

THROUGH SAVAGE EUROPE



Harry De Windt

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Through Savage Europe.

*Yr. Sincerely,
Harry de Windt.*

THROUGH SAVAGE EUROPE

BEING THE NARRATIVE OF A JOURNEY
(UNDERTAKEN AS SPECIAL CORRE-
SPONDENT OF THE "WESTMINSTER
GAZETTE"), THROUGHOUT THE BAL-
KAN STATES AND EUROPEAN RUSSIA

BY

HARRY DE WINDT, F.R.G.S.

AUTHOR OF "THE NEW SIBERIA," "A RIDE TO INDIA,"
"FROM PARIS TO NEW YORK BY LAND," ETC.

WITH ONE HUNDRED ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON
T. FISHER UNWIN
ADELPHI TERRACE
MCMVII

To
HYLDA

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FOREWORD

Most English travellers of recent years in the Balkans have given the names of towns and districts as they are written in the dialect of each country, thereby rendering them wholly unpronounceable to the uninitiated. "Obrenovič" (pronounced "Obrenovitch"); "JaJce," "Yaïtché"; and "Konjica," "Kognitza," are examples.

I therefore think it better to adhere throughout this work to phonetic spelling so far as native words are concerned, chiefly in case the reader should ever be tempted to visit the Balkan States, where mispronunciation may occasionally cause the traveller considerable inconvenience.

HARRY DE WINDT.

GARRICK CLUB, W.,
December, 1906.

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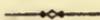
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Through Savage Europe



CHAPTER I

DOWN THE ADRIATIC

“WHY ‘savage’ Europe?” asked a friend who recently witnessed my departure from Charing Cross for the Near East.

“Because,” I replied, “the term accurately describes the wild and lawless countries between the Adriatic and Black Seas.”

For some mystic reason, however, most Englishmen are less familiar with the geography of the Balkan States than with that of Darkest Africa. This was my case, and I had therefore yet to learn that these same Balkans can boast of cities which are miniature replicas of London and Paris. But these are civilised centres. The remoter districts are, as of yore, hotbeds of outlawry and brigandage, where you must travel with a revolver in each pocket and your life in your hand, and of this fact,

as the reader will see, we had tangible and unpleasant proof before the end of the journey. Moreover, do not the now palatial capitals of Servia and Bulgaria occasionally startle the outer world with political crimes of mediæval barbarity? Witness the assassination of the late King and Queen of Servia and of Monsieur Stambuloff, the Bulgarian Premier. Wherefore the term "savage" is perhaps not wholly inapplicable to that portion of Europe which we are about to traverse, to say nothing of our final destination—the eastern shores of the Black Sea.

I travelled upon this occasion as special correspondent to the *Westminster Gazette*. My sole companion was Mr. Mackenzie, of the Urban Bioscope Company, a canny Scotsman from Aberdeen, possessed of a keen sense of humour and of two qualities indispensable to a "bioscope" artist—assurance and activity. Nothing daunted my friend when he had once resolved to secure a "living" picture, and I trembled more than once for his safety in the vicinity of royal residences or military ground. For the bioscope was a novelty in the Balkans and might well have been mistaken for an infernal machine!

Our itinerary was to comprise Montenegro, Herzegovina, Bosnia, Servia, Bulgaria, Rumania, Southern Russia, and the Caucasus in the order named. Trieste was the actual point of departure, and from here we sailed one bright morning in March in a comfortable Austrian steamer for Căttaro (with the accent on the first syllable),

the gateway of the tiny principality which has proved such a thorn in the side of the Turk. This two days' sea-journey is a delightful one at any season of the year, for the course is chiefly laid through picturesque fjords rarely ruffled by a strong breeze, and it was pleasant to bask on deck in the warm sunshine and forget the sleet and east winds lately experienced in cold, foggy England. The little *Pannonia* was crowded; no one spoke English and very few a little French, but the innate courtesy and pleasant manners of our Austrian fellow-passengers atoned for any lack of conversation. As a rule I cordially detest sea travel, chiefly for its monotony, but on this little voyage there was plenty of incident, for every few hours would bring us to one of the white palm-girt towns, which, as we progressed southward, became more novel and picturesque. Zara, on the first day, seemed a picture of loveliness, Spalato lovelier still, but both were eclipsed the next morning by Ragusa, that "Pearl of the Adriatic," which we shall visit in detail later on. A few hours beyond this we enter the Bocche di Càttaro, three almost landlocked salt-water lakes, each one more beautiful than its predecessor. These must be traversed in order to reach our destination, and on entering the second we lose sight of the sea, and the *Pannonia* skims swiftly across smooth, transparent waters into the third lake, from the entrance of which we sight the little town of Càttaro, nestling under a perpendicular precipice of rock. As usual, a crowd on the

quay awaits the arrival of the steamer. It is chiefly composed of men and women in the national dress of Dalmatia, with a sprinkling of Austrian uniforms and German broadcloth. The Bocche di Cattaro have been likened to the Swiss and Italian lakes, but in my opinion the scenery of the former is as superior to these in grandeur as Niagara to the falls of Schaffhausen. Geneva and Como are pretty enough in their way, but become almost commonplace when compared with this frowning fortress and Eastern-looking town, where bright barbaric costumes, dazzling sunshine and a turquoise sky are more suggestive of some fantastic ballet scene at the Alhambra than of a place within four days' journey of Charing Cross.

I think it was Lord Byron who once called Malta a "little military hothouse," and the term applies to Cattaro, where about two-thirds of the population wear the Austrian uniform. The place is as strong as Gibraltar—there is no doubt of that; and yet the work of fortification is still being carried on with feverish activity, more especially since the Russian reverses in the Far East. Cattaro may, indeed, be called impregnable, for in addition to its own formidable citadel no less than twenty-seven forts with heavy and modern guns now command the inlets which divide it from the sea. If appearances go for anything, Austria has certainly "come to stay" in these parts. The place itself consists of an intricate network of tiny streets and squares beautifully paved with huge blocks of granite, but as puzzling



THE MARINA, CATTARO.

Photo by Author

To face page 18.

to a stranger as the maze at Hampton Court. It almost resembles a miniature town, the available space between the quay and wall-like cliffs being so restricted. Near the harbour are some fine Government buildings and public gardens with the usual café and bandstand, where Mars and Venus meet on summer evenings to discuss refreshments and the latest scandal. This so-called garden—a few dusty shrubs and sickly flowers—is the only bit of verdure in the place, which for all its lovely surroundings is as arid as Aden, and the eyes rest eternally upon glary white roads and walls until they ache again. Nevertheless Cattaro is pleasant enough in bright weather, but on dull days, when the mountains are wreathed in mist and blue waters fade into a dull grey, it becomes unutterably dreary and depressing—at least so I was told; for during our brief stay the sun beat down so fiercely and incessantly that gloomy skies would have been a relief. Gnats swarmed in their legions, and I have known the flies less troublesome at Suez in July as we threaded our way (through alleys so narrow that a man could almost shake hands with his opposite neighbour) to our inn. The Hôtel de Graz is at present the only habitable one here, and is a trifle better, as regards food, than a Siberian post-house, and rather worse, as regards accommodation, than a common lodging-house in Whitechapel. We fared far better in peasants' huts over the border in Montenegro than in this Austrian so-called "hotel." Only one room was vacant, and poor

Mackenzie, who had never been far afield from Bonny Scotland, surveyed the rickety bedstead and dirty sheets, creased by many previous occupants, with infinite disgust. Touched by his distress, I called for whisky to solace the man of Aberdeen, but, alas! discovered that he was a "teetotaler"!

Cáttaro is the gateway of Montenegro, and the mass of rock which towers over it is the famous "Tsernagora," which signifies in Slavonic "Black Mountain." Montenegro means, of course, the same thing, but is an Italian corruption of the original word. Both names, however, are equally unsuitable, for mountains and rocks throughout the principality are unusually light in colour. In former days the Tsernagora was a formidable barrier—a frontier in the most practical sense of the word—for only experienced climbers could then enter the country by means of the "ladder," a tiny goat-track which can yet be discerned from Cáttaro zigzagging up the mountain until it is lost in cloudland. The natives still scale this with ease, although towards the summit a slip would mean certain death. Pierre Loti, the famous French author, is one of the few strangers who have crossed this breakneck pass of recent years, but the talented writer of "Frère Yves" is a sailor. At any rate there is no necessity to traverse it now, for a driveable road was made in 1881 a few miles to the westward of the old pathway, and the ill-fated Crown Prince Rudolf of Austria was the first to make the journey in a

carriage and pair. But even the modern ascent looks so steep from below that we mistook it at first for the now disused and perilous "ladder."

Cáttaro has been so often wrecked by earthquake and battered by shells in the past, that it retains few buildings of antiquity or interest. Only some remarkable ramparts, erected centuries ago by the Venetians, have survived countless sieges and convulsions of nature, and these are now modernised by the addition of unsightly barracks and modern artillery. There was no object in remaining here over the morrow, and I therefore set about finding a vehicle for the journey to Cettigne (the capital of Montenegro), while Mackenzie sallied forth to find material for the bioscope, which latter attracted almost as much notice here as a menagerie in an English village. The reader has probably seen thousands of biograph views, but is, perhaps, unacquainted with the instrument itself, which is a square, brass-bound, mahogany case, about the size of an ordinary camera, supported by a spidery tripod about seven feet high. I begged my friend to be careful, for the captain of the *Pannonia* had warned us that spy-mania was raging in Cáttaro with unusual virulence, and that only a short time before our arrival an Austrian Archduke, travelling *incognito*, had been arrested by mistake, and had passed a day in the local gaol for merely carrying a "Kodak" in the vicinity of military works!

Having secured a conveyance for the morrow, I strolled about the place to while away the time

until the advent of a meal, facetiously described as "dinner" by our landlord. All roads in C  ttaro lead to the quay—or "Marina," as this fashionable resort is called—and here, towards evening, I found a dense crowd assembled to witness the funeral of a distinguished official which was to pass here on its way to a cemetery on the outskirts of the town. It was a strange and impressive scene—the verdant shores of the lake fading into a mist of distant hills, the blue harbour sparkling in the sunshine, a military band in the distance; all, on one side, was life and gaiety, on the other that gloomy *cort  ge* emerging from an archway in the city walls to wend its course, like a dark river, through a restless array of bright costumes and showy uniforms. Low murmurs of admiration greeted the hearse—one mass of costly wreaths and flowers—which was preceded by a score of dark-robed priests swinging censers and chanting solemn requiems of the Greek Church. The procession was perhaps half a mile in length, and at intervals some sacred emblem—a silver crucifix or silken banner—towered above a forest of flickering tapers. Presently my attention was attracted by a strange object, an oblong wooden receptacle, evidently weighty, for it was borne with difficulty and occasionally at a perilous angle, over the heads of the mourners. This relic occupied the centre of the line, where it seemed to excite unusual interest and reverence. What could it be, or contain?—vestments, perhaps, once worn by the patron saint of the city. Curiosity impelled me to press forward

for a closer inspection, while the rows of sable-clad figures filed past with slow and measured tread, and joining in the mournful chant of the clergy. At last the mysterious casket came abreast, but, great heavens! Is this a dream, or rather a nightmare, from which I shall presently awake in our mouldy bedroom at the Hotel de Graz? No wonder the natives had surveyed this unusual object with blank amazement (which I had mistaken for awe and veneration), if those Gaelic features and "heather mixture" suit be not an empty vision. But any doubt is soon dispelled by a furtive wink of recognition which momentarily hovers over the melancholy expression assumed for the occasion. This is no dream, and I am wide awake—sufficiently awake, at any rate, to identify, only too clearly—Mackenzie and his bioscope!

* * * *

My friend returned at dusk to the hotel, cool and imperturbable as usual. "I got the graveyard scene all right," he said, as we smoked a cigar under the stars; "but there was scarcely enough life and animation in the picture!" And at a funeral, too! But some people are never satisfied.

CHAPTER II

“ THE LAND OF THE BLACK MOUNTAIN.”

MONTENEGRO was practically unknown, so far as England is concerned, until the Russo-Turkish War of about thirty years ago. I shall not weary the reader with a dry and prosy history of a country which was the birthplace of Diocletian, and dates back to the days of the early Romans. Suffice it to say that this little nation has always fought its own battles, and generally with success, partly owing to the traditional bravery of its defenders and partly to the wild, inaccessible nature of their stronghold. For in this warlike land the crime of cowardice is regarded as infinitely worse than that of murder, and the puniest lad would sooner die than betray the slightest sign of fear, under the most trying circumstances. When, at the commencement of the last century, neighbouring states of far greater extent and power were quailing before the legions of France, these hardy highlanders snapped their fingers in the face of the great Napoleon, and that astute monarch preferred to make a friend rather than an enemy of this pugnacious little State. The Emperor was

probably aware of its strength, and notwithstanding his famous, but empty, threat of converting the Black Mountain into a scarlet one (with the blood of its people!), Bonaparte made every effort, after the battle of Ragusa, to secure the Montenegrins as allies. For they had given the Imperial troops such a taste of their fighting powers that the latter were not anxious to renew the experiment. But all this is ancient lore, and therefore out of place in a work dealing solely with the modern and (at present) peaceful aspect of life in the Balkans.

It is only, as I have said, within the past few years that the name of Montenegro has conveyed something of its personality to the outer world; indeed, not so very long ago, a well-known English author was asked (in a London drawing-room), “whether Cettigne was not the capital of Bulgaria, and whether the Montenegrins were not blacks!” Nevertheless, the assistance rendered to the Tsar by this tiny ally during the Russo-Turkish War is now a matter of history, and I can remember the surprise caused in England by the news that a mere handful of untrained men, under the Prince of Montenegro, had routed the Ottoman forces and seized the Albanian towns of Antivari and Dulcigno. And even prior to this Montenegro had maintained her independence, single-handed, for over five hundred years against the Turks.

At the close of the war Montenegro entered upon a well-deserved era of peace and prosperity, and was enabled, by the Treaty of Berlin, to almost treble her area. The new territory included Dul-

cigno and a part of the shores of Lake Scutari—one of the few fertile regions in this waterless land—so that now the Principality has thirty miles of long-coveted seaboard and two (so-called) harbours. But I doubt if even the acquisition of these were as popular as the marriage of Princess Helena of Montenegro to the Crown Prince of Italy. “Now!” said the Prince, with a sigh of satisfaction when the betrothal had been formally announced,—“Now, at any rate, we shall be heard of!”

“Where is Montenegro, anyway?” asked an American I met at Trieste—and the place, though by no means remote, is so vaguely known that I had better also inform the reader. In shape Montenegro resembles the Ace of Diamonds, with a bit of the left portion (or western extremity) missing. In this direction, about a hundred miles across the Adriatic, lies the heel of Italy, while inland Austria (or rather the States under her jurisdiction) almost encircles the Black Mountain. Albania on the south-east, and the Sandjak of Novi-Bazar on the north-east frontier, are the only exceptions, and even the latter is jointly held by Austria and Turkey. Elsewhere this little country is practically hemmed in by the former power (save for a tiny strip of her own territory on the sea-shore), in Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Dalmatia. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that the ceaseless efforts of Austria to strengthen the defences of the “Bocche” should be viewed with some apprehension at Cettigne.

The entire population of Montenegro numbers about a quarter of a million, and the country is about half the size of Wales, but the interior is such a chaos of mountains that quite a third of it is as yet unexplored. A Servian proverb says, “When God made the world, the bag containing the rocks broke, and they all fell out and formed the Tsernagora.” But this is, of course, somewhat exaggerated, and I prefer the description of a clever French writer who compares the inland surface to “rolling billows of stupendous height suddenly turned to stone in the midst of a tempest.” The simile is not overdrawn, for Montenegro is literally “a sea of mountains,” and with the exception of Baluchistan, I have never traversed a more barren and desolate country, although it is only fair to say that we did not visit the “Berda,” or more fertile region in the East, which one of these days is expected to produce great results. The shores of Lake Scutari are also productive, and there are a few oases amongst the mountains, such as those of Cettigne, Podgoritza, and Riéka, where there are good grazing grounds, and where maize, barley, and even vines and oranges flourish. But these districts are well watered—unlike most of the interior, where many of the natives have never tasted anything but brackish rain-water collected in the rocks. Indeed, were it not for the river Zeta, which divides the country from north to south, and the oases I have mentioned, no one could exist in this stony, sterile land. On the other hand, the “Berda” has no lack of water,

and its numberless torrents run through well-wooded ranges and grassy plains. This is known as "the Alpine region," for some of the mountains attain a considerable height, notably the snowy peak of Dormitor, which is over 8,000 feet above sea-level.

There are no regular post-roads in any direction right across Montenegro. Late in the summer you may travel on horseback and afoot with a guide from Cettigne into Bosnia in something under three weeks, but at other seasons the journey is always tiresome and frequently impracticable. Although travellers have been occasionally held up for ransom, there is little danger from brigands, for none could exist for many days without supplies in those sterile wastes. But if there are trackless deserts and dense forests, where man can scarcely penetrate, you can drive from Cáltaro to Cettigne, and thence half across the country to the town of Niksitch, over roads as good as any in England. These were made by order of the Prince, who has a mania for road-making, and in this hobby he is encouraged, and occasionally monetarily assisted by the Austrian Government—for obvious reasons!

I have never, in all my wanderings throughout the world, met a better fellow than the Montenegrin, who seems to be absolutely free from the petty meannesses which often characterise natives of the further East. He has been called the "Afghan of Europe," and if the latter be as brave as a lion, generous in his

dealings, and the soul of honour, the simile is correct. Everywhere throughout the country the stranger meets with nothing but kindness and hospitality. Let him enter the meanest dwelling and the owner will give him all he possesses as a matter of course, and with no after thought of remuneration. The moment a traveller crosses the threshold he is gravely informed that the dwelling is his and all that therein is—and this is meant to be taken literally. I remember refusing to accept a dagger which I had admired in a wayside hovel, and finding, several hours afterwards, that the owner had concealed it under the cushions of my carriage. At the same time I do not doubt that, if absolutely necessary, your host would kill you without the slightest compunction, but it would certainly be for the sake of his honour and not of your purse. And you would first be given a weapon with which to defend yourself, for a Montenegrin would sooner lose his life than attack an unarmed man.

The men of the Tsernagora are justly famous throughout the Balkans for their good looks and splendid physique. They are a race of giants, and a man of average height in England would be regarded here as something akin to a dwarf. But notwithstanding his formidable frame and stature the Montenegrin is graceful in all his movements, and the picturesque national dress suits him to a nicety. Every one wears it, prince and peasant—rich and poor; and if you meet a man in tweeds or broadcloth, he is generally a

stranger in the land. The costume of course differs in texture according to the wearer's means—the lower class wearing a tunic of coarse white serge embroidered with black braid, baggy breeches stuffed into gaiters of the same material, and *opanki*—or sandals with a leather sole secured to the foot by a network of string. Sheep-skins are worn at all seasons, for there is no distinctive winter and summer dress, at any rate for the peasantry, who wear either half a dozen layers of underclothing or none at all, according to the temperature. Daggers and firearms are carried in a broad "cummerbund" wound several times round the waist, and the former are often of the finest steel and exquisitely inlaid. The Court and upper classes wear a scarlet vest, thickly embroidered, and over it a long white or sky-blue coat reaching to the knees. Over this again is worn a zouave jacket, sleeveless, and so plastered with fantastic patterns in gold lace that the material is almost concealed. Baggy red or dark blue breeches, jack boots of patent leather or white kid, and the inevitable "cummerbund" and miniature arsenal complete the costume of the Montenegrin noble for everyday wear. On special occasions it is even more gorgeous. Every one, irrespective of rank, wears the *kapa*, a tiny black silk forage cap, with a scarlet cloth crown. On the latter are the letters "H.I." (or in Slavonic characters Nicholas the First) enclosed in five semicircles worked in gold thread. This badge distinguishes the Montenegrin from Albanians and Dalmatians (who

wear a cap of similar pattern), the semicircles denoting the five centuries of Montenegro's self-gained independence immortalised by the late Poet Laureate :—

“Of Freedom! warriors beating back the swarm
Of Turkish Islam for five hundred years,
Great Tsernagora! never since thine own
Black ridges drew the cloud and broke the storm,
Has breathed a race of mightier mountaineers.”

Women also wear the *kapa*, but are not entitled to the badge; one of the many restrictions under which they are placed, for the weaker sex here have what Americans call “a pretty mean time.” As in Turkey, a woman is looked upon as a mere instrument of pleasure, which seems strange in a country professing the Christian faith. In Cettigne itself Prince Nicholas has, of late years, done much to improve and elevate the social condition of his female subjects, but in the provinces a wife is treated as an altogether inferior being, sent into the world for the sole purpose of waiting upon her lord and master. All Montenegrins belong to the Orthodox Greek Church, but the clergy here (as in some parts of Russia) appear to encourage rather than condemn this state of things. An English writer has described the women of Montenegro as being beautiful, but if this be so I was singularly unfortunate, for even the youngest we met appeared to me to be extremely plain. Their dress, it is true, would render even a pretty woman

grotesque, consisting as it does of a shapeless white skirt and bodice secured by a silver or leathern belt and worn under a long coat of masculine appearance. The women of the Black Mountain usually wear very subdued colours, and it is said that marital infidelity, amongst the lower orders at any rate, is almost unknown.

You can travel comfortably enough in Montenegro, as we soon found. For our carriage, with its springs and soft cushions was luxurious compared to the rough, bone-shaking country carts of Servia and Bulgaria, and its *troika** of wiry little horses went like the wind. A start was made for Cettigne at 6 a.m. from the quay, to which we had to walk from the hotel, the narrow streets around the latter being too narrow for a conveyance. The beggars of Cattaro outnumber those of Palermo, and if less repulsive they are even more importunate. It was only, therefore, with difficulty that we eluded a ragged crowd, which by the time we reached the waterside had increased to alarming proportions. Mackenzie was delighted — they were such excellent subjects for his ubiquitous “camera”! But the artist was less enthusiastic a few hours later when, in the barren fastnesses of the Tsernagora, we missed an interesting parcel in the way of lunch, which had been purloined while he was at work.

Up till now I had always regarded the White Pass Railway in Alaska as one of the wonders of

* A Russian term, also used here, signifying three horses abreast.

the world, but this little-known carriage-road over the Tsernagora runs it very close. At one time it was deemed impossible to lay even a footpath up this almost perpendicular wall of granite, but there is now a smooth and excellent road which retains a uniform width, to the very summit of the mountain, of about half the breadth of Piccadilly ! This stupendous feat of engineering took many years to accomplish, and when we consider the perilous nature of the work, and the miles of solid rock that had to be blasted away (often by men slung in wicker baskets over a dizzy precipice), the wonder is that it was ever accomplished at all. Moreover, there is even less danger here than over the passes of Switzerland or Italy, which are merely guarded by blocks of stone placed many yards apart. On the Tsernagora, accidents are rendered almost impossible by walls ranging from four to twelve feet high, built on the edge of every precipice, although on the other side of the road there are often giant boulders, which have been left standing, apparently so insecurely that a child could dislodge them. The ascent is gradual, so much so that you scarcely seem to be mounting at all. It becomes, therefore, rather wearisome after a while, for some of the zigzags are of such length, that you may drive for, perhaps, half an hour, and find that during that time you have gained a distance of but forty or fifty feet in height. Thus it took over two hours to reach a little stone rest-house half-way to the summit. The mail coach had just arrived here from Cet-

tigne—a clumsy but gorgeous equipage, with guard and driver in full national costume and armed to the teeth. These men alone are permitted to carry firearms into Austrian territory, their countrymen being deprived of rifles and revolvers at the frontier—or rather the guard-house below it, the border itself being indicated by a rough cairn which we passed eight miles out of Cártaro. All weapons are carefully docketed and returned, but their confiscation often leads to difficulties and occasional bloodshed. An Austrian *douanier* was shot dead here the day after we passed, by a young shepherd who thought he was trying to rob him. For the arms of a Montenegrin are often heirlooms, centuries old, and therefore priceless to their owner.

The bare, comfortless hut was crowded with passengers, who gave a very bad account of the roads on the downward side of the mountain. I also learnt here, for the first time, that communication with Cettigne had been suspended for nearly a month on account of deep snow, and that this was only the third mail out of the country in as many weeks. These facts had been carefully concealed by our host of the Hôtel de Graz, who owned a livery stable, and apparently preferred to rob his guests on the road than to poison them at home. At any rate we decided to abandon all hope of reaching the capital (still nearly twenty miles distant) that night, and to remain at Niégoutch, the only town on the way, about ten miles from Cettigne. Our informant, a German



ENTERING MONTENEGRO.

Photo by Author.



A MONTENEGRIN VILLAGE.

Photo by Author.

commercial traveller, complained bitterly of his enforced residence of nearly three weeks in Montenegro, which he compared unfavourably with a region generally supposed to possess a warmer climate.

As we were leaving, another *troika* drove up from below to disgorge an elderly gentleman of huge proportions, clad in tweeds and a fez, and beaming through huge spectacles. The new-comer was assisted into the hut in a violent state of excitement, gradually increased by the fact that no one present could understand his language. There the poor fellow sat, the picture of helplessness, mopping his brows, while a ring of swarthy, wild-looking Montenegrins regarded him with much the same amazement as we should display at some abnormal specimen at the Zoo! English, German, Italian, Turkish, were tried without success, but at last a few words of French solved the difficulty. The unfortunate traveller (a carpet merchant from Alexandria), declared that he had been robbed of a silver cigar-case by his driver, who had remained with it in the carriage while its owner alighted to admire the view. No sooner was this explained than a cadaverous and whimpering levantine was dragged from his box neck and crop, by half a dozen Montenegrins, searched, and promptly relieved of the missing object, to the great delight of the Egyptian. “I took it!” said the thief calmly; “but I lost my own yesterday!” The excuse (about on a par with that of the Spanish youth who killed his parents and then pleaded for pardon

on the ground that he was an orphan) luckily amused the crowd, and the incident closed with uproarious laughter at the cool impudence of the culprit. The man was an Italian, the Montenegrins argued, and therefore a thief and not worth a thrashing. If a compatriot, he would surely have been severely handled, if not shot, for any theft here is an unpardonable crime.

The morning had been dull and hazy, but when, towards midday, a climb of nearly six hours brought us to the summit, the sky was cloudless, and the glorious panorama spread out like a map beneath us, was bathed in glorious sunshine. And what a view! I have visited many parts of the world, civilised and otherwise, but never have I witnessed anything to compare with this one for extent and beauty. No lake scenery in creation can approach that of the three land-locked harbours which form the Gulf of Cattaro. So clear was the atmosphere that the town itself, more than 3,000 feet below, appeared so close that you could fling a pebble into the market-place, although large steamers resembled toy-ships, and row-boats water-ants skimming over the glassy harbour. On either side of the "Bocche" were the rugged ranges, which, from the deck of the *Pannonia*, looked like precipitous mountains, but which, viewed from here, became almost insignificant hills—only, let me add, so far as their altitude was concerned. For nearly every one is fortified, and although this formidable avenue of defences is invisible from Cattaro, one can well

realise, from the summit of the Tsernagora, that even the allied fleets of Europe would find the place a hard nut to crack. Further afield we could distinguish the snowy peaks of Montenegro and Dalmatia, and the sunlit Adriatic, only a shade less blue than the lakes, with white towns, woods, and meadows clearly mirrored on their placid surface. It is said that no artist has ever been able to portray this exquisite scene upon canvas, and in my humble opinion no artist ever will.

A halt of an hour was made here for lunch, and we lay on the rocks and revelled in the sunshine which would soon be a thing of the past. For snow even now lay thickly by the roadside, and the furs and frost-bitten features of the few peasants who passed us, bound for Cáltaro, told us what we might expect in a few hours. Lunch was a dismal failure. Dr. Johnson once observed that “the finest landscape in the world was not worth a d—— without a cosy inn in the foreground,”—and there is, no doubt, some truth in the assertion. For instance, we might possibly have appreciated the beauties of nature even more under the influence of the good breakfast laid in (and stolen) at Cáltaro, than the dubious eggs and measly ham which were purchased as a last resource at the rest-house.

It was still early in the day when we crossed the ridge and reached the eastern slope of the mountain; and here the sky was dull and overcast, and an icy wind cut through our furs as though they

had been cambric. The surroundings now changed with the rapidity of a scene-shift at a London theatre. A lonely strip of country divides Cettigne from the Tsernagora—lonely even for Montenegro, which says a great deal. To-day the mournful impression was heightened by a sea of snow, from which perpendicular, treeless masses of rock emerged here and there, while in the distance mountain upon mountain, peak upon peak, some swept clear of snow by furious gales, but all devoid of vegetation, stretched away to the dreary horizon : so far as the eye could see, not a vestige of life or particle of verdure. On every side the outlook was one of gloom and desolation, and more suggestive of a lunar than an earthly landscape. Our friends at the rest-house had certainly not exaggerated the state of the road. Although an army of men had for the past week been clearing away impassable drifts, the snow was still up to the axles, and even, in low-lying spots, above them, while it lay piled up to a height of six or eight feet on either side of the roadway. Twice the vehicle was firmly embedded, and it needed our united efforts and those of the struggling *troika* to dislodge it again. Then darkness fell, and with it a sharp, driving sleet that slashed the face painfully and reduced our already funereal speed to a crawl. This fortunately occurred within a couple of miles or so of our destination, or the exhausted team would never have reached it. It was past ten o'clock before we sighted Niégoutch : a few dim, flickering lights kindled by oil or tallow,

and invisible for more than a few hundred yards. Yet it took us nearly an hour to reach them!

Our stay at the Hôtel de Graz at Cattaro had prepared me for even worse accommodation in the interior. Niégoutch (the ancient capital of Montenegro) is now little more than a village, and I therefore fully expected to pass the night in some filthy mud hut, with the usual adjuncts in the shape of vermin and nauseous food. But this is a land of surprises—pleasant and otherwise—and, much to my astonishment, the “Hotel” mysteriously hinted at by our driver proved one well worthy of the name. For here, having discarded soaking tweeds, we were ushered into a brightly-lit room, where an officer in the uniform of the Russian line was partaking of a civilised repast at a table drawn up by a cheerful fire. An invitation to join him was gratefully accepted, for the sight of a savoury meal and snowy linen was a pleasant one after hours of cold and darkness. Nor was a tiny glass of vodka unacceptable as a prelude to supper, and thereafter a bottle of wine of the country, in which we drank to our friend’s speedy convalescence from a nasty wound received at Port Arthur. Captain Kaditz was a tall, handsome Montenegrin, who, like many of his compatriots, had passed through the military College of St. Petersburg into the Russian Army. A pleasanter companion I never wish to meet—so genial, indeed, proved our friend that a cuckoo clock in the hall had struck midnight before we retired to rest. “If it is all like this,” said Mackenzie, as

we turned into clean and comfortable sheets, "I sha'n't grumble!" But the Scot was doomed to disappointment, for this Niégoutch hostelry had only just been started by an enterprising Dalmatian, and was already renowned as one of the best hotels in the Balkans. Why it was built, or how it is expected to pay in this remote village, remains a mystery. But this, so far as we were concerned, was immaterial, and when I strolled round the village next morning and saw what our accommodation might have been, I felt constrained to present that up-to-date landlord with a handsome gratuity—the more so that his charges were extremely moderate.

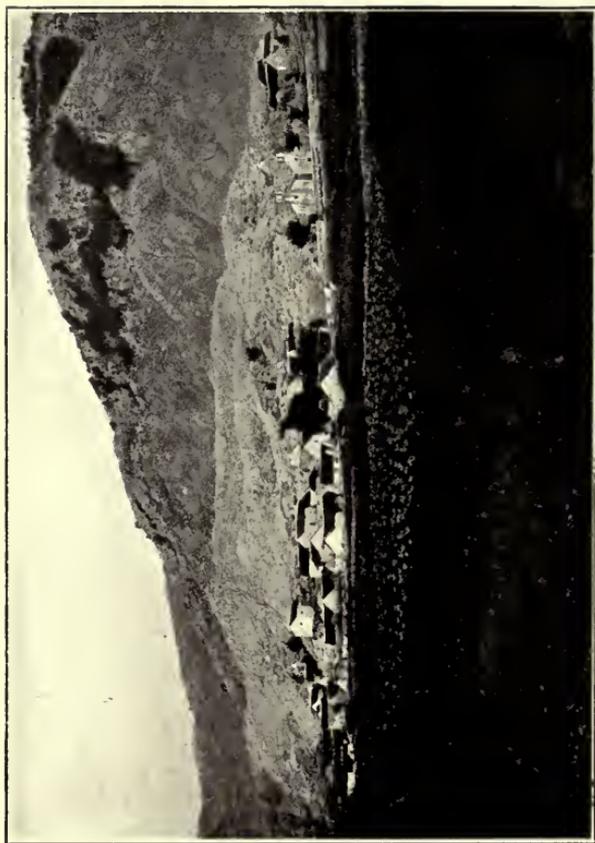
Niégoutch is the cradle of the Petrovitch Dynasty, and probably for this reason Prince Nicholas has a small house here—seldom inhabited, as the plasterless walls and closed and rusty shutters testified. Beyond this there was nothing to see in the place, which resembled some squalid hamlet in the far north of Scotland, with its tiny pastures enclosed by low walls, and loosely-built stone dwellings, thatched with straw, more like cattle-sheds than human habitations. All this we saw through drizzling rain, which, with melting snow, had converted the village street into a fair imitation of a duck-pond. The Russian warrior had departed while we slept, and we proceeded, after a substantial breakfast, to do likewise. The meal was accompanied (but not improved) by the doleful strains of a *guzla*, a kind of elongated violin with one string, played by a blind beggar in



GUZLA PLAYERS.

Photo by Author.

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NIÉGOUTCH.

Photo by Author.

the road. This is the national instrument of the Servian race, which is said to have inspired the latter in its most glorious deeds of patriotism. If this be so, I can only admire and envy the facility with which the enthusiasm of the Servian race is aroused!

The road that day was even worse than on the preceding night, and rain fell persistently throughout the journey, the greater part of which was occupied in wading through slush, far worse than snow to travel through. This is usually a drive of about four hours, but it took us more than twice that time to accomplish it. Finally a dense fog came down, rendering objects a few yards off invisible, and, drawing over the hood, we resigned ourselves to circumstances—boredom, and finally slumber, which lasted until we were awakened, towards dinner-time, by lights and welcome voices at the Grand Hotel, Cettigne.

CHAPTER III

CETTIGNE

WHENEVER I visit a new country (which has occurred pretty often during the past twenty years) I generally try to picture beforehand what the place will be like. But I seem fated to discover, with unerring certainty, that the reality is as far removed from my preconceived notion of it as can well be. For instance, I had pictured Cettigne as a fiercely guarded stronghold, buried in the heart of the mountains—a town of frowning arches and dark, precipitous streets, swarming with armed men and bristling with fortifications, for somehow or other Montenegro is a name suggestive of grim places and people. Of course I was wrong, as usual, for Cettigne stands on a dreary plain—surrounded, it is true, by mountains, but they more resemble hills and are some miles distant. There is no visible sign here of the war-like spirit which has made this little country famous throughout Europe. From a distance the capital resembles a straggling French village, with its one-storied, red-tiled houses clustered around half a dozen larger buildings and a couple of church



Photo by Gullt, Cettigne

CETTIGNE.

spires. The place conveys an impression of dullness and a certain amount of agricultural life, and that is all. And yet many a staunch-hearted patriot has left it for the field of battle, never to return.

Cettigne is the smallest capital in Europe, and I should say the bleakest, with the exception, perhaps, of Petersburg. I have seldom felt the cold, even in Arctic Siberia, as I did here, for there was a moist rawness in the air which chilled one to the bone and increased the discomfort of splashing through the muddy streets, or rather rivers of slush. This barren plateau is also a nest of gales, which made matters worse. I have often been asked how my expedition survived the land journey from Paris to New York, when we lived for three months in the open and the thermometer never rose above 10° Fahr. below zero, and once fell to 78°! Under the latter conditions the lightest zephyr would probably kill the strongest man, but, by a merciful dispensation of Providence, extreme cold is never accompanied by wind. Strange as it may seem, I have felt comparatively warm in 70° below zero, in stillness and bright sunshine, and shivered in London on a squally November day with the mercury well above freezing-point.

Thus we saw the Motenegrin capital under unfavourable conditions (climatically speaking), but although most of the buildings were half concealed by snow banked up to a height of several feet on either side of the so-called streets, and wintry

skies prevailed, it was possible to conceive how picturesque and pleasant the place might become with "frescoed" dwellings and sunlit gardens under the influence of summer. Cettigne contains about three thousand souls, and is easily seen from end to end in a couple of hours. There are two principal thoroughfares, cobbled and composed of houses of the "door and four windows" type, and a score of smaller streets where wine-shops flourish and the dwellings are even meaner in appearance. The shops—such as they are—are mostly for the sale of clothing, provisions, and saddlery, and there are one or two silversmiths where you may still pick up a bargain in the shape of antique rings, old filigree work, and the heavy leather belts, studded with gems or coloured glass as the case may be, which Montenegrin women still wear on state occasions. But these wares are becoming less genuine with the increasing influx of travellers, and ubiquitous Birmingham is gradually creeping into the curio market. Nevertheless the marvellous embroidery of the country may always be safely purchased, for it is practically inimitable and absurdly cheap.

The principal square is near the centre of the town, and in summer time shady acacia trees around a plashing fountain render this a favourite lounge. It resembled a quagmire the day after our arrival, but the market is held here, and notwithstanding the pouring rain I could scarcely force my way through a busy throng of peasants and townspeople. And here I witnessed a tragedy

(or rather its final scene), which caused so little excitement that I am inclined to think that life is valued almost as cheaply here as in China and Japan. It occurred while I was idly watching the crowd haggling with vendors of fish, fruit, and vegetables. Suddenly, in the midst of the clamour, a shot rang out, fired from a horse pistol, to judge by the deafening sound of the report. For a moment there was a startled silence, and then I joined in a wild stampede to an even more densely crowded portion of the Square, where a wreath of grey smoke was still curling into the air. It was impossible to approach the spot or ascertain the cause of the disturbance, until a lane was cleared through the people by stalwart policemen, and through it appeared a limp, lifeless form, carried on a wooden shutter. The latter passed so rapidly that I could only catch a glimpse of a white, bloodstained face and the staring eyes of a corpse. Mistaking my nationality, a bystander observed, in Russian, that the victim had met his death owing to a feud which had existed for generations between his family and that of his slayer. "It was not murder," said my informant, "for the victim carried arms, and was fool enough not to use them." "And his assailant?" I asked. "Nothing will happen to him," was the reply. "Oh! this often happens here," added the man, turning away with a smile and a shrug of the shoulders.

At first sight Cettigne appears to contain only two buildings of any size or importance (one at

each extremity of the town) which dwarf the intervening structures into insignificance. The former are truly palatial stone mansions of recent erection—so imposing that they are generally taken for palaces by a stranger. But they are merely the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Legations, whose respective Governments have spared no expense in order to impress the natives, which, however, they have entirely failed to do. The new Palace (which comes next in size) is a modest, unpretentious edifice, more like some prosperous “bourgeois” residence at Brixton or Asnières than the home of a ruler. You can see into the Royal apartments from the street or look into the garden at the rear of the house, where Prince Nicholas takes his post-prandial cigar and siesta on summer evenings. A couple of sentry-boxes on either side of the entrance, with red and white stripes (the Montenegrin colours), alone denote that this is not a private house. The old Palace outside the town is now used for Government offices, and is called the *Billardo*—a name derived from the fact that at one time the only billiard-table in the country was to be found within its walls. There was then no carriage-road, and the table was carried up the dizzy “ladder” by fifty men—a feat of strength which, at that time, was considered almost an impossibility. I was told, however, that the table more resembles a bagatelle-board than a full-sized “Burroughes and Watts,” which rather detracts from the credit of the performance.



THE PRINCE OF MONTENEGRO.

Photo by Gulli, Cettigne.

With the exception of our own gracious Sovereign, there is probably no potentate in the world so universally beloved by his people as Prince Nicholas II. of Montenegro, and the secret of his popularity lies chiefly in an absolute simplicity of life and manner which appeals to this rugged race of mountaineers. The relations of Nikita (as he is affectionately called) towards his subjects more resemble those of a paternal English squire on the best of terms with his tenants than the Head of a State, the occupants of which are angels one minute and devils the next. The ruler of the Black Mountain is what the French call a *Bon Garçon*, but one whose shrewdness and tact at home and abroad have earned him the nickname of "The Bismarck of the Balkans." And it needs a clear brain and steady nerves to keep the helm straight in this little Principality, which, after finally disposing of one powerful enemy, finds herself practically at the mercy of a doubtful friend. Turkey is no longer looked upon here as a foe, rather the contrary, but Austria is regarded with far greater hatred than was ever displayed towards the Porte, and has been so ever since her hostile attitude towards Montenegro at the Congress of Berlin. Russia, on the other hand, is idolised throughout the Tsernagora, and portraits of the Tsar and Tsarina are as often met with throughout the Principality as that of its ruler.

The Prince is a tall, broad-shouldered man,

with swarthy, handsome features and keen, grey eyes; a stately figure, as upright as a gun-barrel, notwithstanding his sixty odd years. When the "Gospodar" * walks abroad in national costume he might pass for the humblest of his subjects, for he strolls about without state or ceremony and mixes freely with the people. A regicide could kill him in the street fifty times a day, but it is equally certain that the assassin would be simultaneously torn piecemeal. Nikita is said to know all his subjects personally, and even if this be an exaggeration, his Highness certainly makes no class distinctions, and as readily lends his ear to the beggar in rags as to the wealthy noble. A Parisian education and frequent visits to Europe have not affected this ruler's life of almost Spartan simplicity; and although he is a great smoker, generally consuming about a hundred cigarettes a day, he is very abstemious in other ways, and can still remove a cigar from a friend's lips with a duelling pistol at twelve paces. But this is scarcely surprising in one who was once acknowledged as the deadliest shot and finest horseman in this nation of "Shikaris." Of recent years, however, Prince Nicholas has abandoned sport for the more serious affairs of state, with the result that at present he is unquestionably the cleverest of the Balkan sovereigns. He is also an author and playwright of repute, one of his dramas, "The Empress of the Balkans," having been successfully produced

* The title by which the Prince is generally addressed.

in Vienna. Next to Russia, England is the country of his preference, and his admiration for the late Mr. W. E. Gladstone (who is here called the "Saviour of the Balkans," and whose death is still mourned throughout Montenegro) amounts almost to worship. London impressed the Prince more than any other European capital, and the Grand Cross of the Victorian Order, bestowed upon him by the late Queen Victoria, is more prized than any of the numberless decorations he has received from other sovereigns—with the exception, perhaps, of honours bestowed by the Tsar. Even the latter is no greater autocrat than his Montenegrin namesake, who rules his country with a rod of iron, but with so little formality that until a few years back Nikita held levées and administered justice under the spreading branches of a beech-tree in the Palace Gardens.

Trying and eventful as the life of this remarkable man has been, he has a keen sense of humour and the spirits of a lad in his teens. An eye-witness told me that at the public announcement of Princess Helena's betrothal to the Prince of Naples, her royal parent was seized by a dozen brawny highlanders and "frog-marched" down the main street of his capital, roaring with laughter like a schoolboy! On a recent occasion, also, the Prince's love of a joke was shown by his reply to a minister of one of the Great Powers who, during a reception at the Palace, was regretting that the exports of Montenegro

were so meagre and valueless. "Well, I don't know," said the Prince, with a twinkle in his eye; "what about my daughter?"

Ten years ago, any traveller in Cettigne had only to call at the Palace to be received forthwith. Since the marriage of Princess Helena, however, there is more formality, and it now takes two or three days to obtain an audience, which, however, is never refused to the applicant whoever he may be. For Prince Nicholas is always glad to hear of visitors (especially English and French) to his capital, and the comfortable hotel which is now at their disposal was built partly by his desire. Less than a century ago the old Palace served as an inn, and in those days Court etiquette was very much laxer than it is at present. The French explorer, Marnier, relates that, arriving there one wet and stormy night, he supped and passed the evening with his royal host in the kitchen, with only one other guest, a tailor, who joined freely in the conversation, while the Prince rose at intervals and obligingly turned the Frenchman's boots and socks which were drying by the fire!

The Grand Hotel was much older, but fully as comfortable as the inn at Niégoutch—indeed the *cuisine* at the former would have passed muster on the Paris boulevards. This is chiefly owing to the fact that a few years ago members of the diplomatic corps resided in the hotel, and even now that legations have been built the subordinate officials usually make it their headquarters. To dine, on the night of our arrival, in

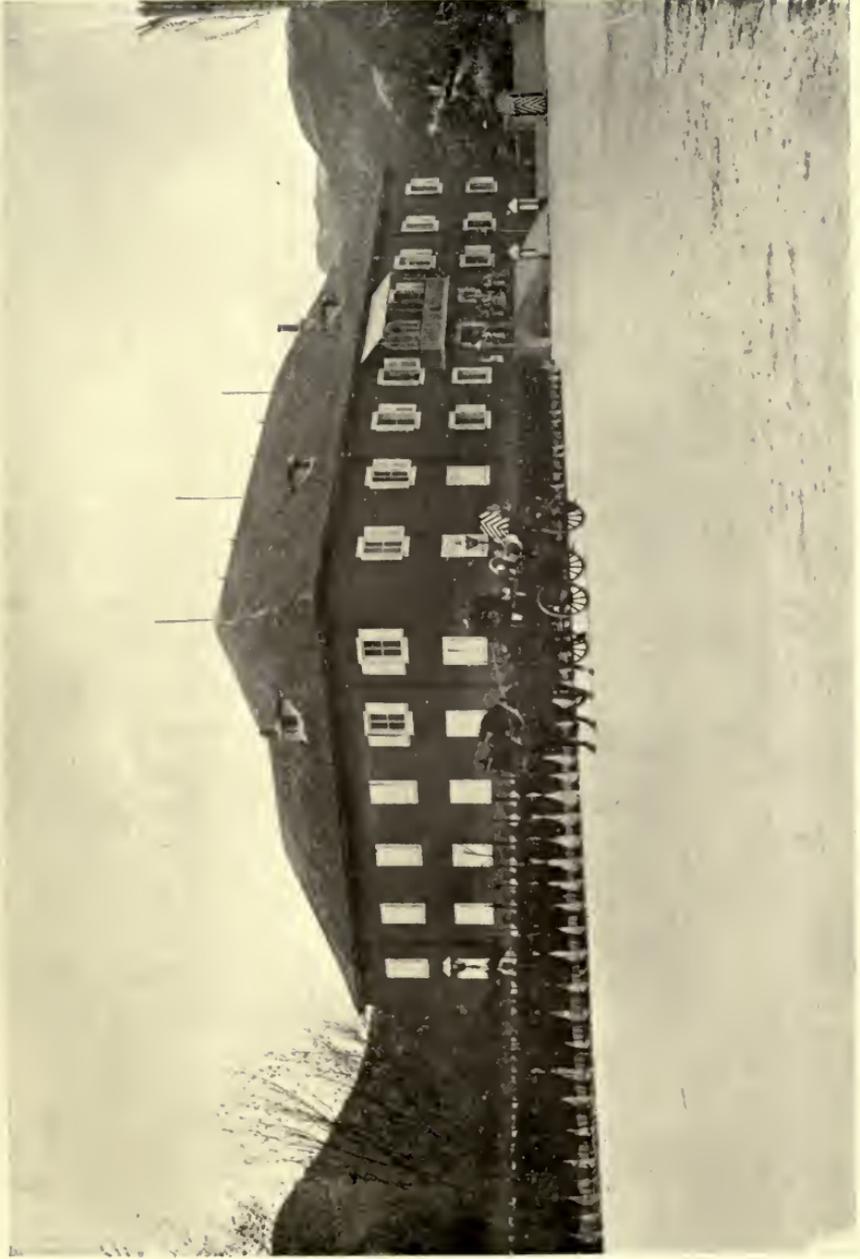


Photo by Gullit, Cattigne.

THE PALACE, CATTIGNE

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travel-stained clothes at the same table with young secretaries and *attachés* resplendent in purple and fine linen was rather an ordeal, especially as visitors here are still rare enough to excite universal attention and curiosity. It was edifying, however, to hear the fate of Europe decided by these ambassadors in embryo (as though Cettigne were the hub of the diplomatic universe), and also to learn that not a foreign minister in Cettigne was fitted for the post which he occupied. Every nation in Europe has its legation here with the exception of Serbia, for although King Peter Karageorgevitch is a son-in-law of Prince Nicholas, diplomatic relations between the two countries ceased with the assassination of the late King and Queen.*

Society here is mainly composed of Court and diplomatic circles, so that the winter season, which the Prince spends in the country and most of the ministers on the Dalmatian coast, is a very dull one. There is a pretty little theatre, occasionally visited by wandering artistes, but it is closed from October until May, so our evenings passed drearily, for even had there been other places of entertainment cabs here are a luxury of the future, and even my old friend, Charles Hawtrey, himself would not have tempted me out on foot in that slush and darkness. Luckily the hotel possessed a *café* and billiard-table, which was our usual resort after dinner, and also a favourite rendezvous of officers in the newly-formed army of

* It is said that these have now been resumed.

Montenegro—fine strapping fellows in a picturesque uniform of blue, scarlet, and gold, not unlike that of the French Zouaves. Before the Russo-Turkish War there was no regular army here—every one was a soldier, ever ready and eager to rally round the colours in time of peril; now there is a disciplined force of thirty-six thousand men which comprises eight brigades of infantry and eight batteries of artillery, armed with modern rifles and fieldpieces, for heavy guns, like cavalry, are useless here. The fine barracks at Cettigne are kept as smart and clean as any in England, and there is also a military college with instructors who have undergone a military training in France or Russia. Besides this permanent force, all able-bodied Montenegrins attend a three months' training at Cettigne and Podgoritzza, one battalion being immediately succeeded by another, so that the country can call upon a powerful and efficient reserve in the event of war. Most of the veterans of '78 are opposed to this new order of things, and sneer at drums and pipe-clay, maintaining that mechanical drill is unfitted to this mountainous land where battles have always been won by guerilla methods. And some of the senior officers of the recently organised army agree with them, and told me as much.

Pleasant fellows were our military friends at the Grand Hotel, many of whom belonged to the Royal Bodyguard, and I can say the same of Montenegrins of every class with whom I came in contact, for they rival our own country-

men in manly qualities and excel the French in politeness. If the Montenegrin has a fault it lies in the combativeness and hasty temper which seem to be his chief characteristics, and which one could dispense with in people who walk about with a portable armoury! A chance word will sometimes convert a placid and agreeable companion into a murderous madman, as I found on one occasion when a young officer, hitherto the soul of fun and friendship, expressed a desire to curtail my existence because I casually alluded to the Russian reverses in Manchuria. My irate companion was eventually pacified, and as I was a foreigner and, therefore, more or less a guest, all ended well and we were again fast friends. Nor was he, perhaps, so much to blame, for these people are born fighters, and brought up from babyhood to despise those who have not shown their mettle in personal combat or on the battlefield. During the last war, Prince Nicholas forbade an old man of eighty to join the ranks, which caused him such grief and disappointment that he promptly drew his revolver and shot himself. Even young children are imbued with this warlike mania, and when street boys quarrel they do not, like our street arabs, throw stones and hint darkly at each other's parentage. One simply says, "Your grandfather died in his bed!" and if this be a horrible truth, the other slinks off, crushed and humiliated! To further illustrate the patriotism and reckless bravery of this race

it is a well-established fact that only *one* prisoner (out of more than six thousand slain) was actually taken throughout the Russo-Turkish campaign.

CHAPTER IV

A DRIVE INTO THE INTERIOR

TOWARDS the end of our stay in Montenegro, clearing skies and warmer weather enabled me to inspect the capital at leisure, and to realise the improvements made of late years by the clever ruler of this little state. Cettigne is now connected by telegraph with the outer world, and all the towns (and many villages) of the interior, and this and the postal arrangements are in every way as well conducted as in Western Europe. Postage stamps which bear the head of the reigning Prince are a recent innovation. A newspaper, the *Glas Tsernagora* ("Voice of Montenegro"), is published weekly, but it is not of much account, and the telegrams received by the Grand Hotel every morning from a Vienna agency supply the latest news. Finally we visited the prison, surely the most extraordinary one in existence, for it had no outer walls and apparently nothing else to prevent the inmates from walking, unmolested, out of the place. The few prisoners we saw, however, seemed so contented with life and its surroundings

that the thought of escape would probably never enter their minds, the cells each containing eight or ten men who had brought their goods and chattels and made themselves thoroughly at home. And well they might be, with a liberal diet—wine on certain occasions, cigarettes *ad lib.*, and no work of any description. As in Russia the criminal here is too well treated, the political offender with undue severity, for to the latter class Prince Nicholas shows no mercy. Out of perhaps thirty prisoners only two wore chains, but these men (one an Albanian) had murdered with robbery as a motive. Vendetta assassins never wear fetters, and there is no capital punishment here, for the simple reason that death has no terrors for the majority. Lifelong imprisonment (even of this kind) is a far severer penalty.

The women's prison resembled an almshouse, with open doors, in and out of which they strolled unwatched and uncontrolled, although the warder, who had accompanied us from the men's quarters, gravely pointed out an imaginary boundary beyond which they were "requested not to go"! Neither sex wore prison dress. I have visited penal establishments all over the world, from Sweden to Sakhalin, but have never yet seen such a novel and extraordinary place of detention as that gaol at Cettigne!

Then came the hospital—the only one in the country—but where operations are now carried out with all the appliances of modern science, and where patients are no longer tortured by unskilled



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THE "GUIDE."

Photo by Author.

operators as in the past. There are also excellent colleges for both sexes, maintained by the state, for education has made enormous strides here during the past few years. Schools are now as numerous as churches in the interior, and Montenegro possesses more of the latter, for her size, than even Holy Russia.

It was our original intention to travel across Montenegro into Servia, *via* Bosnia or the Sandjak of Novi Bazar, but this journey in spring-time is next to impossible on account of snow-blocked passes and flooded plains. August and September are the best months for the trip, which must be made on horseback (and sometimes afoot) across a desolate region so sparsely peopled that natives sometimes get off the track and perish of starvation. Our project was soon noised abroad, however, and one morning an extraordinary individual was announced, and offered his services as the "One and only guide in Cettigne." This was an aged, dissipated-looking individual, with shifty, bloodshot eyes, dressed in a shabby tweed suit several sizes too large for him. The "one and only" addressed us in English, but although early in the day, his strange behaviour was scarcely consistent with a time-worn document which he produced, describing him as "strictly sober." Our visitor informed us that he was a "Greek nobleman," which may have been correct (for I have met queer specimens of the Hellenic peerage), but at any rate he was as drunk as the proverbial lord, and I dismissed him, after some difficulty,

with a couple of francs. We then watched him from the window as he reeled down the street and disappeared into the nearest wine-shop, pursued in his erratic course by Mackenzie's Argus-eyed bioscope.

Our time being limited, I resolved to travel as far into the interior as the post-road would allow. We accordingly set out one morning for Riéka, near the shores of Lake Scutari, in the worst thunderstorm I have ever experienced, accompanied by a blinding fall of snow. Never, even in the Eastern Archipelago, have I heard such deafening thunder, for one peal continued uninterruptedly for twenty-three seconds! The road from the capital to Riéka passes through some of the finest scenery in the country, but heavy snow obscured everything until we reached the summit of the first range of hills around Cáltaro. Here there is a hut built by the Prince to enable travellers to rest and enjoy in clear weather the wonderful view. But I was more interested and astonished at the sudden and complete change of weather and surroundings which occurred at this stage of the journey. Behind us lay Cetigne, wreathed in mist and buried in snow, under a grey and sullen sky. The latter, however, lightened immediately overhead, and towards our destination the heavens appeared blue and smiling over a sunlit country fringed by Lake Scutari and the snowy peaks of Albania. Half a dozen miles distant lay the oasis of Riéka, a welcome patch of green in this desert of grey boulders. It was



Photo by Author.

NEARING RIÉNA.

like emerging from a dense and chilly London fog into the warmth and brightness of a spring morning in Monte Carlo. Furs and wraps were discarded with every mile we travelled, for snow had soon entirely disappeared while summer heat had succeeded an Arctic temperature. Climate and scenery had changed as rapidly as a transformation scene, and with them the depression caused by a week of dark days and stormy weather. At mid-day we drove into Riéka, through pastures watered by clear streams, and past herds of cattle grazing in the long, rich grass. Women were working in the vineyards around, and wild flowers bloomed freely by the roadside, while little children threw nosegays of violets at the carriage as we passed. We might have been in Italy or Spain, indeed in any country but stony, arid Montenegro!

Riéka is but a village, a row of forty or fifty red-tiled houses with the usual pink or light blue façades, built on the left bank of the river of the same name which flows into Lake Scutari. Vine-clad hills, recalling those of fair Provence, surround the place, and a glorious day rendered it so attractive that I ceased to wonder that the Prince was recently offered a fabulous sum for its acquisition as a second Monte Carlo. But Nikita's reply was brief and characteristic—"I am Prince of Montenegro," he said, "not a keeper of gambling hells!"

It was market-day, and Riéka was crowded—so much so that from the fields across the river, spanned by an old Turkish bridge, the uproar

sounded as that from a crowded racecourse. And from here the brilliant, multi-coloured crowd and droves of cattle ever on the move in that little Eastern-looking village, with its verandas and gaily striped awnings, formed indeed a striking *coup d'œil*.

We lunched in a vine-trellised balcony overlooking the river, in a cottage which had never been called an inn until the peasant-owner made his first visit to Cettigne, a year before our visit. Our host had then seen the Grand Hotel, and being a man of resource, bought a sign-board on his return home, with the result that the "Albergo al Ponte" is now the recognised house of call here. It only possessed two rooms (one occupied by its owner and his family), but everything was of scrupulous cleanliness and we fared well on a delicious omelette, freshly-caught trout from the Riéka, and a flask of wine, grown in a vineyard not a mile away. Turkish coffee and a cigar concluded the meal, and Mackenzie then left me to secure "living pictures" in the market. But many of his sitters were Albanians from over the border—sulky, sallow ruffians, armed to the teeth—who regarded my friend and his camera with no friendly eyes, although the Montenegrins were, as usual, only too willing to group themselves and move about when requested to do so. The romantic appearance of the latter has been marred of late years by the habit of carrying huge cotton umbrellas which scarcely tally with deadly weapons and a warlike exterior. These are seldom seen



Ри́ека.

Photo by Gulli, Cettigne.

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in Cettigne or Riéka, for the sight of a "gamp" infuriates the Prince as much as the caricatures which occasionally depict him in the Vienna papers.

His Highness resides here during the winter months, and has built a palace (or rather villa) with beautiful gardens where he can bask in a June sunshine, while people in Cettigne (only twelve miles away) are shivering over their wood fires. The Prince was, unfortunately, indisposed during our visit, but I was informed that an interview would be granted me in the space of three or four days. Time, however, would not permit of the delay, but I shall always regret that I was not privileged to make the acquaintance of this truly distinguished monarch, or of the Crown Prince Danilo, who was then absent from Montenegro, and whom the reader may have seen in London on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee. Opinions differ in Montenegro as to the capabilities of the heir to the throne, and some say that the Western and advanced ideas of the latter may not suit a people hitherto somewhat intolerant of civilised customs. But the Crown Prince is a sportsman and a fine shot, which atones for much in this country, and also inherits some of his father's tact and intelligence. There is no doubt that Montenegro will remain loyal to the Petrovitch dynasty, but the shoes of an unusually brave, wise, and successful ruler like Prince Nicholas must necessarily be hard to fill, especially after a prosperous reign of over forty years.

The oasis of Riéka is not far distant from that of Podgoritzza, but there is a barren strip between them which recalls the poverty-stricken nature of this land. In the poorer districts, the natives often cultivate bits of soil no larger than a tea-tray in the crevices of rock in order to obtain food—not that they require much, for even in prosperity the Montenegrin is a small feeder. Milk and black bread are his staple diet, with meat only once or twice a week, which, perhaps, accounts for his nerves of steel and marvellous powers of endurance. Riéka is here considered a rich district, for it produces wine, tobacco, and insect powder, which is made from the wild *Pyrethrum* flower, and largely exported to Europe, where it is sold as “Persian Insecticide.” Mackenzie opined that all of it should be kept in the country, although, personally, I suffered less here from vermin than in Servia and Bulgaria. Dried fish is another article of export, the “Yaguli,” of which millions ascend the Riéka river in winter.

Podgoritzza, within a day's drive of Riéka, is the granary of Montenegro—and a prolific one, for the plains around are watered by the Moratcha, one of the largest rivers in the country. Besides grain, this place is also the principal market for wool, hides, tobacco, and beeswax. It is a pretty little town of about seven thousand inhabitants; crenellated walls and towers, now in ruins, show that it was once strongly fortified, for in olden days this was the scene of many a desperate struggle between the Cross and the Crescent.



MARKET PLACE, RIÉKA.

Photo by Author.



MARKET PLACE, RIÉKA.

Photo by Author.

Podgoritza still resembles a Turkish town, for mosque and minaret have not yet entirely disappeared, and many of the older houses have windows with latticed screens which once concealed fair inmates of the harem. Now a *yashmak* is seldom seen, nor is it wanted, for pretty faces are rare. One, however, would certainly create a sensation in London—and its owner is Princess Mirko, the wife of Prince Nikita's second son, who may be seen here most afternoons driving out in the daintiest of Paris gowns, which are sadly wasted on an unappreciative peasantry. Princess Mirko is a Servian, and a cousin of the late King Alexander of that country, to whom she was once betrothed. Near Podgoritza, by the way, are the remains of the ancient Roman city of Dioclea, the birthplace of Diocletian.

For a business town, Podgoritza has a dull and sleepy appearance, but commerce can never really prosper here until the entire country is opened up by foreign capital and enterprise. There are two reasons for this: the rooted disinclination of the natives for work of any kind, and the sterile nature of the country. The Montenegrin says, "I am a warrior, and I fight for my country, but do not soil my fingers with trade;" the result of this being that the latter, such as it is, is entirely in the hands of Servians, Bulgarians, and Bosnians, who also perform most of the menial work in town and village. I do not think that I ever met with,

or even heard of, a Montenegrin tradesman or domestic servant. And yet no one is more anxious to develop the mercantile resources of Montenegro than its ruler, who, during the Berlin Congress, devoted his diplomatic energies to the acquisition of a Montenegrin outlet on the Adriatic, chiefly with this object. But both Dulcigno and Antivari are wretched harbours—mere roadsteads—affording very risky anchorage in dirty weather. Had they been landlocked lagoons, however, the commercial lethargy of Montenegro would probably have remained as it was before the war. One of the eight members of the council (which, under the presidency of Prince Nicholas, governs the country) told me that nothing can be done until a good post-road connects the “Berda” (or eastern district) with the sea, and this must take at least three or four years to construct. Once they become better known, the vast forests and mineral wealth of the Berda must surely attract foreign capital; and as for labour, it will be easily obtainable when the natives are better acquainted with the value of money and the advantages to be gained by thrift and industry. Up till now a man with a yearly income of £50 has been looked upon as a millionaire in the interior, although he is walking over mineral wealth which would bring him in three times that amount if he only chose to work! “At present,” said my friend, “our exports are valued at two million florins a year—and what exports! with flea-powder as an important item! Only



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THE CROWN PRINCESS OF MONTENEGRO. *Photo by Gulli, Cettigne.*

let experienced prospectors prove that we have gold and silver in paying quantities (which I can vouch for), valuable deposits of petroleum, and coal (which is already being worked near Dulcigno), and I am convinced of a bright future for Montenegro. Why, there are fortunes in timber alone in the forests of the Berda!" And my friend was probably correct in all his assertions, and also in stating that Prince Nicholas would gladly welcome and assist mineral and mercantile enterprise from any part of the world. But taking into consideration the precarious position and wild, impenetrable nature of this country, I fancy it will be some time before its resources are developed to any great extent.

It was pleasant to return again to the capital and find civilised comforts once more; but passing Riéka we regretfully left the big blue lake, flowers, and sunshine to recross the dreary granite pass and regain the snowy plateau, where the lights of Cettigne twinkled in the dusk. My pocket thermometer at midday registered 70° in the shade, Fahr.; and it was now, only a few hours later, at freezing-point! But Eastern Europe is a land of quick changes—climatic and otherwise! A bright fire and well-cooked dinner awaited us at the Grand Hotel, and I called for some excellent Saint-Estephe, for which the house was famous, to dispel remembrance of the country wines, which, I am bound to admit, strongly resemble violet ink in hue and flavour. But Piétro, the Servian waiter, was full of regrets. The Russian

attaché had finished the last bottle that morning. "Then," I asked, "you have no Bordeaux of any kind left?" "Not a drop, Monsieur," was the reply, and my repast was unavoidably washed down with the cheerless ale of Adam. Next day the same beverage accompanied my *déjeuner*, when, toward its close, Piètro entered and uncorked a bottle for my neighbour bearing the attractive label "Medoc." "What did you mean?" I asked sternly, and suspecting collusion with the diplomat; "What did you mean by saying you had no Bordeaux last night?" "Madre di Dios!" said poor Piètro, with unfeigned dismay, "do you call *that* Bordeaux? Why, we have dozens of *that* in the cellar!"

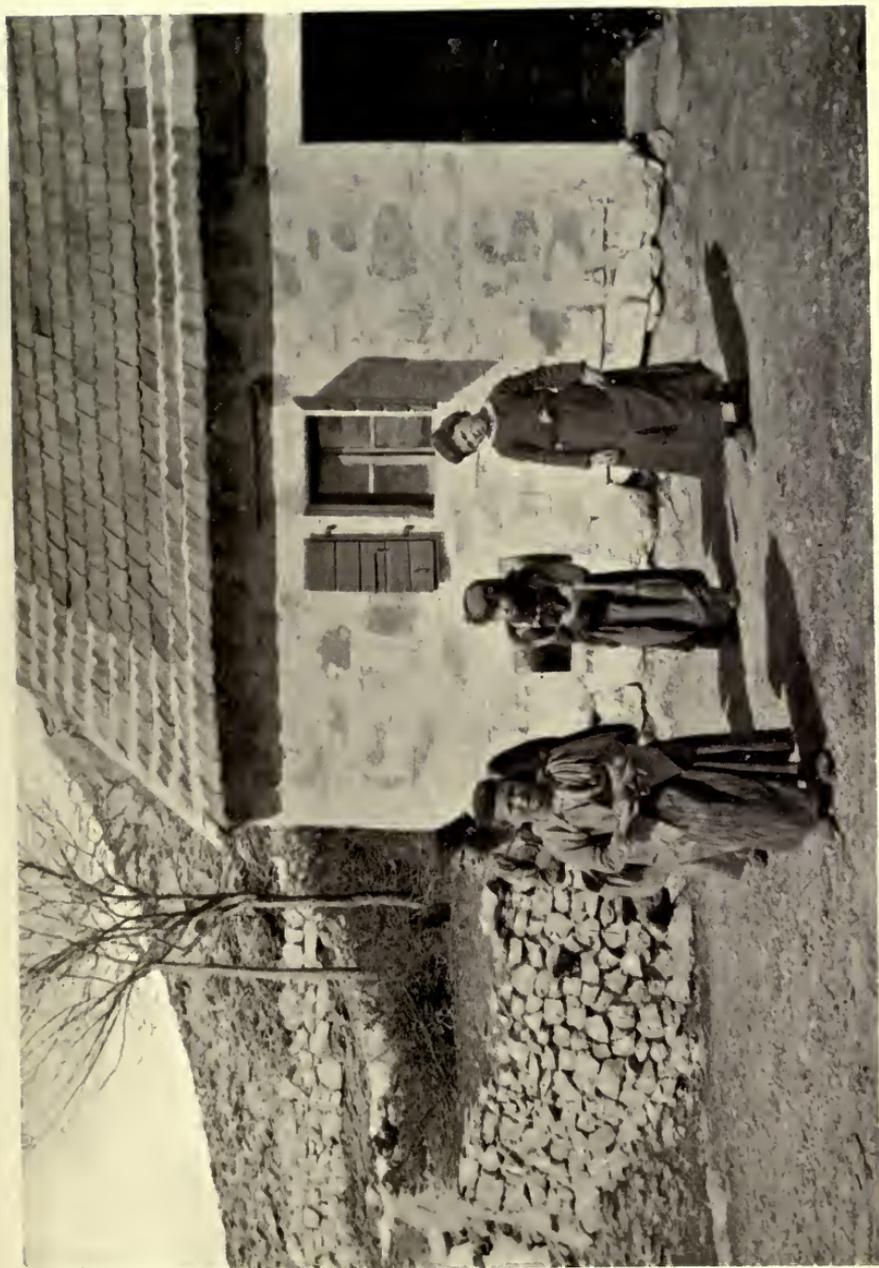


Photo by Author.

"A LAST GLIMPE OF RIEKA."

CHAPTER V

RAGUSA

MONTENEGRO is no country for the sportsman in quest of either big or small game. Both exist, in the shape of bear, chamois, and wild boar in the wilder parts of the country, and there are plenty of duck and snipe on the lowlands around the Albanian frontier. But one does not travel so far afield for wild-fowl, and the difficulties which must be overcome in order to find the real hunting grounds are certainly not worth the indifferent sport obtainable when they are reached, after days, if not weeks, of discomfort and privation. On the other hand, there is good fly-fishing in the larger rivers, and in the neighbourhood of Lake Scutari, but it is infinitely better in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and can there be enjoyed with greater ease and comfort owing to the more civilised nature of the country.

Dalmatia, the next province on our way, is probably better known to the reader than to an

American lady I recently met in Paris, who summed up the country, politically and socially, as "The place where the dogs come from!" This is no doubt useful information, which I may supplement by saying that this province extends from Croatia nearly to the Albanian frontier along the eastern shores of the Adriatic. It partly separates Montenegro from the sea, and Bosnia and Herzegovina restrict its western borders. In shape Dalmatia resembles a closed fan, gradually tapering to a point at its southern extremity, and while its seaboard is about 250 miles, the country nowhere exceeds 50 in breadth. Bosnia and Herzegovina are comparatively recent acquisitions of Austria; but the "White-Coats" annexed Dalmatia in the latter part of the eighteenth century, and, save for a brief interval (during the Napoleonic Wars of 1805), have held it ever since.

There are two ways of reaching Ragusa from Cattaro; one is by land, along a strip of the loveliest coast-scenery in the world, and the other by sea—a journey in either case of only a few hours. We chose the former by reason of the atrocious weather which pursued us from Cettigne, until our little steamer anchored off the "Pearl of the Adriatic," sleeping in the sunshine. Venice has, perhaps, a prior claim to this romantic title, but no Austrian will admit this, or that the Italian city can compare with Ragusa in beauty and surroundings. And I am inclined to agree with the Austrian!

A year ago had any one suggested Ragusa as a winter resort, I should first have inquired where it was, and, on hearing that it lay in Dalmatia, have strongly suspected the speaker's sanity. The very name of the country conjures up visions of brigands, primitive travel, and squalid fare. We live and learn! The above conditions may exist in the interior, but Ragusa itself has, at any rate, one hotel as good as any to be found in Cannes or Monte Carlo. Austrians have frequented the place for years, and the "Imperial" is crowded throughout the winter season with the *élite* of Vienna and Hungary. For the climate is perfect, and thousands of our countrymen who now annually revile the grey skies of the Mediterranean, would do well to come here for a change and enjoy the warmth and brilliant sunshine unmarred by their usual attendant on the French and Italian Riviéras—a biting "Mistral." Rain here is very unusual, and gales are as rare as earthquakes in England. Completely sheltered from the north and east, Ragusa lies, even in mid-winter, as snug and warm as a babe in a cradle, while neighbouring districts are swept by snowstorms and tempestuous weather.

Viewed from the sea, and at first sight, the place somewhat resembles Monte Carlo with its white villas, palms, and background of rugged, grey hills. But this is the modern portion of the town, outside the fortifications, erected many centuries ago. Within them lies the real Ragusa

—a wonderful old city which teems with interest, for its time-worn buildings and picturesque streets recall, at every turn, the faded glories of this “South Slavonic Athens.” A bridge across the moat which protects the old city is the link between the present and past. In new Ragusa you may sit on the crowded esplanade of a fashionable watering-place; but pass through a frowning archway into the old town, and, save in the main street, which has modern shops and other up-to-date surroundings, you might be living in the dark ages. For as far back as the ninth century Ragusa was the capital of Dalmatia and an independent Republic, and since that period her literary and commercial triumphs, and the tragedies she has survived in the shape of sieges, earthquakes, and pestilence, render the records of this little-known state almost as engrossing as those of Ancient Rome.

Until I came here I had pictured a squalid Eastern place, devoid of ancient or modern interest; most of my fellow-countrymen probably do likewise, notwithstanding the fact that when London was a small and obscure town Ragusa was already an important centre of commerce and civilisation. The Republic was always a peaceful one, and its people excelled in trade and the fine arts. Thus, as early as the fourteenth century the Ragusan fleet was the envy of the world; its vessels were then known as “Argusas” to British mariners, and the English word “Argosy” is probably derived from the name.



RAGUSA.

Photo by the Photoglob Co., Zurich.

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These tiny ships went far afield—to the Levant and Northern Europe, and even to the Indies—a voyage fraught, in those days, with much peril. At this epoch Ragusa had achieved a mercantile prosperity unequalled throughout Europe, but in later years the greater part of the fleet joined and perished with the Spanish Armada. And this catastrophe was the precursor of a series of national disasters. In 1667 the city was laid waste by an earthquake which killed over twenty thousand people, and this was followed by a terrible visitation of the plague, which further decimated the population. Ragusa, however, was never a large city, and even at its zenith, in the sixteenth century, it numbered under forty thousand souls, and now contains only about a third of that number.

In 1814 the Vienna Congress finally deprived the Republic of its independence, and it became (with Dalmatia) an Austrian possession. Trade has not increased here of recent years, as in Herzegovina and Bosnia. The harbour, at one time one of the most important ports in Europe, is too small and shallow for modern shipping, and the oil industry, once the backbone of the place, has sadly dwindled of late years. Dalmatia is a productive country, but its resources are being less developed year by year on account of the yearly increasing emigration of the natives to the United States, to which great British and German liners from Trieste convey them at absurdly low rates. Thus in the villages around

Ragusa young and able-bodied men are steadily decreasing in number, and in one village I visited only a dozen remained under the age of fifty out of a population of over three hundred—the others having sailed away to try their luck in the New World. A strong incentive to emigration is the beautiful palace built here by a Dalmatian peasant who went to America twenty years ago, struck oil (of a different kind to the native article) and returned three years ago to his native country, a multi-millionaire! And, strange to say, the latter returned to New York immediately his mansion was completed and has never returned. Large sums have been offered to induce the wealthy and eccentric owner to sell the place for a "Casino," but he stubbornly refuses to dispose of it for that or any other purpose.

Ragusa now having no harbour worthy of the name, the traveller by sea must land at Gravosa about a mile north of the old city. Not a room was vacant in the fashionable "Imperial," so we were compelled to put up at a second-rate inn, kept by an aged Viennese Israelite, whose frayed and greasy exterior was well in keeping with the establishment. Gravosa is merely a suburb of warehouses, shipping, and sailor-men, as unattractive as the London Docks, and the Hotel Petko swarmed with mosquitoes and an animal which seems to thrive and flourish throughout the Balkan States—the rat. Of course, according to the landlord, this vermin never existed save

in the imagination of his guests, and the Gravosan Jew had conceived a novel and ingenious plan of lulling their suspicions. Thus, in my foul and dusty apartment was a mousetrap, placed, so that it could not possibly escape notice, in the middle of the room. Such an object is usually concealed from the public gaze, and it was only late at night that I found a reason for its display; for while I was writing, towards the small hours, an enormous rat (which could have eaten the mousetrap, wire and all!) crawled out from behind the stove, and was shortly followed by another—and yet another—until the ingenuity of the management in accounting for nocturnal noises became manifest. But we became accustomed to rats in Servia, where in some of the wilder districts they almost took possession of our bedroom at night-time.

Gravosa is under a couple of miles from Ragusa, and a short drive by the sea-shore, along a palm-fringed road, with pretty, garden-girt villas on either hand, brings us to the “Porta de Pille,” or principal gateway. Here we leave our *fiacre*, for wheeled conveyances are forbidden to traverse these granite-paved streets, as smooth and spotless as a ball-room floor. Passing through a dark archway (let into city walls which once excited the admiration of Napoleon’s generals) we enter the “Stradone,” or principal street, which bisects the city, which latter, notwithstanding its great age, is, without exception, the cleanest I have ever seen. The Venetians ruled here for centuries, and

in olden days the place was a criss-cross of now invisible canals. A French traveller's happy impression of Ragusa was that of a *charmant décor d'opéra comique*; and certainly castled walls embedded in dizzy cliffs, quaint old buildings, and towering campaniles, crowded into the narrow space between rugged cliffs and a tiny blue harbour, are more suggestive of the theatre than of a place on a line of railway. This is a city of palaces, churches, and monasteries, and some of its architecture is said to surpass in beauty those even of Rome or Florence. The Rector's Palace, for instance, is a perfect storehouse of archæological treasures, and dates from the fourteenth century. Then there are the cathedral and church erected to Ragusa's spiritual protector, St. Blaise, who once averted the fall of the city before the Venetians. And talking of St. Blaise, my countrymen must occasionally form strange impressions of travel, judging from a conversation I overheard between two young Englishmen dining one evening at an adjacent table. "Who on earth was St. Blaise?" said one, immersed in the pages of a red "Baedeker." "I don't know," said the other absently. "Did not he once win the Derby?" If, therefore, the patron saint of Ragusa be occasionally forgotten, the equine son of Hermit and Fusee has at any rate achieved immortality!

The old Custom House is perhaps the most beautiful building in Ragusa, and is one of the few which survived the terrible earthquake of



PORTA PILLE.
RAGUSA.

Photo by Author.

1667. The structure bears the letters "I.H.S." over the principal entrance in commemoration of this fact. Its courtyard is a dream of beauty, and the stone galleries around it are surrounded with inscriptions of great age, one of which at once attracted the observant eye of Mackenzie. "Pondero cum merces, ponderat ipse Deus,"* read my friend, muttering, after a thoughtful pause, "Then why did those Austrian thieves at Gravosa charge me seven koronas for ten cigars?"

A detailed description of the historical and artistic treasures of Ragusa would take volumes, and I must refer the reader in quest of further information to the exhaustive and recently published work of Signor Villari. I am (unfortunately for myself) no judge or student of mediæval art, and must own that my favourite resort here was the Dominican Convent, with its quiet, sunlit cloisters, where an old stone well in the courtyard was almost hidden in a wilderness of palms and roses, and where the occasional clank of a windlass, turned by a holy friar, alone disturbed the drowsy stillness. An artist would revel in this spot, and the wonderful stone pillars of great age which surround this little oasis of peace and greenery would afford a whole day's study to the lover of antiquity.

But everything is delightful here, from the little harbour, with its swarthy fishermen and cluster

* "As we weigh your goods, God holds the scales."

of striped lateen sails, to Napoleon's "Fort Impérial," which at this distance looks like a white pill-box perched on the summit of rugged San Sergio. Ragusa is a Slav town, but although the names of streets appear in Slavonic characters, Italian is also spoken on every side, and the "Stradone," with its arcades and narrow precipitous alleys at right angles, is not unlike a street in Naples. The houses are built in small blocks, as a protection against earthquake—the terror of every Ragusan (only mention the word and he will cross himself)—and here on a fine Sunday morning you may see Dalmatians, Albanians, and Herzegovinians in their gaudiest finery, while here and there a wild-eyed Montenegrin, armed to the teeth, surveys the gay scene with a scowl, of shyness rather than ill-humour. Outside the *café*, on the Square (where flocks of pigeons whirl around as at St. Mark's in Venice), every little table is occupied; but here the women are gowned in the latest Vienna fashions, and Austrian uniforms predominate. And the sun shines as warmly as in June (on this 25th day of March), and the Cathedral bells chime a merry accompaniment to a military band; a sky of the brightest blue gladdens the eye, fragrant flowers the senses, and the traveller sips his Bock or Mazagran, and thanks his stars he is not spending the winter in cold, foggy England. Refreshments are served by a white-aproned *garçon*, and street boys are selling the *Daily Mail* and *Gil Blas*, just as they are on the

far-away Boulevards of Paris. One of the charms of this place lies in its queer mixture of mediævalism and modernity. "Don't write about Ragusa," said the only English lady I met here, who (so far as England is concerned) had practically "discovered" the place, "or tourists will flock here in crowds and spoil it. And I fear that she was right.

Nevertheless, if you are a lover of Society (or what passes for it in French and Italian winter resorts) come not to Ragusa. For there is little to do in the evenings, and the best Viennese people (who alone come here) are averse (unlike some of our countrymen) to making hotel acquaintances. There are not even golf-links! But, on the other hand, the lovely surroundings afford some fresh and delightful excursion for every day in the month. A pleasant drive is to Ombla—eight miles away—where ruins of the campaign of 1806 are still visible, and whence deliciously pure water is conveyed by pipes to Ragusa; or walk towards evening to the old Monastery of San Giacomo and enjoy a sunset such as I have never seen equalled, even in the Red Sea or Arctic Ocean. Or, if you prefer it, a steam launch will take you to the island of Lacroma,* an Eden of woods and flowers, with its palace once often visited by the ill-fated Arch-

* Richard Cœur de Lion is said to have been wrecked on this island on his return from the Crusades; but this tradition seems to lack authenticity.

duke Rudolph, but now converted into a monastery after his son's tragic death by the Emperor Francis Joseph. A sad interest lingers around Lacroma, for here Maximilian, Emperor of Mexico, also resided just before his last and fatal journey. You may roam at will through his late Majesty's apartments, which still contain many melancholy relics, such as books and pictures, many of the latter representing the late Queen Victoria and the Royal Family of England. From the windows of the Palace is a glorious view of the distant city seen across a wilderness of forest, now thickly sprinkled with white heather, which grows here with unusual luxuriance. Flowers, too, grow like weeds in the beautiful but neglected gardens below, where a marble statue of Maximilian is pointed out by a holy friar. Here also am I surprised, or rather shocked, to find a bronze bust of Mr. James Gordon-Bennett (of *New York Herald* renown), presented by that gentleman himself (for reasons not specified). A more fitting place might surely have been found for this work of art, which is certainly out of keeping with the romantic and historical associations of this lonely and beautiful island.

Ragusa is but a three days' journey from London, the last twenty-four hours being by sea from Trieste—through smooth, landlocked fjords, where the worst sailor need fear no ill effects. But Ragusa, to be seen at her best, must be visited without delay; for sooner or later the Austrian



A BIT OF "OLD" RAGUSA.

Photo by Author.



Riviera must become more widely known, and as my English friend prophesied, crowds of tourists will then rob the place of much of its existing charm and novelty.

CHAPTER VI

THROUGH HERZEGOVINA

TWENTY years ago the territory of the Herzegovina (which must be crossed to reach Bosnia from the sea) was so wild and perilous that few travellers ventured into the interior of the country without good reason and a powerful escort. There were no roads, in those days, worthy of the name. You could travel on wheels (but not springs) from Mostar, the capital, to the Adriatic coast, along an execrable track carelessly laid over dizzy heights, scaling wall-like chasms, and finally following the banks of the rapid Narenta River down to the sea. Up north, towards the Bosnian frontier, it was easier travelling, but, on the other hand, you were more likely to get your throat cut! Contrast this with to-day, when you may enter a railway car at Ragusa, and leave it, a few hours later, at Mostar, after traversing some of the finest scenery in the world (Herzegovina has been rightly called the Turkish Switzerland) under the most luxurious conditions! The line skirts the left bank of the Narenta (a clear, swift stream, all cascades and waterfalls, and teeming with trout), which meanders now through rocky defiles and valleys



Photo by Author.

THE NARENTA RIVER.

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ablaze with pink and white blossom, now across green stretches of plain, rich in rye and tobacco. About midway we reach Petchilitz, a cluster of grey houses, red roofs, and minarets, perched on a rock which rises a sheer hundred feet from the water. On the summit is a ruined, moss-grown fort, with rusty cannon still peering from its embrasures. The place looks weird and romantic; and well it may, for Petchilitz was once the chief stronghold of brigandage in the Herzegovina, and caravan-men went round miles to avoid it. To-day I can placidly survey the place while discussing an excellent meal in the train.

This trifling incident only serves to show what has been done on a gigantic scale throughout the Austrian Balkans since the occupation of 1878. We in England can form no conception of the marvellous transformation effected here by Austria in that short space of time, nor even faintly realise the almost magical rapidity with which the recently barbaric provinces of Herzegovina and Bosnia have been converted into growing centres of commerce and civilisation. While travelling from Ragusa to the Servian frontier, I met, in every town or village, with some fresh and wonderful proof that the Austrians (generally regarded as a stay-at-home nation) are really the finest (and quickest) colonisers in the world. For not only do they excel in the administration of state affairs under novel and complicated conditions, but also in that close attention to details which affects even the personal comfort of travellers. Mr. Gladstone once

declared that "no man could put his finger on the map of Europe and find a place where Austria had done good," but I feel confident that the great and lamented statesman would modify his opinion at the present day. Even the stations on the Bosnia and Herzegovina Railway are as trim and well kept as those of the Fatherland, and the corridor trains are, although slower, infinitely more comfortable. Fares are ridiculously cheap, even first-class, but the natives here generally travel in fourth-class carriages—or rather open trucks—as on the Turkish lines.

Mostar, chief city of the Herzegovina, still retains much of its ancient and Oriental charm. The Teutonic element is confined to a couple of white, glary streets, a modern hotel, a public garden with a few dusty shrubs and dilapidated bandstand, and the military barracks. Elsewhere in Mostar you are in Turkey, and are jostled in the dark, narrow streets by the same Jews, infidels, and heretics as in the bazaars of Stamboul. The minaret in Bosnia is fast disappearing, but here you may still hear the evening cry of the "muezzin" and see solemn, white-turbaned Turks squatting in dark doorways and cursing the advent and rule of the "Giaour." Everything around is purely Eastern, from the mud and filth underfoot to the mangy street curs, and from the chink of metal water-goblets to that subtle Eastern odour (a characteristic blend of spices, tobacco smoke, leather, and sweetstuff) which permeates every bazaar from Rangoon to Ragusa.



MOSTAR.

Photo by Studnické, Sarajevo.

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Mostar has always been famous for its picturesque surroundings, but the place derives its name ("Most" bridge, and "Star," old) from an old Roman* bridge of incomparable beauty which spans the rushing Narenta, and which is worth travelling many weary miles to see. The origin of the structure is shrouded in mystery. Some say that it dates only from the Turkish era and is the work of a Dalmatio-Italian architect—and this theory is strengthened by the fact that the only inscription as yet discovered on the edifice is a Turkish one close to the water's edge. On the other hand, an eminent Austrian archæologist has decided that the bridge is undoubtedly the work of the Romans about the year A.D. 72; and this view is the one generally accepted by authorities on the subject. In any case, all antiquarians are agreed that the symmetry of its single arch, 80 feet in height, is unequalled throughout the world. There are no fewer than thirty mosques in this town of under twenty thousand inhabitants (of whom perhaps half are of the Catholic or Orthodox faith), but, although there are domes of gorgeous splendour and minarets of rare delicacy, most of the interiors are mere whitewashed barns. The native quarters are full of novelty and interest, and also the people; but my "Kodak" created as great a scare here as amongst the Austrian authorities at Cártaro, and Mackenzie was compelled to retreat in haste before a menacing crowd of Herzegovinians

* Under the Romans, Mostar was known as "Andetrium."

who apparently could not appreciate the honour of figuring in a living picture! This was annoying, for there was an unusual amount of interesting matter for the camera—especially the Moslem women of the place, who wear not only the usual *yashmak*, but in addition to it a long, black gown with a hideous cowl peculiar to Mostar, and to be seen in no other Mahometan country throughout the world. The effect produced by these sable-clad forms flitting silently through the streets was weird and uncanny even in bright sunlight, and more suggestive of the gruesome Italian “Brethren of Death,” than of the pretty woman whom these shroud-like garments must, occasionally, have concealed. Polygamy is now greatly (and voluntarily) restricted in the Austrian Balkans, where even rich men are generally content with four or five wives at the most. This perhaps accounts for the extra precautions in veiling their women from the prying gaze of the garrison, and of other dissolute infidels. The former, however, appeared to be readily consoled by the Herzegovinian ladies of Mostar, who are justly renowned for their good looks, and who, being Christians, were *not* burdened with cowls or an unusual amount of shyness!

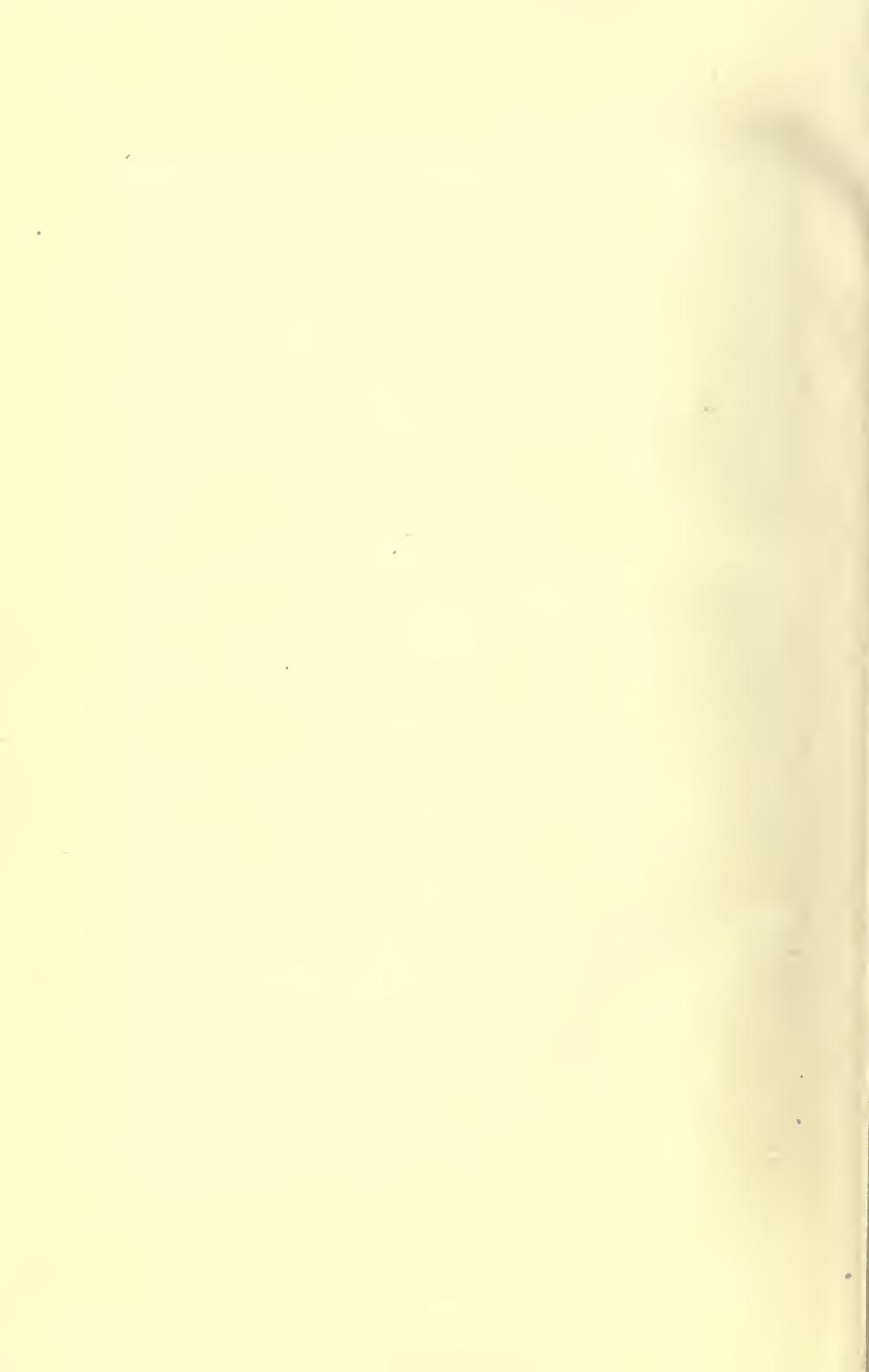
The hotel in Mostar was a revelation. We had expected to find a miserable Turkish *khan*, but were ushered into luxurious apartments, while, at first sight, the midday *table d'hôte*, in its spacious and glittering *Speise Saal*, more



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A VEILED WOMAN OF MOSTAR.

From a Photo.



resembled a military banquet than a humble repast at two florins a head *vin compris*. For nearly every one was in uniform, from the grizzled veteran with beribboned tunic down to the latest-joined schoolboy as yet ill at ease in the light blue and silver of the Austrian hussar. The few commercial gents of Jewish exterior who occasionally joined the repast were calmly ignored by the military (for the Semitic race is *not* popular here); but we were warmly welcomed, as are most Englishmen throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Those were merry meals, for some of these gay hussars were as familiar with Piccadilly as with the *Graben*, and had played polo and performed "between the flags" in England. I have been the guest of regiments in all parts of the world—from Highlanders and Ghorkas in Malta and the East, to French Chasseurs and Russian Cossacks in Tonkin and Siberia, but for true hospitality the Austrian Army almost excels our own, which says a great deal! But you must be an Englishman to enjoy it—other nationalities and, of course, Jews (in all classes of life) are severely tabooed, or were, at any rate, by the *beaux-sabreurs* we met in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Although its suburbs remain Oriental, and therefore picturesque, Mostar has no bazaar worthy of the name. This was not the case a century back, when the inlaid weapons here rivalled those of Damascus, and priceless treasures from the Far East were displayed where now

are only sold cheap Vienna and Birmingham goods. In a few years Mostar will become a commonplace German town, of which the two glary thoroughfares aforementioned, and a new and hideous iron bridge, which now spans the river a short distance above the beautiful Roman structure, form the nucleus. Many Herzegovinians affect to dislike the Austrian occupation, having probably forgotten the cruelty and oppression they suffered under Turkish rule. The place is still shown here where the infamous Ali Pasha had the outer walls of his residence lowered in order that he might witness the impalement of two hundred Christians ; but although this occurred only fifty years ago, a Mostar merchant whose acquaintance I made in the hotel, averre that his country was happier and more prosperous then than under Francis Joseph I. But I was told by the Governor that this was merely a "pose" assumed by many Herzegovinians of the better class, and that they, like the peasantry, would soon cry out at any likelihood of a return to the barbarous Turkish *régime*, when even wealthy Christians were robbed and subjected to every indignity, while the poorer classes were treated as mere beasts of burthen. Nevertheless the Austrian forces met with a fierce resistance before Mostar was finally occupied in 1878, when even women and little children fired upon the invaders from the windows of their houses. Many of the wealthier inhabitants fled across the border into Montenegro, where they

are living at the present day, in comparative poverty, although the trade of Mostar has greatly increased since the occupation, and life and property are far more secure here than in any part of the wild Black Mountain.

Although its surroundings are picturesque there is little in Mostar itself to attract or detain a stranger. My favourite spot was the old Roman bridge which in the morning was generally crowded with an ever-shifting crowd of strange faces and stranger costumes. On market-days caravans of horses, mules, and donkeys, laden with produce, and herds of sheep and cattle rendered the passage across somewhat risky, and once I was nearly jostled over the low parapet and into the torrent below. And what a babel of tongues! Turkish, Greek, Serb, Albanian, and Croatian—even a species of *Lingua-Franca* which passes for Italian on the Dalmatian coast. The costumes would have supplied material for a dozen brilliant ballets—ranging from the seedy frock-coat and fez of the modernised Turk to the real thing from Albania—the swarthy, stalwart savage in gaudy rags, with bright knives and fire-arms. Occasionally the black cowl of a Moslem woman would flit hurriedly by, as if to escape observation, but no shyness appeared to trouble the Christian fair sex, easily distinguished by their gowns of white cloth and black embroidery, heavy silver ornaments, and flower-bedecked hair. The ladies of Mostar are renowned for their beauty, and some would undoubtedly have been pretty

but for the indiscriminate use of rouge and *henna*. An Austrian officer told me that during the races (recently organised by the garrison) the old bridge is a sight to be remembered, and that the day rarely passes without a severe accident occasioned by the dense crowd. The races themselves must also be worth seeing, judging from the fact that, the preceding year, the venerable winner of the principal event had been ridden by a jockey nearly seventy years of age! And although the totalisator paid out only ten florins *in all*, both horse and rider were repeatedly kissed by the delighted crowd on returning to scale!

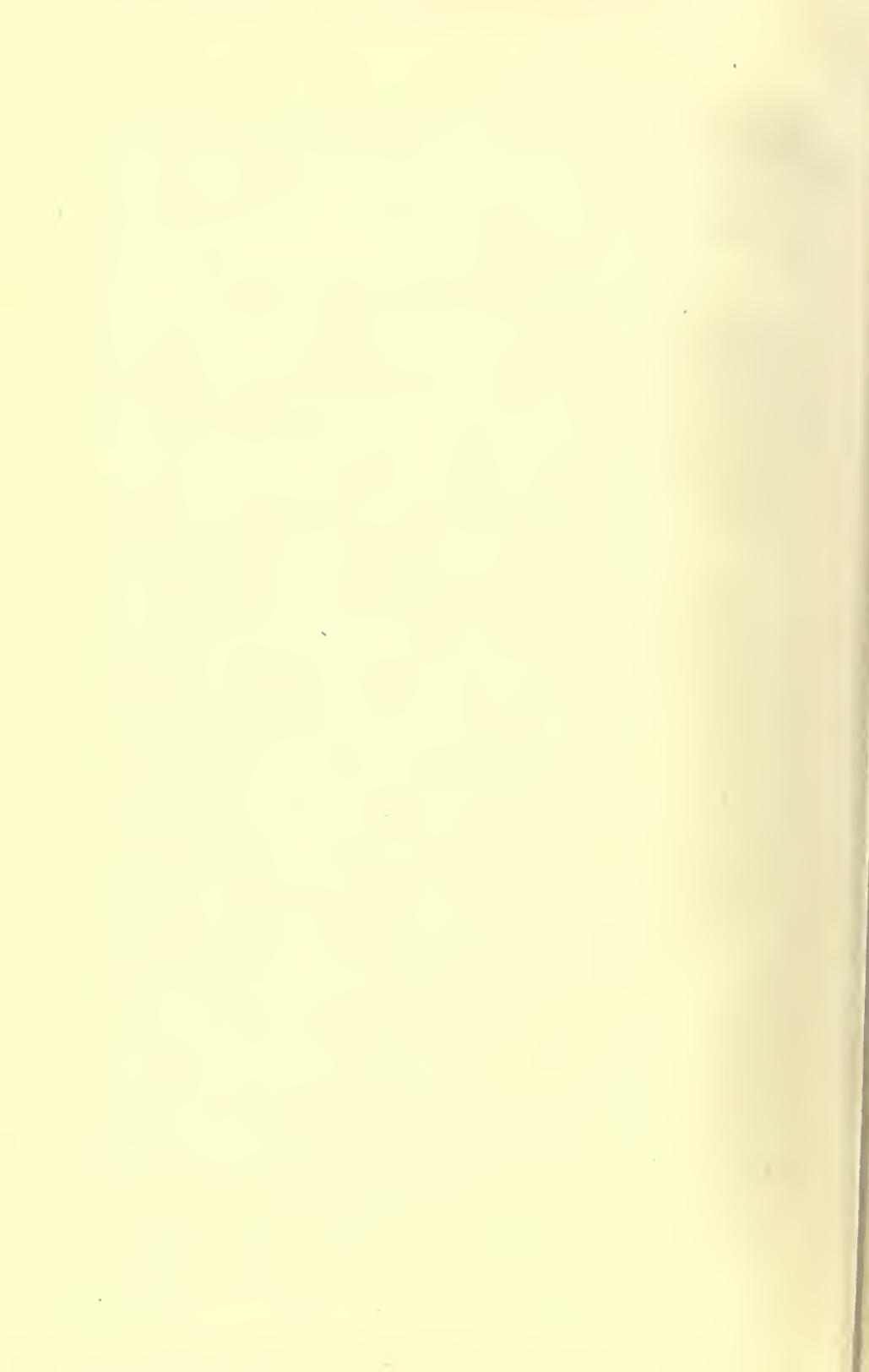
Herzegovinians are even more superstitious, if possible, than Italians. No man, woman, or child would dream of stirring abroad without one or more of the charms, which have a ready sale in the bazaar. These talismans mostly consist of gold and silver crosses and stars, death's-heads in ivory, tiny tortoises, rabbits in cornelean, coral hands against the Evil Eye, and innumerable others, and the amulet worn during life is always buried with the wearer in order to ensure a safe passage across the Styx. Nor is this practice confined to Herzegovinians, for nearly every Austrian officer I met here wore a fetish—which he would probably have scorned to do at home. It is not surprising, therefore, that the superstition regarding vampires should have reached here from the adjacent country of Servia, the land of its birth.* In Herzegovina a vampire

* Serb=Wampir.



THE OLD BRIDGE.
MOSTAR.

Photo by Kisiic, Mostar.



is said to be the soul of a dead man, which leaves his grave at night-time to suck the blood of its living victim. I was told quite seriously that when one of these monsters was exhumed near Belgrade it showed every sign of life, and was sleeping and breathing as peacefully as the man had done before his death, a century before! This occurred thirty years ago, and according to custom the corpse was decapitated, and a stake driven through the body, which was then burnt—the grave being purified with water and vinegar. A gaunt, cadaverous individual who frequented the Hôtel Café at Mostar, was pointed out to me as the victim of a vampire's nocturnal visits, in consequence of which he would after death become one himself. My informant was a grey-haired major, whom I deeply offended by suggesting that indigestion and its kindred ailments sometimes produce an unnatural pallor. But the major was a Hungarian, where this superstition is almost as prevalent as in White Russia, Poland, and Servia, and he therefore received the suggestion with silent contempt.*

A pleasant stay was made here, for the country around it has many attractions, both from a picturesque and archæological point of view. Agriculture has made tremendous strides within the past decade, and the villainous concoction once produced in the adjacent vineyards and called

* An interesting account of a vampire may be found in a work called "In a Glass Darkly," by Sheridan Le Fanu.

wine is now rendered, by modern methods, as sound and drinkable as light hock or claret. And it was pleasant, after expeditions into the country, to return at night to a decent hotel, instead of to the filthy Turkish inn which only a few years back formed the sole accommodation to be found here. But luxurious as was the Mostar hotel in other respects its bathing accommodation was certainly restricted. When returning chilled to the bone after a long day's shooting in the rain, I asked for a hot bath; it was brought me—but in the shape of a large biscuit tin, which still bore traces of the familiar tri-coloured labels issued by a famous Reading firm!

A delightful drive or ride is the one to Blagaj, the ancient capital of Herzegovina, now in ruins. Near here the little Buna river flows from a rift in a mountain of limestone, its blue waters issuing, apparently, from the bowels of the earth. No one has ever summoned courage to ascend this subterranean stream; indeed, it would be impossible, for a glimpse into the gloomy cave and surging torrent reveals jagged stalactites descending from the roof to within a few inches of the water. It is said that this stream is merely a continuation of another which enters the earth (as rivers have a way of doing in these parts), and disappears some twenty miles away to the northward. This is probably the case, and, as our guide gravely remarked, the theory is proved by the following incident, which is said to have occurred in the old Turkish days: An aged worthy of Blagaj,



VEILED WOMEN OUT WALKING.
MOSTAR.

Photo by Author.

while fishing in the Buna, beheld his son's walking-staff floating down stream, and afterwards found that the lad, a shepherd, had lost it in the Sakomka river, which disappears from view on the other side of the mountain range. This opportunity was not lost upon the old gentleman, who craftily arranged that every day a sheep should be killed by the boy and cast into the underground current, to be secured by his father when it reached the open waters of the Buna. But the owner of the fold discovered the fraud, and one day no sheep, but the headless body of the shepherd, appeared on the surface of the stream before the horror-stricken father."

Herzegovina is essentially an agricultural province, and the breeding of cattle and tobacco planting are the chief occupations of its people. Its mineral wealth is insignificant as compared with Bosnia, but I should add that Herzegovina has only as yet been very superficially explored in this respect. The climate is delightful—there is a very slight snowfall—although in summer it is often too hot to be pleasant, the thermometer sometimes reaching 98° Fahr. in the shade. The Narenta Valley is the most fertile, and here maize and tobacco grow like weeds, and grapes, olives, and figs flourish with Southern luxuriance. Sport, so far as shooting is concerned, is poor, but in the Buna, as in most streams in Herzegovina, there is excellent trout-fishing—as yet unpreserved, but scarcely likely to remain so. Living in Mostar is cheap and good, and the cost of travel very trifling

compared to other countries ; so that a man might do worse than bring his rod here for a few weeks in the proper season, especially as many parts of Bosnia afford the same sport and equal facilities for its attainment.



MAGLAJ.
A BOSNIAN FORTRESS.

Photo by Studnické, Serajevo.

CHAPTER VII

MODERN BOSNIA *

HAD the railway from Mostar to Serajevo (which was built in 1891) been constructed in Western Europe, it would undoubtedly have been the talk of the world; for surely no line was ever laid across so difficult a piece of country. In places whole cliffs have been blasted away to enable the metals to follow a narrow pathway with granite walls and a nasty precipice on either side. As the engine creeps carefully over the slender iron bridges towards the summit you may look down from your carriage window into a thousand feet of space, and feel thankful that cog-wheels are beneath you, for otherwise any hitch with the brakes might cause a frightful accident. At times the track is so tortuous that an engine-driver may glance across a chasm and without looking back see the rear van winding around a corner. The speed is slow and sure; seventy odd miles in about eight hours; but with those terrific curves and

* The provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina are amalgamated together for administrative purposes by the Austrian Government.

gradients it would be quite impossible to cover the distance safely in less time.

The line traverses a country as fertile as it is picturesque, for the valleys of the Ivan-planina range are one long panorama of arable, pasture, and forest lands, which every year become better cultivated and more densely peopled. At present timber and plums are the chief products of this district, large quantities of the latter being exported to India and the United States. "Slivovitch," the favourite liqueur throughout the Balkans, is made from this fruit, and is almost as potent, if not quite as nasty, as Russian vodka. But in a few years tobacco, excellent of its kind, will be an important industry in this part of Bosnia, and the Austrian Government wisely affords every assistance to its growers and retains the monopoly. The Bosnian tobacco is not unlike Turkish in flavour, but is at present rather coarse—a defect which, in time, will no doubt be remedied. Of minerals, gold, silver, copper, and iron are known to exist in various parts of Bosnia, and our engine consumed coal of fair quality from a mine lately opened near Mostar. The fare, first class, from Mostar to Serajevo is about ten shillings, which is certainly moderate considering the luxurious conditions under which it is accomplished. When crossing the White Pass by rail in Alaska, a couple of years ago, some of the gradients made my blood run cold, but they were not as bad as that on the Serajevo Railway. But in Alaska trains are run over the mountains in a careless, happy-go-lucky

manner that would make an Austrian railway official's hair stand on end. Sheer luck has hitherto prevented disasters on the White Pass line, but on the Serajevo-Mostar system unceasing care and attention to the minutest details render an accident next to impossible. Breakdowns, however, do occasionally occur, and some trifling repairs to our engine necessitated a slight delay. This fortunately took place near Yablanitsa, a health resort which the Austrian Government has established in one of the wildest gorges of the Pass, and where we found a comfortable hotel with charming surroundings. In civilised Europe Yablanitsa would be a gold-mine to the proprietors, with its pure mountain air and glorious scenery; but as it was, we were the sole occupants of the spacious dining-room with its marvellous view and dozens of ghostly, unoccupied tables ready laid, but vainly awaiting occupants. In summer-time, however, the place is often crowded, and the visitors' book showed that English tourists had once got as far as this from Ragusa—one of the few occasions upon which we ever heard of, much less saw, any compatriots between the Adriatic and Bukarest. As usual, my countrywomen had not been content to inscribe their names, but, inspired no doubt by the romantic scenery, had recorded their impressions in poetry—of their own! Their effusions reminded me of the elderly English spinster who penned the following lines in a visitors' book on the Lake of Como:—

“On the lake of Come,
I hope to find a home!”

But a facetious fellow-guest secretly altered the final "e" of each line into the letter "o," and I draw a veil over subsequent events.

With Serajevo I was disappointed, partly because its beauties had been exaggerated, partly on account of its prim German appearance, which is quite out of keeping with this picturesque Eastern land. A citadel and fortifications crown the heights, but below them the place seems as incongruous here as would a Turkish town, suddenly dumped down on the banks of the Spree. The Franz Josef Strasse, for instance, has its hotels, clubs, shops, and theatres, and looks just like a bit of Vienna or Berlin. Of the old Bosna-Serai, or "city of palaces," only a few mosques are left, and a bazaar, which is gradually being absorbed into the modern town. It forms a continuation of the aforementioned Franz Josef Strasse; and to walk suddenly from the latter, with its handsome buildings and street cars, into the dim, mysterious oasis which still remains here of Oriental life, was like entering some barbaric show at Earl's Court from out of the busy London streets. But if the Austrian be not loved (as he certainly is not) by Bosnians, the latter are wary enough to see that trade has vastly improved under the new *régime*. Also the population has largely increased, for the capital now contains over 40,000 inhabitants. Of these, about 17,000 are Mahometans and about 11,000 and 6,000 belong to the Catholic and Greek Churches respectively. The remainder are Jews—a Spanish



GENERAL VIEW OF SERAJEVO.

Photo by Studnické, Sarajevo.

branch of the race whose ancestors fled here in the sixteenth century from the terrors of the Inquisition. Of late years, thousands of German and Polish Israelites have invaded the towns of this province—and to such an extent that the authorities now contemplate restrictive measures—but from these the Spanish Jews keep strictly aloof, both commercially and socially, maintaining that the intruders come of an infinitely inferior stock to themselves. Moreover, while the new arrivals from Western Europe are universally detested, the Spaniards live in perfect peace and harmony with the Christian and Mussulman population. They speak a kind of Spanish *patois* very melodious, and so far as business is concerned, probably very useful, for no one else in the place can understand it! That they are prosperous is shown by the clean and orderly appearance of the Jewish quarter, and the handsome synagogue, which cost some millions of guldens, and the towers of which are visible for miles around the city.

In 1511, Serajevo was merely a Turkish fortress surrounded by a few wooden huts, which formed the nucleus of the city of to-day. It has always been a fruitful breeding-place of conspiracies and revolts, first against the Turks, and in later years against the Austrian invaders, and the place was not occupied by the latter in 1878 without great loss of life on either side. It is said that the waters of the Miliatchka river, which runs through Serajevo, were red with blood before it was taken, and many of the buildings still bear traces of the

furious bombardment by means of which General Phillipovitch eventually silenced the Bosnian batteries.

Whatever the bazaar of Bosna-Serai may once have been, it is now dirty, dull, and uninteresting. As in Teheran, the costliest wares are only produced when there is a serious prospect of doing business—and the Bosnian merchant utterly declines to haggle over a deal, be it important or otherwise. It is “take it or leave it,” and to either course he is generally supremely indifferent. As in Stamboul, each street in the Serajevo “Bezestan” has its distinctive trade. The local embroidery, silver filigree work, and inlaid steel, are fairly cheap, but, on the other hand, cannot be called artistic or even pleasing to the eye, besides which many of the goods are rubbishy German imitations. As a rule, the only genuine articles here are articles of copper work, or of black wood inlaid with silver, the latter very beautiful. But the stores for the common necessaries of life seemed to be doing the best trade, which does not say much, for although modern Serajevo teems with commercial activity, business in the native quarter is conducted with a lazy indifference engendered of centuries under Ottoman rule. For instance, there are only four working days in the week for the Bosnian: Friday, Saturday, and Sunday being Sabbaths (and, therefore, days of rest) apportioned respectively to the Christian, Mahometan, and Jew! On work-days the “Bezestan” swarmed with strange



A BOSNIAN WARRIOR.

From a Photo.

nationalities, Bosnians, Croatians, Servians, Dalmatians, Greeks, and Turks. The "Tziganes," or gipsies, were also very numerous, and here do not, as usual, earn money as musicians, but as iron and brass workers. Socially, they are looked down upon by all other races, chiefly on account of their women, whose mode of life was indicated by brazen manners, rouged faces, and a profusion of cheap jewelry.

I have not, in the above census, included the garrison, which is over three thousand strong—a large percentage, for every third person in the street seemed to be in uniform. *Cafés*, of course, abound, also "Bierhalles"; and the theatre is generally occupied by some opera or comedy company from Austria, the winter season especially being one round of dances, dinners, and receptions. In summer-time, when the heat and dust of the city become unbearable, Ilidje, about nine miles away, is the favourite resort of wealth and fashion. A branch line of the Bosnian Railway runs to this pretty little watering-place, the sulphur baths of which were much frequented by the Turks, and discovered by the Romans long before them. Of late years a number of villas have sprung up around the town, which formerly consisted of three primitive inns and a restaurant. Now people come from Belgrade, and even from Sofia, to drink the waters and enjoy life, and during the race week, when the "Serajevo Derby" is the attraction, not a room is vacant in the place. Falconry was once the favourite sport

here amongst the *jeunesse dorée*, but lately pigeon-shooting has taken its place—and golf-links are to follow. Imagine English jockeys, “caddies,” and *petits chevaux*, almost within sight of the ancient and venerable walls of Bosna-Serai!

Incessant rain prevented our riding out to the Observatory (the only one in the Balkans), which is well worth a visit. From here there is a magnificent view from a peak 6,000 feet high, and on a clear day even the distant ranges of Montenegro are visible to the naked eye. But it is a two days' journey from Serajevo on horseback along rough mountain paths, and although there is a rough shelter on the summit for the accommodation of travellers, the game, considering the wet weather, was hardly worth the candle. So we roamed about the city and explored its mosques; but most of them are barn-like buildings, plain and unattractive inside and out. Perhaps the “Begova Djamia,” which dates from the sixteenth century, is the finest, but even this would scarcely impress a stranger acquainted with the places of worship in Cairo or Constantinople. Some of the latter here, however, were surrounded by quiet, shady gardens, where it was pleasant enough to stroll about on a warm day and examine the curious old inscriptions on the fez-topped tombstones. How is it that Mahometan cemeteries are always less gloomy and depressing than the places where Christians lay their dead? But the finest view of the city was obtainable from the Jewish cemetery, on the slope of a neighbouring hill, and it was worth the stiff



SERAJEVO FROM THE PALACE.

Photo by Stauinicki, Sarajevo.

climb to come here at sunset, and look down upon Serajevo, its lights twinkling like diamonds through the violet mists of evening, while the stillness was alone broken by the muffled murmur of the town, and the weird cry of muezzins from a hundred minarets. Occasionally a bugle-call from the barracks or the clash of trucks from the station would reach the ear, but otherwise there was nothing to suggest that a commonplace German town, and not the ancient Turkish stronghold, lay glittering at our feet.

And yet although mediævalism is mentally attractive, civilisation is certainly a physical blessing, especially in the Near East. Serajevo, for instance, was formerly a nest of disease, for the broad but shallow Miliatchka (or the "Gently-whispering") formed its main drain, which in summer sometimes ran dry for weeks together. Sewage was then thrown into the streets, and the fruitful harvest of cholera and fever which followed this proceeding may be imagined. Now there is no healthier or better drained town in Europe, at any rate in the modern quarter. In olden times Bosnia was the stepping-stone for cholera and the plague to Western Europe from the East, and in 1741 the latter caused fearful ravages throughout the country. This is scarcely to be wondered at, for in those days the sick were at the mercy of native doctors, who treated the disease internally with boiled violet leaves, and outwardly by magic spells and violent "massage." The clothes, &c., of the sick were soaked in a

river or running stream for three or four days, while prayers were said over them, which naturally spread the infection with frightful rapidity. In 1865 cholera broke out, but by this time the city, although still under Ottoman rule, had been provided with European doctors, and fortunately so, for even this visitation carried off nearly 40% of the entire population! The first hospital was now erected, and the sick properly tended, so that although there have been three recurrences of the epidemic in recent years, the mortality has not been anything like so excessive as it was. Other diseases prevalent here at certain seasons of the year are typhoid fever, dysentery, and measles, but small-pox has been nearly stamped out by vaccination. Leprosy, however, still exists, as a short walk through the "Tsharshija," one of the native quarters, will conclusively prove. But there are now several free hospitals both for natives and Europeans, one of which, the "Central," is an admirably conducted establishment for surgical and medical cases. It is also proposed to found a special department for the "Pasteur" treatment of hydrophobia, which is very prevalent here, not only on account of homeless, starving curs which prowl about the streets, but also wolves which infest the country districts and which, in winter, often attack men working in the fields. I was shown a curious old book at one of the hospitals which contained some of the weird methods of treatment employed by the native doctors before modern science came to their

aid. One of these (which is mentioned as a *certain* cure for hydrophobia) is to kill the dog which inflicted the bite, cut his body in two pieces, and walk between the latter with your eyes shut. This is said to be an infallible remedy, but the writer gravely adds that it should be carried out within twenty-four hours of the accident, otherwise the patient will *probably die!* Oddly enough many of the natives here still prefer to consult their own medicine-men and apothecaries, whose drugs seemed to be as weirdly composed as some I saw in China. I saw some grey powder, said to be "pulverised mummy," sold at an enormous price in the "Bezestan" for the cure of cancer. For the Bosnian is very credulous. I should say also, from a short experience, that he is the least attractive of any of the Balkan races, for he lacks the chivalry of the Montenegrin, the gaiety of the Serb, and the enterprise of the Bulgar. But he has one virtue—domesticity, and is, as a rule, as fond of home and its legitimate surroundings as his Servian neighbours are the reverse. The men are fine, stalwart fellows, inured to a life of labour, and caring little so long as they can earn their daily bread; the women rather undersized and inclined to stoutness at an early age; but Eastern races, like the French, admire this! The female costume is becoming to a young girl, but is, in some cases, so *decollété* that its wearer would speedily be arrested in a London street. There seemed to be few pleasures in the existence of either sex,

and these were taken sadly. Even when dancing the "Kolo" (on the occasion of a wedding, or feast), which resembles the "Horo" of Bulgaria, and which is there performed in riotous merriment, the Bosnian went through the performance as though it were a very serious matter. The music, from a *guzla*, was sad and monotonous, like the country which produced it. I only once saw a group of Bosnians look in any way cheerful, and that was at a funeral.

Bosnia is certainly on the way to become as rich as any other Balkan State, for only capital is needed to develop its many resources, of which timber, tobacco, and hides are now the most important, but will surely not remain so, for valuable minerals are known to exist. And I should here mention that the prosperous condition of this country is due to the ceaseless energy and enterprise of Baron Von Kallay, a Hungarian, who as Austrian Minister of Finance has devoted his life, during the past twenty years, to the complete reorganisation of the State, politically, socially, and strategically. And to this end the Baron has been ably assisted by his beautiful and accomplished wife who, at the zenith of her youth and popularity in Vienna, left the gay capital for this land of exile, which at that time was bristling with discomfort and danger. The journey was then one which few men would have cared to undertake, for railways ceased near the Servian frontier, and the so-called roads of Bosnia were infested by hostile patriots and footpads. Volumes could be written



about the adventures which befel this plucky lady before Serajevo was reached ; and here the Baroness has since remained, doing her utmost to educate and socially improve women of all creeds and classes, and performing the deeds of charity and self-sacrifice which have earned her the title of "Queen of Bosnia." Every Austrian I met here agreed that the rapidity with which this once unsavoury and lawless town has been converted into a fine modern city is entirely due to this illustrious pair, and Ilidje itself would never have existed but for their generosity and perseverance. In addition to her social charms Baroness Von Kallay is justly renowned for her literary abilities and is a marvellous linguist, speaking English, French, Russian, and Bosnian fluently, and her hospitality is a byword amongst travellers of all nations who have had the good fortune to become acquainted with this remarkable woman and her distinguished husband. Baron Von Kallay is only just over sixty years old, but he has managed to crowd two centuries of invaluable work into his lifetime.

Serajevo possesses several hotels, of which the "Grand Central" is probably the best. As usual, there was no sitting-room for the use of guests, and when not exploring the streets and suburbs the restaurant was our drawing-room. As at Mostar, it resembled a military mess, and two-thirds of the *habitués* wore the Austrian uniform, or blue tunic and scarlet fez of some Austro-Bosnian regiment. The officers seemed to

have little to do, for at this season of the year military exercises are generally over for the day by 10 a.m., and the afternoons are usually spent in playing cards or talking scandal which, so far as I could glean, is never lacking here. This restaurant was also the chief centre for news from Europe which was posted up in the shape of telegrams twice during the day, although Serajevo itself is well supplied with newspapers, several being published in German and at least half a dozen in the Bosnian and Turkish languages. In the evening tradesmen came in after the theatre with their wives and daughters to drink Bock and Mélange and to listen to the inevitable string band, while every one spoke German to the exclusion of every other language, and a demand in English or French was met with a blank stare by the "Kellners." The *cuisine* was good but trying, being of an international character, and comprising such contrasts as beefsteak and frogs, sourcrout and "Risotto à la Milanésé"! Austrian politeness is justly renowned throughout Europe, but a lengthened residence in foreign parts had not improved the manners of some of the inhabitants here. For the keenest interest in our movements was taken by the occupants of adjoining tables, and one day a portly Viennese *bourgeois* actually called the waiter to inquire what I had ordered for dinner! It is only fair to add that this disagreeable failing was confined to civilians. The day of our departure a bill was handed to me in the restaurant for fifteen koronas,

which, as we had stayed here for three days and partaken of at least half a dozen meals in the hotel, struck me with pleasurable surprise. But unfortunately it was quickly followed by another account in the hall amounting to an additional fifty koronas, and I then learnt that in this portion of the Balkans the charges for apartments and board are always presented separately. I mention this fact in order that other travellers may be spared the disappointment I experienced!

Serajevo was not always capital of Bosnia—the now obscure little town of Yaïtché, one of the loveliest spots in the country, having first occupied that distinction. Yaïtché is well worth a visit, if only on account of its picturesque position and magnificent waterfall, which dashes with a deafening roar from the level of the town to a foaming cataract sixty or seventy feet below it. The place was built in the fifteenth century by an Italian from Spalato, who also fortified it so successfully that it has often proved a stumbling-block to invading Turks and Hungarians; also to the Austrians in 1878, who only occupied it after considerable loss of life. Here the last King of Bosnia was murdered, in 1463, by an envoy of the Sultan of Turkey, and his skeleton may still be seen reposing in a glass coffin in the old Franciscan church. Yaïtché was formerly inhabited solely by Catholics, and the ruins of many of their churches, destroyed by the Turks, are still visible. St. Luke the Evangelist is said to have died here, and a church dedicated to his memory (since converted into a

mosque) is still standing. I was much interested in an ancient and curious custom here, which is, I believe, unknown in other Bosnian towns: Any woman of the community whose conduct has not been above reproach is compelled to kneel in the street, outside some sacred edifice, for several hours a day until she has repented of her sins. And apparently society in the capital is not over-scrupulous in the matter of morals, to judge by the remark made to me regarding this singular rite by a young officer whom I met at the "Grand Central." "If they had to do it in Serajevo," he said, "there would be no getting past the cathedral!"



CHAPTER VIII

BELGRADE

AT daybreak on a glorious April morning we reached Belgrade, and as the train clattered across the iron bridge which separates it from the town of Semlin in Austrian territory I have seldom looked upon a fairer picture than that of the "White City,"* shining like a pearl through the silvery mists of sunrise. Mackenzie was enraptured with the scene, and remarked that the Servian capital must indeed be "a bonny spot," until I warned him that "distance lends enchantment," and that recollections of my last visit here were anything but pleasant ones. But nearly thirty years had now elapsed since Servia last fought to free herself from the yoke of the unspeakable Turk. In those days Belgrade contained perhaps thirty thousand inhabitants, and was unlinked by a ribbon of steel with civilised Europe. A tedious river journey brought you, from East or West, to a squalid, Eastern-looking town with ramshackle buildings and unsavoury streets. The chief

* Belgrade is derived from the Servian words "Beo-grad" or "White City."

thoroughfare was generally a sea of mud, although Princess Nathalie (afterwards Queen of Servia) might be seen there daily, rain or shine, the royal barouche ploughing axle-deep through mire and splashing its fair and elaborately gowned occupant. This was then the only drivable road, which signified little, as carriages were so few and far between. A truly dreary place was Belgrade in the seventies, for everything was primitive, dirty, and comfortless. In those days the best inn was a *caravanserai*, chiefly occupied by Russian volunteers, cavaliers of fortune, who swarmed into the country long before war had been officially declared. Every night the gloomy restaurant was crowded with these freelances, and bad champagne and fiery vodka flowed freely while painted Jezebels from Vienna cackled songs in bad French to the accompaniment of a cracked piano. Never had this remote Servian city witnessed such orgies, for many of these Russian allies had money to burn. They were of all ranks, from dandified guardsmen in search of fame to wild-eyed, ragged Cossacks with an eye to loot—and other things. It was a reckless, undisciplined horde, eyed askance by civilians with pretty wives, and cordially detested by Servian warriors who, much as they love to sport a uniform, strongly object to being shot for disgracing it. And this frequently happened, for it is a fact that Prince Milan's troops were often driven into action like dogs by their Russian commanders. During the war of 1876 the spectacle of Servian privates strolling about



From a Photo.

BELGRADE.

the capital with self-mutilated hands in order to escape service was a common one. But Prince Milan was a poor example to his army, for while desperate battles were of daily occurrence in the provinces this apathetic ruler passed most of his time playing "Vint" with congenial companions in the "Konak" or old Turkish palace, where his only son was destined to meet, some years later, with such a tragic fate.

A lively remembrance of old Belgrade and its primitive methods made it a pleasant surprise on this occasion to enter a palatial railway station instead of being dumped down on a mud-bank from the deck of a grimy steamer. There was one advantage in those days, however, for travelers were not subjected to the vexatious police regulations which now exist, and which are chiefly due to the unsettled condition of political affairs since the assassination of Alexander I. This time it was quite as bad as entering the Russian Empire, perhaps worse, for there, at least, the Custom House officials are not (or used not to be) exacting. But at Belgrade, in these days, everything in the shape of baggage is turned upside down and closely examined, and the passport examination often occupies half a day—a very obnoxious proceeding to those who, like ourselves, had fasted for twenty-four hours. Mackenzie was especially indignant, the more so when recalled, as we were on the point of leaving, by an inquisitive police official. "Your name Mackenzie—yes?" inquired the latter. "Your fader live Belgrade—no? Very

good man, give plenty money—yes?” “What on earth has my father got to do with you?” returned the irate Aberdonian; “and as for money, you won’t get any more out of me. Here, drive on!” and the carriage dashed away, leaving the man of passports open-mouthed and apparently as puzzled as I was at this brief and mysterious colloquy. And it was only some time afterwards that we learnt that a canny Scotsman, one Mackenzie, who many years ago left the land of cakes to settle down here, had, after a prosperous career, proved such a philanthropist that he has been handed down to posterity as a public benefactor. “More fool he!” remarked my friend, quite unimpressed by the fact that a fashionable quarter of Belgrade now bears the name (with variations) of his late illustrious kinsman.

Rip Van Winkle, after his long sleep in the Katskills, can scarcely have been more astonished at the altered appearance of his native village than I was at the marvellous improvements which less than thirty years have worked in Belgrade. In 1876 a dilapidated Turkish fortress frowned down upon a maze of buildings little better than mud-huts and unpaved, filthy streets. I had to splash my way from the river to the town through an ocean of mud carrying my own luggage, for no porters were procurable, and the half-dozen rough country-carts at the landing-place were quickly pounced upon by local magnates. Having reached the so-called “hotel” I found that it provided only black bread, a kind of peppery stew called



THE CATHEDRAL,
BELGRADE.

Photo by Author.

“Paprika,” and nothing else in the way of food—although all kinds of villainous wines and spirits were to be had at outrageous prices, having been laid down by a cunning landlord to meet the requirements of a thirsty Russian Legion. There was no privacy by day or night, and I was compelled to share a small, dark den with several Cossacks, a Polish Jew, and numerous other inmates which shall be nameless. To-day it seemed like a dream to be whirled away from the railway station in a neat *fiacre*, along spacious boulevards, with well-dressed crowds and electric cars, to a luxurious hotel. Here were gold-laced porters, lifts, and even a Winter Garden, where a delicious *déjeuner* (cooked by a Frenchman) awaited me. Everything is now up to date in this city of murder and mystery, for only two landmarks are left of the old city—the cathedral and citadel, over which now floats the tricolour of Servia. Of course ancient portions of the place still exist, with low-eaved, vine-trellised houses, cobbled streets, and quiet squares, recalling some sleepy provincial town in France; but these are now mere suburbs, peopled by the poorer classes, along the banks which form the junction of the Danube and Save. Modern Belgrade is bisected by the Teratsia, a boulevard, over a mile in length, of fine buildings, overtopped, about midway, by the golden domes of the new Palace. This is the chief thoroughfare, and here are the principal hotels, private residences, and shops, which latter, towards evening, blaze with electric light. The

Teratsia then becomes a fashionable promenade, and smart carriages, brilliant uniforms, and Vienna *toilettes* add to the gaiety of the scene. Serbia is lavish in uniforms, most of them more suggestive of *opera-bouffe* than modern warfare. From dawn till midnight the streets and *cafés* swarm with officers, who apparently have little to do but show themselves to a rather unappreciative public. On the other hand, I seldom saw a private soldier, except those on sentry outside public buildings and in barracks, and there is, no doubt, good reason for keeping the garrison on the alert for any emergency which may arise from the present disturbed condition of affairs. This I shall refer to in another chapter, and the reader will then probably agree that "Scarlet" would be a more suitable adjective than "White" for a city which has witnessed such infamous deeds, committed under the name of "patriotism." Yet, outwardly, "White" is a sufficiently descriptive term, for the snowy buildings, cheerful streets, and luxuriant greenery undoubtedly render this the most attractive capital throughout the Balkan States. A distinguished English traveller has described Belgrade as "a smaller but neater version of Budapest." Personally I see no similarity whatever between the two cities, although in early summer, when trees and flowers are in full bloom, the open-air life and exhilarating climate render the place almost worthy of the name of "Petit Paris," which was given to it, in his palmier days, by that erratic potentate, the late

King Milan. And amongst the novel and civilised objects which here met my astonished gaze was—a motor car! of the very latest Parisian build and finish. I should add, however, that this *rara avis* belonged to a Frenchman who had travelled here from Vienna *en route* to Ragusa and Montenegro. And a pleasanter trip could not be imagined at this time of year, for the high-roads through the Austrian Balkans could give points to many even in France.

Strange as it may seem, there is a great similarity between the Servian and French people, which is one of the most curious characteristics of this little-known nation. This is, perhaps, explained by the fact that, ever since the attainment of Servian independence, the so-called upper classes have sent their children to France to complete their education which, in the towns at least, is of a very high standard. Nearly every Servian I met in Belgrade spoke at least three languages (one of them invariably French); although in the provinces a stranger unacquainted with the Servian tongue fares badly. When travelling through the wilder parts of the country my knowledge of Russian stood me in good stead, and enabled me to converse, although imperfectly, with the natives. This was also the case in Bulgaria, but in remoter parts of Rumania I was again as helpless with regard to language as I had been in Bosnia and Montenegro. But any way, Servians of all classes are the politest people in the world, who will always go out of their way to assist a

stranger. I once inquired my way of a policeman, and he accompanied me for at least a quarter of a mile to put me on the right road.

Belgrade is now essentially a modern city, and the traveller is therefore apt to find it outwardly dull and prosaic after the towns he has visited on his way up from the Adriatic. This is partly due to an absence of colour. In Bosnia and Bulgaria bright and picturesque native costumes are continually met with (in Montenegro you rarely see anything else), but the people of Belgrade, with their tailor-made gowns and stove-pipe hats, might have walked straight out of Regent Street. For the first day or two Mackenzie and I wore light-coloured tweeds which, however, so scandalised the fashionable strollers on the Teratsia that we retreated hastily to the hotel and donned soberer suits of dark blue serge. And here, as in Russia, morning calls of an official nature must be made in thin dress clothes—an attire hardly adapted to a drive in an open sleigh in something unpleasant below zero. I once had to pay my respects to the Governor of Eastern Siberia at Irkutsk under these conditions, when the cold was so intense that I was compelled to draw on heavy furs and a thick suit of felt over the rest of my attire—an aggregate of apparel which gave me the appearance of an animated balloon. The object of the interview was to obtain dogs and reindeer for a four months' trip to the Bering Straits, and His Excellency (who suffered from weak sight) condoled with me on the priva-

tions and sufferings which such a journey must inflict. "Luckily you are very fat," he said, consolingly, with a glance at my massive proportions at parting; "and there is nothing like *that* to keep out the cold!"

During the spring-time a man need never feel dull for a moment in Belgrade, especially if he can present, as I did, letters of introduction to pleasant people who will tell him what to do and how to do it. For there is no lack of amusement at any time or season amongst these careless, easy-going folk, most of whom, like the Parisians, make a business of pleasure and leave work to look after itself. I strolled into the "Kalemegdan," or public gardens, one Sunday afternoon, and the family groups sitting under the trees or sipping "Bocks" at an open-air *café*, the kiosk with its military band, the nurses, soldiers, and goat-carriages, looked as though a bit of the Tuileries or Park Monceau had dropped out of the blue sky into the Balkans! Come here at sunset and you will be repaid by a view which I have seldom seen surpassed; but it must be in summer-time, when the eye can range over leagues of forest, flood, and field, extending from the broad and sullen river at your feet to an horizon formed by the boundless prairies of Hungary. But in early spring-time the Danube overflows its banks and these steppes become a waste of water, a vast grey sea, with desolate islets formed by the higher ground, and you search in vain for the kaleidoscopic effects cast by cloud and sunshine over the fertile summer plains. On

this spot, when the Crescent waved over Belgrade, stood Turkish sentinels, and here also was the execution ground where the blackened corpses of impaled Christians were exposed as a warning to infidels by the reigning Pasha.

A charming excursion was to Topchider Park, where the residence of Milosh, the founder of the Obrenovitch dynasty, still stands amidst well-kept gardens, in beautiful grounds several miles in extent. Topchider is only two miles out of the capital, and is reached either by train or electric railway—which is as well, for few people walk about Belgrade who can avoid it. This is on account of the atrocious cobbles with which portions of the city are still paved, and which not only torture the pedestrian but inflict considerable discomfort to those on wheels. Many pretty villas surround the Park, for it is a favourite resort of the wealthier classes during the summer months. There is an excellent restaurant, where tables must be booked for days beforehand in July and August, for this is then one of the loveliest and coolest spots imaginable, with its stately forests of oak and elm trees, silvery streams, and miles of greensward carpeted with flowers. No wonder poor Queen Draga loved to seek rest and solace here from the dusty capital which was to witness her martyrdom. And this is not the only sad association connected with Topchider, for here Servia's best and wisest ruler, Prince Michael Obrenovitch, was murdered in 1868, a monument being erected to his memory on the fatal spot.

But the aged and be-medalled custodian, who showed us round, was much more communicative on the subject of the late King Milan's amours in these historic woods than on the tragic fate of this susceptible sovereign's ancestor. For here, one summer's day, Queen Nathalie first discovered the infidelity of her consort, and the run of ill-luck which has since overshadowed the house of Obrenovitch may be said to have dated from that day. In connection with this incident, the following anecdote may or may not be true; but it was told me by a Servian statesman not given to exaggeration. As the reader is probably aware, Queen Nathalie is a Russian by birth, and was a mere schoolgirl, the daughter of a Colonel Keshko, a wealthy landowner in Bessarabia, when Prince Milan first made her acquaintance. A marriage was arranged shortly after, but before it took place Mademoiselle Keshko was persuaded by some friends to visit a famous cheiromant. "You will reign over a great people," said the seer. "But your crown will be one of thorns and sorrow. You will be driven into exile from your adopted country, but your downfall will be hastened from a journey you will make on foot through thickly wooded ground—a forest. Avoid the neighbourhood of woods or forests as you would the plague!"

The royal nuptials solemnised, King Milan laughed this prediction to scorn, until his shallow, scheming mind suddenly conceived a plan which should turn the wizard's words to his own benefit.

The Queen—then Princess Nathalie—was inordinately jealous, and her spouse chafed and fretted under a ceaseless *espionnage* which compelled him to resort to all kinds of devices to maintain the *liaisons* formed in his bachelor days. Here was a chance not to be missed, and it was speedily turned to good account by the wily Milan. “You were told to avoid forests,” he said casually one day, having cunningly led the conversation into the proper channel; “of course the thing is as clear as a window-pane. The man meant Topchider, where our ancestor Michael met with a violent death. For the future, Madam, clearly understand that I forbid you to go near the place.”

But this restriction by no means applied to the Prince, whose frequent visits to the royal demesne gradually aroused suspicions in the mind of Nathalie, which were only increased by the reports which occasionally reached her from friends outside the Palace. The suspense becoming unbearable, the Queen one day resolved to disregard the King’s instructions, and to visit Topchider, whither Milan had already gone that morning ostensibly to shoot rabbits. And while strolling through one of the most secluded parts of the park, closely veiled and attended only by a lady-in-waiting, the Queen suddenly came upon the truant in such close converse with a well-known lady of fashion that there could be no doubt as to the nature of their relations. Thus, indirectly, the fortune-teller’s prophecy was fulfilled, for a violent

altercation was followed by the estrangement which ended a few years later in divorce and the final banishment of Nathalie from Servia.

There is no aristocracy in the English sense of the word in Servia. How should there be when less than a century ago the ruler of the country was a pig-drover who could not sign his own name? On the other hand, the wealthier class of Servians have intermarried with the best families in Austria and other nations, and the result is a so-called "society," which, though somewhat cosmopolitan in character, according to English ideas, is to an outsider rather novel and attractive. My brief association with the "Upper Ten" of Belgrade reminded me of the Western States of America, where a man is welcomed less for wealth and social status than for an agreeable personality. For the Servian, like the Frenchman, very rightly refuses to be bored, and is, therefore, as a natural consequence, as yet unversed in the ethics of snobbery. During our stay in Belgrade an Austrian nobleman visiting the country for literary purposes (and therefore provided with the highest credentials) was daily to be seen dining in solitary state at his hotel, while an American tourist, of doubtful parentage but ready wit, was much sought after, and seldom permitted to partake of a meal at his own expense. Bulgarians call their neighbours "a nation of swineherds," and no doubt half a century ago there was very little class distinction in town or country. For the *bourgeoisie* here is a recent innovation (chiefly of

German importation), and in Belgrade the very limited "upper class" is of as questionable origin and recent growth as the famous "Four Hundred" of New York, which it much resembles, save in the deplorable vulgarity and tomfoolery which have rendered that select circle the laughing-stock of Europe. Indeed I have seldom met pleasanter people than those forming what is called the "Court Set" in Belgrade, and the cheery Bohemian existence they led seemed to me worthy of imitation by the so-called "superior" classes of many an older nation. The term "Society" is only too often suggestive of a useless and frivolous existence, especially amongst women, but it is not so here, where the Servian girl of French education is generally better read and far more accomplished than her English prototype.* And yet there is a delightful simplicity about the former, probably inherited from her humble origin, but none the less attractive on that account. Servian home life is absolutely devoid of ostentation, and ladies of good position assist as a matter of course in the menial work of the household. I once attended a supper party at the Winter Garden of the Grand Hotel, a favourite resort after the theatre, where a band of "Tziganes" discoursed sweet music till the small hours amid the usual surroundings of pretty women, palms, and shaded lights, and where digestion was not impaired, as

* Servia has now nearly one thousand Government schools for boys, and over one hundred and fifty for girls. Public instruction is compulsory.

in England, by the tyrannical limits of "time." The feast was given in honour of a young chamberlain of the Court who had that morning succeeded in severely wounding his opponent in a duel—a pastime as popular here as it is in France, but attended with considerably more risk. On this occasion I sat next to a young married woman, gowned by Paquin, glittering with diamonds, and justly renowned for her numerous attractions. But when, the next day, I called at her house, somewhat unexpectedly, I entirely failed at first to recognise in the neat but plainly-clad handmaiden who answered the bell, my charming hostess of the night before!

And talking of theatre parties, there is plenty to do of an evening in modern Belgrade; for there is an excellent theatre, frequently visited by French artists, a couple of minor playhouses for the production of Servian works, and several music-halls with a licence of song and speech which would open the eyes of the London County Council. But the Danubian provinces have never been renowned for morality, and I can recall the days (not so very long ago) when travellers in Hungary and adjacent countries were on their arrival invariably provided by the hotel porter with a photograph book, from which they could select a fair but frail companion to enliven, for a monetary consideration, their evening repast. Indeed there is a legend that, some years ago, a staid British diplomat, travelling *en famille*, and putting up at a well-known hotel in Buda-Pest,

was found intently studying this mysterious volume by the "Ambassadrice," and the painful scene which followed is best left to the reader's imagination.

But this is some years ago, and if vice still exists in Belgrade, it is at any rate cunningly concealed, for there is no sign of it in the streets, where an unprotected woman may walk at any hour of the day or night without fear of molestation. I visited one of the music-halls, which would certainly have been voted dull in London, for the performance lasted until one o'clock in the morning, and was conducted with a gravity suggestive of a first-class funeral. This was the more surprising, seeing that wines and spirits of all kinds were on sale throughout the building; but the average Servian is a temperate being, who dislikes alcohol in any shape or form—and generally prefers water to any other beverage. This, however, does not apply to the provinces, where drunkenness appeared to be almost as prevalent amongst the peasantry as it is in parts of the Russian Empire.

CHAPTER IX

SOME RECENT RULERS OF SERVIA

I MAY as well, before proceeding further, give a brief sketch of the events connected with Servia which have occurred during the past century. This is in order that the reader may more clearly realise the present condition of the country by a knowledge of the many crises through which the latter has passed owing to the eternal struggle for supremacy between the rival houses of Karageorgevitch and Obrenovitch. This historical retrospect is of necessity brief and incomplete, for those who desire a deeper knowledge of Servian history must seek it elsewhere than in these fugitive impressions of travel. For my purpose it will be unnecessary to go further back than the year 1804, when one George Petrovitch, a poor swineherd, indirectly founded the Karageorgevitch dynasty, which is to-day (more or less) firmly established in the person of His Majesty King Peter I. Servia had for centuries languished under Turkish misrule and oppression when Petrovitch contrived to raise a guerilla force of patriots, which, although indifferently armed, eventually succeeded in driving

the Sultan's army across the border. From that day henceforth the humble peasant, who had accomplished this feat with very inadequate means, was hailed as the saviour of his country, and was known, chiefly by reason of his swarthy features and gloomy nature, as "Kara" (or "Black") George, a name from which the present royal title of Karageorgevitch has been derived.

According to all accounts Servia's first ruler must have been what Americans call "a pretty tough citizen." Few men really loved Petrovitch, who ruled solely by fear, and whose cold, cruel nature and insolent ways repelled even his staunchest followers. "Except under the influence of wine," says an English writer, "or the sound of firearms, 'Black George' was habitually moody. On one occasion his aged father having thwarted his wishes, Kara George drew a pistol and shot him through the head; on another, when his mother tried to cheat him out of a beehive he bonneted her with it and stalked off regardless of her piercing cries of pain." Numberless other atrocities are related of this barbarian, who was nevertheless an efficient administrator, and scrupulously just in all his dealings. No braver patriot ever lived, or one with less idea of self-aggrandisement, for he would return, even after his most brilliant victories, to his squalid home, and there resume the uneventful life of a breeder of swine. In 1806 Kara George attained the zenith of his fame by finally crushing the Turkish and Bosnian allies at the battle of Mishar, and the following year



the first national Servian Government was formed, with this peasant *parvenu* as its nominal Dictator.

But internal dissensions soon followed, and various political parties were formed which have never ceased to harass the Government of this fickle, restless nation to this day. Trouble also came from abroad, for the greedy eyes of Russia and Austria were now turned towards Servia by reason of her mineral and agricultural resources. Kara George, fearing that power was being undermined by treachery at home and abroad, organised the *coup d'état* which installed him as absolute ruler of Servia. This proceeding entailed, as usual, many arrests, and amongst those detained was one Milosh Obrenovitch, a young peasant destined to become the first and most famous of that line of princes. In 1811 Kara George was practically King of Servia, but two years later the country had been reconquered by the Turks, and he was seeking refuge as an exile in Austria.

It was now the turn of an Obrenovitch to come to the front. Milosh was at this period about thirty years of age, and although a swineherd like his predecessor, was endowed with more intellect, refinement, and tact. The first Obrenovitch was a born diplomatist, who realised that a Machiavellian policy was the most likely one to bring about the one object of his life—Servian independence. And this crafty peasant so successfully hoodwinked the Turkish authorities, that the Pasha employed him as intermediary to bring about

a more friendly feeling between his countrymen and the Sultan's representative. And so cleverly did Milosh lay his plans that the Sultan's viceroy showered honours upon one who was only biding his time in order to give the final *coup de grâce* to Turkish rule. For two years Milosh patiently and secretly prepared a general uprising, and on Palm Sunday, 1815, at Takova, the banner of revolution was unfurled. Then followed a desperate struggle, waged on both sides with fanatical desperation, in which even women and children joined. This campaign, however, was carried on by the Servians with a total absence of the barbarous cruelty to Turkish prisoners which had besmirched the fame of Black George. Milosh Obrenovitch eventually gained the day, and was duly proclaimed Prince of Servia under the suzerainty of the Sultan. This was in 1817. In the same year Kara George secretly returned from exile with the vague intention of deposing his rival and seizing the throne, but the plot was discovered, and its originator paid the penalty of his rashness by death.

Milosh Obrenovitch was not officially recognised by the Sultan as Prince until 1830, when the title was made as hereditary as it can be in the Balkan States. It is interesting to trace, from this period, the varying fortunes of the Karageorgevitch and Obrenovitch dynasties, which somewhat resemble a contest between two wrestlers in a prize ring—first one gaining the upper hand, and then his opponent. Milosh was the best and wisest ruler Servia ever had, and possibly, with the exception

of Black George, the bravest, for he walked about the streets of Belgrade with his life in his hands, and in constant danger of assassination from Karageorgevitch partisans. But the bulk of the nation idolised him, and when, in 1839, Russian intrigues compelled him to abdicate, Milosh left Serbia sincerely mourned by his people. The banished Prince was succeeded by his eldest son, Milan, who, however, died less than a month after his accession, and was succeeded by his younger brother, Michael, at the early age of sixteen. The first reign of this Obrenovitch was almost as brief as that of his elder brother, and it was cut short by a scheming and unscrupulous mother, whose object was to bring about the restoration of her husband. At the age of nineteen Michael was forced to abdicate, and he also became an outcast, residing abroad for eighteen years, at the expiration of which time he returned to Serbia and resumed the reins of government.

Although the deposed consort of Milosh had not foreseen such a contingency, the opportunity afforded by the banishment of her son was seized upon by the Karageorgevitch faction as a pretext to place Alexander, the son of Kara George, upon the throne, and this was accomplished without difficulty, for the Servian people have been aptly described as human weathercocks. Russia, also, was strongly in favour of the new dynasty, and therefore the reign of Karageorgevitch II. was an unusually long one for Serbia, lasting for nearly seventeen years, at the expiration of which this

prince was deposed for attempting to abolish the House of Assembly, or Skupshtina. The return of Milosh Obrenovitch was now unanimously voted for, and in 1858, at seventy-eight years of age, after twenty years of exile, the Patriarch ruler was welcomed back to Belgrade amidst scenes of the wildest enthusiasm. And although the old patriot died within two years of his restoration, Serbia prospered more during his brief reign than during the lengthened one of his predecessor, who lacked both the courage and enterprise of his uncouth brutal but able parent.

The Obrenovitch dynasty was now firmly established, for it was maintained from the death of Milosh in 1860 down to the assassination of King Alexander and Queen Draga, nearly forty-three years later. With the accession of Michael (the son of Milosh), Serbia entered upon prosperous times. For during his twenty years of exile this ruler had visited most of the Continental capitals, and studied the various systems of government with a view to applying them to his own country. Drastic reforms in the army, the extension of political rights for the people, and a thorough reorganisation of the Skupshtina, were some of the measures carried out by this advanced administrator. But his most masterly *coup de main* was the complete evacuation of Serbia by Turkish troops—a scheme carried through mainly by the friendly intervention of England and Austria. Nevertheless, the Sultan withdrew his garrisons on condition

that on feast-days the Turkish colours should be hoisted over every Government building throughout the land. Thus, for the first time in centuries, Belgrade became entirely free, only the yearly tribute remaining as an invisible sign of Turkish suzerainty.

This was in 1867, but the following year Prince Michael was foully murdered by a gang of assassins hired, it is said, by Alexander Karageorgevitch and his partisans. The unfortunate victim was shot down and then stabbed so repeatedly that more than forty wounds were found upon his body—a species of savagery which, judging from the last political outrage, Servian regicides habitually resort to. A plot to overpower the garrison and reinstate Alexander Karageorgevitch the same day as the murder, was only frustrated by the prompt measures taken by the military authorities, but it resulted in a decree by the National Assembly banishing for ever the Karageorgevitch family from Servia. To this day, therefore, the descendants of Kara George are exiles, and the present occupant of the throne is, practically, a usurper.

Milan Obrenovitch, the murdered Prince's cousin, then ascended the throne under the title of Milan IV. Educated in Paris, this new ruler had ultra-Parisian tastes, and his love of pleasure and reckless extravagance were destined long before his death to justify the name since given him by one of his own party, "Le Prince de Triste Mémoire!"

The events in Servia which followed the Russo-Turkish campaign are too recent to need recapitulation here; suffice it to say that the absolute independence of Servia was affirmed by the Powers at the subsequent Treaty of Berlin. On March 6, 1882, the reigning Prince was proclaimed King under the title of Milan I.

It is said, and perhaps truly, that the vagaries of this cosmopolitan ruler and the scandals connected with his married life caused the renewed activity of the Karageorgevitch clan, whose star had waned since the prosperous reign of Milosh and his successor. In any case Milan's conduct to his consort, Queen Nathalie, who was the soul of honour and integrity, excited the greatest indignation amongst all classes in Belgrade, where the Queen was deservedly popular. A divorce at length severed this miserable union, and Her Majesty left Servia only to return to Belgrade upon the abdication of Prince Milan in 1889.

CHAPTER X

ALEXANDER AND DRAGA

WE now come to the last of the Obrenovitch line—whose short reign exercised, while it lasted, such a beneficial influence over Servia that the name of Alexander I. will surely be handed down to posterity as that of a sovereign who, had he lived, might have accomplished great things for his kingdom. The calumnies circulated after the King's death by foreign journalists, may well be ignored, for they were published by men about as well acquainted with the true life and character of the man they traduced, as I am with those of the Grand Llama of Tibet.

Travel through Servia and you will find, especially in the provinces, that the late King is still mourned by his subjects, while the present sovereign is generally regarded with apathetic indifference. Only compare the two men: on the one hand Peter I., the tool of adventurers, who before he was hoisted, *nolens volens* , on to a throne, was quite content with the aimless existence of a Boulevardier—on the other Alexander, who even as a lad of seventeen possessed sufficient

strength of character to depose the Regents, and proclaim himself King of a country, which to the day of his death he ably and wisely governed. Even his bitterest enemies cannot deny that Alexander displayed qualities of courage, tact and self-restraint far beyond his years. The night before Milan's abdication, the latter, on bidding his son good-night said, "Sasha! * What will you do when you are King?" But the boy, although he looked grave and thoughtful, made no answer. Early the next morning Milan came to his son's room with the greeting, "Good morning, your Majesty!" but Alexander returned the salute with dignity and without surprise.

"So you know?" asked Milan. "Who told you that I was going to abdicate?"

"No one," was the answer; "but I guessed from your question that you intended me to succeed you to-day."

Mr. Herbert Vivian, the English traveller, was not only personally acquainted with the late King but enjoyed his esteem and friendship, and also those of the Queen. The following account of an audience with their Majesties shortly after Alexander I.'s accession is therefore interesting in view of the terrible tragedy which shortly followed. Mr. Vivian writes:—

"My audience was fixed for eleven in the morning. After waiting awhile in the central drawing-room, I was summoned to an ante-room.

* The pet name by which Alexander I. was known to his parents



Photo by Milan Jovanovitch, Belgrade.

THE LATE KING ALEXANDER OF SERVIA.

An animated conversation was going on in the next apartment. A highly-pitched voice could be heard haranguing, and I wondered who was permitted to talk thus to his sovereign. The door opened, and I perceived that it was the King whose voice I had heard. He was now laughing merrily, while a general in full uniform backed out with a deferential smile at a parting sally. There was no ceremonious presentation. I simply walked in and found myself alone with the King, a well-set young man, clad in flannels. He bade me be seated, and we faced each other across a big table that nearly filled the room. Everything was scrupulously tidy; papers docketed in packets, even the pens reposed in strict parallels.

“‘This is not your first visit to Serbia,’ he began. ‘You must find many changes here?’

“‘I do not think that Belgrade has altered very noticeably.’

“‘Ah! but I mean political changes.’

“‘Well, when I was last here, there was a Progressist Government, and now I understand that the ministry is well disposed towards the throne.’

“He looked pleased, and said there had been difficulties, but now they were being gradually settled. Where had I travelled in Serbia? I mentioned my itinerary through the country, and he asked whether I could not induce British capital to Serbia? Now that the war was over, there must be a need of openings for British capital. But people knew so little about Serbia and seemed to consider it wildly remote.

“ ‘Whereas,’ I put in, ‘everything is now safe and assured.’

“Yes, public security was assured, and also industrial security, which interested the investor more particularly.

“After some further conversation, His Majesty apologised for not detaining me further, saying that affairs of state were absorbing all his time just then. Finally, as I took my leave, he remarked cordially, ‘I hope that you will come back many times to Servia.’”

I myself can vouch for the correctness of Mr. Vivian's assertion that wherever King Alexander travelled in the interior he left golden opinions behind him, for he knew how to set every one at his ease and was not only an agreeable talker but, what is sometimes better, an attentive listener. His keen sense of humour often averted a dangerous subject by some witty remark. Superficial observers sometimes mistook King Alexander's silence for stupidity, but they never made a greater mistake. At home and abroad His Majesty was simplicity itself. The royal servants wore plain liveries and most of the courtiers plain frock-coats. You encountered none of the gorgeous pages, magnificoes in uniform, and marshals who swarm in the Bulgarian Court, and the King might often be seen out driving in his capital in tweeds and a “bowler” hat, which would have horrified Prince Ferdinand.

Until King Alexander met Draga Maschin at his mother's villa at Biarritz, he had never even

contemplated matrimony, although Queen Nathalie made no secret of her ambition to arrange, if possible, an alliance between her beloved "Sasha" and some English or German princess. But whenever the subject of marriage was mentioned her son turned it off with a jest, and the remark that there was time enough to think of such things. It seems like an irony of fate that the first meeting between Alexander and the woman who ruled (and involuntarily ruined) his career should have taken place under the roof of his mother, who from the very first was bitterly opposed to the marriage, not only on account of her lady-in-waiting's lowly station but because such a *mésalliance* would undoubtedly further the chances of a Karageorgevitch pretender. And there was some reason for Nathalie's remonstrances, seeing that the object of her son's infatuation was merely the widow of a humble Servian engineer—one Maschin, whom Draga married when she was only sixteen years old. Maschin was a dissipated rake, who subjected his child-wife to such infamous treatment that she easily obtained a divorce, her husband dying shortly after of *delirium tremens*.

The future Queen of Servia, having no private fortune, was now almost penniless, but a fair education enabled her to settle down alone in Belgrade, where she managed to add to her slender income by teaching music and languages. A young and pretty woman, living alone and unprotected, could scarcely expect to escape

slander, especially in the Servian capital, where scandal is as rife as in an English country town. But although Draga, in the dark days of her poverty, made innumerable friends, not a word could ever be whispered against her honour and fair fame. It was only when Mme. Maschin became a Queen that abominable libels as to her moral character were scattered broadcast, in many instances by those who had once called themselves her best friends. It is not likely that Queen Nathalie, on hearing of Draga's sad story, should have straightway appointed her as lady-in-waiting if her *protégée's* character had been open to the slightest breath of suspicion, nor that the ex-Queen should afterwards have made a friend and confidant of one in whom she had not absolute confidence. Much has been written since Draga's assassination anent her surpassing beauty, which, her enemies aver, was chiefly answerable for the fickleness (to use no harsher term) of her affections. But in plain truth the late Queen was less beautiful than comely, according to English ideas—for her features were rather coarse than otherwise, although their expression was refined and dignified, and her smile was sweet and winning. The chief charms of this unhappy woman lay in unusually dark, expressive eyes, and a wealth of dark brown hair, which fell far below the waist. Her complexion was sallow, and her figure rather inclined to stoutness, but Draga's kindly sympathetic nature was her chief attraction, and the



one by which she will be the best remembered (especially by the poor) throughout the kingdom of Servia.

When Alexander first made her acquaintance Draga was nearly thirty years old—an age Balzac rightly describes as dangerous in a woman to young and susceptible manhood. It was a case of love at first sight, which, notwithstanding its secrecy, was soon discovered by Queen Nathalie, who was one day horrified to find that her son was firmly resolved upon matrimony. But threats and supplications were in vain, for Draga was also unwilling to relinquish her lover, for whom she had conceived a deep attachment. High words ensued, with the result that the Queen, angered beyond endurance, retired to her apartments, and Alexander left for Belgrade—whither Mme. Maschin, who had received a peremptory dismissal, shortly followed. Some say that this was the act of a designing woman, whose sole object was the gratification of ambition; whereas poor Draga was merely following the natural instincts of her impulsive nature, and loving, wayward heart. In any case Mme. Maschin once more took up her residence in Belgrade, but under conditions that more or less justified the censure of society. It was soon an open secret that her splendid establishment, costly jewels, and horses and carriages were provided by the Privy Purse, and this gradually estranged the recipient from even those friends who had formerly done everything in their power to assist her. For this the

King alone was to blame, in not announcing his intention, at the outset, of marrying a lady who was publicly living under his protection. Draga was now regarded, in the eyes of the world, as the mistress of the sovereign whose consort no one therefore imagined she could ever become.

When, in 1899, the King was ordered for the benefit of his health to Meran in the Tyrol, Draga followed him after a short interval, and a villa was taken for her close to the royal residence. But this final scandal brought affairs to a crisis, and probably hastened the marriage which Alexander, to do him justice, had resolved from the first should take place. It is said that Russia hastened on the match for her own ends and with a view to overthrowing the reigning dynasty, but it is hard to see with what object, for Alexander was on the best of terms with the Tsar's Government. Be this as it may, the betrothal was formally announced, and on the 5th of August, 1900, the wedding was duly solemnised in Belgrade Cathedral. And although the relatives and ministers of King Alexander did all that lay in their power to prevent what they deemed a fatal step, his subjects were by no means universally opposed to the match; for Draga was a Servian, and she therefore received a warmer welcome than would have been accorded to any foreign princess, however exalted her rank. During the nuptials Belgrade was *en fête* for forty-eight hours on end, and the old city had never beheld such a riot

of revelry since the restoration of its revered and beloved Milosh.

Nevertheless before many months had elapsed the influence exerted by Draga over her husband began to excite considerable uneasiness in ministerial circles. It began to be whispered abroad that Alexander was as wax in the hands of the Queen, and that he could not even decide upon the most trivial question without consulting her. Nothing was done without the Queen's consent, from affairs of state down to theatricals or a picnic. This was perhaps the thin end of the wedge which eventually rendered this unhappy woman an object of detestation to the courtiers and statesmen around her, for one of the charges brought against the Queen was that of exerting an evil influence over Alexander for her own ends, which, as Draga was well known to be the essence of simplicity and good-nature, was as childish as some of the monstrous accusations brought against the ill-fated Marie Antoinette. To one charge only this unfortunate woman had no defence: that she could never become a mother—and the declaration of eminent physicians to this effect was made the most of in order to foster doubt and dissension amongst the peasantry. This news was a severe blow to the King, who, nevertheless, never wavered for one instant in his lifelong devotion towards the woman he idolised.

This, then, was the precarious condition of affairs in Belgrade when tidings of a terrible massacre

in their capital fell like a bolt from the blue upon the Servian people. But how this atrocious crime was planned and accomplished will be told in the two succeeding chapters.

CHAPTER XI

MURDERERS IN UNIFORM

CAPTAIN NIKOLAI RASTOVITCH (of His Majesty King Peter's Royal Regiment of Life Guards) was as pleasant an acquaintance and as fine-looking a young fellow as you could wish to meet. The Servian soldier is a slouching, ill-favoured lout, but his officers are generally as comely and smartly-groomed as those of any army in Europe. Bulgarians say that if King Milan's staff had devoted as much attention to drill and tactics as to the cut of their hair and tunics, the Servian Army would never have been so unmercifully thrashed at Slivnitza. But this is doubtful, for the Bulgarian Atkins has always proved twice as plucky and reliable as his Servian neighbour. Anyway, Rastovitch was the Adonis of the Belgrade garrison (which says a great deal) and the envious glances of dully garbed civilians followed the handsome Guardsman as he clinked down the "Teratsia," resplendent in the green and gold of the household cavalry—suggestive perhaps of comic opera, but attractive nevertheless, to the fair sex. It was on such an occasion

(as he was coming off guard at the Palace) that I chanced to meet Nikolai (whose acquaintance I had previously made at a dance) and he promptly linked arms, in his genial, offhand way, and carried me off to breakfast at a fashionable restaurant—a proceeding I should certainly have resented had I been aware of my friend's past history. For I had yet to learn that the little cross of white enamel which glittered on my host's breast is justly regarded by all decent Servians as the "mark of the Beast," being an "order of merit" worn only by the actual assassins of their late King and Queen. Unfortunately it was only at the conclusion of the meal, when my host had departed to his military duties, that Jones, of the *London Daily Racket*, facetiously inquired, from an adjoining table, whether "lunching with a murderer had affected my appetite"? For it only then transpired that this curled and scented dandy had himself struck down and shamefully mutilated the late Queen under such conditions as would have repelled the most degraded ruffian in the East End of London.

This deplorable event is now a matter of ancient history, and I should not have referred to it at length but for the fact that a very garbled and confused account of the crime appeared, at the time, in the English newspapers. I made the acquaintance while in Belgrade of several of the chief actors, besides Rastovitch, and notably of one, a general officer, who was the first to break

into the death chamber, and who related to me, in the course of several interviews, what actually occurred on the night in question down to the very smallest detail. I am therefore in a position to give the reader probably the first absolutely authentic account of the assassination of the late King and Queen of Servia which has ever been published in England.

Three years have now elapsed since that starlit night of terror, but it is still recalled with a shudder by those who witnessed its doings. The crime was so cleverly planned that very few people, save the conspirators, had the slightest suspicion that Royalty was menaced. The people of Servia had no hand whatever in this so-called "revolution," which was confined to a few of the extreme Radicals and a military "clique" consisting of men of all ages from grizzled veterans to boys in their teens. One Colonel Maschin was probably the prime mover in the conspiracy; for this man (a brother of Draga's first husband) had always been a bitter enemy of his sister-in-law, whose influence he erroneously feared would injure his prospects. I frequently saw him in Belgrade—an elderly, Jewish-looking individual, of dapper exterior and charming manners, probably acquired abroad, for the Colonel had served as military *attaché* in Vienna, and was Servian Delegate to the Peace Conference at the Hague!

It was arranged that the assassination should be carried out solely by officers, but amongst

the civilians engaged in the plot was one George Gengich, then Minister of Commerce, who had violently opposed the King's marriage, and had once actually informed His Majesty that the latter's *fiancée* had been his own mistress—a foul calumny ridiculed even by the man's own partisans. For this Gengich was exiled, but was unfortunately pardoned and permitted to return to Belgrade, where he at once set to work to conspire against the ruler from whom he had received only kindness and consideration. Of the rest of the "83" (as the regicides are called in Servia) it is unnecessary to speak in detail, for they merely acted under orders and were paid for their services by the Radical party, Maschin receiving £1,200 and the others sums in proportion. It is, of course, impossible to regard these men, young or old, without disgust and aversion, and yet one cannot but admire the cool audacity with which this handful of scoundrels seized the capital, coerced an army of two hundred thousand men, and proclaimed themselves rulers of Servia. And all within twenty-four hours!

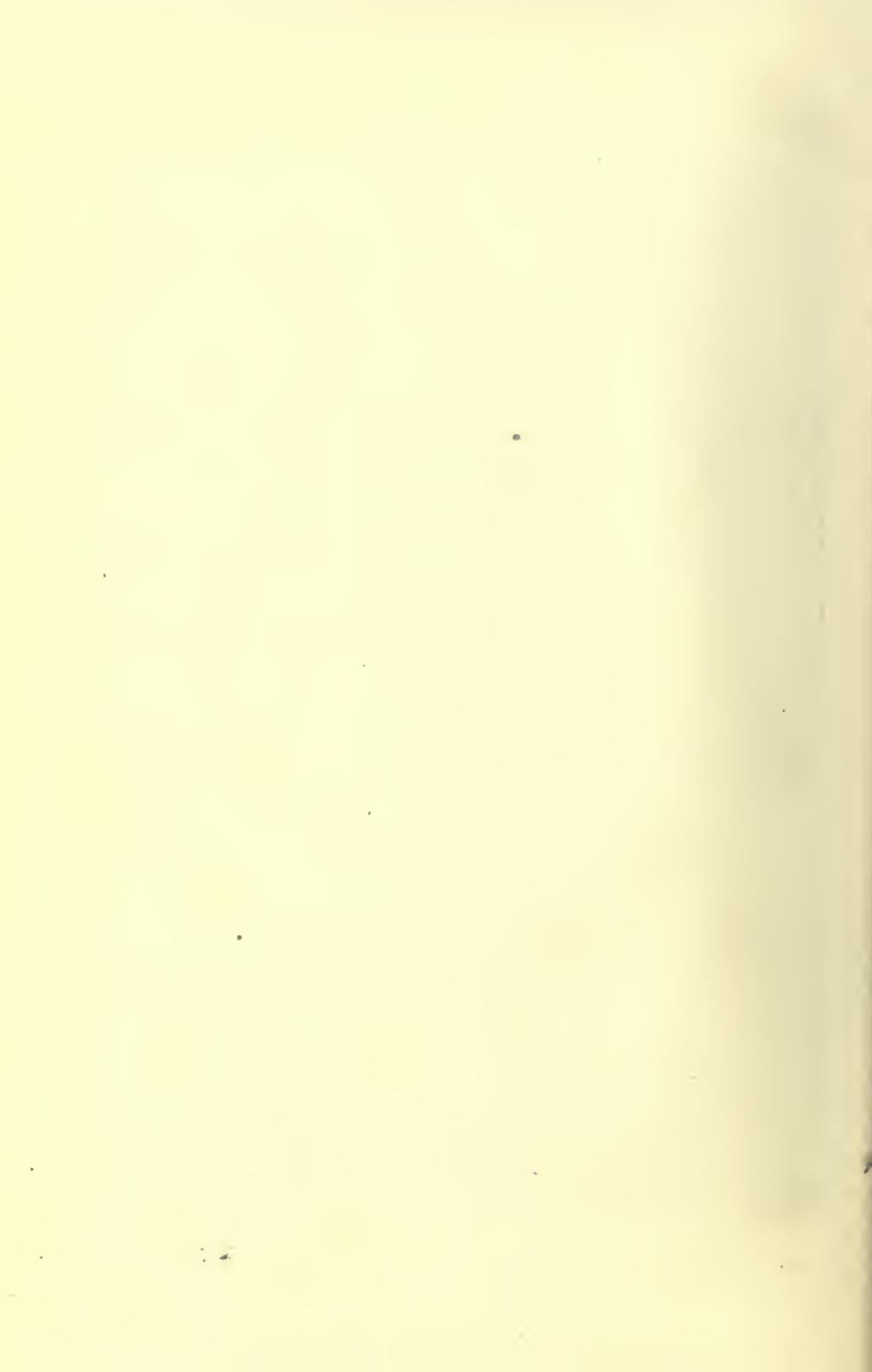
It was finally decided to carry out the project at dead of night, in the Palace itself, and upon the 10th of June, this being the anniversary of Prince Michael's murder in Topchider Park.* I have said that the murders came as a thunder-

* As a matter of fact the massacre did not actually commence until one o'clock on the morning of the 11th of June, 1903.



COLONEL MASCHIN.

Photo by Milan Jovanovitch, Belgrade.



bolt to all but the conspirators themselves, but one person at least outside their number was not wholly unprepared for the terrible fate awaiting her. This was Queen Draga, who was continually haunted by the fear of assassination up to the very morning of her death. A French palmist was perhaps answerable for this, for Draga (when Mme. Maschin) had once accompanied Queen Nathalie to consult the former in Paris. At the Queen's request Draga's hand was read by the cheiromant who predicted that its owner would one day attain an illustrious position but that her life would then be in the direst peril. Some ten days also before the King's death His Majesty received a letter from Mons. Mijatovitch, the Servian Minister in London, imploring him to beware of treachery, and warning him that his assassination had been predicted in a London drawing-room by a crystal-gazer who, although unacquainted with Belgrade, had minutely described the scene of His Majesty's death, and the room in which it subsequently took place.*

Indeed for some weeks prior to this communication anonymous letters of warning had reached the Palace almost daily from army officers who had been invited to join the conspiracy, but had refused. But the King laughingly disregarded these documents, and most of them were con-

* This was afterwards confirmed by several persons who were present at the *séance*, including (I am informed) Mr. W. T. Stead.

signed to the waste-paper basket. Nevertheless, by desire of the Queen, the guard at the Palace was doubled, and there was even talk of reopening a subterranean passage beneath it which would have afforded a means of escape, but which had been bricked up, on his accession, by Alexander's orders.

On the day preceding the crime, eighty-six officers took a solemn oath that they would slay not only their rulers, but any comrade who turned traitor to their cause. A list was then made of other persons to be "removed," including the Prime Minister, the Minister of War, and the Queen's two brothers, artillery officers then quartered in Belgrade. The escape of the elder was especially to be guarded against, for Draga was said to have persuaded the King to name her relative (in the event of there being no direct heir to the throne) as his successor.

Colonel Maschin completed his preparations in a manner which left no loophole of escape. Four line regiments and a battery of artillery were to assist in the operations, the soldiers being told that it had been decided to carry off Draga, and that, in case of a disturbance, their presence was needed to protect the King. Colonel Naumovitch, an *aide-de-camp*, was to admit a party of conspirators into the Palace, while the rest were to visit the dwellings of other victims in the city, under various pretexts, and dispatch them as quickly as possible. The password of the night was to be "Tsver," which in Servian signifies "a



THE OLD KONAK.

The window from which the bodies of the late King and Queen were thrown is the fourth from the left in the right-hand building—the left-hand one being the new Palace. The former no longer exists.

From a Photo.

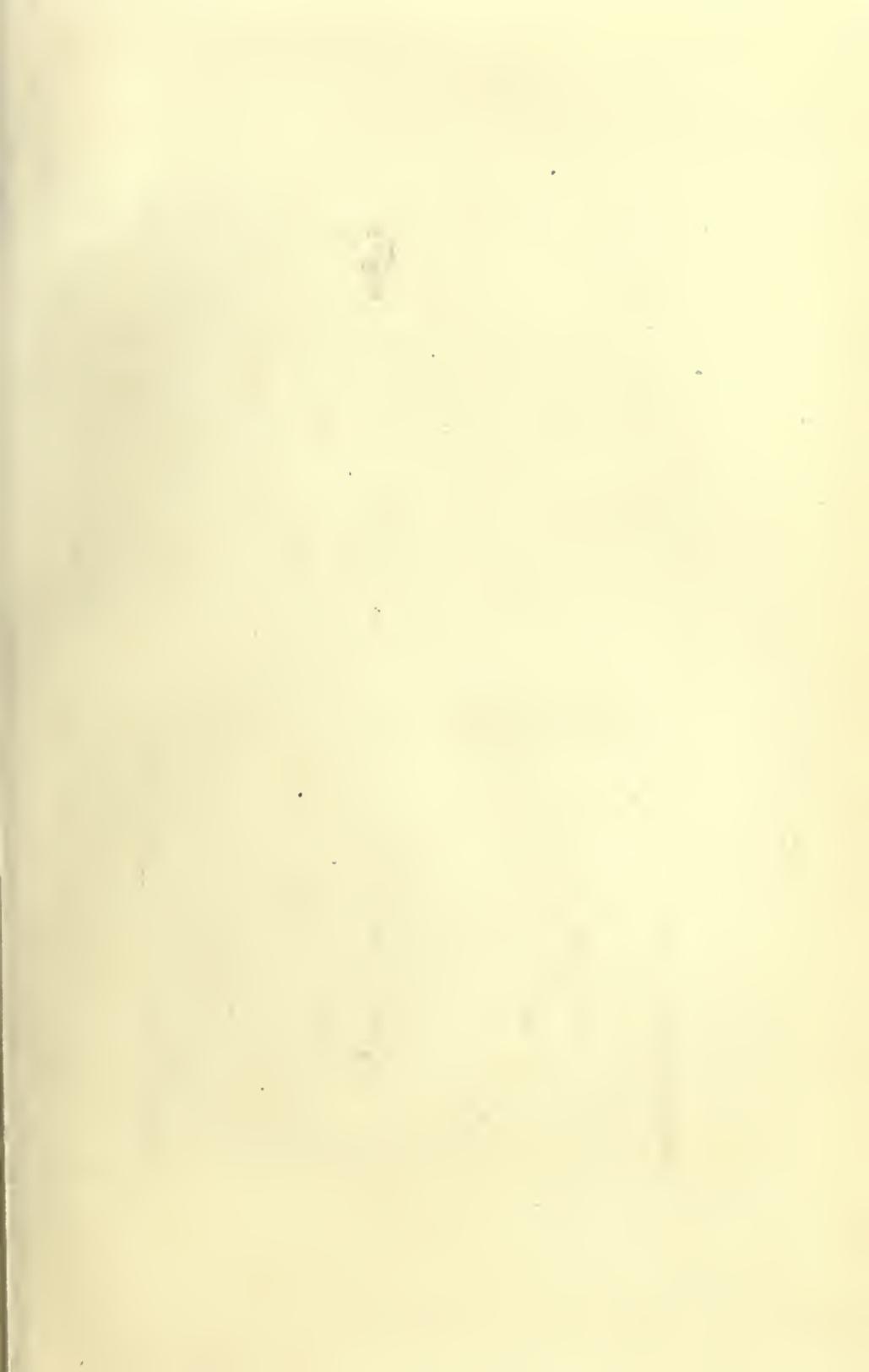
Wild Beast," and it was not inappropriate to the occasion.

King Alexander in those days resided in the "Konak," or old Turkish Palace which used to stand at right angles to the recently built and gorgeous edifice now occupied by Peter I. The late ruler had simple tastes, and preferred the whitewashed but comfortable building which had once housed a humble Pasha, to its more pretentious neighbour, with its walls of granite, towering domes, and Golden Eagles. Gilt railings and a pretty garden used to separate the old "Konak" from the main street, and the long, low building, with its balconies and white venetians, looked more like the villa of some prosperous tradesman than the home of Royalty. But Mr. Herbert Vivian, who knew it well, says that the "Konak," though outwardly commonplace, was luxuriously furnished and the essence of comfort.

"A doorway hung with strings of heavy beads gave entrance to the principal reception-room, with a comfortable balcony overlooking the garden, and this apartment was entirely furnished with characteristic products of the country. Bright Pirot rugs predominated, and there were a number of dainty Servian embroideries of the most harmonious colours. Next came Queen Draga's boudoir (where she generally received visitors), simply but tastefully furnished, and containing a large collection of photographs of King Alexander at every age. The walls were covered with silken panels of a delicate bronze colour. Next to it was the

royal bed-chamber, a room with rose-coloured draperies and walls hung with "Ikons" and sacred images of the Orthodox Church. A door beside the bed opened into a room with three steps descending into a marble bath. On the opposite side was another door leading into a kind of closet where the Queen's robes and dresses were kept."

And in this last-named apartment, usually so dissociated from thoughts of death and its ghastly surroundings, the hideous massacre took place.





THE MILITARY CLUB, BELGRADE.
MEETING PLACE OF THE REGICIDES.

Photo by Author.

CHAPTER XII

THE TRAGEDY—AND AFTER

TEN o'clock on the night of the 10th of June, 1902, was the appointed hour for a general rendezvous of the regicides which, in order to avert suspicion, was held in various parts of the city. These distinguished officers and gentlemen passed the evening in various ways, some at the Military Club at one end of the city, others at an open-air *café* near the Kalamegedan Gardens at the other; and the majority in houses of ill-fame. But in every resort, reputable or otherwise, drink was so freely supplied that, towards midnight, many of Maschin's followers were in an advanced stage of intoxication. Perhaps the most disgraceful scenes were enacted at the "Servian Crown," the afore-said open-air *café*, for here, as the landlord himself told me, "Champagne flowed like water and cognac like wine." The Public Gardens adjoin this place, and people strolling there glanced curiously at the flushed and noisy group of officers sitting at little tables under the acacia-trees, and joining loudly and derisively in the refrain of Draga's March, which some strolling

“Tsiganes” were compelled to play over and over again. And yet the music had been composed, not a month previously, in honour of the wretched woman these ruffians had condemned to a terrible death. The party assembled here consisted chiefly of cavalry subalterns who, when towards one o'clock a.m. they set out for the Palace, reeled down the quiet and starlit street like drunken Cossacks. Had not Maschin and his staidier colleagues kept their wits about them, the whole affair would probably have ended in a ridiculous *fiasco*.

What a contrast is this to the last day on earth of Alexander and his martyred Queen! On the 10th of June the King was in excellent spirits. His Majesty was employed throughout the morning with state affairs, and then, the midday breakfast having intervened, he played croquet on the gravel court at the back of the Palace with his private secretary, a brother of the Queen's favourite lady-in-waiting. It was a lovely day, and Draga sat out for awhile watching the game and merrily chaffing her husband at his ill-success, for the King was a poor player. Presently the sky became overcast and rain began to fall, driving the party indoors, where Alexander devoted the afternoon to his favourite studies. At eight o'clock dinner was served, one of the guests being the Premier, who also was doomed to die that night. It was noticed that during the meal the King became as silent as he had been gay and talkative earlier in the day, and the Queen, remarking upon the change, it was



Photo by Author.

THE "SERVIAN CROWN" RESTAURANT.
SECOND MEETING PLACE OF REGICIDES.

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attributed to the sultry, oppressive weather. During the evening a military band played as usual in front of the Palace, and the royal party sat out on the balcony in view of the passing crowds. At eleven the music ceased and the pair retired to their apartments, but not immediately to rest. For a case, containing some of Paquin's latest creations, had arrived that day from Paris, and an inspection of its dainty contents was still in progress when it was abruptly ended by the arrival of the regicides about two o'clock in the morning.

The entry into the Palace caused considerable noise, for the treacherous *aide-de-camp* who was to have admitted his confederates had so repeatedly partaken of stimulants that when the time came for action he had fallen into a drunken slumber. The gates were therefore blown asunder with a charge of dynamite, the inebriated officer inside them being instantly killed by the explosion, which fate, as the King had always treated him as a personal friend, was justly deserved. Aroused by the deafening report Petrovitch, an equerry, one of the handsomest and most popular men in Belgrade, came hurrying to the spot and sacrificed his life for the King and Queen. Boldly facing Maschin he demanded the meaning of the intrusion, and was told that unless he instantly revealed the hiding-place of their Majesties he would be shot. Realising that everything might be gained by delay, Petrovitch replied that they had both taken refuge in the cellars. Here over an hour was passed groping about in the semi-darkness, the

faithful equerry doing all he could to gain time, and thus perhaps ensure the escape of the fugitives. Nearly an hour passed while the regicides searched every hole and corner, peering into recesses, overturning barrels and ransacking the whole place. Gradually they grew more and more exasperated, but Petrovitch remained perfectly calm, and kept up the pretence of assisting in the search. At last it became obvious that the victims were not below ground, and the assassins, now convinced of their guide's treachery, resumed their search throughout the Palace, leaving the unfortunate Petrovitch riddled with bullets on the cellar stairs.

During this search the King and Queen, realising their imminent peril, had locked themselves into the small room already described, which served as a dress closet. Before doing so, however, Alexander rushed to the window, and, seeing the courtyard crowded with soldiers, smashed the window-pane, and called loudly for assistance. But the men, believing that they had been brought there solely to protect the King, gazed stolidly up at the window, but made no sign. Shortly afterwards approaching cries and footsteps warned the fugitives that no time was to be lost, and the agony of fear and apprehension which the unhappy Draga must have undergone while her assassins, now maddened by drink and bloodshed, were tearing down curtains, smashing furniture, and wildly discharging revolvers in all directions, will never be known. Even his enemies admit that Alexander's last moments were characterised by almost super-

human coolness and heroism. Both he and Draga must have known, from the moment Maschin and his cut-throats burst into the sleeping apartment, that their fate was sealed, although it took the assassins a considerable time to find the door of the dress closet, which was papered over and flush with the wall. To break this open with hatchets was then the work of an instant, and the royal pair stood face to face with their murderers. Both were partially dressed, the King wearing trousers and a red silk shirt, while the Queen, who only an hour before had been engaged in trying on new gowns from Paris, was clad in a petticoat, white silk stays, and one yellow silk stocking, the other having probably been removed while preparing to retire. Draga was cowering in a corner shaking with terror, while the King, revolver in hand, tried to shield her person from the gaze of the brutal intruders. Colonel Maschin was the first to stride up to the King with a document for his signature—a promise to banish Draga for ever from Servia, or abdicate. Alexander made no reply, but fired point-blank at the speaker—missing him—upon which a volley fired by his companions laid the King low, an explosive bullet having killed him on the spot. It was now Draga's turn, and the wretched woman begged so piteously for mercy that her screams were heard in the main street. Colonel Maschin (who had expressly demanded the privilege of killing her), then fired at his sister-in-law, but as the latter was now partially protected by

the prostrate body of her husband, the shot missed its mark, and one Lieutenant Saurich, who was just behind his chief, fired over the latter's shoulder, wounding his victim in the breast. Then followed a series of outrages too revolting to describe. Bullet after bullet was fired into the now lifeless bodies by their maddened assailants, and the faces of both the King and Queen were mercilessly gashed with pistol-butts, hatchets, and sabres until not a feature remained intact.* The corpses were then thrown into the gardens below, where they lay until the Russian Minister found them at daybreak. The King had lost the fingers of both hands, and had received no less than thirty-six bullet wounds, the Queen only sixteen, but her body was literally hacked to pieces, and had been subjected after death to an unmentionable outrage. And so great was the tension and dread of the mysterious but powerful gang which had organised the *coup d'état*, that even Charikof, the Russian Minister, dared not remove the bodies, but only ventured to order some gardeners to turn a hose on to the dead in order to remove the blood which covered their remains and the gravel path around them. Finally they were carried into the Palace, where a hurried autopsy was held by Maschin's orders—a report being published a few hours later stating that the King was insane and that the Queen could never have borne an heir to the throne.

* A correspondent of the *Neue Freie Presse* told me that when he saw the room next morning it resembled a shambles.

After the murders a general looting of the Palace took place, and the soldiers on guard were told that they could take whatever they pleased in the shape of plunder—a privilege which was freely made use of. This was denied by my informant, but the fact remains that for months afterwards valuables which had belonged to the King and Queen were on sale in the pawnshops of Belgrade. Forty-three people were shot down that night, including the Premier, the Queen's brothers, and even one of the conspirators who had shown some signs of mercy. This was a young subaltern who was ordered to shoot a prominent official, but the lad remonstrated with one of his leaders, pleading that he could not murder the man to whose daughter he was engaged to be married. Without a word of warning the boy was shot dead, and a substitute procured and dispatched to carry out the sentence.

Colonel Maschin's detestation of Draga did not cease with her death. The rulers of Servia are usually interred in pomp and splendour within the precincts of Belgrade Cathedral; but this the Colonel would not hear of in this case, selecting the cemetery of St. Mark, a pauper burial-place, as the last resting-place of the royal victims. Only soldiery and the police were permitted to attend the funeral which took place at midnight, the coffins being driven to the graveside in a prison cart used for the interment of criminals. During the whole of the previous day the bodies were exposed to the public gaze in a room of the old "Konak," the mutilated remains of the King being

garbed in plain dress-clothes without orders of any kind, and those of the Queen in a gay pink ball-gown, a costume designed by Maschin to ridicule even the dead. But here he was no worse than his comrades, some of whom even went so far as to spit upon the bodies of the dead.

One evening, towards sunset, I strolled up to the lonely graveyard and entered the little white-washed chapel where the last of the Obrenovitch rulers lie at rest. The day had been bright and sunny, but the sky was now darkened by hurrying clouds, and a chilly breeze which moaned through some cypress trees was well in keeping with this scene of mournful associations. The grey-haired veteran in charge of the place had witnessed the funeral, and told me how the service had been gabbled over the graves by a couple of popes. No friends or relatives of the dead were permitted to attend,* and floral offerings were strictly forbidden—although a tiny wreath of withered azaleas had been secretly placed there since by an unknown hand. Two black wooden crosses leant carelessly

* On All Souls' Day it is usual for the popes to recite a prayer, burn some incense, and bless every grave, even those of paupers. In 1903 this ceremony would have been omitted at the graves of the late sovereigns had not the poor women of Belgrade repaired to St. Mark's and compelled the pope to do his duty. When he pronounced the words, "May God give peace to His servants King Alexander and Queen Draga," the whole congregation wept loudly and bitterly, and one by one they bent down to kiss the simple crosses which mark the last resting-place of the royal victims.—"A Servian Tragedy," by Herbert Vivian.



From a Photo.

CEMETERY OF ST. MARK.

against the wall and bearing the names "Alexander Obrenovitch" and "Draga Obrenovitch," roughly scrawled in white chalk, mark the spot. The crosses stand side by side, but half a dozen other graves separate the remains of the King and Queen. "She shall not even have that satisfaction," Maschin is reported to have said.

Perhaps the most curious point about the whole terrible affair is the manner in which the announcement of the assassination and the election of the regicides by themselves as a provisory Government was received by the Servian people the day after the crime, not only in Belgrade but throughout the provinces. Men and women seem to have been terrorised from the very first into a state of passive obedience suggestive of an infant class at a Sunday School. All day long regiments of cavalry and the line and batteries of artillery paraded the streets, horses and guns being decorated with evergreens, while the crowd looked on with apathy and indifference, although quite two-thirds of the populace silently condemned the atrocious outrage which heralded another dynasty. Yet no one dared to raise a voice in dissent, and windows were draped with gay banners and other signs of rejoicing under compulsion—even those of the relatives of murdered officials. Radical members of the Skupshtina drove about the city haranguing the people, while military bands were stationed about the squares and streets playing national airs and lively tunes from sunrise to sunset. "Gala" performances were given at the

opera, and theatres, restaurants, and wine shops remained open all night. The chief object of the regicides was to make people forget the poor souls so ruthlessly butchered, and, for a time, it probably succeeded. At any rate no one dared to display anything but satisfaction at the sudden change of *régime*, or betray the disgust and horror which all decent-minded citizens must have felt at the ghastly outrage which had preceded it.

So ended the Servian tragedy, which for cold-blooded brutality has seldom been equalled in the darkest ages of the past.

The present King of Servia (a grandson of the famous Kara George) is now sixty years of age. Of late years Peter I. has resided chiefly in Paris and Geneva, although he much preferred life in the former city to the rustic simplicity of Switzerland. While in Paris an American bar near the Rue du Helder was the favourite resort of Prince Karageorgevitch, and here he might be seen almost any afternoon seated on a high stool and sipping cocktails in rather queer company of both sexes. Up to the time of Peter's accession his life had been solely one of pleasure, or as much of it as his slender means could procure. His favourite amusement was gambling, his literature the *Gil Blas* and yellow-backed novels; in short, the man differed in no respect from any other lazy, pleasure-loving "Boulevardier." But unlike many of the latter, who generally run to seed and a stomach after the forties, King Peter is a spare, military-looking man, with sharp features, grey moustache,

and restless eyes. He used to look like a "Rastaquère," and his utter incapability to fill an exalted and important position is shown by certain events which occurred when news of the murders reached Paris. The *Temps* is a serious, matter-of-fact journal, but it thus describes how Karageorgevitch celebrated his accession to the Servian throne:—

"Last night," says the *Temps*, "they were expecting Prince Kara at the Bar du Helder. The company—composed of elegant men with eye-glasses screwed into their eyes, and of women in light dresses with sparkling jewels—was tremulous with excitement. Sprawling upon a stool, the proprietor of the place, a friend of the Prince, was holding a reception over the counter. All her friends had come to present their homage, and—a touching idea!—the whole saloon was adorned with little Servian flags, which fluttered in an atmosphere of champagne cocktails. Every moment a new arrival came to congratulate the mistress of the house: 'Good day, Princess!' . . . Towards evening the Prince arrived, pallid with excitement, with a bristling moustache and an open hand. All rose in one movement of enthusiasm, and the unanimous cry of 'Vive Kara! Vive la Serbie!' greeted his entry."

A dinner party followed, given by the newly proclaimed monarch to his distinguished associates at a *café* near the Madeleine, and the company did not break up until the small hours. Thus did Peter I. embark upon a new and responsible

career ; but the superficial, almost childish character of the man is indicated by the fact that his first thought on hearing of his accession was to rush off and order a gorgeous crown from a jeweller in the Rue de la Paix !

The members of the present monarch's family are neither more intelligent nor attractive than their august parent, whose wife, a Montenegrin princess, died some years ago. The Crown Prince is a reckless, headstrong youth, whose riotous habits have already rendered him rather unpopular, the Crown Princess what Americans call a "homely"-looking girl, with sallow features, and a figure not improved by a primitive taste in gowns. Princess Helène is, indeed, painfully unattractive, but, like most plain women, imagines that her charms are irresistible—an innocent illusion which, let us hope, may long continue. I frequently saw both her Highness and the Crown Prince driving or riding about the capital, but never their father, who seldom leaves the Palace, unless it be to attend the Skupshtina or perform other state duties. Some say that Peter would cheerfully abdicate to-morrow, for "the fierce light that beats upon a throne" is by no means suited to his Bohemian temperament, and the formality and restraint of a court are as distasteful to him as the perpetual police surveillance which is needed for his protection. In the early days of his reign the king's chief amusement was to wander about the capital, *incognito*, and, like a modern Haroun Al Raschid, hear what his subjects said about him,



THE NEW PALACE,
BELGRADE.

Photo by Author.

but, for obvious reasons, this practice was soon discontinued. The King is absolutely devoid of firmness. Upon his accession he proclaimed that the punishment of the regicides should be his first consideration, and yet on reaching Belgrade he was hypnotised into a subjection as abject as that shown by his subjects. In one case only did he show determination—the razing of the old Konak to the ground, which was carried out by his orders immediately after the coronation, and notwithstanding the opposition of Maschin, who wished the building to remain as the record of “a glorious deed accomplished by Servian patriots!”

The installation was hardly a success, for his people soon discovered that Peter’s protracted residence in Lutetia had sent them a sovereign but slightly acquainted with the Servian language, which he speaks like a foreigner. Belgrade was crowded for the occasion, but there was no enthusiasm, and nobody seemed to care whether a Karageorgevitch or one of the regicides occupied the throne now that the legitimate ruler had been removed. The following day two peasants were gazing into a shop window, where portraits of Peter I. were exposed for sale.

“Who is that?” said one.

“That is the new King,” was the reply.

“But why did they kill the last one?”

“I do not know; perhaps because he was not liked by the army.”

“But supposing the army does not like this one?”

“ Well! They will kill him too!” And this expressed the feeling of the general public at the time.

It would also appear to be the King's opinion, for the measures taken for his protection are as elaborate as those which guard the Tsar of Russia. Not only have sentries around the Palace been trebled, but every night a cavalry regiment is kept under arms in the vicinity. Moreover, the subterranean passage which used to lead from the old Konak to a place of safety (and which Alexander I. rashly had bricked up), has now been hastily reopened. The restless nights of Peter I. are therefore solaced by the thought that, in case of a sudden attack, there is always a bolt-hole through which he may perchance reach Austrian territory, and thence return in safety to the Rue du Helder, and his beloved Paris! For signs are not wanting of treason in the land. Only a week after his arrival Peter sustained a severe shock in connection with the Jubilee stamp which was struck in commemoration of his coronation. The stamp bears the heads of the present ruler and his ancestor “Black George,” and at first sight the clever device of some revolutionary artist is unnoticeable. But turn it upside down and the gashed and ghastly features of the murdered King stand out with unmistakable clearness—just as they appeared when Alexander and his consort were discovered in the grey dawn of that summer's morning in the gardens of the old “Konak.” Needless to state, the issue was at once prohibited.



CORONATION STAMP OF PETER I.

(The reversed stamp shows the face of the murdered King Alexander.)

Under present conditions Belgrade is an impossible place to live in, for even foreigners are subjected to the most vexatious police regulations, the Press is muzzled, and harmless citizens are imprisoned for months together on mere suspicion of ill-favour towards the reigning dynasty. The special correspondent of a leading Vienna journal told me that he had twice been imprisoned for publishing the most moderate article on the internal policy of Servia, and had since taken up his residence at Semlin (a couple of miles away, in Austrian territory), preferring to travel to and fro every day to the risk of another possible sojourn in a foul Servian gaol. The secret police is as active and indiscriminate here as it ever was in Petersburg, and freedom of speech is as restricted as it has ever been in Russia. Indeed the sale of any article which may recall the memory of the late King and Queen is strictly forbidden, and I had the greatest difficulty in obtaining the portraits of their late Majesties which appear in this volume. The bookseller from whom I purchased them stood in fear and trembling, and with one eye on the door, lest some *mouchard* should walk in; and I had to repair to the same place at night and with the utmost secrecy to inspect a portion of the late King's library which this loyal tradesman had secured at the public sale of his Majesty's effects. Closely-written notes on the margins of the more serious works showed what an earnest student Alexander must have been. Many of the volumes were

English, and it was interesting to note that the most numerous were those of Carlyle and Herbert Spencer, and in light literature the novels of Sir Conan Doyle and Hall Caine.

That King Peter's days are numbered is the general opinion in Belgrade and especially in the provinces, where the army is by no means universally loyal. A distinguished general I met in one of the provincial towns confidently predicted that the King must either be assassinated or deposed within two or three years. "And then who will reign?" I asked, and was informed that a very strong party was in favour of a German ruler—Prince Francis Joseph of Battenberg, who was married in May, 1897, to a Montenegrin princess, but who at present has no children. A natural son of Prince Milan—Milan Cristich—who resides in Italy, is the last hope of the house of Obrenovitch, but he is a weakly, delicate lad, and in any case it is hardly likely that an illegitimate heir to the crown would ever be tolerated by the Servian nation.

CHAPTER XIII

“THE GARDEN OF THE BALKANS”

SERVIA has been aptly christened “The Poor Man’s Paradise,” for we travelled from end to end of the country without encountering a single beggar, while the agricultural labourer seemed almost as affluent as a small farmer in England. But Servians have a prettier name for their native land: “The Garden of the Balkans,” which it undoubtedly is, being the most picturesque and fertile of all the Balkan States. The farther you roam inland from the flat, marshy banks of the Danube the richer becomes the soil and more beautiful the scenery, although this is not, like Bosnia, a land of comfort and security. Here you must rough it, sometimes severely, away from the railway, and some of the country roads are not over-safe at night-time, as we ourselves were fated to discover. But this was a mere accident, and the reader could probably explore the wildest parts of this State for an indefinite period without meeting with a similar experience, and with far less danger to life and property than a trip through Greece or Sicily would entail.

In spring-time Servia is an idyllic place to travel

in, especially for those weary of the beaten tracks of Europe, but I should add that dirt and discomfort reign almost everywhere throughout the provinces, and those who are squeamish in the matter of *cuisine* and clean sheets will do well to defer their visit until they can travel with Cook's "coupons"—which time, in view of the feverish quest of the English tourist for new playgrounds, can scarcely be far distant. If you have travelled from London to, say, Eastbourne, you are already familiar with the line from Belgrade to Kragujevatz, our first stage on the way to the Bulgarian frontier, for the train sped through a country watered by clear streams and broken by occasional glimpses of some stately mansion, surrounded by picturesque lawns and woodland, for all the world like a landscape in England. And many an English railway company would do well to substitute the luxurious corridor-cars in which we travelled for the comfortless carriages still in use, notwithstanding the mysterious tragedies which have rendered them, of late, unpleasantly notorious. On the other hand, in Servia you travel very slowly, and I was constantly reminded of Mark Twain's journey through Texas when the famous humourist implored an official to remove the cow-catcher from the front of the engine and place it in rear of the guard's van in case the cattle should climb in and attack the passengers! But no one is ever in a hurry here, and punctuality can be dispensed with by those who travel for journalistic purposes!

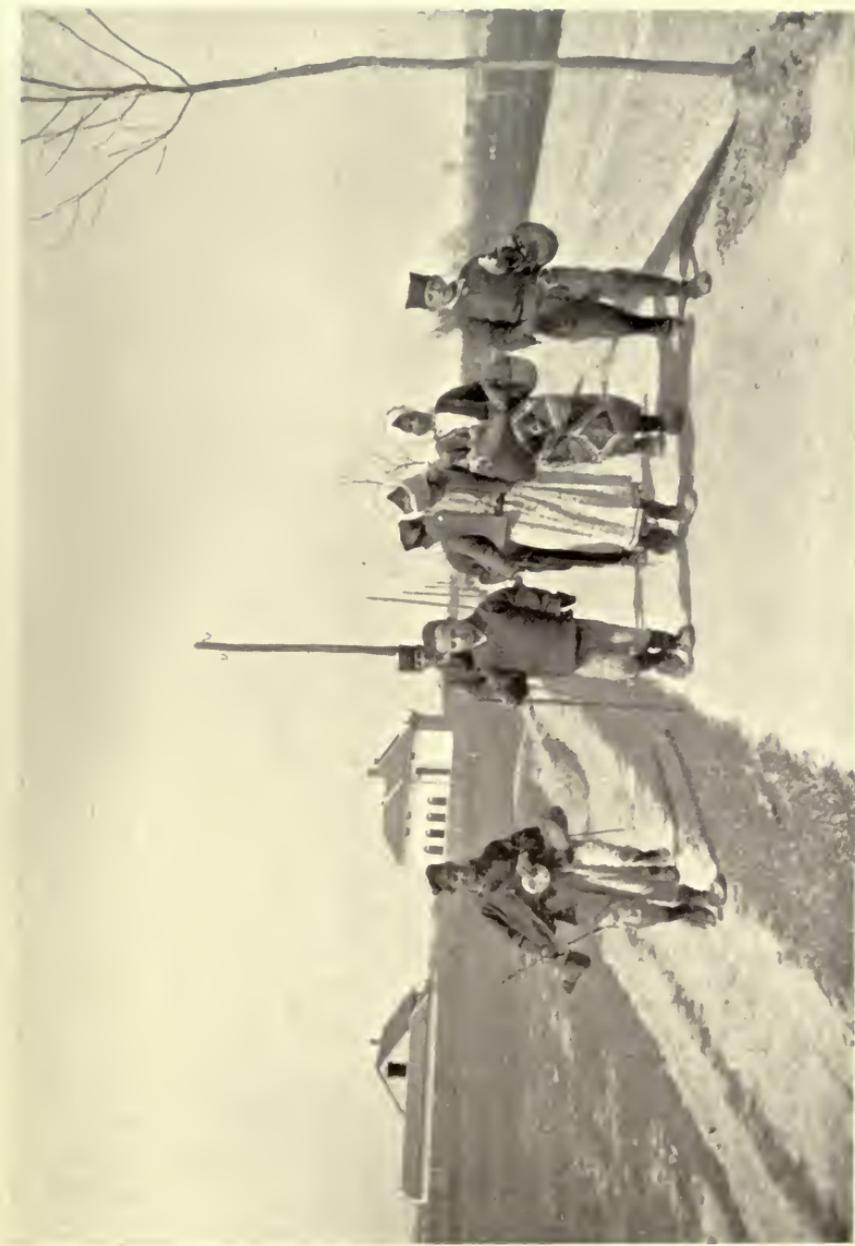


Photo by Author.

SERBIAN PEASANTS.

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It was difficult to get away from Belgrade where, as in Russia, hospitality is rather overdone, and the passing guest is finally compelled to resort to subterfuge before he is allowed to depart in peace. But our stay in the capital was very enjoyable, for although King Peter sternly refused to grant me an audience (which decision was perhaps due to the fact that I had occasionally seen His Majesty in the Rue du Helder!) invitations poured in from elsewhere, and the friends we made assured us that they earnestly desired the friendship of the English Government, although they dared not openly proclaim the fact. The terrorism which Maschin and his colleagues have spread throughout the land was indicated one day when I was walking arm-in-arm with a prominent member of the Skupshtina who had shown us some hospitality. This man had always denounced the regicides, and eulogised my country, but when Colonel Maschin, suddenly emerging from a side street, encountered us on the Teratsia, my friend dropped my arm as though I had suddenly developed symptoms of bubonic plague. "You must pardon me," said he, when Maschin, whose eagle eye had rapidly taken in the situation, had disappeared, "but he does not like Englishmen!" I made no reply, but silently marvelled at the meek submission of the Servian race, and wondered what an Irishman would have done under similar circumstances!

Another incident which occurred during our stay

in Belgrade serves to show the bitter hatred of King Peter and his immediate *entourage* for England. A photographer had invited me to inspect his collection of Servian views, and I was looking over the latter when a young subaltern in the Guards entered the studio to make an appointment for a sitting with the artist. The latter having left the room for a moment, we conversed in French, with which language I am so familiar that the stranger mistook my nationality, until I disclosed it and inquired where I could find the British *chargé d'affaires*.

"I know neither the house nor the man," was the curt reply, and abruptly turning on his heel my military friend left the shop without fulfilling the object of his visit.

Presently the photographer returned. "Do you know that gentleman?" he inquired. "That is A——, who only returned yesterday from Paris, where he was compelled to go for a time on account of his atrocious conduct on the night of the murders. Poor Queen Draga's dead body—— Ah! I see you know the rest," said the man; adding, with a laugh, "No wonder he bolted on hearing you were an Englishman!"

Even the saddest occurrence generally has its ludicrous side, and it was impossible to help smiling at the speaker's account of his doings on that fatal night. "Bullets were flying like hail," said the little man, his face lengthening at the mere thought; "and imagine my feelings at seeing them spattering on the walls all round



Photo by Author.

*AT LAPOVO.
MR. MACKENZIE IS SECOND FROM THE RIGHT.*

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this beautiful glass studio, which was only just finished, and had cost me a fortune to build!”

A pleasant journey of a few hours brought us to Kragujevatz, for, as I have said, Servia has little to learn in the art of railway travelling. The smallest comforts of travellers are seen to, and the tiniest stations embowered in flowers and greenery, with a restaurant and vine-trellised arbours where you may sit out on summer nights, smoke and drink coffee, and await your train in placid content. Each car contains a map of the district you are travelling through—a plan which saves much confusion and might be advantageously adopted on English trains. Lastly, first-class fares in Servia are so cheap that even officers of the army, who are miserably paid, seldom travel second class. A good hour was allowed for *déjeuner* at Lapovo where a side line to Kragujevatz leaves the main track from Belgrade to Sofia. The meal was served in a garden in much-needed coolness and shade, for my pocket thermometer registered 71° (in the month of April!). A cloudless sky, the fragrance from some beds of violets and narcissi, and drowsy hum of insects, rendered the meal an idyllic one, although it was composed chiefly of “Kalbsbraten,” fruit, and thin Servian wine, which latter daily aroused Mackenzie’s ire and indignation.

“Well, this has been a wonderfully cheap trip,” I remarked, during breakfast, to the Ur-

banite. "But you must remember that we have always drunk the wines of the country!"

"Remember!" muttered the Scot, with suppressed irony. "Great heavens, man! do you think I am ever likely to forget it?"

But my friend recovered his complacency under the soothing influence of Turkish coffee and a cigar. For the most confirmed grouser would have felt at peace with the world in that shady arbour set in the midst of greenery and flowers, while, to enhance the Arcadian surroundings, a peasant in a neighbouring meadow was playing, while tending his flocks, an old-fashioned lute. Only one thing was out of the picture, and that was Fritz, a native of Heidelberg, in frayed and greasy suit of sables, who ministered to our wants and informed me that within a year over a hundred of his compatriots had settled down as waiters in Servia where wages are higher than even in England. But this fact ceased to surprise me when I had travelled through the Balkans and met German emigrants in every town, and almost every village. On the other hand, I doubt whether there are half a dozen Englishmen (in all) in this land of plenty, so replete with golden opportunities for the man of energy and small capital.

"You are always pondering in England what to do with your sons," said an Austrian merchant to me one day in Belgrade, "Why not send them to Servia with a capital of, say, £300, and I will guarantee that they double it within three years.



"FRITZ."

Photo by Author.

Land, and plenty of it, is to be had for the asking, and every facility would be given by the Government to English enterprise, which I can assure you is sadly needed to develop this country.”

Kragujevatz is a quiet, sleepy place, not unlike an English country town, with its cobbled market-place from which diverge half a dozen narrow streets so atrociously paved that a very short stroll suggested rest and a pair of carpet slippers! The place is usually the picture of stagnation, but on market-days it wakes up, and the thoroughfares are then blocked with flocks and herds, and huge waggons piled up with produce swarming in from all parts of the district. Nearly one-third of the country immediately around this town is farmed by Austrians, whose numbers are yearly increasing; and no wonder, for land is to be had almost for the asking, and yet is of a kind that when “tickled with a hoe laughs with a harvest.”

Our travels through Servia extended as far as the Turkish frontier and thence back to the railway at Nisch—roughly speaking, two hundred miles—through a region so fertile that I ceased to wonder at the conclusion of the trip that paupers have no business here. Fifty francs will purchase a plot of land that will keep a man going for the rest of his natural life, and so it is from Belgrade to three points of the compass—south, east, and west. Servia is an agricultural El Dorado, and if the untutored peasant can now make a living by antediluvian methods, what

might not be accomplished with capital and machinery? I doubt whether there is at present a steam-plough throughout the whole country, and yet I met at least half a dozen farmers at Kragujevatz with incomes ranging from £300 to £500 a year. Every season there are two crops of hay, wheat, and barley; while maize, oats, hemp, and tobacco grow like weeds. In pig-breeding alone there are millions to be made, and the rearing of horses and cattle on a large scale would be equally lucrative.

And who is skimming the cream of all this? The Germans! Not only as agriculturists, for they own more than half the shops in Kragujevatz, stores for the sale of all kinds of goods—farming implements, wearing apparel, saddlery, groceries, and even tobacco-pipes from the Fatherland. I searched in vain throughout Servia for goods from other countries, but nearly all imported articles bore the now too familiar legend—"Made in Germany"!

Kragujevatz is the headquarters of an Army Corps, the officers of which rendered our short stay here a very agreeable one. And I here discovered that the regicides are regarded with as much mistrust and aversion by provincial garrisons as by the citizens of Belgrade, which fact caused me to wonder that some combined movement had not been organised to overthrow them. Such a plan could scarcely fail to succeed, yet Maschin's hypnotic influence had apparently restrained even General B——, the Commander of



AT THE WELL.
A RAILWAY STATION

Photo by Author.

Kragujevatz, and one of the bravest of men, from attempting to carry it out.

The General permitted me to visit all the military establishments under his command, and also furnished me with some facts regarding the Servian Army which considerably modified the poor opinion I had formed of the latter in Belgrade. For here work, and not show, is the order of the day, and these officers had something better to do than to masquerade about the *cafés* of the town in spurs and gold lace, playing cards and drinking bad champagne with Viennese *cocottes*. The garrison of Kragujevatz consisted of about four thousand men (or one-third of the population), but so admirably was discipline maintained that one scarcely realised the fact—save when moving artillery, the clatter of cavalry and tramp of soldiers marching to the exercise ground aroused one at dawn—on week-days. The men looked smart and well-equipped, but their fagged, worn-out appearance confirmed a statement made to me by a major of hussars that ever since the disastrous war with Bulgaria they had been worked off their legs. Nevertheless, the Servian Army is now twice as efficient and well-organised as it was in '86, although in my opinion (and judging from what I afterwards saw) they will never rival the Bulgarians.

I witnessed a field-day at Kragujevatz, and the manœuvres of the cavalry and artillery would have compared favourably (on a small scale) with those of any great European Power. But the line

regiments lacked smartness and dash, and had evidently, as my friend termed it, been "drilled to death." The same mistake has, I fancy, been made of recent years in France, although the Servian private is better housed and far better fed than the French *Piou Piou*. The barracks at Kragujevatz, for instance, were models of cleanliness and comfort, and even then they were inferior to those I afterwards visited at Nisch. But the regimental bands were really excruciating, as I found that day, when compelled to stand for nearly an hour within a few yards of one, by the saluting base.

A dinner at the cavalry barracks wound up a pleasant day, and I have seldom visited a cheerier or more hospitable mess than that of the "Parachin Hussars." But it was irritating to hear the English Army discussed (as, for some occult reason, it generally is on the Continent) as though it were about on a par with those of Belgium or Switzerland. Foreigners generally acknowledge the supremacy of our navy, but our land forces, notwithstanding their glorious history, are generally regarded abroad with utter indifference, born no doubt of ignorance, but none the less galling on that account.

Thus the following remark, made to me by an artillery officer during the evening, was expressed sincerely and only with friendly intent: "What a pity," said he, "that we were not with you in South Africa! We would have wiped out the Boers in three months! But then your army is so small!"

And perhaps it is (numerically) compared even with that of Servia. For the latter now numbers 180,000, which, with 90,000 Reserves of the 1st and 70,000 of the 2nd class, make up the formidable total of 430,000 men. Every man in Servia must join the colours for two years, after which he is drafted into the Reserves up till the age of forty-five.

There is an arsenal at Kragujevatz, where nearly one thousand hands were formerly employed, but since the Bulgarian campaign heavy guns and rifles have been imported, and Kragujevatz now turns out military requisites of all kinds and a certain amount of ammunition, but very few weapons. There is no question that, given an ally, this country could render a good account of herself at the present time—but that ally is wanting. At present, Russia is almost as cordially detested here as Bulgaria (which says a great deal), for while the latter utterly crushed Servia by force of arms eleven years ago, she has always been despised by the Russians, rightly or wrongly, for cowardice on the field of battle.

As General B—— remarked: “Every Servian is a soldier and every soldier a Chauvinist,” and this is probably true—until war is declared. Then, as events have proved (at any rate within the past thirty years), the warlike ardour of the Servian perceptibly diminishes in proportion to the gradual approach of his foe! Nevertheless, in 1901 the maintenance of Servia’s army cost

her nearly £700,000 out of a budget of about £3,000,000.

Our inn at Kragujevatz—"The Takova"—was a stuccoed and imposing edifice externally, but it proved a whited sepulchre, as filthy and verminous as a Siberian posthouse. Our meals were served in a long, bare restaurant, where we discussed unsavoury and greasy repasts to the discordant groans of a string band composed of tawdrily clad and much-berouged Austrian ladies. Electricity has not yet reached this town, and though the streets are lighted with gas we retired to rest in our murky bedroom with a farthing dip. The Michael Ulitza is the chief street and fashionable promenade, where on fine afternoons, judging from the quaintly attired ladies of the town, one might have been living in the days of the great Napoleon! The few exceptions were amongst the wives and daughters of officers of the garrison who had not passed their entire existence in Kragujevatz, and whose gowns were therefore a little in advance of the early Victorian era! The shops, even in the principal street, are very uninteresting, for the traveller will find no curios in Servia. Stores for the sale of farming implements and groceries predominate, and it was painful to see the rubbish foisted by Germany upon a gullible peasantry. Sunlight soap was the only English article which seemed to have reached this benighted region, where I endeavoured to purchase a bottle of brandy for medicinal purposes. The best I could get was contained in a wired

and gaily labelled flask bearing the signature of some French firm, and I only discovered on reaching the inn that the plausible shopman had swindled me. For "Cognac" had been spelt "KONIAK" by the local manufacturer!

Next to grocers, hairdressers seemed to predominate, and the Michael Ulitza was a perfect avenue of gaily-striped barber's poles. But a word of advice! Take your own razors to Servia, or indeed anywhere else in the Balkans, where shaving brushes are unknown, and the operator invariably uses a hot and grimy hand to lather the face of his victim!

CHAPTER XIV

AN UNPLEASANT INCIDENT

THERE is a dull, drab look about most Servian towns, which seems out of place in a country so nearly adjoining the bright and gorgeous East. Kragujevatz, however, was more lively in this respect than the other places we visited, on account of its numerous *cafés* with gaily striped awnings, and other establishments for the sale of refreshments, chiefly consisting of the local wines and "Slivovitch." My companion has already spoken somewhat disparagingly of the former, which, as produced at present, are perhaps better than no wine at all, and all is said. But Servian vintages could certainly be made as wholesome and popular as those of France and Germany with proper care, for there is no lack of the raw material—grapes, both white and black, and of excellent flavour. The numerous cellars at Kragujevatz were more suggestive of Spain or Italy than the Balkans—cool, dark places, cunningly contrived above-ground, where you could step in from the street and quench your thirst on a hot day with a pint of red or white



NISCH.

Photo by Arangelositch, Nisch.

“Kragujevatz” grown within gunshot of the town, and drawn, like ale, from the wood, by a rosy-cheeked waitress. But these wines are absolutely pure, and for that very reason unpalatable to those accustomed to the doctored brands of civilisation. We found them almost undrinkable for the simple reason that they are produced by primeval methods; and yet there must be millions of money going begging in this particular branch of industry, for the simple reason that only the unsophisticated peasant exploits it. The sour, but sound, white wine of Kragujevatz is now sold on the spot at eightpence a quart (retail) in old hock-bottles imported from Germany, and at a handsome profit. Only rich Servians drink the Hungarian Tisch-Wein, for it costs a franc a pint, and yet it is infinitely inferior to the product of their own vineyards, but, being adulterated, is pleasanter to the palate. There is no doubt that, with care and modern methods, Kragujevatz could be made an important wine-producing district. Even now a considerable amount of Servian wine finds its way to France for purposes of adulteration, and many a *château* brand, sold at exorbitant prices in Parisian restaurants, is partly composed of grapes grown east of the Adriatic. But I fancy more wine goes into Bordeaux than is ever sent out. California alone exports thousands of gallons yearly, and I once dined with a French skipper on the point of sailing from San Francisco with his vessel laden down with a cargo which had

it not been exported for more aristocratic purposes would have been labelled "Zinfandel." "How can you blame our wine-growers?" said my friend, "when my entire country, transformed into one huge vineyard, could not possibly supply the demands of the world for red and white Bordeaux and Burgundy?" Water in Servia is never safe and frequently very nasty, so local mineral waters are sold even in "Mehanas," as the smaller country inns are called. They are usually dull, vapid beverages, not unlike Vichy water which has been left open for a week or so, but it is better to suffer momentary inconvenience than risk an attack of typhoid fever. And should the reader ever visit this country he will do well to stick to the natural spring of "Lomnitchka" which can be bought everywhere and which is perhaps less nasty than any other local spring—which is not saying much! On the other hand, you can generally get good home-brewed ale—that of Yagodina being the one most favoured by the military, generally good judges in this respect. Schwappe's soda-water, Apollinaris, and almost any mineral waters may be procured in Belgrade, but rarely elsewhere throughout Servia.

As regards languages, the traveller only acquainted with English or French meets with endless difficulties and annoyances in the provinces. A knowledge of Russian smoothes the way, but German was spoken almost everywhere, even in the tiniest villages, where Russian,



PEASANT WOMEN AT NISCH.

Photo by Author.

although it resembles the Servian tongue, was often useless and occasionally misunderstood.

The second town we visited was Nisch—in the fertile valley of Morava. Nisch may be called the Chicago of Servia, for here are the principal pork-curing establishments of the country, and before the place was reached we passed hundreds of cattle-trucks packed with squealing swine travelling to their doom, or returning from it in the shape of pork packed in specially constructed ice waggons. This animal should figure in the national arms of Servia, for he has been the backbone of the country for generations, and is exported everywhere, even to the United Kingdom, where I have no doubt his hams are occasionally sold as prime “Yorkshire.” The Servian pig is a scraggy, wolfish-looking beast of unsavoury appearance, very inferior in every way to our carefully tended and ponderous English porkers. The meat, too, is badly cured, salt and stringy, but there was little else to be got in the way of food at the country inns but black bread rendered more or less palatable by our private store of jam and sardines. “Kaimak,” a kind of clotted cream, is sometimes to be had, and is said to be delicious when properly made, but it was generally served on plates of such doubtful cleanliness that I never had the courage to try it. In the river districts we fared really well, for fish was always plentiful and good, and with the addition of “Paprika” (a kind of native pepper largely consumed throughout the Balkans)

made a substantial and appetising meal. Sturgeon and trout were the best for culinary purposes. I am now speaking only of the fare at "Mehanas," for in the provincial towns mutton and veal were always procurable, although the meat was invariably tough, greasy, and underdone. The soup was always atrocious, until we were lucky enough to find a solitary case of "Bovril" and add it to our slender stock of portable provisions. Here, as in Russia, a dram commences every meal, and in Servia "Slivovitch," or plum-brandy, is generally substituted for vodka. Every Servian housewife can make "Slivovitch" as easily as her English prototype can produce currant or elderberry wine. "Komitsa" is another home-made liqueur, made of grape-skins, and is about as nasty a compound as I have ever tasted. Both are drunk out of tiny, long-necked bottles, which hold about an ordinary liqueur glass full, and which I never saw anywhere but in Servia. Wherever we went in the Balkans the coffee was delicious but only served in thimblefuls *à la Turque*. No one seemed to be able to produce it as French *café noir* or *au lait*.

I have already said that unless the visitor is prepared to "rough it," Servia is a good place to avoid, and I speak as one who has had his full share of tough travel. Belgrade of course was luxury itself, but on leaving this every hotel and "Mehana" seemed to be worse than its predecessor. It reminded me of a bather, who tries tepid water before venturing into cold, and following



— МАНАСТИР МАНСИЈА —

AN OLD SERBIAN MONASTERY.

Photo by Arangeloritch, Nisch.

this simile, Kragujevatz represented the former, and Pirot (the last town we stayed at before leaving Servia) an ice-flecked Serpentine. Nisch was bad enough, for the Hotel d'Orient was not only unspeakably filthy but a den of thieves, where we were subjected to every annoyance and extortion short of being stripped and thrown bodily into the street. The so-called restaurant was dusty and comfortless, meals were served on filth-encrusted plates, while my bedroom contained a truckle bed with sheets which had evidently been previously occupied by guests of doubtful cleanliness. I have fared better in many a Siberian posthouse than in the Hotel d'Orient at Nisch.

There is a large garrison here, the officers of which took their meals at our hotel, but they were a rude and rowdy lot, very different to our hospitable friends at Kragujevatz. As usual, every man's tunic was plastered with decorations, and one beardless boy displayed no less than three medals with clasps, which he must have gained at a rather early age seeing that over nineteen years had elapsed since the last Servian war! Be this as it may, I have seldom come across such boors as these, and a notably uncouth Siberian regiment of Cossacks, with which I once stayed on the Chinese frontier, could have taught them a lesson in manners. More than once I had to restrain Mackenzie from retaliating when derogatory remarks were made, in a loud tone, about England. However, the laugh was on our side when one evening the commanding officer

arrived, resplendent in full uniform, to partake of dinner with his wife. The Colonel's majestic entry was greeted with a respectful and general salute (by all but ourselves), but was somewhat marred when a leg of lamb was served and he and his worthy spouse proceeded to carve portions from the joint, and transfer them to their mouths without the customary intervention of a plate. "The Colonel seems hungry!" I quietly remarked to my neighbour, a plethoric major, and the withering glance which met the observation amply atoned for previous insults!

No one was more amused at this than a jolly old "pope," or priest, who sat opposite, and who, being a stranger in the town, had witnessed the behaviour of his military compatriots with ill-concealed disgust. We travelled on for a short distance the next day with this worthy prelate, and found him an entertaining companion and a pleasant contrast to most priests of the Greek Church whom I have had the misfortune to meet in Siberia—where the village pastor is often a drunkard, and generally as rapacious as the local Shylock. Such men are unknown in European Russia, where the clergy of the Orthodox faith are justly renowned for their intelligence and refinement. Father Vladimir, our Servian friend, was of humble origin, but had made the most of his time and opportunities during a youth passed in Moscow—where he had graduated for the Church. An excellent *raconteur*, the Father would have made a name in any European



Photo by Author.

HOTEL D'ORIENT, NISCH.

capital as an orator, but as he graphically remarked, "Pigs make a poor audience, and my parishioners are little better, intellectually speaking, and not half as useful, as the swine they breed!" All creeds are tolerated in Servia, and I found this Servian cleric far more tolerant than his Russian brethren. But nearly every one here is of the Orthodox Greek Church, Mahometans coming next in very limited numbers, and finally Roman Catholics and Jews, who number less than twenty thousand, all told, in a population of about two and a half millions. The Father seemed to lead a comfortable existence, being possessed of a prosperous farm and vineyard which eked out the slender income he derived from the Church. But, like every one else, he bewailed the absence of foreign capital with so many millions of acres running to waste. At present Servia produces about one hundredth part of the cereals which could be obtained with a moderate outlay. An English syndicate with, say, 100,000 acres of land around Nisch would realise colossal profits in a very short space of time, for splendid roads render communication easy with all the principal towns. This district, for instance, could supply the country east and west of it with milk, butter, and cheese by rail at infinitesimal prices and still realise enormous profits. Milk and butter are now only purchased by Servians, who get their cheese abroad, for the local product is sour and flavourless for the simple reason that it is badly made. Modern methods would soon put

cheeses on the market cheaper and infinitely better than those now obtained from abroad. "The Germans know all this," added the priest; "and you may be sure will lose no time before they get to work and overrun the country. But we in Servia would infinitely prefer to welcome Englishmen and their money—for obvious reasons! And agriculture is not the only bait offered here to capitalists, for the mineral wealth of Servia though yet undeveloped has been proved by prospectors of recent years to be very considerable. Gold, silver, and iron are known to have been extensively worked by the Romans, and in later times gold-dust has been gathered for centuries by peasants in the valley of the Timok. Recent operations have proved that lead, copper, sulphur, and arsenic exist, and coal, although of rather poor quality, is found in many places. All minerals are the property of the State, which would gladly permit them to be worked for a very small royalty.

Like most popes, our friend was married, and spoke affectionately of his "little wife" at home—who, by the way, came to meet her husband on arrival at his village, and turned out to be a person of colossal proportions, with the face of a pugilist. The lady regarded us with some mistrust, and did not endorse the cordial invitation extended to us by her lord and master. By the advice of the latter I afterwards attended service at Nisch Cathedral, where the music was said to be very fine, but I found it execrable. No organ is used

in the Greek Church, and in Russia the marvelously trained bass voices atone for it. I once entered St. Isaac's Cathedral, in Petersburg, during a festival, and can never forget the weird, almost unearthly beauty of the chants and responses.

Nisch is one of the oldest cities in Servia, and has a population of about twenty-five thousand, mostly (to paraphrase Carlyle) thieves—or that, at any rate, was our experience. Although this town lies on the direct route from Paris to Constantinople, it remains much the same as it was three centuries ago. Mosques, minarets, and crazy wooden dwellings, muddy unpaved streets, Servian men in homespun and sheepskins, their women in brightly-coloured garments of white or blue cloth worked with embroidery of Russian design, here and there the fez and *yashmak*, for a few Mahometans still reside here. Dust everywhere—except on rainy days—and dust so fine that it worms its way into a watch-glass, and renders your eyes sore and hair gritty for days. This cannot, therefore, be called either an attractive or interesting place. In summer-time it may be different, for then there is no lack of greenery, and the Royal Palace, with its spacious gardens, was once the favourite residence of Queen Draga, who came here every summer to escape the hot weather in Belgrade. For Nisch stands on a vast plain where there is always a breeze, pleasant enough as a July zephyr, but distinctly otherwise when it comes in the shape of a wintry blizzard, and sleet. Nevertheless, not-

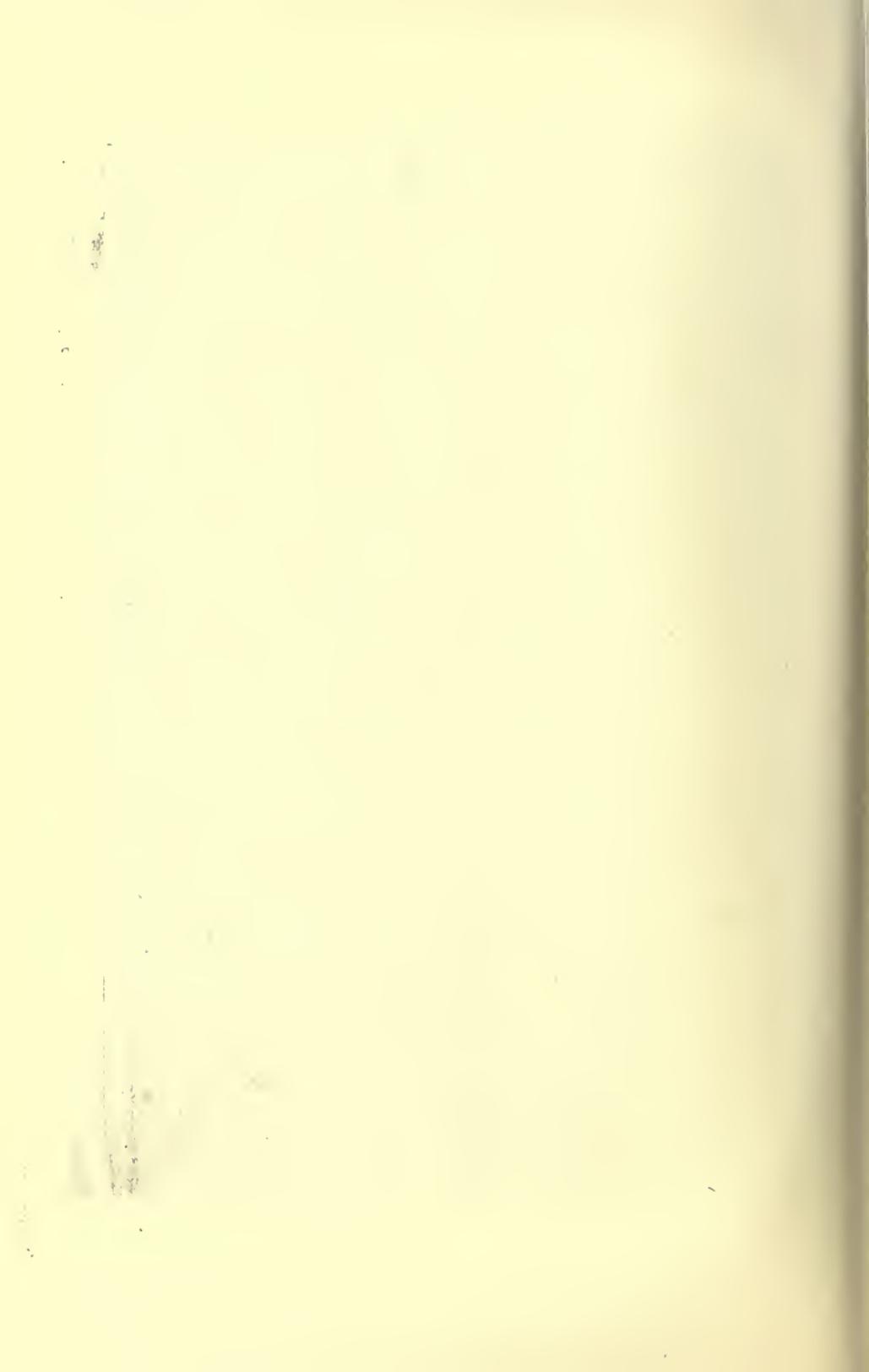
withstanding the dirt, dust, and general discomfort, Nisch was more attractive in my eyes than the commonplace towns of Northern Servia. Market-days here were especially interesting, chiefly by reason of the mixed nationalities who attend them: Bulgarians, Albanians, Greeks, Tziganes, and even Montenegrins, the only ones we saw after leaving that country, for Prince Nicholas's subjects seldom wander far from their beloved mountains. Nisch was also remarkable for the fact that I saw more drunkenness here in one day than throughout the entire journey out from London and back again. At night-time most of it was centred in a third-rate dancing saloon immediately opposite the hotel, where the fun became fast and furious towards the small hours, and sleep was rendered impossible by the jangle of a piano-organ, and stamping of feet across the way. The Servian does not display the usual signs of intoxication, such as singing or shouting, but gives vent to low wails, like a dog baying at the moon, and the effect, at night-time, is most weird and uncanny.

I had almost forgotten one object of interest, the Tower of Skulls, for which this place is famous, but this is now a mere name for a column of bricks and clay about twelve feet high where niches once occupied by the heads are the only traces left of this Turkish trophy, gruesome enough when seen by Lamartine, early in the last century. The sight was then a sickening one, for many of the skulls were furnished with hair



Photo by Arangelovitch, Nisch.

THE PALACE, NISCH.



and hundreds of grinning rows of teeth added to the horror of the spectacle. The story connected with the place is a romantic one, and goes to prove that Servian warriors of olden days were anything but the poltroons they are said to have become in modern warfare. One Stefan Sindiélitch, commander of a brave little band, after stoutly defending an outpost near Nisch was defeated by overwhelming odds, and sooner than surrender exploded the powder magazine, killing himself, his gallant followers, and an even greater number of the enemy. The Pasha, infuriated at the loss of his men, resolved to punish the Christian population by collecting the heads of their vanquished ones, and erecting this ghastly monument—now barely visible for the wreaths which have been placed on it. A few years ago a pretty chapel was erected over this spot by order of the late King Alexander, and the collection of grinning skulls which once formed the tower have now been burned.

From Nisch we travelled in country carts through some of the most fertile country in the world to Prokupié, a quaint old town, which might have flown bodily over from England and settled down in this dark corner of Europe. It is evening as we rattle over the cobbled market-place to the inn, outside which villagers sit smoking and drinking red wine after the day's work. Church bells are chiming softly, and, across the square, lights twinkle from curtained casements into the quiet dusk. From a side-

street come the clatter of closing shutters, the creak of a crawling waggon, and the distant laughter of children at play. Only a ruined minaret near the inn and the jargon of strange tongues remind me that this is not some sleepy old market town in distant Kent or Sussex! We noticed, a few miles from here, a village remarkable for the unusual neatness of its dwellings and the fertile, well-farmed lands surrounding them. This I ascertained was Alexandrof, a settlement composed solely of Hungarian emigrants from the "Banát." Germans are therefore not the only foreigners who are "making hay while the sun shines" in this land of endless resources.

There is much sameness about Servian travel, so it will be unnecessary to detail the events, commonplace for the most part, which occurred for three or four days after leaving Prokupié. Suffice it to say that we drove through a picturesque, well-populated country, but that nearing the Turkish frontier smiling villages, trim gardens, and cultivated lands disappeared, and we reached a grey and sterile region with human habitations few and far between. The people here seemed less friendly. We had been warned not to travel by night near the frontier; but this is sometimes difficult when villages are twenty or thirty miles apart. Anyway, we kept revolvers handy, though I have little faith in that gimcrack weapon when used against more than a couple of sturdy and resolute assailants. A double-barrelled pistol,



THE TOWER OF SKULLS, NISCH.

From a Photo.

even a poker or stout blackthorn are infinitely preferable.

In this district is a place called Ropitza, where we rested for a few hours before proceeding to the frontier town, twenty miles distant. The "Mehana," which constitutes Ropitza, (there is no other habitation for a radius of fifteen miles) contained as tough a crowd of ruffians as it has ever been my lot to encounter, and these were a startling contrast to the mild and meek-eyed peasantry we had hitherto met with. Ropitza has an evil reputation, for it is the favourite meeting-place of thieves, smugglers, and shady characters from all parts of the Balkans. Servians, Albanians, Bulgarians, and even Greeks were collected in the squalid little inn, also an elderly Turk in a fez and seedy frock-coat, who spoke a few words of French and urged me to pass the night there. Failing this, the old villain quietly disappeared, and so effectively plied our driver with "Slivovitch" that he could not sit up on the box until sunset. It was therefore dark before we could set out, along a narrow road, hewn for the first few miles through dense pine forest. But our game little team dashed along with a merry clash of bells, and must have covered about a mile, when there came a violent lurch, followed by a crash, and I found myself in the dusty road, within an inch or so of unpleasantly active iron heels. The driver had been hurled by the shock clean over his horses' heads, and lay motionless, but calling loudly for plum-brandy! Fortunately

my companion, like myself, was uninjured, and we set to work to repair the damage and assist the plunging and terrified ponies to regain their legs. A pine-tree which had fallen across the track was the cause of the disaster, but the carriage was luckily intact and only a trace was broken, which I hastened to repair with the aid of rope and a jack-knife while Mackenzie held the lantern. Then a curious thing happened. "Look behind you!" suddenly cried my friend, and I turned hastily to discover perhaps twenty silent, shadowy forms, which had apparently sprung out of the earth around us. There was no "Your money or your life," business about this strange band, but its methods were quite as effectual. "You will give us two hundred *dinaras*,* and we will help you shift that tree," said the spokesman, in Servian; and I instantly recognised the voice as one I had heard that afternoon in the "Mehana" at Ropitza. Resistance was, of course, useless, for a match was kindled by the speaker ostensibly to light a cigarette, but probably to reveal the gleam of firearms in every man's belt. They numbered more than twenty, we only three, and one of the latter half-stupefied by drink and terror. There was nothing for it, therefore, but to pay up and look pleasant; and, having removed the barrier (obviously placed there by themselves), the robbers vanished as rapidly and silently as they had appeared upon the scene. Happily the situation had a certain grim humour to atone for our

* About £8.



A TOUGH CROWD AT ROPITZA.

Photo by Author.

monetary loss, and it is consolatory to reflect that the slightest resistance on our part would certainly have converted the farce into a drama. For we afterwards ascertained that a dozen persons had been waylaid and robbed (one of them being murdered) on this road within the past year. But I should like to meet that elderly Turk again, within reach of an English police-station, or even under similar conditions, with half a dozen trusty and well-armed companions, in the depths of that Servian pine-forest!

CHAPTER XV

THE LAND OF UNREST

A BRIEF pilgrimage (on wheels) of eight days safely ended where it had commenced, at Nisch. The "Orient-Express" runs through here, twice a week, from Paris to Constantinople (and *vice versa*), and this luxurious conveyance landed us in Sofia within a few hours. It was on a bright sunlit morning that we boarded the train. A week in Servian wilds had left us grimy and travel-stained, and we entered with some diffidence a palatial dining-car, where about a score of well-dressed men and women fresh from Paris were seated at breakfast. And what a breakfast! After tough pork, greasy "Paprika," dirty plates, and the usual repellent surroundings! Only once have I enjoyed a meal as much, and that was on board an Americian Revenue cutter, in the Arctic Ocean, off the coast of Siberia. We had lived for several months on seal-meat (eaten raw and otherwise), and the savoury dish of canned mutton then set before me still lingers in my memory! But in this world everything is comparative, and to-day the *Omelette aux Truffes*

prepared by an artist contrasted just as exquisitely with Servian fare, although even the latter would have been deemed delicious on that miserable land journey from France to America! "You must suffer to enjoy," said the philosophical Mac, as we discussed our coffee and a cigar in a bright and cosy *Fumoir*, and no truer words were ever spoken. For only those who have undergone severe and continuous hardships can truly realise the blessed meaning of the word civilisation.

The line from Nisch to Sofia is wretchedly laid, but passes through some of the finest scenery in the world; notably the desolate gorges of the Nichava Valley. In places huge boulders almost meet overhead, blotting out the sunshine, as we skirt a foaming, roaring torrent at unpleasantly close quarters. So massive are the towering crags around that they dwarf the world-famed "Orient-Express" into the semblance of a toy-railway. The mountains begin to recede as we reach a little frontier town, with its ruined castle overlooking a picturesque collection of red-roofed, garden-girt houses, and a few minutes later we have entered Bulgarian territory. *Slava-Bogh** to Servia!

The examination of passports at Tzaribrod occasions far less fuss and annoyance than we encountered on entering the latter country. With this exception one might be in Russia, which country everything around us recalls. Only one

* Serb = Goodbye.

thing is missing: the characteristic odour of smoke and leather which assails the nostrils from end to end of the Tsar's dominions. On the other hand, the uniforms are absolutely identical, and some officers who joined us here might have stepped into the train at Moscow or Kieff. These were pleasant, sociable fellows, and I may add that throughout Bulgaria I never met an officer of any branch of the service who did not, at any rate, behave like a gentleman. Leaving Tzaribrod we enter another valley of rocks to finally emerge upon a dreary and monotonous plain, which is pointed out to me, with some pride, by our military friends as Slivnitsa—a name strictly tabooed in the country we have just left, for here, as the reader is already aware, the Servians were utterly routed in 1885. "We could have driven them back much sooner," says my informant quietly, and with the air of one stating a simple fact, "but we allowed them to advance almost to within sight of Sofia in order to render their defeat more crushing and complete!"

After the deprecatory remarks of the garrison at Kragujevatz, it was pleasant to note the admiration of these men for the British Army, nor was I surprised to find that the Russian reverses in the Far East have considerably diminished the respect once inspired by the army of the Great White Tsar in this portion of the Balkans. Thus a remark which I made upon the similarity of the Russian and Bulgarian uniforms met with any-



THE NISCHAVA VALLEY.

Photo by Arangelovitch, Nisch.

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thing but approval. "They may resemble each other," said a grey-haired colonel, who, while consuming innumerable cigarettes, had hitherto remained silent; "but I can assure you that our methods are entirely different!"

That inevitable topic in the Near East, Macedonia, was of course touched upon, and I was eagerly questioned upon the probable attitude of England in the event of a crisis. Like all military men I afterwards met in Sofia (and travelling through the country to the Shipka Pass), our fellow-travellers seemed convinced that the Macedonian question must eventually be settled by force of arms, and that, in that case, Bulgaria was the country to do it. The opinion of the Great Powers on the question did not seem to occur to this nation of fire-eaters, who nevertheless would probably render a good account of themselves in the event of hostilities with Turkey. At first I was inclined to smile inwardly at the confident tone in which our companions spoke of a possible war with the Turks. But when I had become acquainted with the practical methods of the Bulgarian Army, its magnificent artillery and no less efficient cavalry and line, I smiled no longer. For Bulgaria has already become an important factor in Eastern events which may one day have to be seriously reckoned with. I also learnt that a projected alliance with that powerful neighbour, Rumania, had lately engrossed the attention of Sofia politicians, and would willingly have heard more of this; but unfortunately at this

point the journey ended and the "Orient-Express" clattered into the handsome *Gare* at Sofia, having accomplished the journey from Paris in under forty-eight hours.

The capital of Bulgaria occupies the same site as the squalid poverty-stricken town once governed by the Porte. No mushroom city in Western America ever sprang so quickly into a prosperous being from the ashes of filth and a corrupt administration. Twenty years ago the mean-looking buildings and foul, dark streets of Sofia rendered the place a nest of filth and disease, and its rapid conversion into a modern city of fine buildings, broad, well-paved streets, and pleasant parks and gardens, is one of which Bulgarians may well feel proud. Since the opening of the railway Sofia has progressed by leaps and bounds. The new Palace and "Sobranié," or House of Parliament, would grace any European capital, and so would the hotels, theatres, restaurants, street cars, and electric light. Everything here is more up-to-date than in Belgrade; French and German are spoken in shops and hotels, and you may walk on smooth asphalt instead of painful cobbles. Living is absurdly cheap—a leg of mutton costs tenpence, meat is only threepence a pound, and twelve delicious apples can be bought for one penny, and other fruit in season as cheaply. Sofia has been called a "little Brussels," and it certainly resembles the latter, although on a bright day its busy streets, alive with Eastern colour, grey, time-worn mosques, and the snowy peak of Mount Vitosch, backed by



THE GRAND BOULEVARD,
SOFIA.

Photo by Author.

a sky of sapphire, render it infinitely more novel and picturesque. Also there is a prosperous, business-like air about the people, which forms a striking contrast to the dawdling, *café*-haunting citizens of Belgrade. Not that these establishments do not almost outnumber those in King Peter's capital, and from about four o'clock in the afternoon until seven they are generally so crowded that it is almost impossible to find a seat. A *café* in Paris is the usual resting-place after business hours—not so here, where only few customers come for relaxation in the shape of a glance at the papers or game of dominoes. The majority are here for a different purpose, for almost every important political conspiracy, from the assassination of Stambuloff to the abduction of Prince Alexander, has been hatched in these establishments. Personally I would sooner reside in Sofia than in any other Balkan city (with the exception of Bukarest), were it not for its normal state of political unrest, which, although interesting enough to the casual traveller, would after a time become intolerable to any permanent resident afflicted with nerves. For the close connection between politics and bloodshed is anything but agreeable to the peaceful stranger from Western Europe. Thus Stambuloff,*

* "On the evening of July 15, 1895, as Stambuloff was driving home from the Union Club with an old friend, three men leapt into the street, with yataghans and a revolver in their hands. Before the Premier's old servant had had time to fire, the assassins had cut his master down and were hacking his prostrate body with their knives as it lay on the roadway.

after dining quietly at his club, was hacked to pieces just outside his own house in a fashionable thoroughfare, and during our stay here a member of the Macedonian Committee was shot dead at midday in the public gardens, where the incident created less excitement than a cab accident in Piccadilly. Indeed the place was crowded with nurses and children, but they continued to promenade and play about as though nothing had happened. These political "executions" are of weekly occurrence in Sofia, though you may walk through the darkest and loneliest streets in the small hours without fear of molestation. A famous Macedonian leader told me that this city contains more police for its size than any capital in the world. I met him by appointment in a brightly-lit *café*, which is eyed askance by the authorities as a favourite resort of socialists. Here my friend pointed out at least a dozen plain-clothes detectives, who had come with no apparent object, for political intolerance is now, in Bulgaria, a thing of the past. I frequently heard Prince Ferdinand openly discussed in terms which surprised me; but secret societies flourish here, as was plainly shown by the following incident which

At the first shot the three murderers fled, and the police who were present made no attempt to arrest them. Their unfortunate victim was taken home to die. Death came as a relief, for both his arms had been cut to pieces, one eye had been half gouged out and his forehead bore the marks of fifteen wounds. Three days later the ablest of Bulgaria's sons breathed his last." ("The Story of the Nations," by W. Miller.)

occurred one night in the *café* in question. Several friends of my host had joined our table, and one of these—a florid, middle-aged person, full of jokes and laughter—left us early in the evening, to keep an appointment. “He will not laugh long,” said my neighbour, in a low tone, alluding to the individual who had departed. Knowing my company I discreetly changed the conversation, but shortly afterwards I heard of the death of our merry friend, who was found at dawn a few days later in a street off the principal boulevard with a bullet in his brain! I recollect this poor fellow had once been in England, where he had picked up a few slang phrases, one of which he constantly made use of on the evening in question: “Now we sha’n’t be long!” In his case the words were indeed prophetic! *

Prince Ferdinand is certainly not popular, which

* “In private life, the average Bulgarian is an excellent fellow—honest, hard-working, and hospitable. It is in the political arena that he still displays, beneath the thin veneer of twenty years’ civilisation, the effect of five centuries of Turkish rule. To “remove” a political opponent is accordingly still regarded as an ordinary and recognised party weapon, and the license of language in the party press exceeds all decent bounds. The extent to which party feeling is carried may be proved by the fact that the hall-porter of my hotel solemnly rebuked me for desiring to see M. Petkoff, the editor of the *Svoboda*, the leading Opposition paper, which, as he said, “it is better not to read.” And when I suggested that that gentleman should visit me, I was told by one of his staff that it was advisable for him *not* to go to the hotel. It will be seen from this that the Bulgarians take their politics very seriously.” (From W. Miller’s “Travels in the Near East.”)

is partly owing to the fact that he is away for more than two-thirds of the year, and that even when in Bulgaria he chiefly resides in one of his country palaces—some say from dread of assassination, which, in view of the fate of most Balkan sovereigns, seems probable. That the Prince's numerous trips to London, Paris, or Monte Carlo are not favourably viewed by his people is scarcely to be wondered at, for the royal traveller has expensive tastes (his marriage alone cost £130,000), and while on these erratic journeys His Highness's expenses run to about £100 a day. The absurd ostentation of the Bulgarian Court, where more formalities exist than even in Vienna or Petersburg, also causes much annoyance amongst all classes, but the Prince played a clever card when he recently visited England ostensibly to discuss the annexation of Macedonia. Radicals aver that the journey was one of pleasure, but at any rate the bait took, and the people acclaimed a future King on the return of their ruler. The latter is no longer the ardent Russophile he was; but this change of front is not, as some may suppose, connected with the Japanese victories in the Far East, but because his son, little Prince Boris, did not receive the usual decoration upon being made honorary colonel of the Russian "Regiment of Minsk." Scandal says that the Sofia photographers have lost a fortune by this omission, for Prince Ferdinand is as lavish a patron of the camera as his august cousin in Berlin.

There is no doubt that Prince Ferdinand's rule



Photo by Author.

A STREET IN SOFIA.

in Bulgaria hangs on a very slender thread, and his Royal Highness has been compelled to work the "Macedonian boom" for all it is worth to retain even the lukewarm loyalty of his subjects. This was not always so, for Stambuloff discountenanced the foolish extravagance which now causes so much friction between this ruler and his people, not only because it rendered the former the laughing-stock of Europe, but because the latter invariably have to pay the piper. Little Prince Boris (who is said to be an amiable, attractive boy) is never allowed to take a short drive without a troop of cavalry in attendance, and is being taught to sacrifice everything in life to the empty exigences of the "etiquette" so dear to his pretentious sire. When in Bulgaria I never heard a good word said of Prince Ferdinand, although his deposed predecessor was everywhere mentioned with affectionate regret.

The reigning Prince is not a clever man, which is curious seeing that his mother is (or was) one of the brightest women in Europe, but her son is endowed with a certain amount of cunning which, under the circumstances, may further his projects even better than true statesmanship. Stambuloff, one of the greatest men Bulgaria has ever produced, almost despised him, although the present Premier affects undying loyalty and humours his every whim. Columns of praise have been lavished upon His Highness of late in the press of Western Europe, but as a German correspondent here remarked: "They do not know him as I do!"

Since I was in Sofia the question of converting Bulgaria into a kingdom has been brought before the Powers, and more or less favourably received. Most Bulgarians I met scout the idea, but Ferdinand does not seem to consider the inclinations of his people on this important subject, although the latter may one day prove a nasty stumbling-block to his overwhelming conceit and ambition. Unfortunately the Prince lacks one important quality with which Nature has so lavishly endowed the King of England—tact; and this deficiency is a continual cause of trouble and dissension amongst the courtiers (or rather flatterers) by whom the ruler of Bulgaria is surrounded. Nor does a fickle, irritable disposition increase his popularity, for most people strongly object to being warmly welcomed at Court one day and snubbed, for no apparent reason, on the next. The correspondent of a great London daily has cause to remember a certain breakfast at the Prince's hunting lodge at Rhodope a few months ago when, under the genial influence of champagne and good fellowship, one of his ministers toasted the royal host as "King of Macedonia," much to the latter's delight and self-gratification. But the Englishman was unlucky enough to report this fact (not having received instructions to the contrary), and the *entrée* to the Palace is now barred to one who was once received not only as a guest, but a privileged friend. Some subjects are better passed over, but I may remark that, although a stickler for etiquette, Prince Ferdinand



BULGARIAN PEASANTS.

Photo by Author.

can at times become so Bohemian in his mode of life that he is apt to forget that walls have ears, and that absolute secrecy is impossible in a capital of this size.

The Prince was no doubt handicapped in having to succeed a man of such charming personality as the first Prince of Bulgaria. His victory over the Servians at Slivnitza established him as a hero, and as such he will always be remembered. Prince Alexander was no diplomat, but his personal bravery has never been questioned, and women adored him, for he was as much at home in the "Boudoir" as on the battlefield. Unfortunately, in those days the will of Russia was supreme and incontrovertible. The downfall of Alexander was decreed by the Tsar, and, as a matter of course, came to pass. But his memory will live for ever in the hearts of his adopted people.

But whoever their ruler may be, these same people, as Americans say, are "all right," although they have realised, since the Treaty of Berlin, that Russia is an infinitely harder taskmaster than the indolent, easy-going Turk. And it says much for the national grit of Bulgaria that she has generally held her own against the intrigues and threats of the Powers that be at Petersburg.

When we were here the Macedonian business was the burning question of the hour, and there seemed to be as much dissension between the so-called "leaders" as that which existed amongst the heads of the "Paris Commune" in 1871.

Boris Sarafoff is no longer taken seriously, even by his own countrymen, and General Tzontcheff is generally regarded as his welcome successor, although many others lay claim to this distinction. It is, however, an open secret that Tzontcheff has the firm support of Royalty, and the General's views regarding the state of affairs may therefore be taken as expressing those of the Government. Indeed, Tzontcheff was removed by special order from his command at Widin to Sofia in order to devote closer attention to Macedonian matters. It was only with the greatest difficulty that I obtained an audience, for the General was up to his eyes in work and has been so persistently mis-stated by journalists that he was naturally chary of receiving me. We met in a low, whitewashed apartment, which is used as a committee-room and the publishing office of the *Reforme*, a journal almost exclusively devoted to Macedonian affairs. Tzontcheff is a dapper, dark-bearded man of middle age, with a piercing eye and quick, decisive manner, indicative of much resource and mental energy. M. Gologánoff, editor of the *Reforme*, and Colonel Yankoff (for whose capture alive or dead the Ottoman Government had recently offered £2,000) were also present. The inevitable cigarettes and coffee having been discussed, I managed to turn the conversation into the required channel, by alluding to news which had only been received that morning of a serious affray between armed Servians and Turkish troops near the border. The General speaks French

imperfectly, and the following statement was therefore taken down, word for word, in my presence by M. Gologánoff:—

“The so-called reforms in Macedonia have entirely failed to improve the condition of affairs. Hilmy Pasha is absolute ruler of the country. The civil agents of Russia and Austria have practically no authority, and (perhaps for political reasons) exercise no control. Turkish officials collect taxes, administer their own ideas of justice, and fill the prisons with innocent victims just as they did before the new *régime*, and I can safely assert that anarchy and bloodshed have increased since its establishment. Moreover, the Turkish Government loses no opportunity of fostering religious and racial feuds which would otherwise not exist. It does not hinder, but encourages, hostile bands of Greeks and Servians to cross their frontiers and lay waste Bulgarian villages, its policy being to decimate the Bulgarian population for its own ends. I know of towns in Macedonia where Greek Committees exist (with the connivance of Turkish officials) for the sole purpose of murdering prominent Bulgarians. After the Salonika and Monastir murders not one in twenty of the assassins was captured—for obvious reasons. For the object of the Ottoman Government is twofold: to enfeeble the Christian element by racial wars, and to prove to the outer world that Macedonians are utterly incapable of self-government and unworthy of European sympathy.

“As for the gendarmerie, what can it do? Take

the Province of Sérés (under the French), which has eight districts with ten officers in all. In each district are 100 to 130 towns and villages. Thus you have, say, 1,000 centres of population under the control of only eight men, six of whom cannot speak the native language! Drama (the British section) has the smallest area of all, but how can a handful of officers at these points know what is going on in the interior of the country, especially when their information is usually derived from those who wish to maintain a state of disorder—the Turks themselves? How can they redress the grievances of natives, when complaints (however urgent) must first be submitted to the Chief of the District, thence be despatched to Hilmy Pasha, and finally be sent to the Civil Agent, by which time they are probably cast aside and forgotten in favour of more recent affairs? And even when a delinquent is brought to justice he is seldom, if ever, punished. Take the case of the district of Gorna-Djoumaya, under the French. Here villages were pillaged and burnt, men beaten to death, and women outraged. All this was duly reported and sworn to by French officers, and what was the result? Sali Pasha, the military commander and chief instigator of the atrocities, was tried, found guilty, and removed to the town of Sérés, where he now occupies a more lucrative post than before!

“The situation is now more critical than ever by reason of the extensive military preparations being made by Turkey in Macedonia. Large



OFFICES OF THE "REFORME."

Photo by Author.

bodies of troops and quantities of war material are arriving daily in the 'Vilayet' of Adrianople from Asia Minor, and the Macedonian reserves have been partially mobilised. The object is probably to intimidate Bulgaria, and prevent her further interference in Macedonia, but the result may be to endanger the peace of the Balkans. For the influx of Turkish soldiers means further persecutions, which may drive the Macedonians to open revolt; and this can only end in wholesale massacre—as of the Armenians. In this case Bulgaria would be compelled to act, and a conflagration would ensue which might set Europe ablaze.

“A remedy? It is simple enough: ‘*effective* reforms under the control of all the European Powers.’ I do not mean a ‘Gendarmerie,’ which is an absolute farce! The only satisfactory solution of the Macedonian question is one which appeared in one of your London papers some weeks ago, as having been suggested by a Liberal member of your Parliament at a Macedonian Conference. It was simply this: ‘*The appointment of a European Governor for Macedonia and Adrianople, independent of the Sultan, and responsible to all the Great Powers of Europe.*’ Such a scheme as this would very soon prove its efficiency, and would meet with universal acclamation throughout Bulgaria—and, I imagine, throughout the civilised world!”

But personally I should imagine that this is very doubtful, seeing that even in Sofia opinions varied considerably as to the most practical solu-

tion of the difficulty. It was confusion worse confounded. General Tzontcheff's ulterior aim was undoubtedly a Bulgarian autonomy of Macedonia, and formal annexation to the Principality. Sandansky, another leader, declared himself the only legal representative of the "Macedonians." His object was the establishment of an independent State to be included into a Balkan Confederation. And yet again I heard of a "Macedonian Committee" which, regardless of the fact that Macedonia contains at least a dozen different nationalities, wished to establish Bulgar as the universal language of the State before attempting further measures. The power of the once famous and influential Boris Saráffoff seemed to have entirely waned. I used to see him daily at the "Grand Café" drinking and smoking till the small hours, surrounded by a little coterie of "toadies," and glaring defiance at the men who have supplanted him.

Here, too, one evening we met some of the military friends with whom we had travelled from Tzaribrod, and arranged to witness a review of the troops which took place the day before our departure. And my eyes were indeed opened by that imposing spectacle of several thousand men under arms, comprising a battalion of Guards, several regiments of cavalry and infantry, and two batteries of artillery. Here again, judging from the uniforms, this formidable force might have formed part of the Russian Army, especially the line regiments with their flat, white caps, high boots, and pea-soup coloured overcoats which

throughout the Tsar's Empire are worn alike by soldier and convict. But, as my friend the Colonel had truly remarked, the resemblance between the Bulgarian and Russian armies is confined to outward adornment, for not only are these officers better educated and more efficient as regards their military duties, but over 30% of their men can read and write. A French officer who was present that day told me that the Bulgarian artillery was fully equal in every respect to that of his own country. This gentleman had resided here for some time in order to make a special study of the army, and had found its organisation almost perfect in every way, although the commissariat and transport departments were not as satisfactory as other branches of the service. I visited some huge barracks newly erected near the railway station at Sofia, where six thousand men could be accommodated with ease, and found the dormitories, sanitary arrangements, and training and recreation-rooms quite as good as, if not better, than any we have in England. On my return home I was asked by an English General if Prince Ferdinand could put one hundred thousand men into the field at a month's notice, and he seemed incredulous when I told him that in that space of time Bulgaria could mobilise a well-equipped and efficient force of half a million men. Nevertheless, this is a fact. And let us not forget that even twenty years ago the Bulgarians, after routing one hundred thousand Servians like dust before a gale, could have marched right on to Belgrade and

occupied that place if Austria and other Powers had not intervened. And twenty years makes a considerable difference to even a small nation which, during that time, is straining every nerve and expending every available copper to increase the efficiency of her army. When I was at Sofia France had just secured the whole of an "order" for new and formidable batteries of quick-firing guns, notwithstanding pertinacious bids from Germany. For these alone the Creusot works are to receive over a million sterling!

I found Bulgarians of all classes, if less hospitable, more serious and better read than Servians. The former are also more up-to-date as regards the treatment of the Jews, who in Sofia, at any rate, enjoy the same privileges as in that earthly paradise of the modern Israelite—England. And when even our own country is gradually being compelled to bow before the Semitic golden calf, surely little Bulgaria may be pardoned for following suit. Personally I can never understand the common prejudice against Jews, for I have invariably found them (in all parts of the world) more charitable, and generally cleverer and more entertaining than Christians. Only in Poland do I object to this much-maligned race, but many of their own creed in England share my opinion. In Bulgaria the Jews are mostly of Spanish origin, and come from the same stock as those we met at Mostar and Sarajevo.

The remainder of this population of about seventy thousand is very mixed, and you hear German,

Russian, Italian, and Greek spoken on all sides as well as the native language. The Turks now number under two thousand here, and only one mosque now exists, the others being used for secular purposes. This was not done to impress Mahometans with a sense of their inferiority after the emancipation, but merely because the latter were not sufficiently numerous to require more than one place of worship. For Mahometans in Sofia are treated exactly like Bulgarian subjects, and most of them aver that they are so contented here that nothing in the world would induce them to return to their own distressful country. The "Hotel de Bulgarie"—an excellent establishment where we stayed—overlooks the public gardens, and when a military band was the attraction I frequently saw Christian and Moslem strolling about on the friendliest terms. The hotel also adjoins the Palace, a fine building in the style of the Tuileries, surrounded by beautiful gardens. But as a Bulgarian journalist remarked, it always looks as if it were "to let," and indeed the blinds which are generally lowered for two-thirds of the year, give one that impression. Under the guidance of my friend I also visited the House of Parliament, which cost over £70,000, and which is indeed a contrast to the ramshackle Skupshtina at Belgrade.

The aforementioned journalist, Monsieur B—— (I suppress the name for obvious reasons), had run a newspaper here for several years and therefore proved a reliable guide. Forty-eight hours sufficed

to exhaust the sights and pleasures of Belgrade, but I could willingly have passed as many days in Sofia, the place is so bright and attractive, or at any rate seemed so in the brilliant weather which lasted uninterruptedly during our stay. You may walk about the streets here all day and never feel weary, they are so full of life and colour, although, as in Japan, picturesque native costumes are gradually giving way to broadcloth and tweeds. This quaint mixture of the latest European fashions and Oriental costumes are the first things which strike the stranger on arrival in Sofia. But he soon discovers that this is a land of contradictions. For instance, the man who drove us to our hotel from the station was an essentially modern Bulgar who, as far as dress was concerned, would have walked unnoticed up Regent Street, and who was as loquacious and full of information as a Maltese guide. Indeed he was up-to-date on every subject, from the newest style of motor-car to Mr. Chamberlain's fancy in orchids. And yet his wiry little pair of ponies were adorned with necklets of blue beads as amulets against the "Evil Eye," any allusion to which was strongly resented by their driver.

Sofia is formed by three separate districts: the modern city, which has the Palace for a hub, and where the Legations and better classes of all nationalities reside; the old Turkish quarter with its unpaved, narrow streets and dark, wooden dwellings, now rapidly disappearing to make way for bricks and mortar; and the outer portions of the

capital, composed of straggling roads, and houses of various dimensions, chiefly occupied by the middle classes. Here dwelt my friend B—— in a pretty little villa, whither I accompanied him after our wanderings. But my host and his beautiful wife (pretty women are as numerous here as they are rare in Servia) had to lay the cloth for supper, their domestic having left the house at a moment's notice. "The third in ten days," sighed poor Madame despairingly, for it would seem that it is even more difficult to procure servants here than in Belgrade, and even when obtained the aggressive conduct of the Bulgarian handmaiden renders her a doubtful blessing. For instance, this young person had left in a huff because she had not been formally introduced by her mistress to some callers during the day! Apparently the only way to keep a servant in Sofia is to let her wages fall in arrears, but this plan can scarcely be called a satisfactory one. Recently, however, an agency has been started to enlist the services of German girls, much to the delight of the ladies of Sofia, who now, for the first time, see a way out of their domestic dilemmas.

Belgrade was preferable to Sofia in one respect—there was always plenty to do in the evening. But in Sofia after dark there are no amusements whatsoever. An occasional performance by a Dramatic Society, a military band twice a week, and two or three third-rate *café chantants* where both artistes and refreshments were execrable, formed the only recreations of the place. Every

one here is too deeply engrossed in politics to waste valuable time on theatres, and the Bulgarian is made of sterner stuff than his frivolous, pleasure-loving neighbour. This is partly shown by the large proportion of schools and educational establishments throughout the country, which even now number more than twice those of Servia. Sofia has hitherto lacked a University, but a fine building is now being erected for this purpose, although Prince Ferdinand strongly disapproved at first of this institution, which will no doubt introduce the dangerous "student" element which has already worked such havoc in Russia. I now speak of schools and "gymnasias" for the middle and lower classes, for rich Bulgarians generally send their children to Western Europe to be educated. The educational movement is greatly assisted by the founding of public libraries which are now met with in most provincial towns, and the press is making great strides throughout the country. Sofia alone has nearly a score of daily and weekly publications—one or two of them illustrated—and the latter, though poor productions, are creditable enough when we consider the age (or rather the youth) of this go-ahead little country.

It is also satisfactory to note the important reforms which have taken place of late years in the general management of Bulgarian penal establishments. As British delegate to the Paris Penal Congress of 1895, I was able to realise what dens of cruelty and disease these were under

Turkish rule, and even now the remoter districts are provided with prisons where the sanitary arrangements are infinitely worse than those of the worst Siberian gaols. In the larger towns, however, convicts are now well cared for and enjoy a much more liberal diet than in England. But the supply of labour is utterly inadequate (as in most Russian prisons), and men are detained sometimes for many months before being brought up for trial—two defects for which there can now be no excuse. Murder is still nominally punished by death, but the sentence is rarely carried out.

Having painted Sofia in colours so attractive that it may allure my readers, I should mention one drawback connected with this city, and that is its deplorable drainage, which often causes serious epidemics. Otherwise, at any time but summer and early autumn, the climate is healthy and exhilarating. But Rome was not built in a day, and the sewage question is now occupying the serious attention of the medical authorities, so that in time one may be able to visit this capital without being subjected to sickening odours (even in the best hotels) and the consequent risk of serious illness.

CHAPTER XVI

PLEVNA AND THE SHIPKA PASS

THE time had arrived for our departure from Sofia. I awoke at daybreak (for, as usual, the train left at an unearthly hour in the morning) and gazed from my warm and comfortable bedroom upon a wintry scene—a Christmas card designed by Nature. The previous day had resembled Calcutta in July; but I noticed that the shady spot in the public gardens where we had then discussed cool drinks was now concealed by a carpet of snow. My snug, white bed presented a tempting contrast to the cold, cheerless streets, but I aroused Mackenzie and we emerged from the portals of the *Hôtel de Bulgarie*, entered a *fiacre* (converted into a sleigh since the previous evening) and set out for the railway station, *en route* for Plevna and the Shipka Pass.

As a matter of course, we had to await the arrival of the train for nearly an hour, pacing briskly up and down a draughty and fireless waiting-room. There is absolutely no need for this enforced period of discomfort, for the purchase



Photo by Girvli, Sofia.

PLEVNA.

of a ticket and registration of baggage occupies only a few minutes. But in Bulgaria custom has decreed that the traveller shall be conveyed to the railway station at least an hour before the scheduled time of departure, although no one seems able to explain why he should undergo this needless discomfort. "Every one does it," was the only reply I could get—and with this I had to be content, although raging inwardly at the folly of local habits. On the morning in question we reached the station at a quarter before 7 a.m., and our train steamed leisurely (and punctually) into Sofia at something past eight. Another half-hour would have afforded ample time for breakfast (which was unobtainable at the hour of our departure), and fortunately a restaurant-car was available, or we should have had to fast until the evening. Wherefore is it wise to be provided with a private stock of provisions when travelling in the Balkans; and we found meat lozenges the best and most portable means of staving off the pangs of hunger. Another excellent thing on this kind of journey is "Carnyl," a patent food invented by Dr. Yorke Davies, for it is strengthening, easily prepared, and never palls upon the palate. I found it invaluable during a dog-sled journey of several months in Arctic Siberia, and even at home it makes an excellent dish for breakfast or lunch.

Not so very long ago the journey from Sofia to Plevna entailed some discomfort, for it had to be made in a conveyance locally known as a

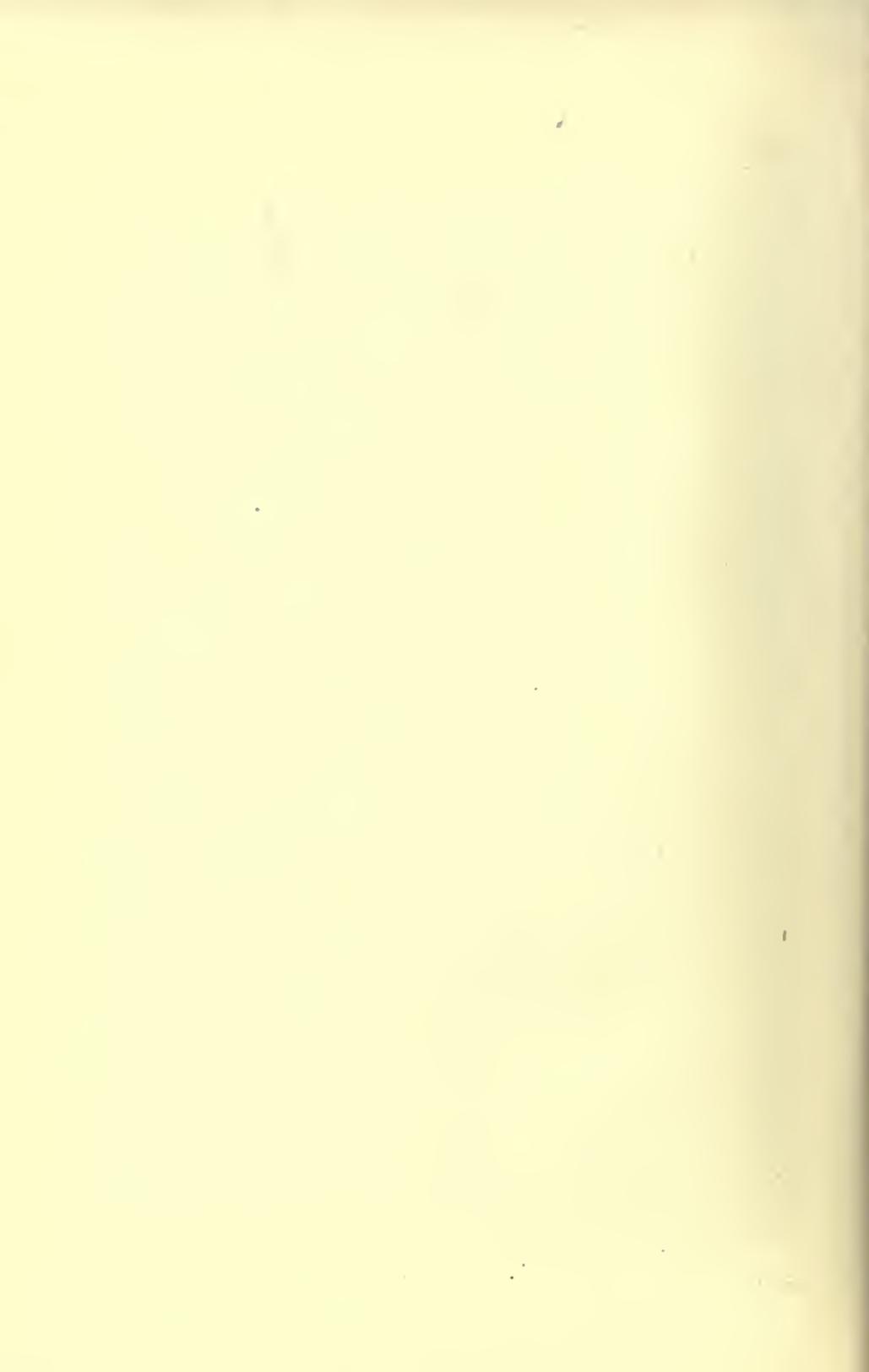
“Phaeton,” a little box of torture on wheels, as unlike the English vehicle of the same name as can well be. The Bulgarian article is an open carriage drawn by three or four horses abreast, and it is generally unprovided with a hood, so that the occupant is exposed to a scorching sunshine, drenched, or frozen, as the case may be. Bulgarians do not (like the Russians) understand the art of posting, and I have driven from end to end of Siberia (before the days of the railway) and experienced less annoyance than during our comparatively short trips through the Balkans. The cattle here, however, are better than even the game and wiry little Siberian post-horses—which is high praise—but the Bulgarian Jehu is very inferior in every way to the Russian *yemshtchik*, and makes a free use of his whip which would horrify the latter.

Our experience of travel in a “Phaeton,” however, was reserved for a later portion of the voyage, and as far as Plevna we travelled by the recently constructed railway; a dreary line laid through gloomy gorges and across monotonous plains. The restaurant-car attached to the train was dirty, and the food and service both primitive, not being under the same management as the well-appointed “Orient-Express,” but the same day landed us in Plevna, a sleepy little town, which now shows few traces of Osman Pasha’s gallant resistance. There is no hotel here, but the landlord of a wineshop gave us a rough shakedown, and offered us relics of the siege in



A BULGARIAN PEASANT.

Photo by Author.



the shape of spurious bullets and fragments of shells. I believe they may still be purchased at Waterloo!

Plevna, which lies in a hollow surrounded by low hills, appears to have no natural defences, and how it held out so long must ever remain a mystery. Nevertheless, the place would probably never have fallen when it did had it not been for the assistance rendered by the Rumanian allies—a fact which, at the time, was scarcely appreciated in England. Our host had fought with the invaders in the famous battle of September 7, 1877, when a force of 135,000 Russians was repulsed by an infinitely smaller garrison of Turks with a loss of 18,000 men. The old "Chevalier Garde" had served as orderly on the Russian Head Quarters Staff and was therefore able to furnish some interesting details anent the capitulation and Osman Pasha, for whom he professed unbounded admiration. "I can see him now," he said, "that marvellous man, refusing to yield up his sword to the Prince of Rumania (whom he regarded as a rebel), and handing it to our General as though he were granting a favour!"

"General Stroukoff," added the old Guardsman, was the first to enter the Pasha's presence, and I accompanied him. We found Osman in a squalid hovel with a mud floor, lit by a broken window stuffed up with bits of rag. So poorly was the place furnished that he had to sit on a wooden bench resting his back against the grimy wall.

The cold was intense, for only a handful of damp wood shavings spluttered in a rusty stove. Every one was shivering save the hero of Plevna who, however, was deadly pale, partly from exhaustion and partly from physical pain for his leg was being bandaged, the foot resting on an empty cartridge box. The dressing of his wound must have caused the sufferer acute agony, but he coolly smoked a cigarette, and watched the surgeons at work as though another person had been undergoing the operation. Osman was shabbily attired in undress uniform, and wore no decorations, although no man in Europe had justly received more. I don't think the Pasha was much more than forty years of age at that time, but he looked twenty years older. When Stroukoff entered, Osman rose from his bench with great difficulty and put out his hand."

"Mon Général, you are wounded; I pray you be seated," said Stroukoff in French, declining a proffered seat in the presence of so illustrious a captive. "I am here," he added, "by order of General Ganetsky, to congratulate your Excellency on the brilliant defence of Plevna. But I regret to inform you that the Grand Duke can only accept an unconditional surrender."

For a few moments Osman was silent, and appeared to be pondering deeply; then—

"I am entirely at the disposal of His Imperial Highness," he said, in so low a whisper that the words were scarcely audible.

"It is the will of God, your Excellency,"

rejoined Stroukoff, a veteran of many campaigns, yet not unmoved by the pathetic appearance of the speaker.

Half an hour later General Ganetsky arrived, a brusque but amiable old soldier, who warmly greeted Osman and unceremoniously seated himself beside him. For several minutes Ganetsky could only speak of the splendid achievements of the Turkish troops.

“Colossal!” he kept repeating. “Nothing has ever been seen like it.” But his congratulations seemed to weary the Pasha, who received them coldly and in silence. Stroukoff, ever tactful, endeavoured to shorten the interview, and drew out his watch with a significant gesture.

“Excellency,” he murmured, “it is past four o’clock.”

“Ah! true,” replied Ganetsky; then turning to the bowed and shrunken figure beside him, he demanded the formal surrender of the city. Without another word Osman turned towards his Chief of Staff, and, wearily raising his hand, pointed towards the door. Adil-Pasha saluted and then slowly withdrew, followed by Stroukoff and some Rumanian officers. The final order for disarmament had been given, but it was not carried out without considerable difficulty, for at first Osman’s troops, now reduced to mere ghosts by disease and starvation, stubbornly refused to lay down their arms. That evening General Skobeleff arrived to pay his respects to the Pasha, who received him with more

cordiality than he had displayed towards any other Russian emissary. Thus fell Plevna, after a siege of four months, and with it were captured no less than 40,000 men and 77 guns. "But we should not have done so well without the Rumanians," added the narrator. "They bore the brunt of the decisive battle, and captured the Gravitzza Redoubt. Heaven only knows how many they left there!"

During our stay here rain fell in torrents and a lowering glass and watery sky looked as though the downpour might last for a week. Plevna is not a cheerful place even in sunshine, and gloomy weather made it unbearably dreary and monotonous, especially as our only means of killing time was by means of an object, ambitiously described by its owner as a billiard-table, which stood in the middle of the wineshop. Later on, at Tirnova, we found another, so I presume this is the article generally turned out by the Bulgarian Burroughes and Watts, although billiards is hardly the name for a game which is played without cues or pockets, and which consists in knocking down a row of wooden pins with an iron top. Anyhow it served our purpose for awhile and we passed the remainder of that dismal endless day drinking coffee, smoking innumerable cigarettes and listening to our host's reminiscences which were related in a monotonous undertone, to which the moaning of the wind and ceaseless patter of rain against roof and window-pane formed an appropriate accompaniment.



Photo by Givori, Sofia.

OUTSIDE PLEVNA.
MONUMENTS ERECTED TO RUSSIAN GENERALS KILLED DURING THE SIEGE.

“If it goes on like this,” said the landlord, when we retired to rest (on a wooden bench), “the floods will be out and you may be detained here for a week!”

But fortunately this gloomy prediction was never fulfilled, for I awoke to find the sun blazing into my eyes, while out in the open the drab, sodden hills of yesterday now appeared green and smiling under a cloudless sky. There was time for a ramble round the outskirts of the town, but as I have said, a few grass-grown mounds once honeycombed with guns are now the sole mementoes of the great struggle which involved so much suffering and loss of life.

Here, as everywhere else in Bulgaria, the peasantry looked prosperous and well-to-do; and well they may in such a land of milk and honey. It is a paradise of greenery and vegetation, which is strange, seeing that with the exception of the Danube, the Principality does not possess a single river worthy of the name. In summer most of the streams run dry, but autumn and early spring bring an abundant downfall, which is perhaps fortunate, for without rain the Province would become another Sahara. The soil is everywhere excellent, and if properly cultivated would yield the richest crops. As it is, the people not only supply their own wants, but furnish a considerable export of produce in fruit and cereals. And yet agriculture is conducted here as primitively as in Servia, and the implements in use are those of ten centuries ago.

From Plevna we travelled on to Tirnova (the ancient capital of Bulgaria), a comparatively short but tedious journey on account of the delay at the junction of Gornea-Orehovitzza, where the traveller must leave the train proceeding to Rustchuk, on the Danube, and take a branch line which runs south to his destination. From here we caught our first glimpse of the Stara-Planina, or Balkan range, and the scenery gradually increased in grandeur until we reached, towards sunset, the ancient capital of the Bulgarian Tsars, assuredly one of the most picturesque and interesting places in Europe. I am fairly well acquainted with three-quarters of this globe and can safely say that I have never been so favourably impressed, at first sight, with any city in the world.

Tirnova is built on a cliff, some 500 feet high, and from below the houses seem almost to overhang each other, so steep is the declivity upon which they stand. Everything has an Oriental aspect, and there is the usual lavish display of colour in walls and façades, toned down, however, by the storms of centuries, and harmonised by weather-beaten woodwork and overhanging eaves of Turkish design. Numerous arcades and balconies line the principal street, and viewed from the rocky summit the town might be built on an island (for the broad and rushing river Yantra here describes almost a circle), an island composed of gardens and greenery, save where luxuriant vegetation has disappeared under bricks and mortar. In



BULGARIAN SCENERY.

Photo by Author.

one respect, however, distance lends enchantment, for as we toiled up the hill from the railway station and crossed a new iron bridge which spans the river at a dizzy height, certain odours, obviously not of Araby, were wafted across from the town. But a long and varied experience of strange races has taught me that some people prefer their native home to have its characteristic smell, and, in this case, the inhabitants of Tirnova must be well satisfied. And anyway, this was a discomfort speedily forgotten in the interest afforded by the tortuous old streets, or rather alleys, formed by gabled, one-storied houses of great age. Some were shops—places for the sale of Sheffield and Manchester goods, cheap agricultural implements (as usual, made in Germany), and that vulgar curse of the twentieth century, the picture post-card. But everything else here is so purely Eastern that one could scarcely realise that the Cross has now effaced the Crescent in Bulgaria, although a blue plaque bearing the words "Battenberg Ulitza" in the main thoroughfare clearly showed that Ottoman rule is now at an end. In a side street not sixty yards long, leading out of the "Battenberg," I counted no less than eleven brass plates indicating that the owner of the house was a lawyer. Physicians (of a sort) seemed to be almost as numerous, and I was unable to obtain an explanation of this strange coincidence in a town of under twenty thousand souls.

Notwithstanding this formidable array of legal talent there seemed to be little doing here in the

way of trade, and Tirnova had an air of stagnation, notwithstanding the prosperous look of its inhabitants. Curs, pigs, and poultry strolled about the grass-grown streets and into the open doorway of our inn, the "Hôtel Royal," which for dirt and discomfort surpassed anything I had seen since leaving the Adriatic. There was another hotel, but a selection of either as a residence recalled the darkie when questioned as to the choice of two roads—"Whichebber one you travels, Boss, I guess you'll be d——d sorry you did not take the other!" For one thing the "Royal" was infested with rats, the presence of which, in unusual numbers, successfully murdered sleep that night; but wakefulness on this occasion was opportune, for towards dawn it disclosed a gentleman in peasant garb tampering with our baggage. The intruder explained that he had got into the room by mistake, which, seeing that the door was locked and he lived four miles away, did not say much for his resource or intellect. But that miserable night was almost atoned for by the view from the inn at sunset: an outlook over leagues of verdure and fertility which in the dusk became an ocean of mist, stretching away to the snowy peaks of the Balkans, now flushed with tints of mauve and rose, now fading to a silvery grey, as night crept over the world. You could have dropped a pebble from our wooden balcony into the swift, shallow waters of the Yantra, eight hundred feet below. Presently a chime of bells tinkled across the valley from a distant church, and at the sound



A BULGARIAN VILLAGE.

women digging in the gardens below gathered up their implements and clambered painfully homewards up the hillside. So steep were these strips of cultivation, that, in one instance, a man had roped himself to the trunk of a tree in order to weed his tiny garden in safety. The nearest approach to this place which I have ever seen was at Yezdi Ghast in Persia, where the inhabitants had to be hoisted up to their houses in wicker baskets from the level of the desert three hundred feet below.* But notwithstanding the romantic surroundings of Tirnova truth compels me to add that here (as at Yezdi Ghast) sewage could plainly be seen coursing on every side down the slopes of the mountain.

Although a railway is available very few strangers find their way here, for Tirnova is far out of the beaten track of travel, and has not yet been pictorially advertised. By the way, I often wonder who is responsible for the attractive works of art, depicting health and pleasure resorts, which adorn our London hoardings and railway stations! The dullest and dreariest seaside town is now transformed into an oasis of winter warmth and sunshine, and the writer was once gulled by one of these pleasant fictions into visiting the so-called "English Riviera" in the month of December, but—never again! At any rate, so remote is Tirnova that I was much surprised to find an American here (the only other inmate

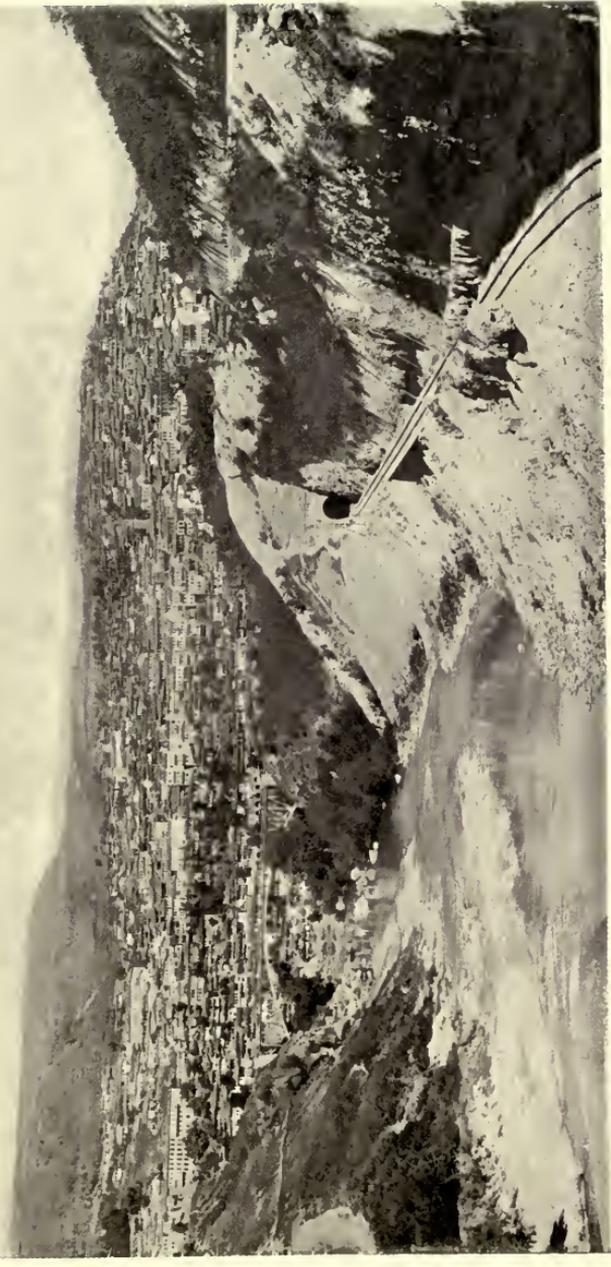
* See "A Ride to India," by the same author. (Chapman & Hall.)

of the "Royal") who had made himself as comfortable as our comfortless inn would permit, by annexing the dining-room sofa as a sleeping-place, and concocting a cocktail, which he called a "Turn-over," out of local and primitive ingredients. The inventor of this subtle beverage hailed from Chicago, and was now engaged in a survey of the country between here and Sofia, with a view to obtaining a concession from the Government for breeding and farming purposes. Steam power, he averred, would shortly revolutionise the Balkans and draw the attention of the world to this portion of Europe, which, although teeming with agricultural wealth, has hitherto lain as fallow, from a modern point of view, as an African desert. "We have got to hustle and get ahead of these Germans!" said my friend; and it would be well if that sentiment were more often expressed (and carried out) in England!

We remained two days here—a stay which I would gladly have prolonged, if only for one reason—this being that I have a passion for "curios" of all kinds, from prayer-wheels to Indian scalps, and Tirnova is one of the few places remaining in Europe where you may still pick up a genuine bargain. When travelling from Pekin to Paris by land in '87 I bought a tiny cup of cracked china from a wayside beggar for twopence (or about 500 "cash") and am now offered £20 for it, which has given me a taste in this direction—not that this will prob-

Photo by Givoli, Sofia.

TIRNEVA.



ably ever happen again, although I have no doubt that if a *connoisseur* kept his eyes open in Tirnova he would find something well worth having in the shape of old silver, porcelain, or brass. Some of the steel work inlaid with gold was especially fine, and only lack of room prevented my investing in an entire armoury which was offered at an absurdly low price. Perhaps the best thing I saw at Tirnova was a small prayer-carpet of great age and marvellous texture, which had mysteriously drifted here from Teherán. And the sum asked for this little gem was exactly one-twentieth part of what I paid for a similar one in the Persian capital some years ago.

This ancient capital offers countless attractions to the archæologist and student of history, and the "Church of the Forty Martyrs," which dates from the thirteenth century, is still in perfect preservation, notwithstanding the troublous times it has witnessed, and the fact that during the Turkish occupation it was converted into a mosque. Another building well worth seeing is the Metropolitan Church (of Byzantine architecture), a small but beautiful edifice with subterranean dungeons where unfortunate captives were formerly immured for years together, in semi-darkness. The principal portal of this church is made of copper, and in clear weather its silvery dome can be seen shining like a diamond for miles away. But it would need volumes accurately to set forth the varied charms of Tirnova, and, in these rough notes of travel, my object is less to describe the

Balkan States as they were in the dark ages than as they are at the present day. Unfortunately this place cannot at present be seen in comfort, not only because the accommodation is atrocious, but here you are always either climbing a hill, or descending it, and as this is a veritable "Castle of the Winds" (it is always blowing a gale from *somewhere*) the operation becomes a laborious and sometimes a painful one.

Schools (for all classes) are as numerous here as lawyers, and the same thing applies to the entire Principality which, within the past thirty years, has developed an almost perfect educational system. In 1879 there was only one gymnasium in Bulgaria worthy of the name, but to-day there are nearly five thousand of all kinds, from village schools to technical colleges. Besides these there are two agricultural colleges; one at Rustchuk (on the Danube) and the other at Sadowa, near Philippopolis which is one more proof, if any were needed, of Bulgarian enterprise. And it is well to note, while surveying the progress of this country since her emancipation, that there is not at present a single foreigner in the service of the State.

Bulgaria, according to reliable statistics, can show a school attendance of 9·1 per cent. of the whole population, Servia has 4·2 per cent., Rumania 6·2 per cent., and for Greece the figure is 3·7 per cent. In 1900, 92 per cent. of the male city inhabitants between the ages of ten and twenty could read and write, and 74 per cent. of the female, while 68 per cent. of the male and 18 per



A STREET IN TIRNOVA.

Photo by Author.

cent. of the female rural population were similarly advanced.

There was little to do here after dark, and the dining-room of the "Royal" appeared to be the favourite lounge in the evening—a long, cheerless apartment, dimly lit with kerosene lamps—where people met to discuss the events of the day, and listen to the wheezings of an asthmatic gramophone. Supper was served *à la mode de Vienne* towards nine o'clock; and two hours later every one had retired and only the cry of the watchman was heard in the dark and silent streets. And if the nights are dull here, the days must pass with maddening monotony, although there is plenty of sport to be obtained in the neighbourhood without trouble or expense. Bears, wild-boar, and red and roe deer abound at an easy distance, and the chance of bagging a chamois, now so rare in other parts of Europe, would probably attract many sportsmen from England if they only knew that a journey of four days would probably ensure his capture. Wolves are as common as cats in a London square, and wildfowl of all kinds abound, eagles in the mountains and snipe and wild duck below. Woodcock is common in November, and quail used to be until some enterprising people took to catching them for export. Fishing is very poor here, owing to the scarcity of rivers of any size. But all who come here for sport or otherwise must be prepared to "rough it" in the true sense of that often misused term. I have fared better in Persian *khans* than at the "Hôtel Royal," and

yet the bill was of dimensions which would have ensured a day of luxury at a Ritz hotel. Fortunately the Bulgarian currency exactly resembles the French, or there is no knowing to what extent the unfortunate traveller might be fleeced. But a *lev* is a franc, a *stotinka* a centime, all over the country, and the most rapacious landlord can make them no more !

On a bright April morning we left for the Shipka Pass—a drive of about thirty-five miles along pleasant country roads as smooth as asphalt. I only saw one motor-car throughout the Balkans until we reached Bukarest, and yet a delightful trip could be made from the latter city to the sea by the way we had come, for the high-roads are everywhere well adapted to rubber tyres. Petrol would be the only difficulty, but this could be sent on beforehand to convenient places *en route*. On this occasion our conveyance was a “Phaeton.” with a vicious little team of ponies harnessed three abreast, which tore along at such a break-neck pace that the vehicle swayed and jerked in all directions, like a miniature barouche, with a monkey inside, drawn by dogs round a circus ring ! Distance made no difference to this little *troika*, which pulled up late in the evening at the town of Gabrova on the northern side of the Shipka just as fresh as when they started at early dawn. I noticed that before starting, our driver made the sign of the cross as he mounted the box, and this custom seemed universal in these parts.

We took a midday meal at Drenova—a quaint



From a Photo.

CURIOUS ROCKS NEAR GABROVA.

To face page 236.

old village—rendered more picturesque by gay flags and banners which waved in the streets on the occasion of a public holiday. A long procession of school children passed the wineshop in which we discussed a frugal lunch and a flask of “Euxineograd,” which is at present the only palatable vintage in Bulgaria. Each child carried a small tree, and I gathered that these were to be planted at a spot outside the town. This yearly custom was originated by the Minister of Agriculture in order to promote the growth of timber in this treeless portion of the country, the shrubs having been imported for the occasion from a considerable distance. This explanation may or may not have been correct, but it would seem rather superfluous to worry about a scarcity of wood in a region which yields such a harvest that the grain is often left to rot from sheer lack of transport! Besides, other parts of this country have thousands of square miles of forest of valuable timber, as yet untouched. I may, therefore, have misunderstood my informant. Anyhow, Mackenzie obtained some capital views of the quaint ceremony with the bioscope, which seemed to create more fear than amusement amongst the little ones.

If Tirnova was the most beautiful, Gabrova was undoubtedly the quaintest city we saw throughout our wanderings in the Balkans. It reminded me of an illustration from the “Arabian Nights.” The day following our arrival was bright and summer-like, which enhanced the

picturesque appearance of the dark, narrow streets, and vine-trellised houses, so dilapidated that they appeared to be rolling about in all directions like ships in a storm. Many centuries must have elapsed since these were built, for from some of the buildings you could almost step from the first storey into the street without risk of injury, while in many of the walls great gaps appeared, disclosing glimpses of a squalid interior. In places the roofs almost met overhead, blotting out the sunshine and deepening the gloom of the street below. Our "Phaeton" had to crawl at a snail's pace to the inn, for it was market-day, and the streets were rendered almost impassable by carts, cattle, and a surging crowd of Bulgars who occasionally wrenched our ponies' bridles, with a sulky stare at the driver, when the team brushed them accidentally aside. All wore native dress, the women in bright, garish colours, with sequins and ribbons in their coarse, black hair, the men in homespun and sandals with the *kalpak*—a cylindrical cap of black or grey sheepskin—as a head-covering. Only a few loungers, sitting at little tables outside the *café* in the market-place, wore frock-coat and fez, both generally the worse for wear. Their nationality was a mystery, also their occupation, for they appeared to smoke, play cards, and drink coffee without interval for rest and refreshment throughout the livelong day, and most of the night. On the other hand, the market-place and bazaar were beehives of in-



DANCING THE KOLO.

From a Photo.

dustry and animation. The Yantra is here spanned by three quaint old stone bridges, and rushes through Gabrova with a roar which is heard all over the town. Along its banks are several tanneries, the chief industry of this place and its twelve thousand inhabitants, and there are also several prosperous cloth factories, for this is one of the principal wool markets in the country. As at Tirnova the façade of every home was gaily painted, but partly concealed by the vines which trailed over the houses and across the streets, and which, in summer-time, must convert the latter into avenues of grapes and greenery. We put up at the Hôtel Paskaleff, which so far resembled a Persian *caravanserai* that the dozen rooms it contained surrounded a stable yard, and nothing was procurable in the way of food. We therefore repaired to a shabby little restaurant over the way with a signboard bearing the legend "Au Lion de Bulgarie" in faded gold letters. Smoking in the doorway, in his shirt-sleeves, was the landlord (once a lieutenant in the Russian Army), who led us up a rickety ladder and into a comfortless room with a dusty, rat-holed floor, which had gradually subsided into a perilous angle. This was the dining-room, said the man proudly, "In which General Skobeleff had often partaken of meals, and millions of roubles had changed hands, at cards, between young dandies of the Imperial Guard." "Pity you did not borrow a bit and make a new floor," said Mackenzie. But, any-

how, our host's campaigning days had taught him the art of cooking, and he served up as tender a beefsteak as I had eaten since leaving London, although the potatoes rather resembled the consistency of the shells once so numerous in this neighbourhood. It was bitterly cold (for Bulgarians have yet to learn how to warm their houses), and we therefore dined hastily, and returned to the inn to prepare for departure at dawn on the morrow. Upon leaving we were presented to Madame, a Bulgarian lady who, during the war, had tended and eventually led the lieutenant to the altar. The latter, although an exile, was still a staunch Russian patriot. Tears came into his eyes whenever he spoke of Skobelev. "If only my General had been in Kuropatkin's place!" were his last words, "where would the Japanese be now?"

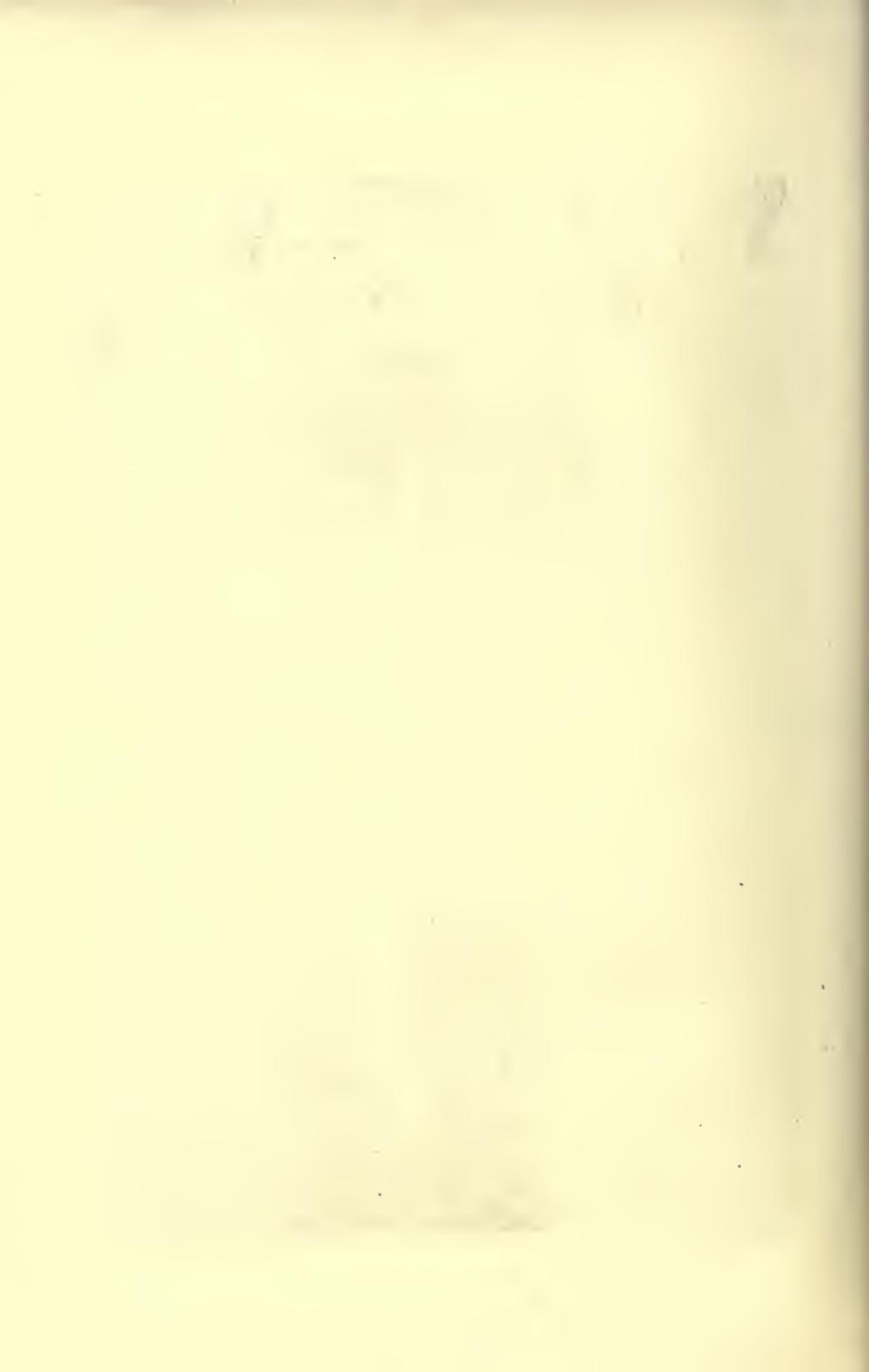
Gabrova possesses proportionately as many colleges and schools as Tirnova; indeed the Bulgarian language was first taught here in 1835, and the first grammar was published in the same language at about the same period. An English traveller, Mr. James Samuelson, visited the principal gymnasium here a few years ago, and was somewhat surprised to find that in some branches, especially chemistry, geography, and physical science, the students of the Gabrova gymnasium excelled the pupils in nine out of ten schools of a similar grade in England.

My original intention was to cross the Shipka Pass to the village of that name on the southern



From a Photo.

GABROVA.



side of the mountain, and to drive thence to Philippopolis, from here to Varna by rail and across the Black Sea to Rumania being a short and easy journey. But I learnt at Gabrova that a fairly good road which used to lead over the mountains was now quite impracticable on wheels and that a considerable portion of the way to Shipka must be accomplished on horseback. This method would have entailed endless difficulties on account of our baggage, and hearing that a heavy fall of snow had recently detained the mail carriers for several days *en route* I resolved to return the same way from the summit, and travel to Bukarest by land. Even as it was we had some difficulty, on account of snowdrifts, in approaching the peak of Mount Saint Nicholas, captured by the Russians after a stubborn defence by their gallant foes. A Bulgarian mail carrier we met near the spot told us that his trip of under ten miles from Shipka had occupied nearly two days, and indeed it looked as though another two or three miles would settle both horse and rider. The man was armed to the teeth, for this district is about the only one left in Bulgaria where you may not travel in absolute security, so far as brigands are concerned. Only the preceding year one of these messengers had been robbed and left for dead by a gang of footpads.

The Shipka Pass is nearly 5,000 feet above sea-level, and it took us several hours to reach the summit, for the road was very rough and in places

partly broken away. From here there is a magnificent view, and this is perhaps the only object to be gained in ascending the fatal Pass where, in 1877, almost as many perished from blinding blizzards and the ferocious cold as from shot and shell. We visited the granite obelisk and little burial-ground which mark the last resting-place of many a brave Russian and Bulgarian, and faintly realised as we toiled wearily up to the rocky peak what a similar ascent must have meant under a hail of shell and shrapnel. From here you may discern to the north the Danube river—a tiny thread of silver over a hundred miles away—and, southward, the pretty red-roofed village of Shipka, nestling in gardens and fruit orchards, in the centre of a vast forest of rose-trees. The town of Kazanlik, hard by, furnishes the most costly attar of roses in the world, and I was told that 60 oz. of the essence is worth £100.*

So powerful is the scent of the roses in summer-time that it extends for many miles around, and may be smelt at the very summit of the mountain. Everything around the spot, the cosy homesteads in the valley, the teams of oxen ploughing in the fields, and tinkling cow-bells, now wore an air of rustic peace and prosperity, and yet it seemed only yesterday that the eyes of

* In 1884 the export of this product was valued at £80,000. In England alone one wholesale perfumer pays a Kazanlik firm about £3,000 a year for the essence. (Report of Consul-General Jones on the trade of Eastern Roumelia, 1886.)



Photo by Author.

A STREET IN GABROVA.

Europe were turned with horror upon the tragedies enacted here. One must visit the place to thoroughly realise the almost insuperable obstacles which, during that terrible winter, impeded the progress of the Russians across the Balkans, especially as regards artillery. For the mountain paths were mere slopes of ice, several inches thick, over which it was quite impossible to transport heavy guns by means of horses, and men were therefore utilised for this purpose. This operation was so laborious and lengthy that sixty hours were occupied in dragging the first field-piece to the summit, a distance of under six versts, or about four and a half miles! And the descents which had to be made while crossing from one ridge to another were even harder than clambering upwards over this slippery, insecure surface. For here the guns had to be lowered by ropes twisted round tree-trunks and boulders—a primitive method which caused many accidents and some loss of life. How many perished during that desperate struggle will never be known. But all the way from Tirnova, graves marked by stone monuments, rough wooden crosses, or green mounds (where numbers of the dead were hurriedly thrown into huge trenches), are always somewhere visible in the landscape.

Our driver had crossed the Balkans with Skobeleff, whom, like most of the people about here, he appeared to regard as a demi-god. "The Russians will come again," he confidently averred, "and this time they will remain on the Bosphorus."

The man also pointed out a building in the far distance, with a gilt dome and crosses. "Under that monastery," he said mysteriously, "you may walk for miles through vaults crammed with arms and ammunition. Every year the most modern weapons are brought there from Russia. By and by the Tsar will return—never fear—he will return and drive the Turks where they should have been driven in 1878—into Asia." Strange to say, this anecdote was repeated to me in all seriousness in Gabrova, but it is probably a fable which has gradually come to be accepted as a fact by a credulous peasantry.

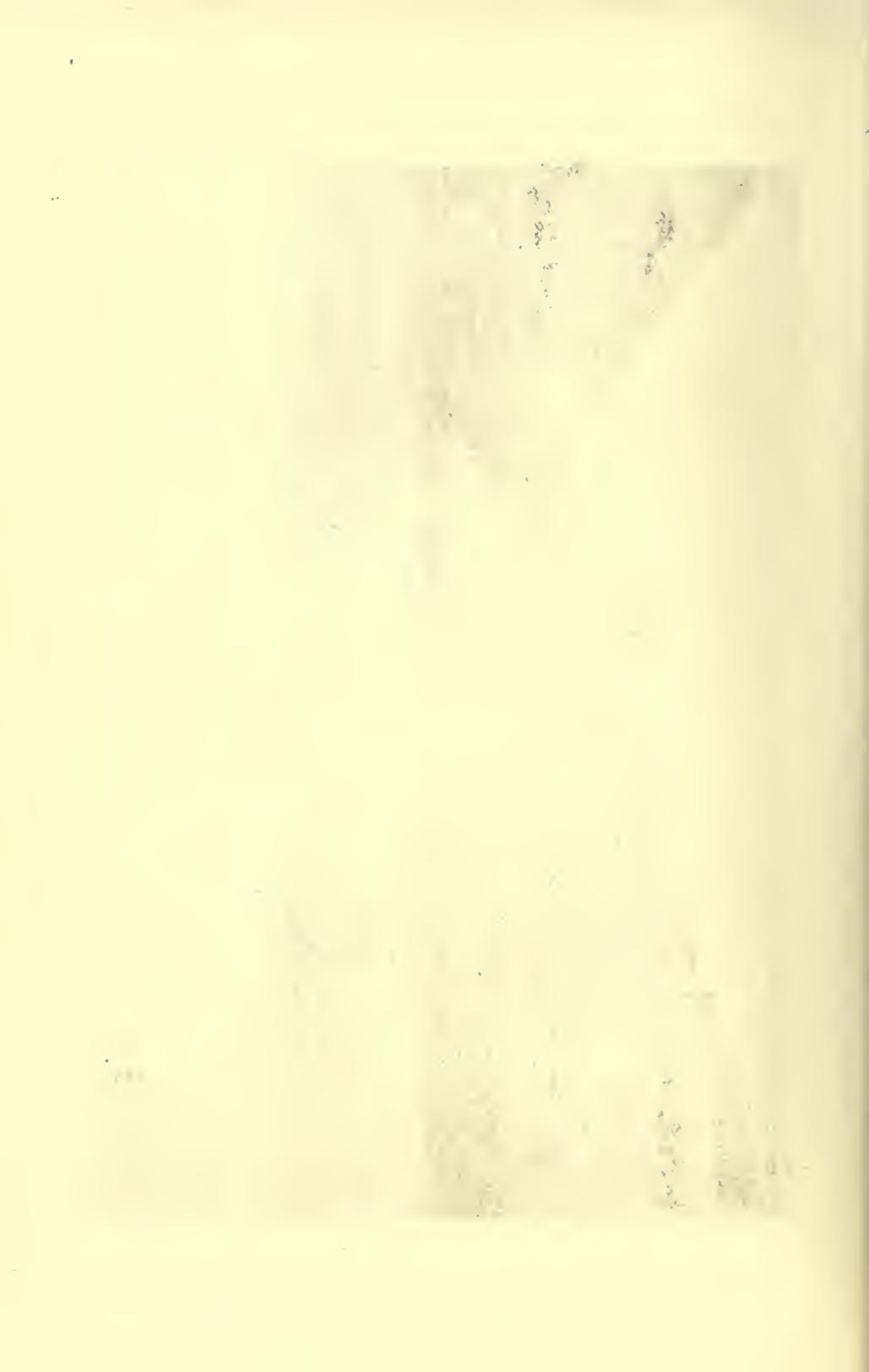
Evening saw us once more in Gabrova, and while we sat and smoked after supper outside a vine-trellised *café*, reports reached us of a tragedy which had just occurred in a neighbouring house. A young girl, the daughter of a rich merchant, had taken poison in consequence of an unhappy love affair, and was not expected to live through the night. This sad expectation was realised, for poor "Maritza," whose photograph I was enabled to obtain, died at dawn. The gay Lothario responsible for her death was vainly searched for by an infuriated crowd, which would probably have made short work of him had he not prudently disappeared.

We drove back to Tirnova next day in pouring rain and a roaring gale which once nearly blew the light "Phaeton" bodily over. Night came on and we were still ten miles from our destination, when, while galloping helter-skelter through a

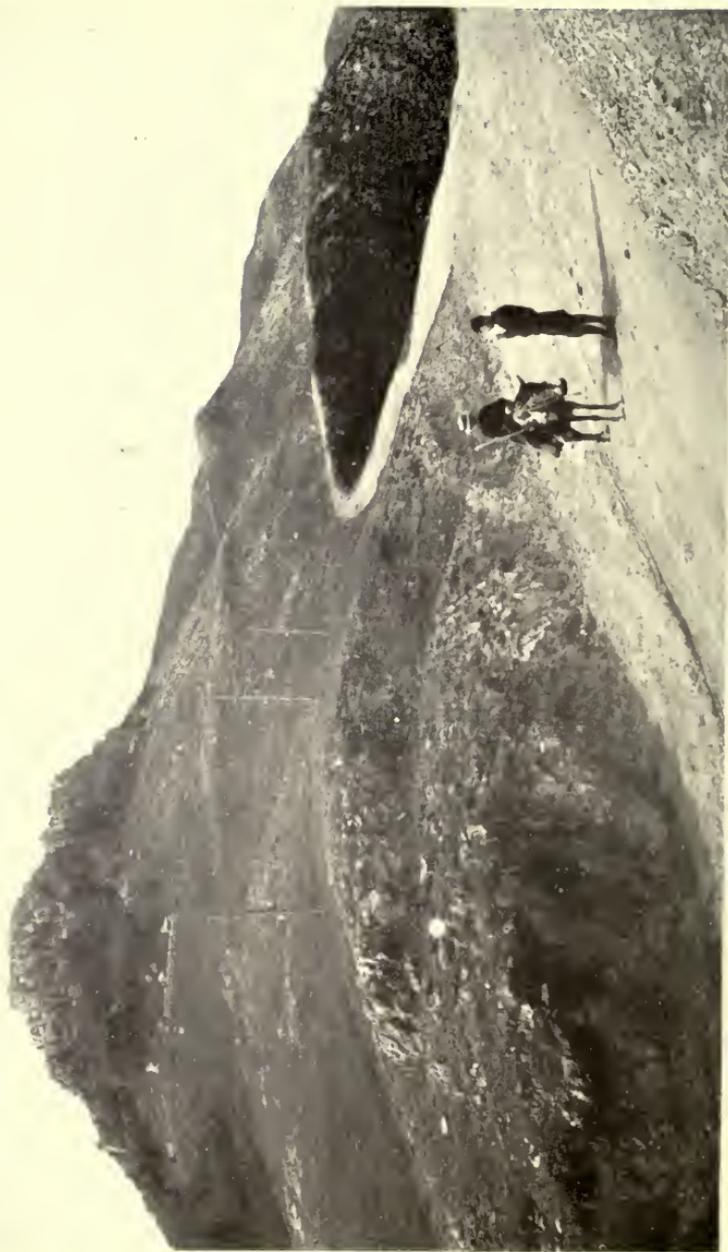


THE FOOT OF THE SCHIPKA PASS.

Photo by Author.







MOUNT ST. NICHOLAS.
SHIPKA PASS.

Photo by Givoli, Sofia.

village in the darkness there was a sudden crash and our "Phaeton" was on its side at last. "Foot-pads!" was my first thought, with a lively recollection of our Servian adventure, but on this occasion nothing more dangerous than a pig-trough left in the middle of the road had brought us to grief. Nothing was broken beyond easy repair, and we drove into Tirnova, drenched and shivering with cold, in the early hours of the morning. Nearly an hour was then passed in a pitiless downpour endeavouring to awaken the inmates of the "Royal Hotel." But by the time the door was unbarred the day was dawning, and, as the train left at 5 a.m., we drove off to the railway station without alighting, followed by the curses of a dishevelled and angry landlord.

The same day we reached Rustchuk, on the Danube, the waters of which to-day appeared rather less dull and turbid than usual in the sunshine. This is now a fine city of thirty thousand inhabitants as modern in every way as Sofia, although when Melton Prior, of the *Illustrated London News*, and I were here in '77 the place was a collection of hovels. But Rustchuk is now a convenient place of departure for every point of the compass, and is yearly increasing in commercial importance.

Here we bade farewell to Bulgaria, and with some regret. For apart from its interest as a new country with a great political and social future, I found the Bulgarians infinitely more attractive than any people with whom we had as

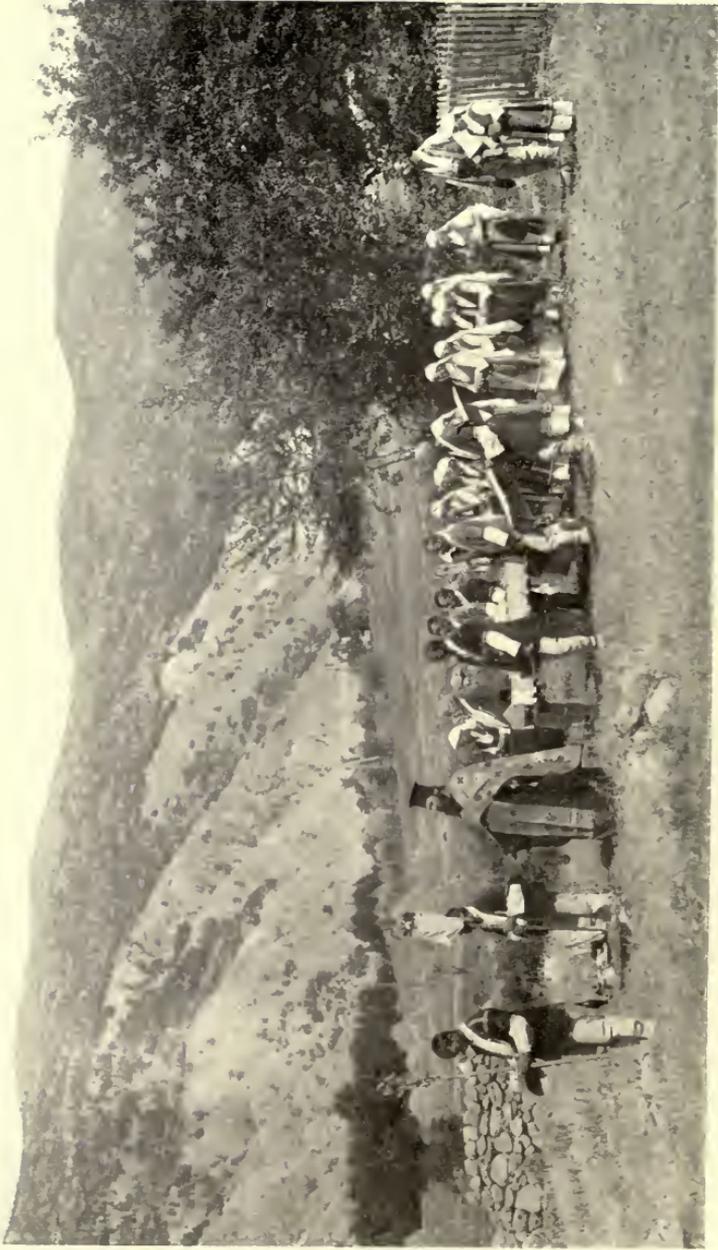
yet come in contact. This country will not stand still—not a year, nay, not even a month passes, that important reforms and improvements do not occur in her government, and the efficiency of her formidable army. It was suggested to me while travelling through Rumania that an alliance may one day take place between the latter country and Bulgaria, and in this case even a Great Power, in the event of hostilities, would surely find her hands full.

A glance at the statistics of Bulgaria will show how far she surpasses neighbouring countries in energy and enterprise. What with factories, cultivated land, horse and cattle breeding, mines, exploited forests, public works, and compulsory education, the Budget is already in proportion to the progress of the country. Greece and Servia no doubt have budgets nearly equal to that of Bulgaria, but their public debts are far greater with smaller territories and populations, and consequently less wealth. The public debt here amounts to 78 francs per head, that of Russia is more than double this amount. In 1880 the exports and imports of Bulgaria amounted to only 32 millions. In 1904 they had risen to 390 millions! and are still yearly increasing. These facts speak for themselves.









MARITZA'S FUNERAL.

From a Photo.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CITY OF PLEASURE

THERE are few countries in the less civilised portions of this globe which do not possess their "Paris," or some town so called on account of its resemblance to the French capital—which resemblance generally exists solely in the imagination of the inhabitants. Thus Saigon is called by French colonists the "Paris of the Far East," by reason, I suppose, of its solitary boulevard of mangy trees and two or three garish *cafés*; but why Batavia, with its hideous streets and ill-smelling canals, or Irkutsk (that gloomy dust-trap in Eastern Siberia) should ever have been likened to the fairest city on earth is beyond my comprehension. Bukarest is also called the "Paris of the Balkans," but here, at any rate, there is some reason for the simile, for I do not know of a more attractive little city in Europe or elsewhere. This may indeed be called, without fear of exaggeration, a miniature Paris, but amongst Rumanians Bukarest is more generally known as the "City of Pleasure," a name equally suitable, and one which the native word "Bucuresci" literally implies. For the first

things that strike a stranger here are the brightness and gaiety of the streets and lavish display of wealth, not only in the daily life of the people but in public and private buildings, hotels, and shops. And it soon dawns upon a visitor that he will have to pay Monte Carlo prices for everything he buys, be it a *rivière* of diamonds or a mutton chop. Petersburg has been called the most luxurious capital in Europe, but there a veil is drawn over the dazzling splendours of the Court, and Midas squanders his millions within four walls. The Russian capital gives the impression (outwardly, at least) of a poverty-stricken city, whereas you must explore the most remote quarters of Bukarest (there are no slums) to realise that people of modest means exist. When I was here in the eighties I paid twenty-five francs for a pint of inferior champagne, and prices appear to have increased rather than diminished since that period, notwithstanding the increased facilities of communication. On this occasion, the fare I paid for a *fiacre* to the hotel from the railway station was about double that which I should have given the driver of that most costly vehicle in the world, the New York hansom. But here the cabs are smarter and better turned-out than two-thirds of the private carriages in London or Paris, and, without numbers, would never be taken for public conveyances at all. A stranger is apt to be startled by the rapidity with which his *fiacre* gallops away the moment he has taken his seat—for the driver is never told where to go, but guided by touching his left or right



A STREET IN BUKAREST.

Photo by Author.



arm as the case may be. Every cab you see is drawn by magnificent horses, while the driver wears a blue velvet coat embroidered with gold lace, rather suggestive of a Lord Mayor's show, but gay and pleasing to the eye. Most of these cab-drivers are of Russian nationality, and belong to a sect proscribed in their own country the "Skoptsi," a number of whom I found exiled near Yakutsk in Northern Siberia on my way from Paris to New York.

The principal street here (or "Calea Victoriei") is an avenue of palatial buildings, for fabulous sums have been spent on the city in recent years, and much of it wasted in useless display. The post office, for instance, is unquestionably the finest in the world, architecturally speaking, but its marble halls generally seemed deserted, for they are ten times too large for the business transacted. The Palace, on the other hand, is a comparatively modest building, so near the street that you may see into the royal apartments, and participate (from a distance) in any state or private function which may be in progress! For the Court here is as informal as that of Sofia is the reverse. Queen Elizabeth is chiefly responsible for this laxity, for Her Majesty's unconventional views are only equalled by the kindness and tact which have rendered "Carmen Sylva" the idol of her people. King Carol the First does not share this popularity, especially amongst the nobility, which resents German methods and manners. Some of the

* See "Paris to New York by Land," by the same author.

“Boiards” would eagerly acclaim a Rumanian ruler; but the country, on the whole, is loyal, and the Hohenzollern dynasty therefore seems likely to flourish for an indefinite period, especially as the heir-apparent (a nephew of the present ruler), who married Princess Marie of Coburg, is liked by all for his personal charm and sterling qualities.

Rumanians resent the inclusion of their country with the so-called “Balkan States,” to which they consider themselves, and not without reason, somewhat superior. The contrast even with Sofia was striking, and on the Sunday of our arrival the sunlit and busy boulevards, crowded *cafés*, and military music recalled a summer’s day in Paris. There is no trace here of Eastern rule in the past—mosques and minarets, dim bazaars, and veiled ladies have vanished to give place to palatial hotels, Parisian shops, and the latest creations of Worth and Redfern. The Latin races may have their faults, but few will deny that they are the pleasantest people to live amongst!

The Hôtel Splendide, one of a score of equally luxurious establishments in this city of about 300,000 souls, is considered the best, and here we took up our abode, but not for long, having been warned that a prolonged residence would tax a millionaire’s resources. Two days were quite sufficient to prove this fact, but those forty-eight hours were certainly the pleasantest, if not the most profitable, throughout the whole journey. An Irish gentleman travelling in whisky who, judging from his normal condition, must



A RUMANIAN LADY.

From a Photo.



have been an excellent judge of that product, was staying at our hotel. In his opinion the chief charm of Bukarest lay in the fact that "you need never go to bed," and although, in this respect, I did not share my friend's enthusiasm, the Rumanian capital has almost limitless attractions for the pleasure-seeker. Dine at the Restaurant Capsa (where the *cuisine* rivals that at Paillard's) in dress-clothes and go on to the opera, or partake of sausages and lager-beer in tweeds at Frascati's, and drop into a music or dancing hall, and you are pretty sure, either way, to be amused. From dawn till dusk the *cafés* are ablaze with electric light, also other establishments which shall be nameless, for this is certainly the most immoral city in the world, now that one in the New World, which ran it very close in this respect, has ceased to exist. And yet a lady can walk alone at night in the streets without fear of insult, for Rumanians are the most polite people in the world, and a stranger here meets with nothing but courtesy, even in the lower quarters which we occasionally visited in order to hear the "Tziganes" play and sing—a very different performance to that of the so-called "Hungarians" in London restaurants. Only the genuine gipsy can do justice to the weird, barbaric melodies of his people—certainly not the red-coated impostor who frequently hails from Berlin or Hamburg!

It was only in the outskirts of the city that we had any difficulty in making ourselves understood, for everywhere French is spoken almost

as frequently as Rumanian. Russian is never heard in this Latin island in a Slavonian sea, and streets and shops are no longer designated in cryptic letters, but words of plain meaning. "Toiletta di Dama," "Facultatea di Medecina," and "Carta Postala," are some which caught my eye, and which show the close affinity between Rumanian and the French and Italian languages.

Other boulevards here, almost as fine as the Calea Victoriei, are the Carol I. and Calea Elizabeth, where, during the season, the street cars pass with difficulty through carriages, cabs, and even automobiles. For motoring is now the rage here, and one morning I noticed a crowd surrounding a large "Panhard" which, judging from the amount of baggage and provisions, was being prepared for a long and arduous journey. Presently a chauffeur and two passengers took their places, and drove off amidst the cheers of the crowd. The owner of the car, a Rumanian prince, intended, if possible, to reach Teherán in Persia, *viâ* Constantinople and Asia Minor—an adventurous trip which (being acquainted with those countries) I fear was never accomplished, especially as it was the hasty result of a bet only made late on the previous night at the Jockey Club! The stakes were £5,000—a mere nothing for Bukarest, where there is higher play at the Jockey than even the Yacht Club in Petersburg. But Rumanians of all classes are passionately fond of gambling of any kind, and the reader may have noticed that whenever a prodigious sum has



RUMANIAN TZIGANES.

Photo by Schwarz, Bukarest.

been won (or lost) at Monte Carlo, the player is generally a Russian or a native of this country.

We came in for the fag end of the season (which is in winter) here, but the "Chaussée," or Hyde Park, was crowded on fine afternoons, and the Crown Princess's victoria, with its showy liveries and outriders, was still to be seen with its fair occupant, generally gowned in white, with the pretty Rumanian embroidery which has lately found its way to Paris. "Capsa's" was the fashionable resort for afternoon tea, and here towards five o'clock you would generally find as many well-dressed men and women as at Rumpelmayer's or Colombin's in Paris. Rumanian women are generally blessed with more than their share of good looks, and have also the unconscious charm of manner which seems only natural to the fair sex east of the Danube. Some one has said that the woman of Bukarest combines the beauty of the Hungarian, the grace of the Austrian, and the wit of her French sister; and he was not far wrong. Moreover, her voice is generally low and melodious, and one could enjoy tea and a cigarette at "Capsa's" without being under the impression that the place was a parrot-house. Nearly all spoke the national language interspersed with French words and expressions—a kind of jargon which was evidently confined to ultra-smart circles. Unmarried girls here are brought up as strictly as in France, but, on the other hand, marital infidelity is very common. Divorces are therefore frequent, but do not, as in other countries,

ostracise a *divorcée*. I was presented to a young and charming lady who had three divorced husbands living, and was about to be married to a fourth; and this is not an unusual occurrence.* The frivolity (to use no worse term) of the Rumanian woman is probably due to the fact that those of the upper classes live in a perpetual round of gaiety which leaves little time for serious pursuits or studies of any kind. There was a bookshop every ten yards along the Calea Victoriei, but it generally chiefly contained trashy Rumanian French and English novels. On the other hand, there are some excellent libraries, almost exclusively patronised by the middle classes. Rumania has two fine universities, one in Bukarest, and the other in Jassy, but, at present, most young men (and women) who can afford it complete their studies in Paris, Vienna, or Berlin, the first-named city being chiefly frequented by law and medical students. Some of them never return to their own country, but remain in Paris, to become celebrities in the world of science and letters. Amongst these are Jean de Mitty, now a famous writer on the *Matin*, the painter Simonidy, and Pal, the originator of the "Artistic poster" in France. Madame de Nuovina, the gifted soprano of the Opera Comique, is also a Rumanian.

Notwithstanding their superficial, pleasure-loving nature Rumanians are almost as morbid as the French. While at "Capsa's" one afternoon I saw a funeral pass—that of a young girl—the

* A divorced couple here can never re-marry.



RUMANIAN WOODCUTTERS.

Photo. by Schwarz, Bukarest.

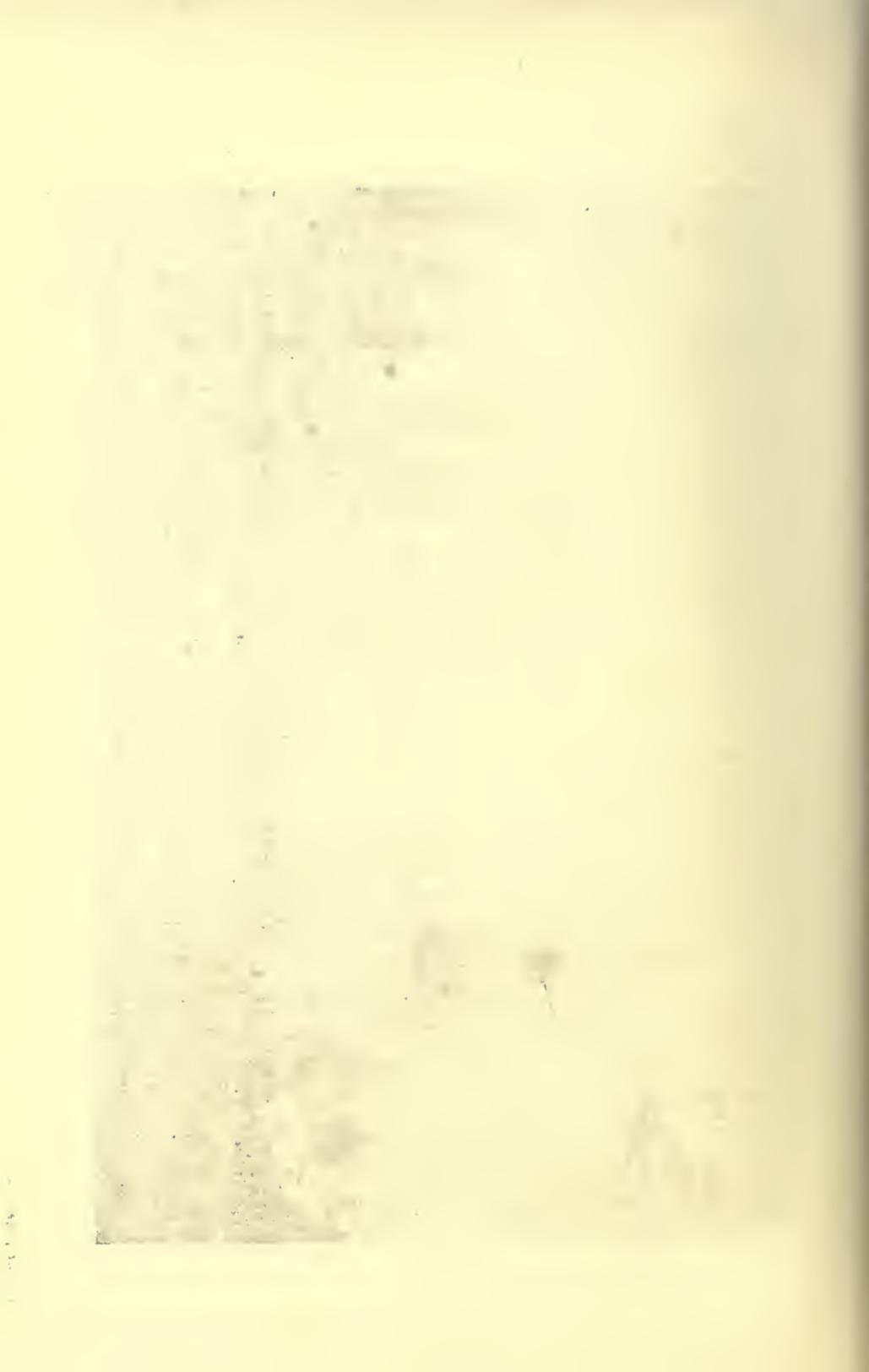
daughter of a famous politician of the hour. In a moment every table was deserted, and the fashionable crowd, chattering and laughing the moment before, were congregated at the doorway silently watching the gloomy procession. The coffin was, as usual, open, and I caught a glimpse of pale, drawn features amidst a mass of white flowers. As the *cortège* passed the men uncovered, as in France, although this is not usual in the Orthodox Church. Rumanians are as strict and devout as Russians in their religious observances, but it would be better if they sacrificed a little religion to the care and welfare of their domestic animals. A branch of the S.P.C.A. is sadly needed in Bukarest, although I never saw a case of cruelty in the provinces. There, on the contrary, horses and dogs appeared to be treated with more kindness than children.

The Rumanian almost excels the Servian Army in the splendour and variety of its uniforms, and on a Sunday the streets presented a brilliant sight with the black or scarlet hussars plastered with gold lace and the chocolate and dark blue of the artillery and line. These people are proud of their army, and rightly so, seeing that it is the third most efficient force in Europe. When, in 1877, Prince Carol led his Rumanians across the Danube to win undying fame before Plevna, the forces at his disposal numbered under 35,000 men. To-day his army consists of 65,000 men and nearly 400 guns (on a peace footing), the active army with reserves 200,000, the territorial militia 150,000

and the *Levée en Masse* (men between thirty-six and forty-six years of age) 200,000—a total force of some half a million men! And all this has been accomplished since the proclamation of independence in 1877—or in under thirty years. The expense of keeping up a force of this kind in a country with a population of about six millions is of course enormous, but not a penny of the expenditure is grudged by the nation. Stay-at-home politicians never seem to consider what effect a military combination between this kingdom and her neighbour Bulgaria might have, at any moment, upon the condition of affairs in the Near East, although I frequently heard its possibility discussed amongst military men in both capitals. Moreover, the fortifications of the Rumanian frontiers and capital are now as perfect as skill and money have been able to render them, and any attack on the Russian side has been specially guarded against. It is therefore unlikely that Rumania will ever again be made a cat's-paw by the Tsar. Her sons do not forget that thousands of their countrymen sleep side by side with vanquished Turks outside the walls of Plevna, and that for this their reward was the loss of the rich province of Bessarabia (given them after the Crimean War), and the acquisition in exchange of the worthless steppes and marshes of the Dobrudja.*

But the prominent position of Rumania as a

* Report of H.I.H. the Grand Duke Nicholas: "Les résultats brillants obtenus à Plevna furent dus, en grande partie à la coopération de la brave armée roumaine."



military power, is not the only blessing which has been conferred upon his adopted country by the King and his beloved consort. Before the days of '66, when Prince Charles of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen left a crack Prussian regiment of cavalry to assume the reins of Government at Bukarest, the people here were almost as oppressed and poverty-stricken as the serfs across the frontier. Prince Carol found a land ruled by wealthy and unscrupulous nobles, tenacious of their rights, and indifferent to the sufferings of the poor, who were not even permitted to cultivate miserable strips of land save under the most restricted conditions. The petty official was then almost as great a curse here as the Tchinovnik in Russia. The first act of the Prince, therefore, was to reorganise the then insignificant army, the second to provide the peasants with small holdings—a drastic measure which rendered him very unpopular amongst the aristocracy. But inch by inch the wedge of reform was inserted, with the result that the Kingdom of Rumania is now practically a constitutional State. Disaffection and oppression no longer exist, and even the humblest peasant has a voice in the government of his country. Agriculture is as yet in its infancy, from a scientific point of view, but nearly half of Rumania is now under cultivation, whereas thirty years ago less than a quarter was farmed. And although machinery and steam power are as yet only employed to a minor extent, the production of maize per head is only inferior to

that of the United States. Mr. Alfred Stead, an English traveller who has made a special study of the subject, writes :—

“ It is as a wheat-exporting nation that Rumania ranks largest. A comparison with the exports of the United States is instructive. To the 47·16 millions of double quintals of wheat of the United States, Rumania exported (1900) 8·15 millions ; to the 3·25 millions of rye, 1·67 millions ; to the 26·29 millions of maize, 7·12 millions ; a total export of 16·94 millions as against the 76·70 millions of the United States. The quantity of cereals exported has trebled in twenty-three years, and the future contains enormous increases. Even in 1898 nearly ten millions sterling worth of corn was exported. The Government is not behindhand in taking measures to encourage the export, and erected in 1892, in Galatz and Braila, the Danubian deep-sea ports, warehouses, grain-elevators and granaries to the number of forty-eight, valued at £720,000 and with a capacity of 750,000 tons. Since then further improvements have been carried out and others are in contemplation.”

Although the industrial products of Rumania are at present very limited, she is said to possess extensive mineral resources, but save with regard to coal the country has as yet been only superficially surveyed in this direction. Gold and silver have been found and even worked in a primitive fashion, and at present more cannot be said on this subject. There can be no doubt, however,

that the petroleum fields here are, or will be, the richest in the world, for every day fresh deposits are being discovered in the various districts. The manager of some wells at Campina (not many hours by rail from the capital) told me that his daily output of oil from one spring was estimated at about £1,200, and this is by no means one of the richest oil fields. Petroleum here is superior in quality to that obtained in the Caucasus, and is naturally exported to Western Europe with more ease and rapidity. At Kustendje, on the Black Sea, large tanks have been erected by the Government, and there are modern facilities for expeditiously shipping the oil destined for the Mediterranean and the Far East.*

You must travel leisurely through this new and progressive kingdom to appreciate the changes and improvements wrought by its ruler during the past thirty years. We made only a flying visit to Sinaia, a fashionable resort with luxurious villas and beautiful gardens, clustering around the palace where Carmen Sylva generally passes the summer months, away from the dust and turmoil of the city, amidst her books and flowers. No one who can afford to leave the capital remains there after the month of May, for the heat then becomes oppressive, and epidemics often occur. From Sinaia we went on to Jassy, through a fertile country as green as an emerald, and past pleasant

* The Rumanian petroleum fields are not included in the Standard Oil Trust.

country towns and picturesque villages, some of the latter surrounded by vineyards, for they make wines here as wholesome and palatable as those of Bulgaria and Servia are the reverse, and a Bordeaux firm lately acquired an extensive tract of land for this purpose.

But Rumania becomes less attractive as you near its northern border, for here the landscape resembles that portion of the great sullen Empire which looms across the river Pruth—dirty drab huts, bleak wind-swept plains, and half-starved, shivering cattle. Goodbye to the neat white homesteads and fertile fields and gardens of Southern Rumania! Before me lies Russia, the land of mystery, gloom, and death. At Jassy Mackenzie leaves me to return to England, for, while at Bukarest, a friendly hint from the Russian Embassy warned me that, under present conditions, the presence of a bioscope artist in a disturbed city might produce unpleasant results, not only to the operator but also to myself!

CHAPTER XVIII

THE RED FLAG IN RUSSIA

ODESSA—ROSTOV-ON-THE-DON

You must travel with a man for an extended period, and in strange lands, to thoroughly appreciate his society—especially when he has left you to finish the trip alone. My friend Mackenzie was an admirable travelling companion (I never wish for a better), but I should probably have regretted the departure that day of a criminal lunatic, had he been of my own nationality, for, amidst strange people and gloomy surroundings, there is always a certain comfort to be derived from hearing your own language. And you might as well search for a nugget in a London paving-stone as for an Englishman in the frontier town of Jassy. The latter may be a charming residence in bright and sunny weather, but the woolly skies and persistent drizzle which accompanied my short stay rendered the place as gloomy as an Arctic settlement. In other parts of Rumania towns and villages are rendered doubly attractive by the clean-looking, picturesque national

costume, the light-coloured serge or flannel with neat blue and red embroidery, which is worn by both sexes. Perhaps the sense of depression I experienced here was partly owing to the fact that at Jassy the peasants resembled perambulating masses of rags little better than the *moujik* in his filth and furs just over the border. Indeed, outwardly, Jassy might well be taken for a Russian town, for although its modern portion has fine buildings and asphalt streets, the remainder of the city is chiefly composed of wood and corrugated iron. Gipsies and Jews appeared to swarm here, and in the poorer quarters every third man I met in the streets had the pendulous lip and drooping eyelids of the chosen race. For there is plenty of money to be made here, and a considerable trade in leather and cereals, to say nothing of some large tobacco factories. The population of Jassy, now figured at about eighty thousand, is therefore yearly increasing.

All that day I splashed about disconsolately in the rain, and at sunset sat down to a frugal meal with the landlord of the inn—a loquacious personage, who expressed surprise on hearing of my destination. “Of course you go on business?” he said; adding that under present conditions even the proverbially insane Englishman would scarcely visit Russia for pleasure. My host insisted on calling for a bottle of “Cotnari,” a Rumanian vintage of which I partook sparingly, for during its consumption we were joined by a Russian gentleman suddenly and suspiciously summoned



A RUSSIAN GIPSY.

From a Photo.

by the landlord on the plea of conviviality. The stranger was a pale, hungry-looking personage, clad in broadcloth and frayed linen, who carried an ebony walking-stick, plastered from end to end with the silver monograms of his friends (a favourite custom amongst the Russian nobility), which this unmistakable *mouchard* had copied to suggest intimacy with the aristocracy. I recognised the type in an instant (thanks to a twelve years' experience of the secret police), and remained on my guard. "What was I doing in Jassy?" "When was I going to Russia?" "Did I know Maxim Gorky?" "Was I known to General Trepoff?" To these and numberless other questions (most of them trivial and childish) I had to reply and at the same time to keep my temper, not only that night, but the next day. For my friend was awaiting me in the hall at 9 a.m. and never left me until the train steamed out of the railway station, where the cringing respect shown him by the officials only confirmed my suspicions. It is difficult to say with what object this man was stationed at Jassy, or why, when we reached the frontier, he again appeared at my carriage window—such an obviously foolish proceeding that I could scarcely refrain from laughing outright. The Tsar's watch-dog now asked to see my passport (which he read upside down), returned it to me, and finally disappeared, having put himself to much inconvenience for no apparent object. Millions of roubles are expended by the Russian Government on these men. The

hotels in every large city throughout the Empire swarm with them, and it is no exaggeration to say that (even before the revolution) every stranger who stayed at the Hôtel de France in Petersburg or "Slavianski Bazar" in Moscow was watched, down to the English tourists landed for a few hours from the pleasure yacht *Argonaut*. Why this is done I cannot attempt to explain, but I merely state it as an indisputable fact. In England there is a popular belief that these secret agents are endowed with abnormal sagacity and cunning, whereas they are generally (and especially in Southern Russia) most illiterate and ignorant men. For instance, two years ago, an English sailor landed at Taganrog and travelled leisurely through the country, using an old temperance certificate as a passport! And the fraud was only discovered at the British Consulate in Odessa, where I heard of the incident. During the recent revolutionary crisis there has naturally been more cause for espionage, which is, however, generally conducted in such an open and bungling fashion as to defeat its own object.

Anyhow, I can safely assert that I had to contend with more worry and vexation during the thirty days' trip from Rumania to the Caucasus than throughout my many journeys in Siberia. Trouble began at Ungheni, where the railway station bristled with police, and the minute examination of our baggage detained the train for five hours. The most trivial objects were eyed by the lynx-eyed officials in a manner which, under



AT UNGHENI.

From a Photo.

pleasanter circumstances, would have been amusing, for toilet requisites, ladies' glove-boxes, and even a concertina were gravely removed for closer inspection to an inner room, the instrument being actually cut open to see if it contained Socialistic literature! For the same reason books, of any kind or language, and music were ruthlessly seized; but I luckily possessed a letter recently received from the Governor of Petersburg, and this fact and a knowledge of the Russian language saved my journals. It was solely a police inspection, for no duty was exacted. A passport was not sufficient, for every traveller was rigidly cross-examined as to his antecedents and business in the country. Finally, two gendarmes barred the way for some time before I could leave the station and kill time by visiting the adjoining village—the usual straggling street of hovels, rendered more squalid by the newly whitewashed walls and golden domes of a brand-new church. A dull, grey afternoon harmonised with the depressing aspect of the rickety mud-huts and their ragged inmates. Scraggy pigs and curs wandered in and out of the murky little shop where I bought some cigarettes. The place looked the picture of gloom and desolation, and I was glad to return to my brightly-lit compartment and pass the remaining hours of delay in slumber.

Odessa is certainly the pleasantest, if not the most interesting, city in Russia, but the vile weather which had pursued me ever since leaving Bukarest culminated here in a drenching down-

pour, with the cheerful addition of a dense sea fog. On the arrival of the train a line regiment was drawn up outside the station, having been hastily called out to a disturbance in a neighbouring town; and if I have ever seen misery personified it was in that line of grey, sodden figures, devoid of all trace of martial bearing, standing motionless in the rain, with pallid faces and downcast eyes. Near them a glittering group of officers, chatting and smoking cigarettes, looked gay and unconcerned; but champagne and vodka had not cheered the departure of their men, who looked less like soldiers than a gang of convicts bound for the city gaol!

While in Odessa I was subjected to an incessant police espionage which fully equalled my experiences on the frontier. I have put up, as a rule, with this annoyance with equanimity (every traveller in Russia must do so), but here it was impossible to leave the hotel for an hour without being shadowed by an agent of the police. This, as I had a mission of some delicacy (if not peril) to perform, rendered the attentions of my plain-clothes friend the more objectionable. The brother of a political exile whom I found immured at Sredni-Kolymsk, in Arctic Siberia, resides in Odessa, and my object was primarily to obtain his views (as a prominent Socialist) on the political situation in Russia for publication in the *Westminster Gazette*; and secondly, to fulfil a promise I had made to the unhappy exile to seek out his relative and deliver a certain message, whenever



A BRIDE OF "LITTLE RUSSIA."

From a Photo.

the opportunity occurred. I need not describe, in detail, the ruses and risks which had to be resorted to and run in order to accomplish my mission. Sufficient that it was eventually accomplished, chiefly by the aid of "palm oil," and that I found the object of my search living in a secluded suburb of the city. To my surprise he ridiculed the precautions I had taken, and assured me that although spies were more numerous than ever, the police had lately displayed a tolerance hitherto unknown in the annals of Russia. This was verified in a fashionable *café*, which I visited with my friend A——, where politics were openly discussed in a manner which a year ago would have consigned the speakers for life to a fortress or Siberia. Again, in former days every one upon entering a post office was legally compelled to remove his hat, as a mark of respect towards the portraits of T.I.M. the Tsar and Tsarina, which invariably adorn its walls. Now, to my surprise, nearly all remained covered, and not a word was said. Here the Jewish element predominates, but I found in many other Russian cities the same discontent and unrest (amongst all classes) that existed in Odessa. And, perhaps oddly enough, the most desperate revolutionaries I met were generally either officers or Government officials. The Terrorists were, however, in the minority, and even A—— (a prominent Anarchist), deprecated the use of bombs and bloodshed, although he heartily approved of the "execution" of the late Grand Duke Serge. For the latter was partly

responsible for the exile of my friend's brother to Sredni-Kolymsk, that little hell of darkness, cold, and famine in Arctic Siberia where I had found him, almost bereft of reason, while travelling by land from Paris to New York.

While I was in Odessa, the manager of the Hôtel Bristol repeatedly warned his guests to avoid Government offices and public buildings, and it was not oversafe to walk anywhere in the streets, an official and two policemen having been shot down on the principal boulevard within a fortnight of my arrival, during the busiest hours of the day. Indeed, it was extraordinary how little excitement was caused by tragic events of this kind—probably because of their frequency. I myself witnessed the attempted assassination of a late chief of police, which occurrence indirectly released me from a *mauvais quart d'heure* in a police court, for at the time I had just been requested by a constable to accompany him to headquarters for carrying a "Kodak" without special permission. The afternoon was bright and sunny, and the "Deribasovka," a fashionable thoroughfare, crowded with people. Suddenly the report of a pistol, closely followed by another, caused a number of people to rush to the spot where an elderly man in the official uniform of grey and scarlet had fallen to the ground. My policeman, now heedless of cameras, also made off like a flash of lightning to render assistance, and I discreetly and rapidly followed his example—in the opposite direction. I heard later that the



PEASANTS OF "LITTLE RUSSIA."

From a Photo.

wounded man eventually recovered, and the would-be assassin escaped—a sequel of such frequent occurrence that there may have been some truth in A——’s assertion that many of the police were actually in league with the extreme revolutionary party.

In a time of peace Odessa is by no means a dull place, for there is plenty of sport in the neighbourhood, and the fairly numerous English Colony passes a pleasurable existence, what with shooting, yachting, and other outdoor amusements, social entertainments, the opera, and excellent theatres and music-halls. The Nikolaievsky Boulevard, overlooking the harbour, is one of the finest in Europe, with its magnificent buildings and shady trees and gardens; and here I used to sit and smoke of a morning, looking down on the crowded wharves and busy roadstead, the scene of the tragic *Potemkin* episode. The Black Sea, by the way, is as aptly described as the White, for in the latter case ice, and in the other enormous depth, render each title literally appropriate. The former, a tideless lake, becomes very unhealthy in the spring-time, for masses of weed then become detached from the ocean bed to drift in and rot in putrid heaps on the sea-shore. Bathing is therefore only possible when the spring gales have washed away all this refuse. Furious storms, which often occasion much loss of life, are not confined to the winter-time, for I have experienced bad weather at all seasons of the year, when crossing the Black Sea.

I had intended to proceed from here to Baku, in the Caucasus, by sea, but found communication with Batoum had been suspended owing to the disturbed state of the latter port. Maxim Gorky had only recently arrived at Yalta in the Crimea; but I was advised to abandon a projected visit to the great patriot-author, which might have resulted in my expulsion across the frontier. So I travelled by land to my destination *via* Elizavetgrad and Rostov-on-the-Don, through a pleasant and fertile country, where smiling villages and a clean and contented peasantry present a cheerful contrast to the poverty-stricken provinces and paupers of the North. Elizavetgrad is the chief town of this prosperous district, where agriculture is carried on after the most approved and modern methods. A large factory here for modern steam machinery is owned by an Englishman who, fifteen years ago, was clerk in a mercantile house in Odessa and is now a millionaire. Cloudless weather had now succeeded the rain and mists of the past few days, and blue skies and brilliant sunshine rendered this the pleasantest portion of my journey through Russia. The railways here are slow and deliberate in their movements, but the cheapness of travel is extraordinary in view of the luxury of the first-class cars, and splendour of the restaurants even at the smaller stations, where you may generally partake of an excellent meal amidst spotless linen, flowers and gilt candelabra, with sable-clad, white-tied waiters in attendance.



A DON COSSACK.

From a Photo.



1875
A. C. ...
The ...



A COSSACK'S WIFE.

From a Photo.

Lunch or dinner do not consist here, as they often do in England, of stale sandwiches and fly-blown buns, for there are generally half a dozen *entrées* to select from, and an hour is always allowed for the midday and evening meals, which averts a deal of ill-temper and indigestion. At Znamenka, a pretty little "Miastietchka" (which signifies something between a town and a village), my dinner consisted of fresh caviar, soup, sterlet and a partridge, beautifully cooked and served, and at a cost of only two roubles, or about four shillings, including coffee and a bottle of Crimean claret. This is the centre of one of the richest agricultural districts in the South, and the platform was crowded with peasants returning to their homes from a market held that day. Furs and sheepskins had been discarded in the warm spring weather, and the men wore the red shirt and velvet caftan, the women the gaily embroidered bodice and skirts of Bessarabia, where the national costume is perhaps the prettiest in Russia. Some were dancing to the merry strains of a concertina at the end of a platform, others had gathered around a little girl of about fourteen years old, who wore a silver medal with white and red ribbon which she had received for tending the sick and wounded during the siege of Port Arthur. And every one, from station officials to ragged beggars in the roadway (and with the exception of myself), appeared to be nibbling pea-nuts, until closer scrutiny disclosed that they were the seeds of the sunflower, one of

the most profitable harvests in Russia. Thousands of acres of these are cultivated, and the seeds are sold at an enormous profit in the shops and streets. I found them as tasteless as bits of wood, and quite as indigestible—but so inordinate is the craving for them, especially amongst the peasantry, that most of the latter had tiny niches in their front teeth, worn away by the continual friction with the hard and gritty substance. But whether the fact was due to the sunshine or sunflowers, everybody seemed happy and contented, save a few Jews and “Tchinovniks” who are the curse of these agricultural districts—the former with their usury and dramshops, the latter by reason of the extortion which the much-coveted Government “Rosette” enables them to practise with impunity. Nothing can be done here (I might say throughout Russia) without first greasing the palms of these gentry, but they are hypocritical rogues, and bribes must be offered with a certain amount of tact, and as if the donor never doubted the honour and integrity of the recipient. One of the favourite methods (employed by Mr. S——, an Englishman I met in the train) is to purposely lose at cards or other games of chance. A lengthened residence in Odessa had made S—— proficient in the art of “squaring” the local “Tchinovnik,” although he was somewhat staggered when the latter, while transacting some business, offered to toss him, heads or tails, for a costly marble mantelpiece, imported at great



From a Photo.

NEAR VLADIKAVKAZ.

To face page 272.



expense from Italy—and, as usual, was allowed to win it!

My countryman was returning to Rostov, where he has (or had) a large business in the sale of agricultural implements, for the farmers of Southern Russia only employ the most modern machinery and implements. Yet notwithstanding these improved methods of tilling the land, and the improved social conditions arising therefrom, S—— told me that the peasantry of the southern districts are almost as ignorant and superstitious at the present time as they were in the reign of the Empress Catherine. On the other hand, the *moujik* of Bessarabia and Little Russia is a big, warm-hearted baby, occasionally addicted to vodka, but hospitable to a fault. You have only to enter his dwelling (infinitely cleaner and more comfortable than that of his northern brother) to be made free of the house and all it contains in the shape of eatables, even though the latter be restricted to salt fish, black bread, and a barrel or two of “Agourtsi.”* And yet in moments of anger this same good-natured boor can display an unbridled ferocity which, in the event of a general uprising, would probably amaze and horrify the civilised world.

The superstition which prevails here amongst the peasantry is unequalled even in the remotest parts of Siberia. I recollect once entering a *traktir* on the outskirts of Rostov and remarking to the proprietor (while idly watching the

* Cucumbers steeped in brine.

gyrations of a flock of pigeons), that no man could partake daily of one of these birds for three consecutive weeks—a physical impossibility which has been proved in England by numerous attempts and inevitable failures. “Of course not,” was the reply. “They are sacred birds.”* And S—— told me of other local superstitions, which he had observed during his journeys on business in the interior and which savour of the dark ages. Perhaps the most curious is the universal belief in the existence of a “Damovoi,” a gnome-like vision which is supposed to inhabit every dwelling and render it agreeable or otherwise for the inmates. The “Damovoi’s” costume is black or yellow, but he has invariably a long, grey beard, flaxen hair, and red, gleaming eyes. The remains of supper are always left on the table for the “Damovoi’s” refreshment during the night, and his comfort and well-being enter into all the domestic arrangements, for if ignored in any way he takes a speedy revenge by bringing some disaster upon the household. Again, over the door of every building, house or stable, there is nearly always a cross rudely scrawled in red or white paint—for no witch or evil spirit can possibly enter under that sacred emblem. In parts of Bessarabia also it is considered very unlucky to meet a “pope” or priest upon the road; but a sure way to avert misfortune is to wait until the holy man has

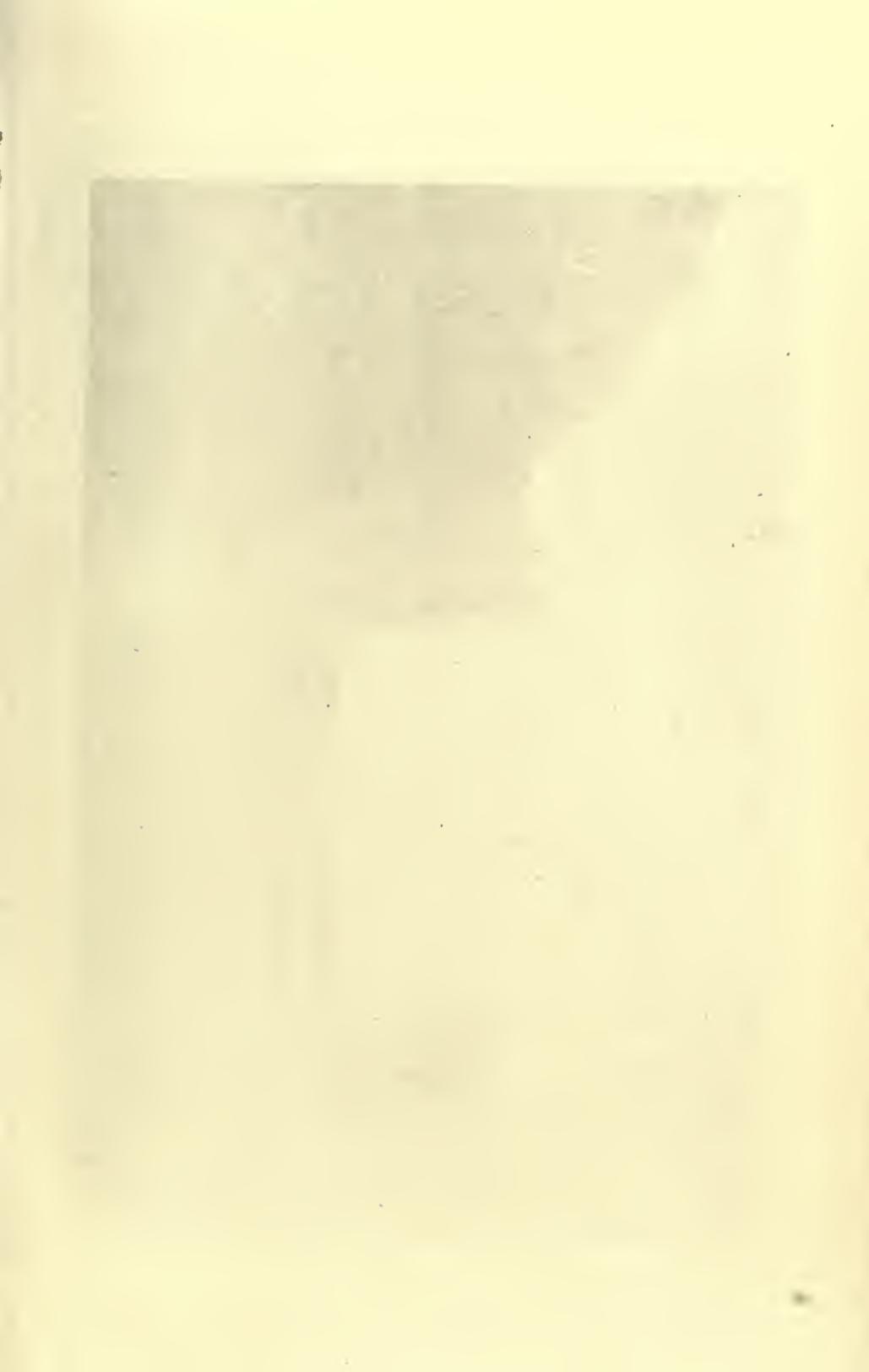
* Throughout Russia the pigeon is regarded as sacred on account of its similarity to the symbol of the Third Person of the Trinity.



VLADIKAVKAZ.

Photo by Kaguzinsky, Vladikavkaz.







THE CAUCASUS MOUNTAINS.

From a Photo.

passed and then to walk for some distance to the right or left, crossways, behind him. But I could fill a chapter with the quaint and numerous customs practised in this part of Russia and of which Mr. S—— possessed an endless store. In Siberia I have rarely come across such instances, chiefly because I had not the time (or inclination) to study the subject. But I remember once calling upon a lady at Tomsk during a storm, and at the first clap of thunder she suddenly became silent and preoccupied. Attributing this to alarm, I essayed to reassure her. "Oh! I am not frightened," said my hostess, after a long pause. "I was merely trying to recall the features of six bald-headed acquaintances. It averts the lightning!" Women are generally more given to superstition than the opposite sex, but S—— informed me that, in Southern Russia, the reverse is the case.

Long and tedious hours at length bring us to Ekaterinoslav, the Birmingham of Southern Russia, late in the day, and we pass through a ring of fire formed by its blazing ironworks. These are owned chiefly by Germans and Belgians, and the fact that land here has almost trebled in value within the past decade is largely due to the influx of foreign capital.

Shortly after leaving Ekaterinoslav we cross the River Dnieper, upon the brown waters of which, notwithstanding the sultry weather, ice-blocks are still floating, and early next morning drink tea at Taganrog, a dreary-looking town overlooking the

Sea of Azov. Taganrog looks a miserable place and does not belie its appearance, for in summer the town is swept by dust-storms of Saharan force and density, while in winter intense cold and fogs occasion much sickness. Up till now the scanty supply of water here has been the cause of frequent epidemics, for only rich people can afford to purchase the precious fluid, at about a shilling for a small cask, while the poor have to depend solely on condensed sea-water and the turgid river Don for a supply. Leaving this the train skirts for a while the flat and dismal sea-shore, with here and there a fisherman's shanty lost in a wilderness of yellow sand dunes and wiry grass. Inland the sullen grey steppes roll away like huge Atlantic breakers to the horizon, across a landscape as desolate as the ocean itself, save for the occasional gleam of a stagnant pool rotting in a fringe of rushes or a momentary glimpse of some wild bird, hovering, like a restless spirit, over the wilderness. But towards midday there appears far ahead a blur of brown, with golden domes gleaming faintly above it, between the cheerless horizon and cold grey sky. "Rostov-on-the-Don!" says S—— cheerfully, with a sigh of relief—and a few minutes later we have reached our destination.



MAIN STREET, VLADIKAVKAZ.

Photo by Kagazinskiy, Vladikavkaz.

CHAPTER XIX

THE RED FLAG IN RUSSIA (*continued*)

IN THE CAUCASUS

A GLARY, dusty town of unpaved straggling streets, ankle-deep in mire after rain, a nucleus of fine stone buildings, surrounded by others in a state of transition between corrugated iron and bricks and mortar, such is Rostov-on-the-Don. The place had, up till the time of my visit, remained the most loyal and orderly of Russian cities, although even here the schools were closed, and a public gathering of students had recently been dispersed by Cossacks with an occasional volley and a free use of the *nagaika*.

There was, therefore, a certain amount of incident, although I was not sorry when my enforced stay of two days here came to an end, for this is a very uninteresting city save from a commercial point of view. Rostov is at present cut off from the sea by the sand-banks of the river Don, but when the latter has been dredged sufficiently to admit large vessels (and when the country has quieted down!) this will probably

become one of the most important trading centres in Russia. But this laborious and expensive scheme, which has long been discussed, has not yet been commenced. Outwardly the chief imports and exports of this port appeared to be agricultural implements and cigarettes. Nearly two-thirds of the shops along the "Bolshaya Sadovaya," or main street, contained the former (chiefly, I was glad to note, of English manufacture, for in this particular branch America appeared to come in a bad second and Germany for once in a way nowhere).* The cigarettes of Messrs. Asmoloff, who have large works here, find their way to all parts of Asia; indeed, I found them even at Yakutsk, in Arctic Siberia, which Russians still call "the end of the world." The Russian *papirosh* is to my mind far superior to the Turkish or Egyptian, and it has always been a source of wonder to me why they are not more popular in England, for their flavour, compared to other brands, is delicious and their price infinitesimal. The reason may be that thousands of boxes purporting to contain Russian cigarettes are annually sent to this country from Hamburg, and are very rightly condemned by the luckless buyers as unsmokeable rubbish. As a matter of fact, however, I believe there is only one place in London where a *real* Russian cigarette may be procured, a small shop (where

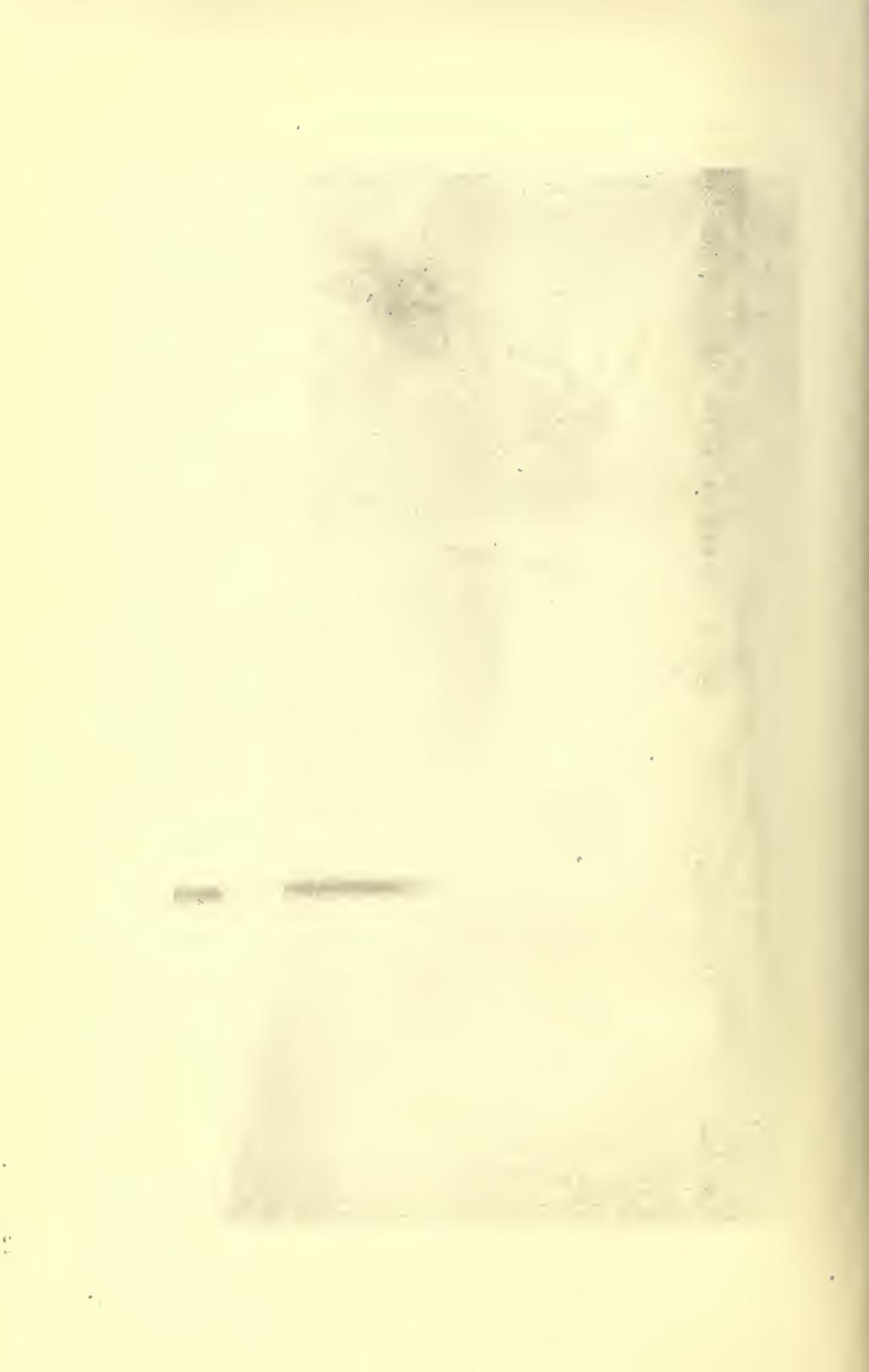
* There is a duty on all imported agricultural machinery except reaping machines, which, for some reason, cannot be made in Russia.



From a Photo.

A SHOOTING PARTY,
CAUCASUS MOUNTAINS.

To face page 278.



fresh caviar is also sold) in Rupert Street, Soho, and of which the owner is special purveyor to the Russian Embassy.

There is a palatial hotel, newly built and towering, in Rostov, but it is a whited sepulchre. S—— directed me to the "Grand," an old but respectable hostelry, but which reminded me somewhat of one of our old coaching inns, and where the *cuisine* was excellent. The sanitary arrangements were of course deplorable, and the accommodation almost as bad. The washstand in my room was the usual contrivance used in Russia, by which you press a treadle with your foot and a tiny jet of water dribbles from a tap above the basin. Sometimes it spurts violently out (according to the quantity of fluid in the reservoir) and wets your clothes. In any case, by this method it takes quite a quarter of an hour to wash the hands and face—and if you want hot water it is generally produced in a tumbler! In some places you can have a bath, but this is no light undertaking, for in an hotel the order entails as many preparations as a dangerous surgical operation. When pressed for time, it is generally preferable to go to a public establishment and wash *à la Russe*, but these places are not overclean in the provinces, although in the capital and Moscow they are as clean and luxurious as any London "Hamam."

The good news that a train would leave for Baku on the evening of the second day came

as a pleasant surprise, for a week's detention here had seemed likely. I quickly made my way to the police office to obtain my passport, which was handed me with the polite intimation that although there was no objection to my travelling as far as Vladikavkas, I must on no account proceed as far as Baku. Argument was useless (it always is with the Russian police), and I therefore withdrew, with fervent expressions of gratitude, but firmly resolved to reach the proscribed city, if this were any way possible. Before leaving Rostov I despatched many letters to the *Westminster Gazette* and friends in England, but for obvious reasons only a few of these ever reached their destination.

The railway station that evening swarmed with soldiers, for our train carried two line battalions from the province of Orel (which Russians pronounce "Arreeol"), and the troubled state of the Caucasus was evident from the large number of troops of all denominations which continued to pour into that country during my brief stay. During the two days' run to Vladikavkas I had as travelling companion a colonel of artillery. "I was shot in Manchuria, and now I am asked to shoot my own countrymen!" said he; "how long is all this going to last?" I must have had that question put to me fully fifty times a day between Odessa and the Austrian frontier, and by all sorts and conditions of men!

The journey of two days from Rostov to Vladikavkas was dull and tedious, especially as in the



MILITARY ROAD BETWEEN VLADIKAVKAZ AND TIFLIS.
CAUCASUS.

Photo by Kaganzinsky, Vladikavkaz.



hurry of departure I had forgotten to bring away any light literature. The speed was slower than usual, so much so that at times a fast walker could have kept up with the train, although the engine was one capable of running fifty miles an hour. But all Russians have a rooted antipathy to fast railway travel, and apparently even object to saving time if one may judge by an incident which occurred some years ago when I was travelling across the Caucasus from Batoum to Baku. We had reached a tunnel, at the entrance of which the train had pulled up for at least twenty minutes. "There is something wrong?" I remarked to a fellow-passenger. "Oh, no," he replied, "we are only making up the time! This tunnel was recently made to avoid a long detour round a range of hills, and as it now cuts off several miles, a short delay is necessary so as to fit in with the scheduled time." "But surely we should save time by going on," I urged, not unnaturally. "Perhaps so," said my friend, placidly lighting a cigarette. "But then, you see, they would have to alter all the time-tables!"

Nevertheless, I still maintain that if a man is not in a hurry, he can travel more comfortably by rail in Russia than in any other country in the world. Even the cars on this remote Caucasian line were beautifully fitted up by day, and at night were converted into luxurious sleeping apartments. The dim light furnished by two wax candles was the only drawback; but a further supply could always be obtained from a polite and attentive

guard. On the other hand, an English lady would perhaps find this line rather inconvenient, for some of the first-class "sleepers" were indiscriminately occupied by both sexes, although all other Russian railways provide special accommodation for the convenience of *dames seules*.

Of course we stopped everywhere, the first morning at Tikhonitzka, where tea was served, but the Colonel preferred to make an early breakfast off vodka, some black bread, and—spring onions! I was travelling with an invading army, for the restaurant swarmed with soldiers in summer uniform (white linen caps and tunics), and Cossacks of the district bristling with knives and silver cartridge belts, and wearing long, dark skirts and huge astrakan bonnets which almost concealed their faces. The stations were so isolated as to seem like islands set in this ocean of steppes, and were all of one pattern—iron-roofed, brick buildings with an engine shed at one end, and at the other a dusty strip of garden with a well, like an Egyptian "Shadoof," in the centre. The town was generally miles away, and as the train started the Cossacks mounted their small shaggy ponies, which had hitherto wandered freely round the place like human beings, and galloped homewards like the wind, yelling like fiends as they scoured across the grassy plains. Armavir was one of the few towns closely adjoining the railway, and the heat during the day having been tropical, it was pleasant to alight here in the cool of the evening. This is a typical Cossack town, not-



MOUNT KASBEK.
CAUCASUS.

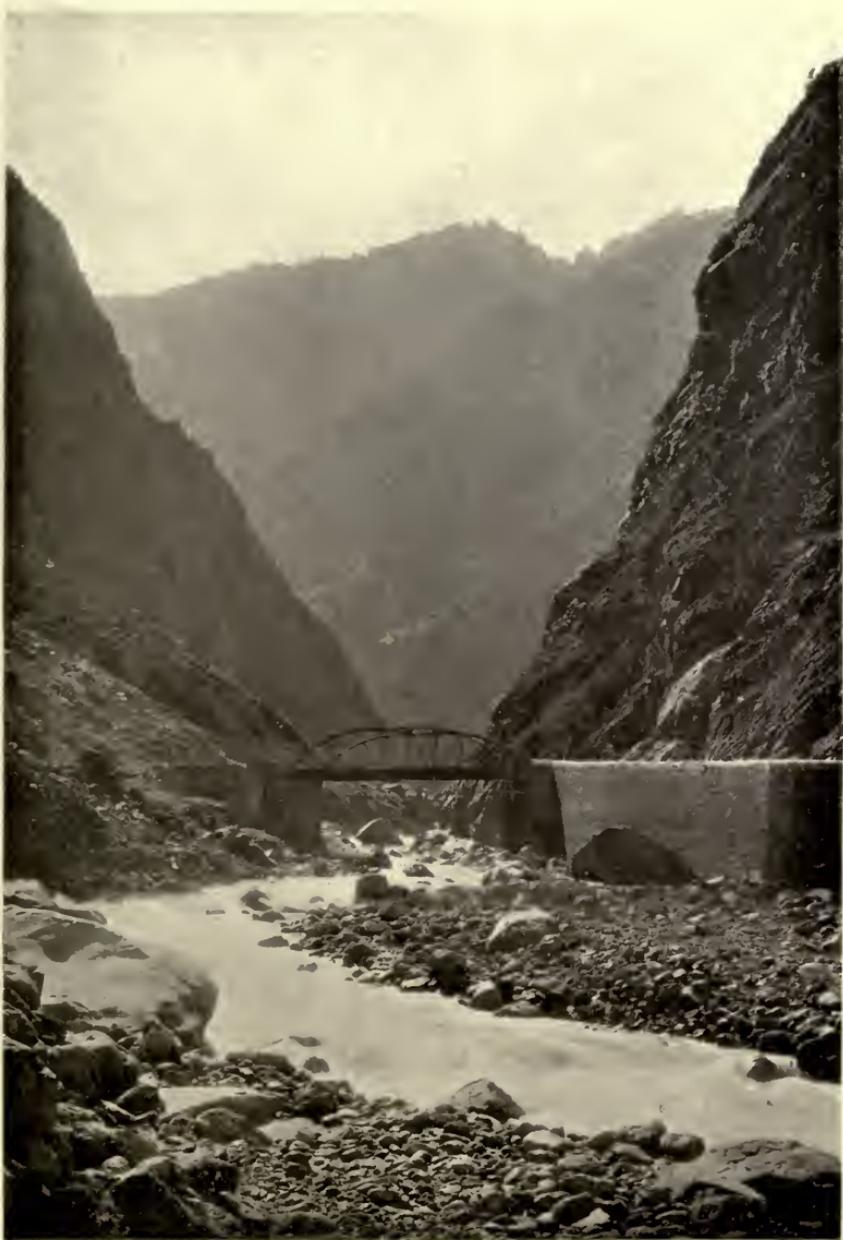
Photo by Rogazinsky, V'ladikavkaz.

withstanding its rural and peaceful appearance, and it is surrounded by rich grazing grounds, well stocked with herds of sleek, well-fed cattle. Beyond this we entered the mountainous Kuban district, called after the river of that name, and from here onwards we are in Switzerland, or might well be, judging from the scenery on either side of the line.

Vladikavkas is a town of four thousand inhabitants, which stands in a green and fertile valley, backed by the snowy peak of Mount Kasbek and the wild, precipitous ranges of the Caucasus. People Chamonix with hundreds of rough-looking louts in grey rags and rusty boots (the Russian line), and many more lithe, sinister-looking blackguards in dark skirts and astrakan bonnets (the Cossacks), and the place is before you. And here, perhaps more than elsewhere, the latter are the terror of the place, for they acknowledge but one master—their “Ataman,” the Tsar—and display a contempt for the gold-laced, dram-drinking Russian officer, which is, perhaps, occasionally deserved. It is a mistake, however, to gauge the Cossack’s valour by his warlike exterior, for, as a general rule, a more abject poltroon does not exist in action, although in a crowd of unarmed men and defenceless women his services with revolver and whip are invaluable. “Duck-stealers” they were derisively called during the riot at Warsaw; but this is an injustice, for while I was in Vladikavkas a gang of them looted a jeweller’s shop and got clean away

with 5,000 roubles. Few people in England are aware that the term "Cossack" is a very comprehensive one, given to numberless races living between the Baltic Sea and Pacific Ocean. Thus the Cossacks of Eastern Siberia are mostly emigrants, inoffensive tillers of the soil, who only desire a quiet and peaceable existence, but who during warfare are provided with a horse and a rifle by the Government and made to fight. They thus become "Cossacks" in name only, for they differ as much from the wild, lawless hordes of the Don and Black Sea as a ploughboy in the English shires from a Greek brigand. The Siberian Cossacks, unlike others, are not exempt from taxation, and do not carry a *nagaika*—the terrible instrument which is wielded with such deadly purpose in European cities, but which would be useless in their sparsely populated country. Also the Siberian Cossack is generally a better man in every respect than the swaggering bullies of the Caucasus. I speak from experience, for had it not been for the indomitable pluck and energy of one Stepan Rastorguyeff, who accompanied us from Yakutsk to America by land, my entire expedition would have perished. Yet Stepan was a (Siberian) Cossack.

The train I had come by remained a whole day here before proceeding to Baku, but nothing I could say or do would persuade the authorities to permit me to resume the journey. "In a few days, perhaps," was the only consolation I could get from the chief of police, so I sadly took leave of the little colonel and drove to the



THE DNIESTER GORGE.
CAUCASUS,

Photo by Ragazinsky, Vladikavkaz.

inn, and here I found a stranded German journalist in the same plight as myself.

Sinister news, he said, had arrived that day from Baku—a bank had been blown up with a dynamite bomb and several people killed; but there had been nothing to report during the five days my colleague had been detained here. At first he was a cheery, sociable fellow, a Teutonic Mark Tapley, who was evidently accustomed to cast his bread upon the waters with the firm belief that it would eventually be restored in the shape of buttered toast. But as time wore on, my friend's hopes sank with it, and after repeated applications to the police to be allowed to proceed to the scene of action, the discomfited Herr one morning incontinently lowered his colours, took his ticket for Rostov, and left me alone to face the situation. "You will never see Baku," were his last words; but this prophecy was fortunately not fulfilled. For I eventually reached the place in question, not, however, before a sojourn of four days had thoroughly sickened me of Vladikavkas.

There is a good post-road from here across the mountains to Tiflis, and here I thought was perhaps an opportunity to evade the authorities and travel to the Caspian *viâ* the latter town, whence a drive of only two days would have brought me to Baku. But my scheme collapsed like a house of cards on hearing that post-horses could only be procured from a Government station, and that *podarojnas* (or the necessary permits to

use horses) were not being issued at present. So there was nothing to do but wait, and exercise patience, of which virtue I am not entirely devoid, thanks to previous experiences of Siberian travel.

In summer Vladikavkas is said to be so beautiful that tourists flock there from all parts of the world, but the day after my arrival the fine weather broke up, and the rain came down in sheets, and without an interval, until I left the place three days later. There was no going out, for my wardrobe was very limited, and the long, weary days were passed at the inn, sadly surveying the deserted sloppy streets and dense curtain of mist which obscured even the trees and houses over the way. As for the mountains, I never saw them until I passed here on the way back from Baku.

Vladikavkas is famous for its beautiful silver work, and one morning I braved the downpour and entered a jeweller's shop not far from the hotel in order to purchase a cigarette case as a souvenir. The Armenian who owned the place spoke English fluently, and told me that, notwithstanding the garrison, the Cossacks practically governed Vladikavkas and the villages around it. He produced a revolver, and said that none of his compatriots here dared to move without one. Only the previous evening some Cossacks had broken into his shop and threatened to kill him unless they were paid 1,000 roubles, which sum he was compelled to hand over the counter. The preceding week an Armenian and



KAZMINSKY ROAD,
CAUCASUS.

Photo by Ragazinskiy, Vladikavkaz.

his wife were attacked just outside the town, and were both mercilessly flogged because no money was found upon them, the woman being subjected to the vilest outrages. There was no redress, for the police, when applied to for assistance, simply refused to interfere. This man probably spoke the truth, for I afterwards heard at Baku from a credible source that the Armenian massacre there (which occurred a few weeks before my visit) was the work of Kuban Cossacks, disguised as Persians, who had been sent there for the purpose by the Russian Government. And that very night I was awakened by loud cries for help outside the hotel, and saw an inanimate form borne away by three policemen surrounded by Cossacks who appeared to be directing the proceedings. The next morning the jeweller informed me that the victim was an Armenian who had been robbed and nearly murdered. When I mentioned the incident to the landlord, he smiled and shrugged his shoulders. "What can you do against Cossacks?" was his remark, and the fact did not seem to strike him, or any one else here, that a garrison of five thousand disciplined men could, within twenty-four hours, have cleared the town of these cowardly blackguards.

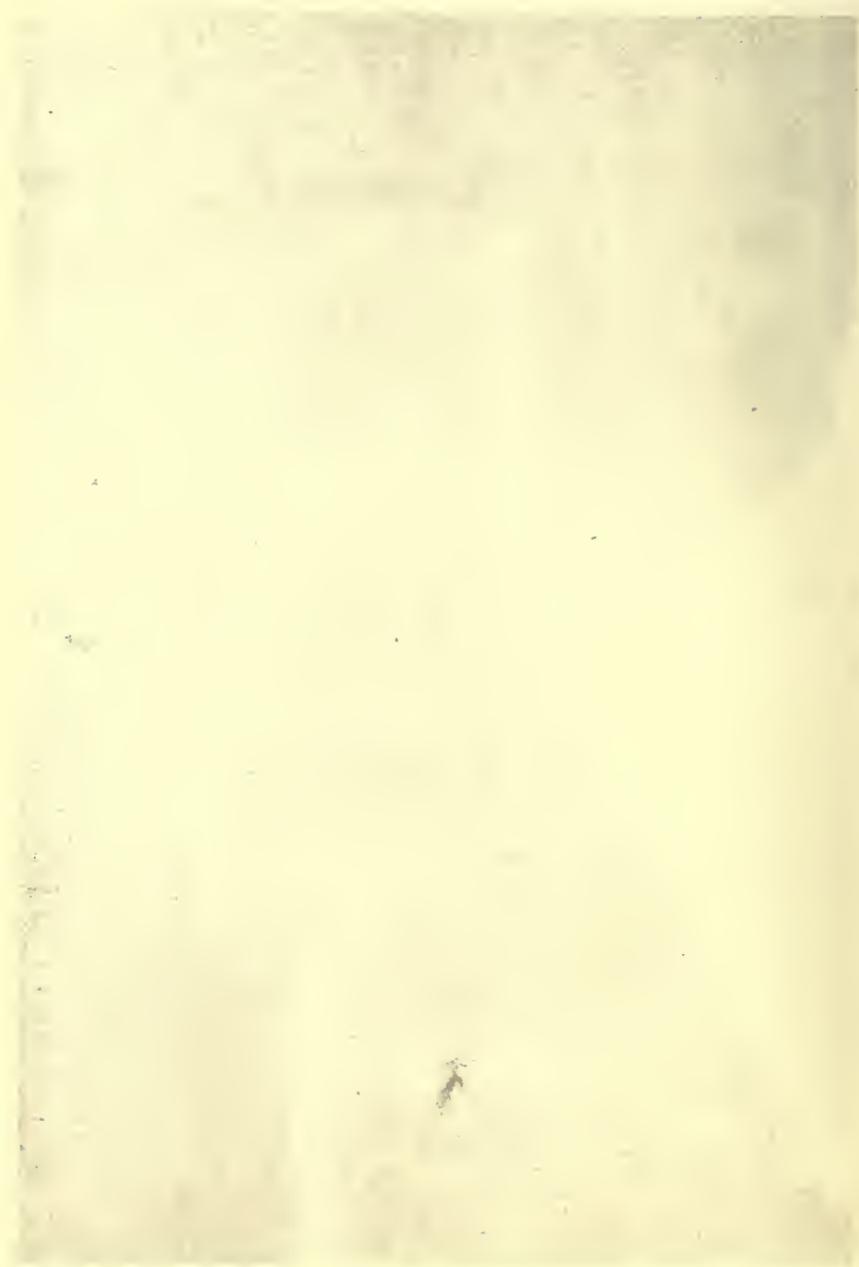
A journey of two days, generally accomplished, under normal conditions, in half the time, landed me in Baku, the first four hours being passed in an open truck under a tarpaulin. Whether this was a joke on the part of the authorities or whether it was done to impress me with a sense of their

power and importance I shall never know. At any rate I reached Baku, which after all was my primary object, and having done so, speedily recognised the fact that I might just as well have stayed away. Not that there was not enough excitement and bloodshed to gladden the heart of an American newspaper man, for during my stay of four days here a bomb exploded within a few yards of my hotel, a bank manager was stabbed, and five Armenians were shot in the native quarter. The petroleum city was practically in a state of siege, and five separate conflagrations in various parts of the town were visible from the roof of my hotel. All this was interesting enough had I been able to impart the news to those eagerly awaiting it in England. This, however, was impossible, for the wires were inaccessible to all but Government officials, and private letters were despatched "at the risk of the sender," which generally means, in Russia, that after being read they will be consigned to the waste-paper basket. I then applied to the police for permission to take photographs, and this favour, also, was politely but firmly declined. So I strolled about the town aimlessly for three days, regretting the time and trouble I had expended in reaching it. For Baku, apart from its tragic associations, is utterly devoid of interest. Besides, I had been here before, and knew the place only too well, with its incessant gales and clouds of dust, the former so violent that the very name of the place is derived from the Persian



A FORT IN THE CAUCASUS MOUNTAINS.

Photo by Ragazinsky, Vladikavkaz.







A CAUCASIAN BRIDE.
(Note the length of gloves.)

From a Photo.

words, "Bak," the wind, and "Kubeda," beaten. Only sixty years ago a tumble-down Persian settlement occupied the spot, which now consists of handsome stone buildings, well-paved streets, warehouses and shops. The place has, like Odessa, a mixed population, in which Russians and Tartars predominate, but French, Germans, Italians, and a few English are also met with, most of the Europeans being employed in the petroleum trade, profitable enough to those at a distance, but distinctly unpleasant to residents here. The wells are fully three miles away, but even tablecloths and napkins are saturated with the odour of the oil and the very food has a faint, sickly flavour of naphtha. "Bathe in the Caspian," said an English engineer I met here, "and the smell will cling to you for a week!" And I bathed in the hotel with much the same result!

Anyway, I clearly realised at the end of four days that there was nothing to be done here, for a newspaper correspondent without an available wire or post office is as effete and helpless as a man without limbs. At first I thought of returning *via* Tiflis, but the line to that place was closed, apparently for an indefinite period, as several miles of rail had been torn up. So I finally resolved to retrace my steps *via* Rostov and Kieff to Warsaw, arriving at the latter city on the eve of its first serious riot and in time to witness the ruthless slaughter of over one hundred innocent victims—men, women, and children—by the soldiers of the Tsar.

CHAPTER XX

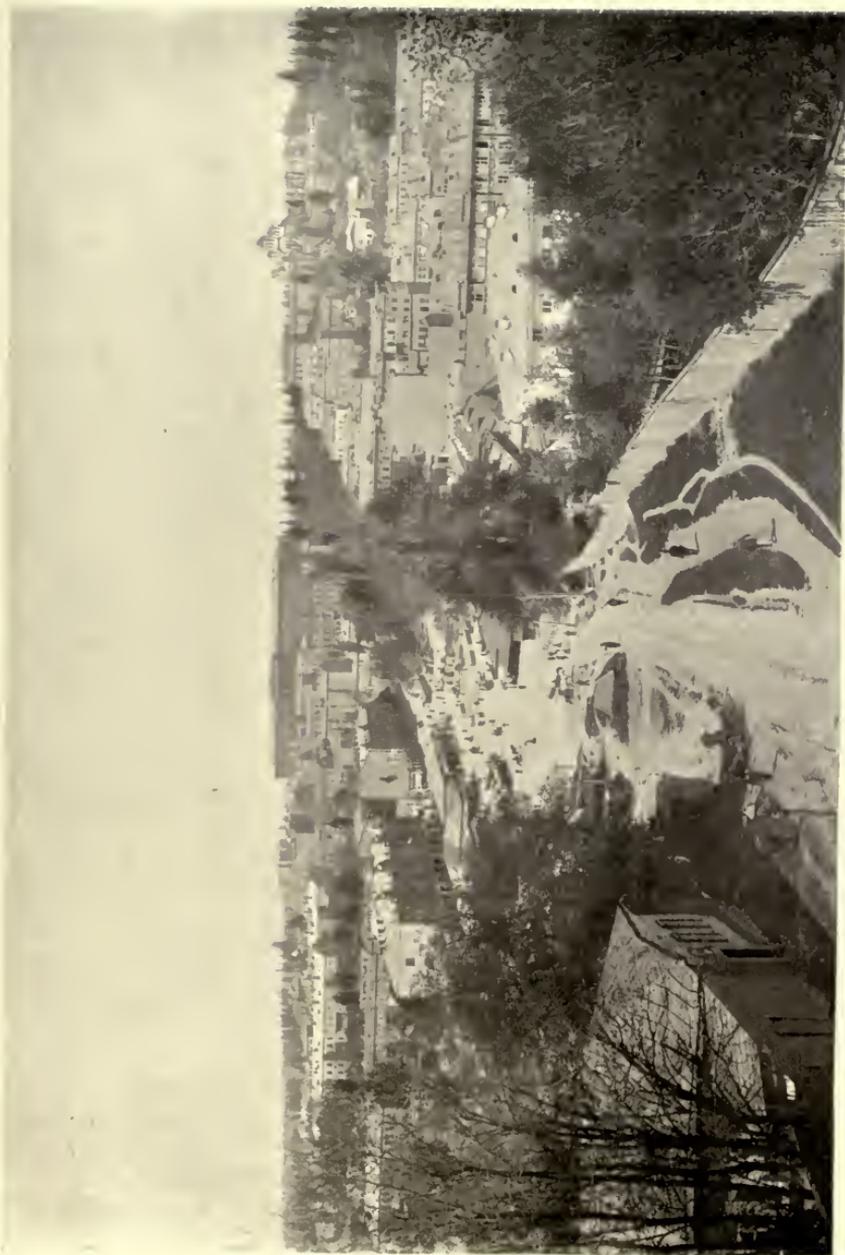
THE RED FLAG IN RUSSIA (*continued*)

A RIOT IN WARSAW

CRASH! Bang! Smash! I awaken with a start to my surroundings in a luxurious bedroom, all rosy chintz, and white and gold furniture, and wonder whether a violent earthquake has shaken the world, for the whole massive building seems to tremble, for a few seconds, under the shock of the concussion. But almost simultaneously a German waiter enters, cool and imperturbable, with the morning roll and *café au lait*.

“Another bomb, Monsieur,” he remarks, as unconcernedly as though he were criticising the weather. “It sounds as if this one were in the Jewish quarter—that makes the third this week, and there will probably be some more to-day!”

I had arrived in Warsaw the previous evening to find the city in a state of ferment and the wildest rumours abroad. Even at Kieff the mail-cart had been brought to the train by a heavy escort of cavalry, and I had found the railway station here surrounded by troops. One-third



КИЕВ.

Photo by Moser, Kieff.

To face page 290.



of our train had been composed of prison cars occupied by a regiment of the line under orders for this place. Everything looked as if a row was imminent, and before many hours were over.

“They say there are two thousand bombs in the city!” was my greeting from the gold-laced porter at the Hôtel Bristol, the gilded and usually crowded halls of which I found deserted save by a few Press correspondents and business men—and even these wore an air of apprehensive unrest. “Anything may happen to-morrow—a public holiday,” said the editor of a leading Warsaw journal; “but there will be no bloodshed if it can possibly be avoided.” But he added that the most trifling incident in the crowd—a chance word or blow—might lead to scenes of slaughter too terrible to contemplate. For on the Sunday preceding the massacres there were all the makings of a row on both sides—the soldiers were sulky at having to patrol the hot, dusty streets on a day of rest; the people were goaded into an irritable frame of mind by vexatious police restrictions and the wholesale arrests which had recently occurred here and at Lodz. Moreover, the sudden arrival of three regiments of Don Cossacks was not calculated to mend matters, for these gentlemen are less handy with smooth words than the *nagaika*. It was reported that the Governor-General had issued strict orders that shot and steel were only to be used as a means of defence and as an absolutely last resource. This may, or may not,

have been correct. Anyway, twelve rounds of ball cartridge were issued to each man, and it is calculated that on the fatal day there were no fewer than sixty thousand troops under arms in and around the city. It is true, an *ukase* of the Tsar proclaiming religious tolerance had arrived that morning, but most people regarded it as a mere artifice to quiet the people and tide over this critical time, which it probably was.

The bomb explosion, which occurred at six o'clock on that bright May morning, was quickly followed by the clatter of cavalry and tramp of troops on the wood pavement, and this continued unceasingly throughout the whole of that day and the following night. I rose, and dressed quickly, during which operation two policemen entered my room, and without a word of excuse or explanation closed the shutters. In the entrance hall I was agreeably surprised to find an old friend—Stanhope, of the *New York Herald*—and we set out together, while there was yet time, for the telegraph office, a report having just come in that the Town Hall would surely be wrecked by dynamite at midday. It was now only 8 a.m.

The military display was in itself worth the journey from London to witness, and the blue sky and dazzling sunshine, church bells, regimental music, and spectacular appearance of thousands of glittering uniforms, ever on the move, was anything but suggestive of the ghastly tragedies which were so soon to follow. Indeed, the only

sombre figures in that brilliant assemblage were Jews of the hideous Polish type, with rusty black skirts and corkscrew ringlets, who wandered aimlessly through the crowd with a look of nervous expectation on their pale, crafty faces. Up till 10 a.m. street cars and cabs were running; after that hour the streets resembled a desert, although either pavement of the Krakovskaya, or principal thoroughfare, was densely crowded with people whose anxious looks contrasted oddly with their gay holiday attire. About eleven o'clock some workmen overturned a *droszki*, the driver of which had been bribed to convey a fare to the railway station. Both men were rather severely handled, but nothing of further importance occurred. Every courtyard in the principal streets was now occupied by the soldiery. At noon congregations left the churches to swell the multitudes on the Krakovskaya. Warsaw was now like a beleaguered city. Not a meal was to be had for love or money—save at a certain French restaurant, where Stanhope and I were taken by the American Consul to clandestinely partake of breakfast under the anxious eye of the trembling proprietor, whose house would have been promptly attacked had the fact transpired. Then I returned to the Moskovskaya, where bodies of troops were still moving—ever on the march—chiefly dense masses of men in the hideous grey coats of the Russian line, relieved by occasional glimpses of colour as a squadron of lancers or the Grodno hussars, in their smart green tunics and magenta overalls, came clattering

by. And all this while the crowd looked on in silent and sulky apathy, although the Don Cossacks, armed with whips and mounted on their shaggy ponies, occasionally called forth uncomplimentary remarks. Near the Hôtel Bristol a street boy's facetiousness went too far, and like lightning a swarthy ruffian reined up, and I saw the lad jump in the air with a shrill scream of pain as the cruel *nagaika* curled round his body with a crack like a pistol-shot. Had this occurred in the poorer quarters of the city the man would have been torn to pieces.

The heat was terrific, and early in the afternoon I returned to the hotel for a few minutes' rest in the cool marble lounge of the "Bristol." Some cavalry officers had come in from the sweltering, dusty streets, for the same purpose, and one of them was showing an empty bomb, taken by the police on the previous night, to his comrades. These infernal machines were facetiously termed *Mandarines* in Warsaw, but their shape in no wise resembled an orange. The one I handled was about six inches long and four in diameter, with a thin paper partition in the centre dividing two compartments—one of which, when charged, contained muriatic acid, and the other nitroglycerine. In the latter a leaden ball was placed, so that when the missile was thrown with violence and struck the ground at either end, the ball broke through the paper, the chemicals met, and an explosion ensued. The cost of each was about 15 roubles—or £1 10s.—and ten thousand were said to

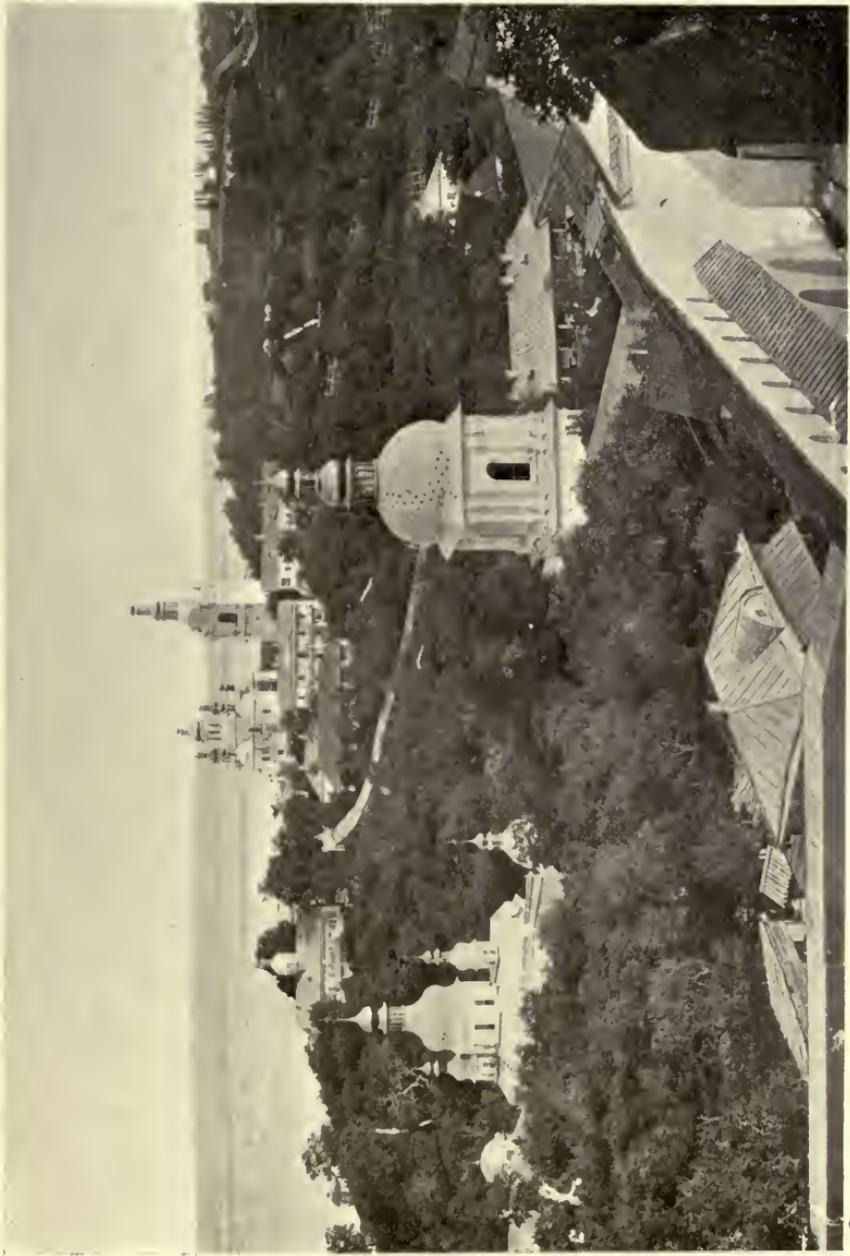


Photo by Moser, Kieff.

THE "SACRED CITY" OF KIEFF.

have been distributed for use throughout Warsaw, but subsequent events proved this report to be grossly exaggerated.

The time was now drawing near for the monster demonstration which, consisting of thirty thousand men, was announced to start from the poorer quarters at 4 p.m., parade several parts of the city, and finally march past the Governor's palace and down the Krakovskaya. But the hours went by and not a soul appeared. My only means of obtaining information was through my friend the Russian editor, who sat in his office throughout the day watching events in Warsaw and metaphorically feeling the revolutionary pulse of Lodz by telephone. About 3 p.m. he passed me, white and breathless, in the street, crying out that important news had come at last. A fight had occurred in the Jerusalemski Street, near the Vienna Railway Station—fifty already reported killed and wounded, women and men. It took me quite half an hour to reach the place in question through a struggling, panic-stricken mob, but here I found a compact wall of infantry blocking up the thoroughfare as far as the eye could see. What happened here will never be known; but it is safe to assume that in the Jerusalemski affair at least sixty people were killed on the spot. At any rate, it was officially announced that over a score of wounded succumbed in the hospitals next day. This riot is said to have been started by a shot fired into the troops from a window, but it is just as likely that this body of workmen

were carrying red flags (which had been strictly forbidden) and that this provoked a military attack.

From this time indiscriminate murder was let loose, and news of fresh conflicts and disasters kept coming in every hour. At six o'clock about twenty students and workmen (and two or three women) were shot down in the Sosnovaulitza. From Praga (a suburb just across the Vistula) we learnt, at seven o'clock, that men, women, and children had been shot down *en masse* by the Lithuanian Regiment. Here over thirty-six people are said to have been killed, most of them poor, harmless beings who had idly strolled out to witness, and not join in, the manifestation. These were the two principal encounters of the day, but there is no doubt that many others occurred in the various suburbs, and that the official report of the casualties issued by the authorities were far below the actual figures. Warsaw is a large city, and posted, as most of us were, on the Krakovskaya, it was impossible to know what was going on in the suburbs. But it is a significant fact that, although the Krakovskaya was specially selected by the various Socialist committees for their most important parade, not a single workman appeared all day near the street in question! Couple this with the fact that sixty thousand troops (to say nothing of police) were engaged in maintaining order all over Warsaw and its outskirts, and I fancy the Government reports as to the number of killed and



AN HOUR BEFORE THE RIOT.
WARSAW.

From a Photo.



GRAVES OF VICTIMS KILLED IN THE WARSAW RIOT.

From a Photo.

wounded that day in Warsaw may safely be discredited.

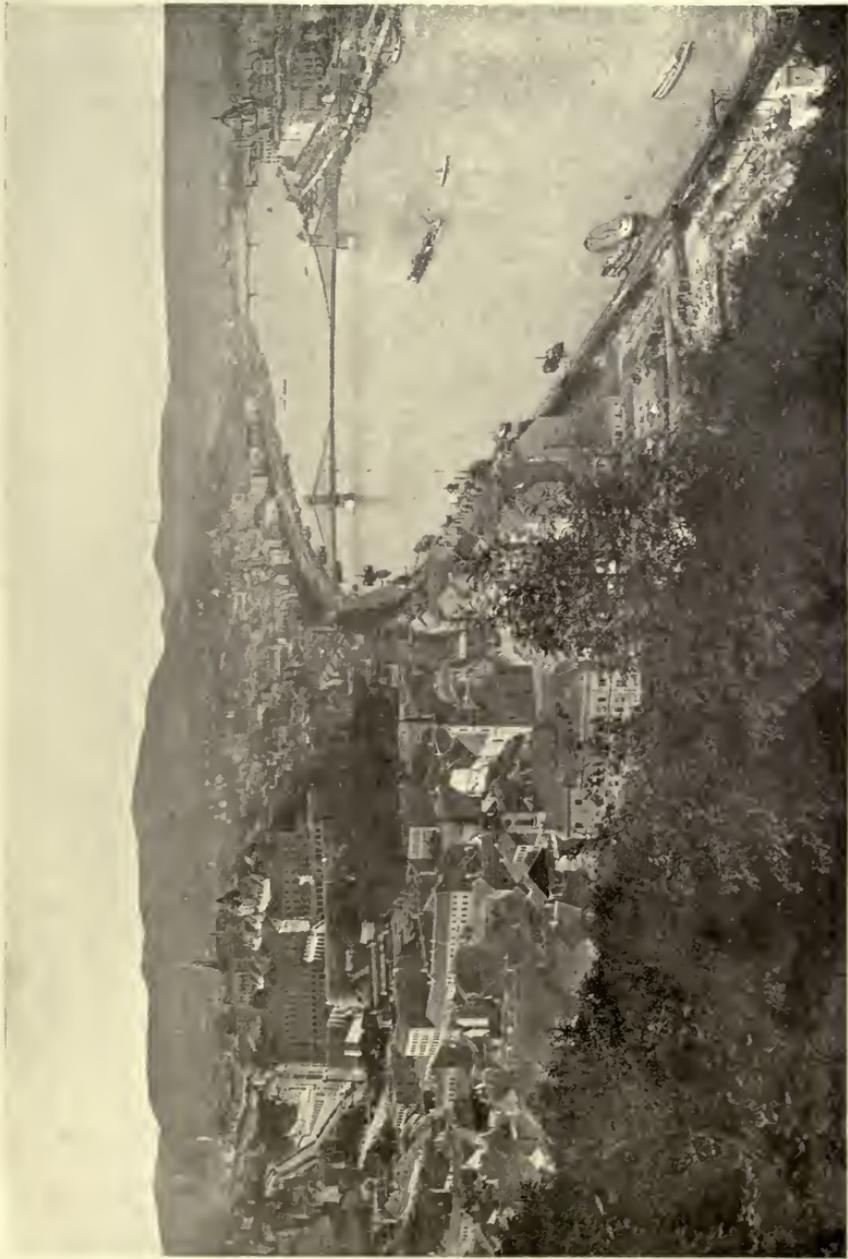
The Praga business over, there was a lull, at any rate in the Krakovskaya, which was now cleared of civilians and solely occupied by ambulance carts, squadrons of cavalry, and Cossacks. Occasionally the latter would gallop wildly off, with unearthly yells and a cracking of whips, and we knew that more bloodshed would shortly be in progress. But all that day the most level-headed people were in a state of doubt and nervous excitement, and it was difficult to substantiate the wild reports which kept pouring in from all parts of the city.

From eight o'clock until ten in the evening there was little doing, and I strolled down the street to the Governor's palace, which I found surrounded by Cossacks seated around their camp fires. But approaching too near the building, I was quickly covered with a rifle and ordered to clear out, which I did, fully expecting to be followed by half an ounce of lead, for many people were shot that night on the flimsiest pretext. We were wondering at the "Bristol" what had become of all the threatened bombs, when one of the latter burst in a street close by, killing three Cossacks and a policeman. And this, so far as I know, was the final tragedy of the day, and occurred at about half-past ten in the evening.

Towards midnight the streets were quiet and deserted but for the eternal challenge of sentries

and tramp of armed men. While smoking a cigar in the moonlit street outside the hotel, a rumble of wheels was heard on the wood pavement, and a rough country cart appeared, drawn by an old white horse and escorted by soldiers with fixed bayonets. "Some of the dead from Praga," said a man beside me, and curiosity impelled me to follow the weird *cortège* into the courtyard of a low, yellow building—the police office—across the street, where it was halted by the corporal in charge. A rouble to the latter enabled me to examine the vehicle more closely—also its mysterious contents: a shapeless, bulging burthen, secured by ropes stretched over a coarse tarpaulin. There were four bodies—three men and a woman—huddled together in wet and dirty straw: one a smooth-faced student in grey uniform, the others two respectably dressed men—perhaps artisans. Presently the flickering lantern revealed the woman—a girl of about sixteen, slim and fair-haired. "She was pretty," says the corporal, as the frail little body is carried past us in its white serge dress with mauve ribbons—now discoloured—at the throat and wrists. Shot through the heart! Ye gods! What can such a child as this have had to do with politics? The corporal guessed my thoughts. "Poor little thing," he muttered, not unkindly; "I saw it done, but it was an accident! They got her in the back while she was running away. Heaven rest her soul!"

The mortuary was one hurriedly improvised for the occasion—underground—and lit by an



BUDAPEST.

From a Photo.

To face page 298.

electric lamp suspended from the rafters, and here the dead lay side by side in semi-darkness and an unspeakably foul atmosphere, notwithstanding the carbolic acid which had been freely sprinkled about the floor. Men and women lay almost over one another in the confined space, dressed in the clothes in which they had met their end a few hours before, but both sexes were stripped to the waist, their upper garments being rolled across the hips. Some were shockingly disfigured, having been clubbed to death with the butt ends of rifles, but many of the women who had been shot in the back while trying to reach a place of safety had no visible wounds. The victims appeared to be chiefly poor people, and only a few were of the upper class—one of them a woman, who had evidently put on her smartest clothes and jewelry for the festive occasion destined to end so tragically. The work of identification was to take place early the next morning, but by this time I had seen horrors enough, and had no desire to attend that harrowing ordeal. I have had to witness other ghastly scenes in the darkest recesses of the Tsar's great Empire, but the recollection of that dark cellar, with its rows of upturned staring faces, will haunt me to my dying day.

There is little more to tell, for two days after the events above recorded I was on my way to the Austrian frontier. During the journey, while passing the town of Lodz, a "parting shot" was fired at the train, the bullet passing through an adjoining compartment, within an inch of its

solitary occupant. But Buda Pest was eventually reached in safety, and here, once more within the commonplace but comfortable realms of civilisation, my wanderings "Through Savage Europe" are at an end.

THE END.

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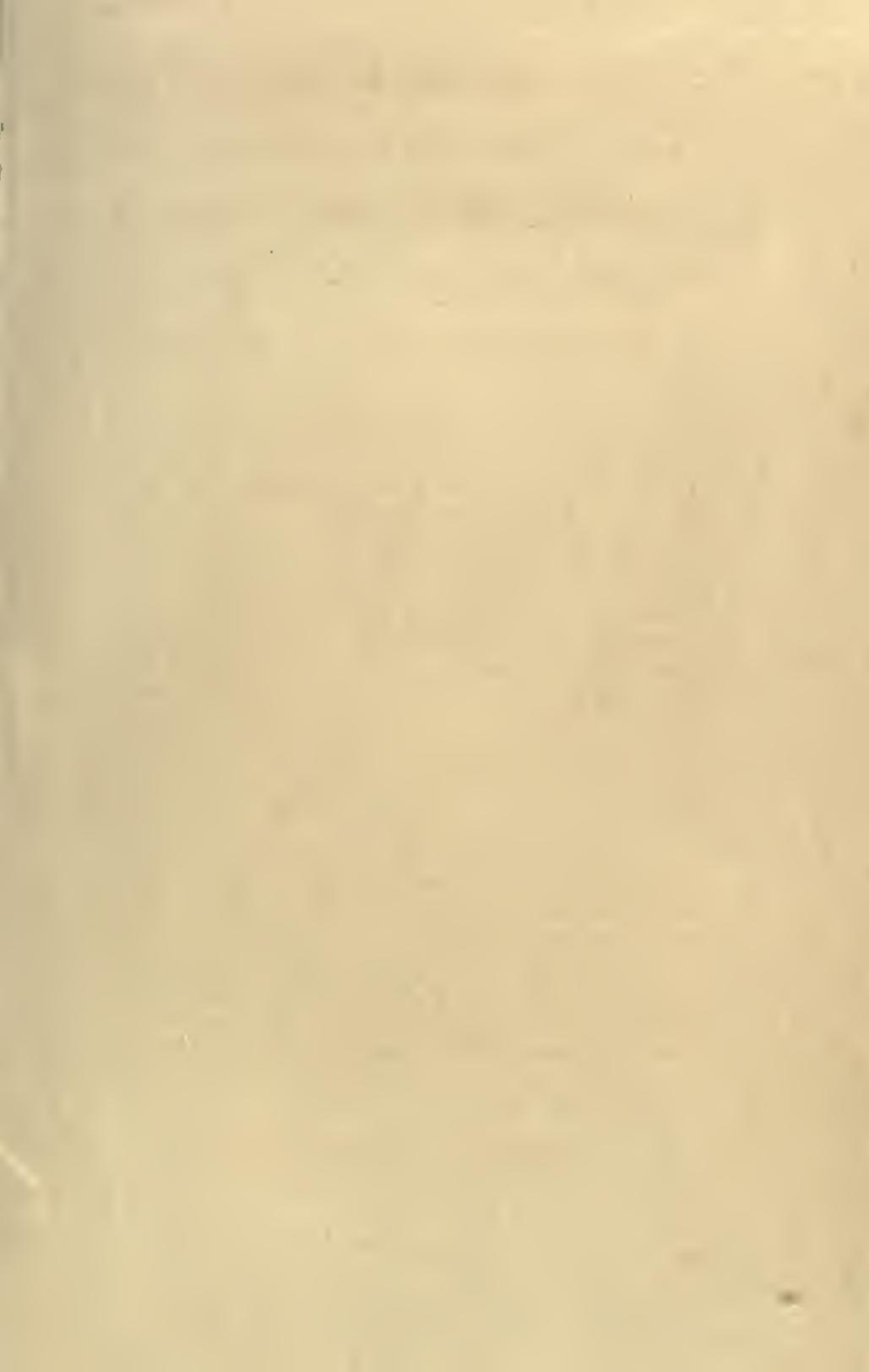
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