and leapt from one emotion to another. Over his wife he was quite sentimental; over the fact that he was childless he was greatly depressed. "I am twenty-eight," he said gloomily, "and in three months I shall be an officer, but I have no son." He counted on his fingers, and did a little arithmetic. "I might have three by now," he added simply, "but there is not one, not one." "Dost thou very much wish a son?" I asked. Yakoub was very much in earnest. "By God," he cried, "it would be a great delight to me. I wish a son that shall be a veliki junak!" and he entered into some very quaint particulars. No longer the rollicking gendarme, he sat on the floor, an unhappy man who required comforting. "Thou are yet young," I said; "I hope thou wilt have a son that is a veliki junak." "Mashallah I will and I hope that thou wilt too!" said Yakoub politely. After which I considered the subject sufficiently thrashed out.

The return ride to Berani was easier than the

previous journey. Unhampered by a caravan, and provided through the lieutenant's kindness with two mounted gendarmes, we made good progress. The Pasha stuck to my passport till the last minute, as Yakoub pointed out with a grin when he returned it to me as we were starting. He also volunteered that it was a good thing that I had not gone with the officer's Nizams, but gave no answer when I asked "Why?" The Pasha, it may be of interest to note, has, according to the papers, been recently dismissed from his post. Yakoub's relatives are, for all I know to the contrary, still in power.

The defile by daylight was extraordinarily beautiful. About half-way through it Yakoub announced that he thought it was safe now, and that if I were not afraid the second zaptieh might go back. I told him I was quite willing, as I had had but one man before, and he was on foot. This seemed to surprise him much. They pulled up at the only hut in the pass, and had a long consultation with its Albanian owners, the result of which was that the second man rode with us to the top. I was glad that when riding this road in the dark I had not realised it was in quite such a touch-and-go condition. "No danger now," said Yakoub cheerfully as we rode out into the open, and the second man returned with a party of four zaptiehs and an officer that we here fell in with. "Three months ago I would not have dared ride that way with only one other man; by God, no! Not if the officer had told me. All the woods filled with wild Arnaouts, perhaps a man behind every rock. Piff-paff and you are dead, shot in your living heart! As there is a God I would not have dared

it. If one had to go, it was with thirty men or more. Now the caravans can pass again." But he continued to ride with his rifle ready on his knees until we were almost at Berani.

A sudden and most violent thunderstorm on the hilltop drove us in a hurry to the stinking "Han," and the rain came down in such sheets that I was glad to be under cover, even in such a hole. It was full of Albanians. We waited full three-quarters of an hour and drank coffee. I was anxious to start as soon as the rain slackened, but Yakoub did not mean to get a wetting. He was very happy discoursing in Albanian to a large and admiring circle, to whom he was a great man. He told them, so he explained to me, that in my country the men always waited on the women, which they all agreed was a most extraordinary state of things. They all sat round and gazed at me as though I were possessed of peculiar power, and I returned their unblinking stare. "He and I both serve her," said Yakoub, pointing at Radovan, and Radovan murmured, "They think you are like an officer."

The rain lifted. Radovan went out with my saddlebag. Yakoub rolled up his overcoat, and went down to strap it on his saddle. His parting words of affection, and the kisses which he lavished on the most casual acquaintances, always took much time; so to hurry matters I picked up the rest of our belongings, followed out on to the balcony, and handed down my waterproof and cape. Yakoub looked up from his saddle-girths. "Give me my Martini and my cartridges," he said. I dangled the belt down to him, tucked the rifle under my arm with my umbrella, and

descended. He took his Martini with a beaming smile and a twinkle, most humorous, in his eyes. "Now *thou* hast served *me*," he said; "it is right." He got off his little trick with great neatness, and was vastly pleased with himself. I have no doubt he left the rifle on purpose. He considered it a very fine weapon. It was of American make—Peabody-Martini. All the Turkish gendarmerie are thus armed. It carries only one cartridge, and according to Radovan is very inferior to the repeating rifles of the Montenegrins. The ride over the grassy uplands was splendid; the ground was ablaze with flowers, and the peaks rose violently blue from a black belt of pinewood. Yakoub hopped off his horse and played like a child. The hill sloped away steeply below us in a great incline of grass, down, down for full a thousand feet. His joy was to balance flat rocks on edge, and to send them spinning into the depths. He shouted with laughter as they leapt and span. Even Radovan, the serious, found it amusing, and we wasted some minutes over this pleasing pastime, which people who are inclined to giddiness would not have enjoyed.

It was quite dark when we got into Berani. The landlady rushed out when she heard our horse hoofs, for she was expecting her husband, who had also gone to Pech. Their only daughter, who had married and gone there a year ago, had just had her first child. It was a boy. The happy grandfather, on hearing the news (brought through by a caravan), leapt on his horse and rode over in hot haste. The joy of grandmamma, aged thirty-one, was boundless. It is a grand thing for a woman to have a son, she said.

Then all the men in the place go to her room and sing and dance and drink rakija, for joy that another man is born! Having seen "grandpapa," I was able to report that all was well; and she took us in and fed us on eggs and milk, for nothing else could be got at that time of night. I bakshished Yakoub for the last time, and told him it was "for coffee," which delighted him immensely, and he filled himself up with rakija until Radovan, who was exceedingly temperate, was scandalised. But no amount of liquor seemed to affect the Moslem's hard head.

We left for Andrijevitza early next morning, Radovan once more a happy man in a Montenegrin cap. As we passed the guard-house Yakoub flew out for a final farewell, and discovered, for the first time, that Radovan was a Montenegrin. This he considered a splendid joke; he slapped his thigh and shouted with laughter, and we parted very good friends. Frontier life contains many mysteries which I am unable to unravel. Radovan was much relieved when we had crossed the Montenegrin border, and I too felt that I had come home again. The vague, indescribable, ever-present dread of "something"; the sense of general insecurity that leads people to shut the window before speaking, to glance mechanically round to see who is within earshot; the general sense of oppression hanging like a cloud over all things, rolled away. We were in a land which is wild and rough, if you will, but safe and free.

I have no space to tell of all the fun I had on my return. Andrijevitza was pleased with me, and was lavishly hospitable. Time was flying, and I was due home. The herdsmen had driven their flocks to the

summer pasturage, and I arranged that Radovan should pilot me over the mountains on the first fine day. We had a final grand night with the gusle, and then, having kissed the ladies and drunk stirrup-cups with the men, I tore myself away with extreme reluctance, and started up Kom of the Vassoievich shortly after the "white" dawn, with the knowledge that I might wander many leagues over the face of the earth before I met a set of kinder friends than the fighting frontiersmen of Montenegro. Proud, self-respecting, fiercely unyielding by long inheritance of temper, they are outwardly very gentle and courteous, so courteous that it is only on very rare occasions that a certain grim tightening of a strong, square jaw, a gleam of very white teeth, and a sudden leap of lightning to the eye reveal in a flash their possibilities as foes. With an extraordinary lot of strength in their physique, they have very little knowledge how to apply it and hardly any enterprise. This is due mainly to entire ignorance of how to set about things. In the one branch of industry they understand, "junashtvo," they are certainly not deficient in energy. They are very pious, and never say they are going to do anything without adding, "God willing." If you forget to say this, someone generally puts it in for you very seriously. They are very honest, and their standard of morality is high. And they are extraordinarily visionary, and dream dreams of the great Servian empire that is to be, where everyone will be free and happy. Exceedingly poor, they are also exceedingly hospitable, and will share with a friend as long as they have anything to share. It is true that they have the defects of their qualities, but

their qualities are such that there are many more civilised places that would be the better for a leavening of them.

Radovan and I started up the slopes of Kom of the Vassoievich, and I was promised a fine day. I owed a good deal to this strong, ragged, level-headed man who had piloted me safely through a somewhat risky enterprise, and was glad of his further company. He had displayed the most extraordinary tact throughout the tour, and, while playing the part of a humble horseboy who asked for my orders, had managed and arranged everything. Silent and watchful, he was always in the background; he slipped in his pieces of information quietly, told me what to pay, whom to pay, had very definite ideas as to whom I was to speak to or could be left alone with; ascertained, when buying forage for the horse in the town, the state of the country, and passed me the news in three words when he handed me the change. But he never spoke a word unless it was required. On his native hills he was conversational. He had been again to Berani, and told me with a grin that the "ljuta zmija," the Kaimmakam, had asked, "Where is that Englishwoman?" and had been very angry when told, "She has eaten, has fed her horse, and is gone." "It was better so," said Radovan oracularly, and he added, with a laugh, "and Yakoub knew." I was unaware that I had been spirited back across the frontier, and it gave me much food for reflection.

The ascent was easy over steep grass slopes, Radovan pointing out all the landmarks. He told of the Voyvode's prowess. He loved the Voyvode, and showed me down below at the head of the valley the

old home of the Voyvode's family. He told me of his own little cottage, his field of corn and his plum trees, and of his wife and three children, one, thank God, a boy.

We had just reached the shoulder of the mountain, and were about 5300 feet up, when a thick fog swept down upon us and driving rain. "We must go to a friend's hut," said Radovan; "it is poor but dry." We forged on through the most awful weather; dense mist-wreaths swathed everything, and all the world was blotted out. We came to a collection of tiny hovels, Radovan's friend welcomed us, and we crawled in out of the wet. His hut was a shed made of a few planks; I could only stand upright in the middle. The mud floor was dug out about six inches and a heap of logs blazed in a hole at one end. Near the fire a very young calf was tethered; there was also a half-blind woman, three girls, and two hens. We were warmly greeted; my host spread a straw mat for me to sit on, brought in my saddlebags, and threw wood on the fire. "This is how we live in the 'katun,'" said he. "We are poor, and it is the best we can give you. You are very welcome." He made me a couch with his greatcoat and my saddlebags, and started cooking the dinner, for it was midday. He slung a big pot, poured olive oil in it, and stirred in coarse maize flour as it boiled. "My poor wife cannot see well," he said, "and I do all this. We went all the way to Cetinje to the doctor, but he did nothing to the eye that is blind, nothing at all; he only did things to the eye that she can still see a little with." He finished making the porridge, sprinkled some sugar on it, and poured it into a bowl.

"Here we never see bread or meat; we eat milk and maize. It is good food. Up on the mountains it is very healthy, thanks be to God and St. Peter, and the water is good." He insisted on my eating his food and not my own, saying, "You will need that to-morrow." And as it was warm, and I was cold and hungry, I found it not unpalatable, and finished up with a bowl of milk. The rest of the party found it very good, as it was extra sweet on my account.

The youngest girl, a child of fourteen, I had not noticed much before, as she had sat all the time huddled in a heap on the other side of the fire, and the hut was full of smoke. Now she began rocking to and fro, crying, "Oh, my foot, my foot!" Her father explained that a few days before she had upset the caldron of boiling milk over her foot, and that it pained her so that she could not sleep. An old woman from the next hut came in to look at it. The poor girl drew up her skirt and showed the foot swathed in the filthiest handkerchief. I was horrified, jumped up, and hurried round to the wind side of the fire where she lay and there was no smoke and one could see. The people here have enormous faith in the healing power of any stranger, and they were most delighted when I offered to look at the injury. She peeled off the dirty rags. The skin was off the whole instep; it was dressed with mud and grass, and the edges were angry and forming matter. It evidently pained her horribly. She was a plucky little thing, and let me strip off the pudding of mud and matter, clear the place of grass, and dress it with clean handkerchiefs and lanoline. Her skin was very thick and as hard as leather. The fresh dressing

relieved her greatly, and as the rain had just lifted I went out to have a look round.

For a few minutes the view was incomparably grand. The huge jagged summit of Kom rose up abruptly from the grass not a quarter of a mile away, and stood all bare and lonely, quite white on an angry purple sky, for the fog had frozen upon it. Down below great snakes of mist clung and crawled, and the distant peaks rose one behind the other, violently and vividly blue. It was extraordinarily majestic and as silent as death. Down swept the storm again with a fusillade of chill hail. Even the hut a few yards away was invisible. We struggled back to it, my host remarking, "You will have to stay the night 'kod nas.' If you try to go farther you will be lost on the mountains."

The little girl with the bad foot was much happier and her father greatly pleased. "Here," he said, "we either get well or we die. There is no help for us. But, thanks be to God and St. Peter, we are very healthy. We have had much trouble. My only son is dead; my poor wife nearly blind. My three brothers are all dead and have left no sons!" He sat down by the injured child and cuddled her. "She is very brave," he said; "I call her my little son." The child smiled with pleasure. They begged me to do something to the woman's eye, but that, of course, was impossible. The rain fell in torrents! We huddled round the fire. At Radovan's request I gave them my sketch-book to look at, and was surprised at the rapidity with which they recognised everything, telling the names of all the people who lived in the houses, and laughing heartily over the Gusinje man

and Yakoub. The wind whistled between the planks, the dense smoke eddied round the little hut; they piled on sticks and began preparations for supper. Then a terrible thing happened. The woman threw down a little maize and called the hens. They came, a white and a yellow one. There was a whispered talk, and I heard "the pretty one." The yellow hen was caught and given to the lame child to hold. "Now we shall have no more eggs!" she said sadly. I was horrified, for I grasped at once that the hen was to be sacrificed to me. I begged for its life. "Thou must eat meat," said my host. I pleaded vainly that I had eggs and cheese in my bag. "Thou hast given," he said, pointing to the child's foot, "and we must give. This night thou shalt eat meat." The child caressed the hen. I cannot tell how unhappy I felt. Two cows, a little flock of sheep, and these two hens were all they had in the world. Last year they had had to eat ferns, and they were braver and better and in all ways more deserving than I. "He that hath, to him shall be given," is a bitter thing. My prayers shook the man's resolution for a moment, but so anxious was he to do what he believed to be his duty, that without more ado, and before he should alter his mind, he suddenly whipped out a big knife and sliced off the hen's head with one swift stroke. The neck twitched convulsively. We sat round and watched the blood drip, dripping in silence. Everyone felt it was a rather serious event. He tore the bird to pieces with his fingers with great dexterity, and put it to boil in a tin basin. As it had no lid, he went out and picked dock leaves to cover the pot with and replaced them as fast as they were burnt. Mean-

while he gave me the liver, warmed through in the wood ashes, as a snack. In due time I was seated before the fowl's remains spread on a piece of board, and the family sat round to see me enjoy it. Alas! the muscular bird, swiftly boiled, was like the hardest indiarubber, and I knew not what to do. Eat of it I must somehow. With the little blade of my penknife I minced it fine, and said that the English did so. Then I swallowed pellets of it, and everyone was much pleased. I handed round bread, which was a rare luxury, and they polished off the rest of the fowl in a jiffey, drank up the broth, and were quite lively after their meal.

I dressed the bad foot again, and was pleased to find that the rest of the dirt came off with the dressing and the place looked healthy. The child lay down and went to sleep at once. Outside all was blackness and wet, and I began to feel that the rest of my life was going to be spent storm-bound on Kom of the Vassoievich. They pitched wood on the fire. The man said it would be a cold night. We lay down with our feet towards the blaze. I wrapped my head in my waterproof to keep off the bitter blast that whistled through the wide crannies. Radovan went to the next hut. There was not room for us all on the floor. My host took off his coat and spread it over me, wrapped himself in his greatcoat, and lay down by my side. "So thou shalt sleep warm," he said. His wife and daughters cuddled up on the other side of him, and in five minutes they were all asleep. I lay and listened to the drip of the rain outside and the steady grind of the calf chewing cud in the corner. The surviving hen roosted on a

peg and muttered softly to herself, and I slept, and slept soundly. We woke in the chill grey dawn, and they kindled the fire. The lame child had slept the whole night through. I dressed the wound a third time, gave them the lanoline and most of my handkerchiefs, and told them to keep the place clean and it would soon be well. Their gratitude was painful, and they thanked God and St. Peter who had sent me. The death of the hen lay heavy on my soul, and I succeeded in making the woman accept a little money. She refused at first, but when she found I really meant it, the tears came to her eyes and they all kissed my hands and dress. I rode away feeling much overcome. The sun had not struggled out, and we tracked through dripping beech woods dim with mist, out on to lone slopes and into solemn valleys, where we were the only living things, till in the evening I saw once more the little shingled houses of Kolashin, and drew rein at the inn door.

There is little more for me to tell. On my return journey I was deeply touched by the reception we met everywhere, and filled with amazement. Now at last, people said, England would know what life was in Stara Srbija. Many of them considered I had risked my life for the cause, and could not thank me enough. They even sent their greetings to the mother who had let me come to help them. I felt very humble, and had to accept hospitality that was undeserved, for I knew that I had done very little and the results would be still less.

After Stara Srbija the route seemed absurdly easy. I avoided Brskut and went by way of Morachki

Monastir. It is the oldest monastery in Montenegro, and was founded by Vuk, governor of the Zeta, brother of Stefan Prvovenchani and St. Sava, which makes it six hundred years old. It stands in a lonesome valley, sheltered and fertile but quite cut off from all the rest of the world, and has successfully resisted the Turks, who have more than once attacked it furiously. Like all the other monasteries that have had to struggle for existence, it is surrounded by a high wall. It was the eve of St. Peter's day, and the courtyard was filled with mountain men, who had come to take the communion on the morrow. The Archimandrite, a man of splendid stature and military bearing, and courteous as they all are, came out and welcomed us right royally. He was vividly interested in our journey, gave Radovan the praise he so well deserved, and filled him with joy. For the Archimandrite is a "veliki junak," and praise from his lips was very sweet. I rejoiced that Radovan was getting his due.

This monastery church is of very great interest to the archæologist, as it has never fallen into Turkish hands and is in perfect preservation. The inner doors of black wood inlaid with ivory are very beautiful and the frescoes which cover the walls are in excellent condition. The church is whitewashed without and roofed with wooden shingles. The outer wall is boldly frescoed on either side the main door, St. George slays the dragon decoratively from a white steed, and a large picture of the Last Judgment shows souls struggling to ascend the ladder to heaven, aided by angels above and torn at by devils below. The doorway and whole group of paintings are pro-



PODGORITZA.

tected by a big wooden porch. Service on St. Peter's day was very solemn, and the crowd of communicants made it last for several hours. I came out from it, more deeply than ever impressed with the fact that it is largely her loyalty to her church that has, so far, saved Montenegro.

I dined at midday with the Archimandrite, who was most hospitable and jovial, and gave me a massive, solid meal, to tackle which required a good deal more heroism than a trip to Stara Srbija.

He saw me off next morning with a stirrup-cup of rakija so potent that neither Radovan nor I could manage the Trinity in it, and we made our way back to Podgoritza. Podgoritza was a surprise to me. I came to it out of the wilderness, and was astonished at its size, luxury, and magnificence. Then I understood the point of view of the man who had asked me a quantity of questions about London, its population, whether it were really true that there were a hundred trains a day, bazaar every day, electric light, etc., and ended by saying, "And do the potatoes grow well there?" "London is a large town," I said, "all houses, houses." "I know that," he replied; "I asked, do the potatoes grow well in London?" "Do potatoes grow in London? What extraordinary ignorance! One can scarcely believe it possible," said an Englishman in a London suburb when he heard this tale. He is "culchawed," and devotes time and labour to improving the minds of "our parish." "And what were the theatres like in these out-of-the-way places?" he asked. We were talking of Stara Srbija.

Now I sat under the white mulberry trees

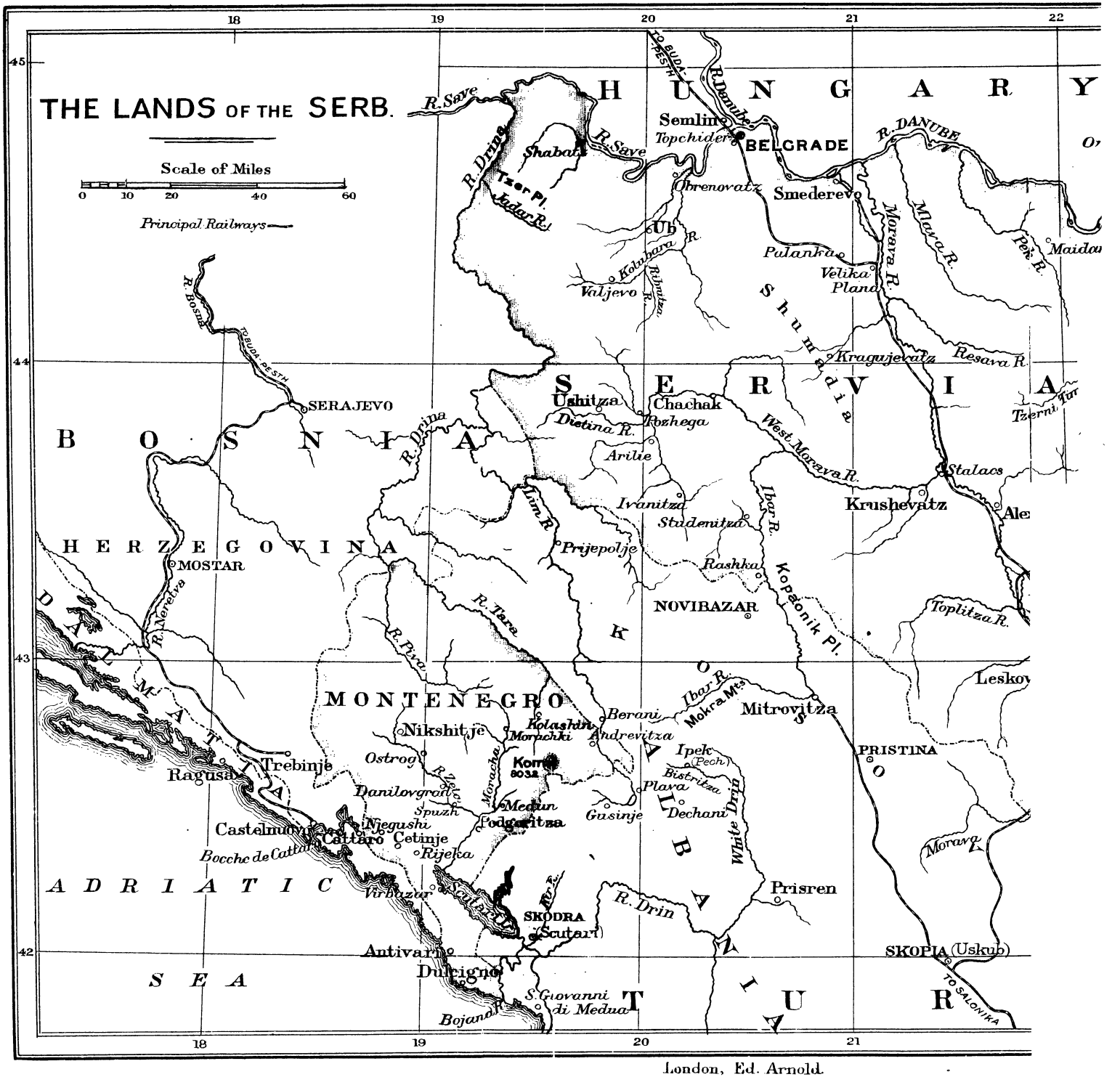
at the door of the inn and admired Podgoritza. For a few weeks I had looked at civilisation across a gap of centuries from the "back of beyond," and things look very different from that point of view, more different than anyone who has lived at one end of Europe only can ever realise. And, still in the grip of the wilderness, I parted from Radovan with regret and many promises to return next year for a tour so wild and extensive that it is to resemble a young campaign.

It was the end of July; Podgoritza was sizzling and sweltering in the summer sun. It received me warmly in every sense of the word. But the change from the chilly heights of Kom to the baking plain was too trying to induce a long stay. Besides, as everyone said, "you are coming back next year." I made a pilgrimage one morning to the grave of Marko Drekalovich, the "dobar junak" to whose wild valour, military skill, and indomitable spirit this corner of Montenegro largely owes its freedom, and who now sleeps on the rugged heights of Medun that he tore from the Turks, and I returned to Cetinje. A carriage and a road were a strange enough experience, and as for Montenegro's joy, the only motor car, I admired it almost as much as do the Montenegrins. Once at Cetinje the spell was broken, and from Cetinje to London one whirls in a few days in the lap of luxury, second class.

I left the Balkan peninsula not with "good-bye" but with "do vidjenja" (au revoir). The story of its peoples is tragic, their future looks black, and they have few friends. It is the fashion just now to make a great deal of capital out of the fact that these

Christian peoples do not love one another as, of course, all Christians should, and to say that each one is so jealous of the other that it is impossible to help them. This is rather idle talk, and not unlike that of the pot that called the kettle black. Race instinct, one of the strongest of the human passions, has as yet shown no tendency to die out anywhere. It seems, therefore, a little unreasonable to expect the Balkan peoples to be the ones to set an example to the rest of the world by dropping all international jealousies and national aspirations. After all, they do but love one another as France does Germany. International jealousy is certainly at the root of the present grievous condition of affairs in the Balkans, but it is the jealousy not only of the Balkan peoples but that of other nations which are supposed to be older and wiser and whose quarrels are of even longer standing.

I have no patent medicine to offer for the present trouble. It has got beyond pillules and homœopathic doses, and nothing but the extirpation of the centre of disease can have any lasting effect. As long as the Turk is permitted to "govern" Christian peoples, so long will there be trouble in the Balkans. That the Balkan Slavs are not as black as they have often been painted I have tried to show by telling how they have treated me. If they do not possess all the virtues of civilisation they are free from many of its vices. I have found them kindly, generous, and honest, and I wish them very well.



London, Ed. Arnold.

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