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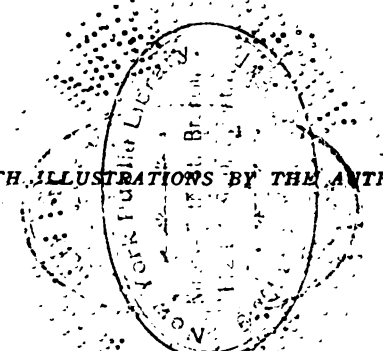
THE BURDEN OF THE BALKANS

BY

M. ^{ary} EDITH DURHAM

AUTHOR OF 'THROUGH THE LANDS OF THE SERB'

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR



'I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight everyone against his brother, and everyone against his neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom.

'And the Egyptians will I give over into the hands of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts.'

ISA. xix. 2, 4.

LONDON

EDWARD ARNOLD

41 & 43 MADDOX STREET, BOND STREET, W.

1905

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THE BURDEN OF THE BALKANS



OF THE

DEDICATED

WITH GRATEFUL THANKS AND WITHOUT PERMISSION

TO

H.B.M. CONSULS,

WHOSE KINDLY HELP HAS NEVER FAILED ME.

M. E. D.

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P R E F A C E

THE diplomat, the geographer, the archæologist, I do not pretend to be able to teach. My aim is a far humbler one. I wish to give the general reader a somewhat truer idea of the position of affairs in the Balkan Peninsula than he usually possesses.

If he be interested in the affairs of Turkey-in-Europe at all, he almost always believes in a spot inhabited by Turks (all Moslems and bad) and 'Macedonians' (all Christians and virtuous). He believes that the horrors of which he hears are caused by the rising of these same Christians against the tyranny of their Moslem rulers, and, thus believing, he hastens to offer them his sympathy and help, and to beg the British Government to intervene on their behalf.

I hope in the following pages to show him that these troubles are largely of racial, not religious, origin. The Christians who have revolted did not rise, as he fondly believes, on behalf of Christianity. Nor do they represent by any means the Christian population of the country. The revolt was purely political, and part of a long and complicated scheme to obtain a large additional territory for Bulgaria.

The truth of this is proved by the fact that the revolutionary party directs its attacks not only upon Moslems, but murders Christians of all the other Balkan races when opportunity occurs.

I have been begged by persons of these other races to tell all that I have seen and heard, to remind the British public that there are other peoples besides Bulgars whose interests should be considered, and to point out that the money given by well-meaning people, as they think, to support Christianity is likely to cause the Bulgar party to believe that it has England's support, and to encourage it to commit fresh outrages upon other Christians.

I have been begged by others not to tell all that I have seen and heard.

It is impossible to please everyone. Want of space naturally prevents my giving the details of this, my sixth, tour in the Balkan Peninsula, but I have tried to tell a plain tale of the main facts. Such success as I met with I owe entirely to the kindness of those who helped me on my way. The mistakes are all my own.

M. E. DURHAM.

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SKENDERBEG'S HELMET.
(*Vienna Museum.*)

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PART I

THE STORY OF THE PEOPLE

**'For thrones and peoples are but waifs that swing
And float or fall in endless ebb and flow.'**

CHAPTER I

'You like our country. Will you do something for us?' said a Balkan man to me the first time I met him.

I inquired cautiously what this odd job might be.

'Explain us,' he said, 'to the new Consul. He does not understand us;' and he made this request as if the 'explaining' of a nation were an ordinary everyday affair. Its comprehensiveness staggered me.

'But I do not understand you myself,' I said.

'Our language not well perhaps yet, but us—the spirit of the people—yes. Everyone says so. Now, if you would explain it to the Consul. We do not like him,' he added.

'Why don't you like him?' said I.

'Because he does not like us,' was the prompt reply; 'and he does not understand.'

'When he has been here longer and knows you,' I said, 'he will doubtless like you. You have very little to do with him. Why trouble about him? It is surely not necessary to like all the foreign Consuls.'

Then he gazed at me with surprise. 'One must either like or hate,' he said simply; and he wanted me to 'understand' and 'explain' him.

And he is but one example of many, for thus it is with the Balkan man, be he Greek, Serb, Bulgar, or Albanian, Christian or Moslem.

'If Europe only understood,' he says (and it should

be remarked that he rarely, if ever, classes himself as European)—‘if Europe only understood’ the golden dreams of his nation would be realized, and, as in the fairy-tales, there would be happiness ever afterwards. He is often pathetically like a child, who tells you what fine things he is going to do when he is grown up. That Europe cares no jot for his hopes, fears, sorrows, and aspirations so long as they are not likely to jolt that tittupy concern ‘the Balance of Power’ never seems to occur to him.

Now, to ‘understand’ him it would be necessary not merely to view things from his window, but to see them with his eyes (for what is seen in the landscape depends largely on the spectator), and this is impossible. It is doubtful, indeed, whether one race ever will understand another. It has certainly never done so yet. But the story of the past that has set him at that particular window and coloured his view is more easily arrived at, and explains many things.

Without some knowledge of it, travel in the Near East is but dull work, for the folk of the Balkans live in their past to an extent which it is hard for us in the West to realize. It is a land strewn with the wreckage of dead empires; peoples follow one another, inter-tangle, rise and fall, through dim barbaric ages blood-stained and glittering with old-world splendour, striving, each for itself, in a wild struggle for existence, until the all-conquering Ottoman sweeps down upon them, and for four centuries they are blotted out from the world’s history.

When after that long night they awoke—the Rip Van Winkles of Europe, animated only with the desire of going on from the point at which they had left off—they found the face of the world had changed and new Powers had arisen. Internally, there were the problems

of the fourteenth century still unsolved. Externally, they were faced with those of the twentieth century, Western and insistent.

It is the fashion just now to attempt to simplify the problem of the Balkan Peninsula by limiting it to the 'Macedonian Question,' and representing the miseries of the land as the result of a struggle between Moslem and Christian. But in truth it is nothing so simple. It is the question of the slow waning of Ottoman might and the consequent resurrection of, and struggle for supremacy between, the subject peoples which began at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and has yet to be fought to its close. And the problem is not limited to any one spot; it extends not only over the whole of that part of the Balkan Peninsula which is still under the Sultan, but also over lands ruled by other nations.

When we first know it, the peninsula was inhabited by Thracians, Macedonians, and Illyrians—wild folk, not Greek: a mass of savage tribes each led by its chieftain. They appear to have been closely allied in race. Their form of speech is unknown. 'If the Thracians,' says Herodotus, 'were either under the government of an individual or united among themselves, their strength would, in my opinion, render them invincible; but this is a thing impossible.' And his estimate of these people was a just one. Philip of Macedon welded the wild tribes into a power, and Thracians, Macedonians, and Illyrians formed the foundation of Alexander the Great's all-conquering armies.

The Balkan Peninsula is a land of 'one-man empires.' Alexander's did not long survive him. He died in the year 303 B.C., but he is still the talk of the town in his native land. There is a surprising amount of excite-

ment about him ; for the blood of the oldest inhabitants of the land is still with us. That the modern Albanian is the more or less direct descendant of the primitive savage people of the Balkans is a fact which, I believe, no one now disputes. Alexander the Great was a Macedonian, and Olympias, his mother, a Princess of Epirus (South Albania) ; therefore Alexander was clearly an Albanian. So far so good ; but on his father's side, according to tradition, he was of Greek origin—remote, it is true, but the Greeks admitted it. To-day Greek and Albanian alike claim him enthusiastically, and along with him, of course, his Macedonian lands.

Nor are they the sole claimants. There is no theory too wild to flourish in the Balkans, but this, perhaps, is the maddest of all. The Bulgarians, too, claim to be Alexander's sons. Alexander, I have been told quite seriously, commanded his men, 'according to a well-known classical author' (name not given), 'in a tongue that was not Greek, and was therefore undoubtedly Bulgarian!' A song was sung during the late Macedonian insurrection, in which an eagle, who is soaring over the land, asks what is the cause of so much excitement, and is told that the sons of Alexander are arising. This annoyed the Greeks and the Albanians extremely, for the insurrection was being worked solely for Bulgarian ends.

'Georgie,' we asked one of our hospital patients, 'do you know about Alexander the Great?'

Georgie cheered up ; Alexander was clearly an 'old pal.' Georgie believed himself to be a Bulgar and a son of Alexander beyond any doubt.

'We all are,' he said.

Poor Georgie ! he spoke a Slav dialect, and was possibly a mixture of all the races that have ever

ruled the peninsula, and all he had gained was a Mauser ball through his right hand in the name of Alexander the Great.

Alexander died, but the aborigines had one other burst of glory.

Pyrrhus (Burri = the Valiant, Alb.), King of Epirus, is all their own; no other nations claim him. Gendarmes in South Albania to-day will tell you of Pyrrhus, 'the great King who beat the dirty Greeks and everybody else.'

History in the Balkan Peninsula repeats itself with surprising regularity. Its peoples have never yet fought their differences to an end, but have always been overpowered by a common foe.

Rome swept down on the struggling mass of Thracians, Illyrians, Greeks, and Macedonians. They parcelled out the peninsula into Roman provinces, and its fierce peoples, whose delight was in war, soon formed the flower of the Roman army. Later—for they possessed not only physical, but mental, energy—they rose even to the purple. Diocletian and Constantine the Great, to mention only the most celebrated, were of Illyrian blood.

There is nothing new under the sun. In our own time Illyrian blood has again swayed the fortunes of Rome; Crispi, Prime Minister of Italy, was of Albanian origin, and Italy once more looks covetously at the Illyrian coast.

Tacitus gives us a vivid snapshot of the 'savage genius' of the Thracians of his day, who 'lived wildly upon the mountains, whence they acted with the greater outrage and contumacy,' and 'were not even accustomed to obey their native Kings further than their own humour.'

The Roman has gone, and has left scant trace

behind him save the bastard Latin dialect of the Vlahs. The 'savage genius' of the aborigines is still unquenched.

Into this land of fierce tribesmen, dotted with Roman colonies and joined by Roman roads, came other wild peoples, who poured in from the strange dark lands beyond the Danube. It was the day of the shifting of the nations, and they moved in resistless thousands. Of the many who came and killed and plundered, but claim no territories to-day, we have no space to tell; but the coming of the Slavs is an all-important fact in the history of the Balkans. These early days are dim, and dates are uncertain; all that it is safe to say is that Slav tribes were drifting over the Danube probably as early as the third century A.D., and settling in the fat lands that form modern Servia and Bulgaria. By the end of the sixth century this dribbling immigration became an invasion. Slavs poured in in irresistible numbers; they disputed the lands with the original inhabitants, driving them before them to the mountains, as the Saxons did the Britons, and settled as village communities on the undulating, well-watered plains.

These Slavs are described as an agricultural, herding people. Like the people they displaced, they were divided into clans, which were ruled by independent chiefs (Zhupans), who quarrelled freely among themselves, but met and discussed matters of common interest, and were loosely held together by a headman elected by themselves, who recognised the suzerainty of the Byzantine Emperor. This tribal state, which is common to the childhood of most races, would not be noteworthy in this brief sketch were it not for the strange fact that neither Slav nor Albanian has yet quite outgrown it, and it has proved a source of weak-

ness which has largely influenced the fate of each. By the end of the seventh century Slavs were settled as far south even as modern Greece. They seem to have formed the rural population of the plains, while the Greeks inhabited the towns and the sea-coast.

From these Slav tribes are descended all the Servian-speaking people of the peninsula—the Servians, the Montenegrins, the Bosnians and Herzegovinians, and, as we shall see later, in a large degree the modern Bulgars too.

Thus at this very early date began the burning question of the present day—the enmity that rages between Slav and Albanian in the districts both claim.

‘Servian!’ said an Albanian to me but a month or two ago. ‘Servian! Yes, I have heard so much that I understand it, but I will not soil my mouth by repeating their dirty words!’

‘Why do you hate them so?’ I asked.

‘Because,’ he replied calmly, ‘we are born like that. It is in our blood.’

‘Like cats and dogs,’ said I.

‘Exactly so, mademoiselle. It is like cats and dogs.’

Things look so different through other windows. When the Albanian loots or burns a Slav village, his act, in the eyes of Europe, is ‘an atrocity.’ Seen through Albanian glasses it is quite another colour. The Albanian has fought for his land with all its invaders in turn, and is doing so still. He is at once the oldest and the youngest thing in the Balkan Peninsula. He and his rights and wrongs are at the bottom of most of its problems, and any scheme for the settlement of them which does not give him space to develop on his own lines is foredoomed to failure.

This is the first of the great Balkan hatreds. The second is not far to seek. In the reign of Constantine IV., about 679 A.D., the Bulgars, who for some time had been harrying the frontiers and making raids into the peninsula so destructive that they threatened the safety of Byzantium itself, crossed the Danube in a body, and established themselves in the land still called Bulgaria. Who they were, and what tongue they spoke, is unknown. They came from the wild lands north of the Black Sea, and are believed to have been allied to the Huns and Fins. It is a noteworthy fact that the Albanian still calls the Bulgar 'Shkyar koké etrashé'—*i.e.*, thick-headed Scythian. A ferocious race, not divided into tribes, but led by a Khan, whose rule is said to have been despotic, they burst into the land and poured over it, dealing death and destruction. They sacrificed their prisoners to their gods, and were noted even in those very unsqueamish days for their cruelty. Displacing such local chieftains, both Slav and Thracian, as they found in power, they rapidly mastered a large part of the lands already settled by the Slavs. The Timok River, then as now, was their western frontier. The separate histories of Serbia and Bulgaria began, and it should be noted that by this time the Roman Empire of the East, in which the Greek element had been coming more and more to the front, was now become definitely Greek in character.

The Bulgars spread south at first, and aimed at Byzantium. Such was the terror they inspired that the weakly Emperors at first bought peace, but a peace of short duration. A long and bloody period of fighting began. The Bulgars seized Sofia, and outwitted the Byzantine army, and, having captured the Emperor Nicephorus, they beheaded him, and made a

drinking-cup of his skull, a grim form of jest not unpopular in those days. They then took Adrianople, and forced their way even to the gates of Byzantium, were bought off at a heavy price, and only returned northwards after wasting all the neighbouring lands.

Such was the coming of the Bulgar, a foe alike to Greek, Serb, and the aboriginal tribes, and thus, as early as the seventh and eighth centuries, were sown the seeds of a plentiful crop of hatreds, from which the Balkan peoples reap an annual and a bitter harvest. The Bulgar to-day is hated even worse than the Turk; the grudge against him is an older one, and his present action impedes the settling of Balkan affairs.

The Bulgars, being the dominant race, poured southward and conquered both Greek and Slav. The detached Slavonic tribes fell an easy prey to the Bulgar Prince and his united army, and the Byzantine Emperors could do little more than protect their own capital. Then a notable thing happened. The Bulgar conquered the Slav, but the Slav absorbed him. He adopted Slav customs and the Slav tongue. Of his own language nothing is now known to exist, unless a few untranslatable words in an early list of Kings belong to it. But broad, flat faces, high cheek-bones, dark, straight hair, narrow eyes, and thick lips still show a large admixture of non-Slavonic blood in the folk of many districts.

Christianity had already made some way among the Slavs who were in contact with the Greeks. The Bulgars were a pagan people. The final conversion of both Serb and Bulgar was brought about towards the close of the ninth century by Greek priests, of whom there are said to have been seven, under the leadership of the celebrated missionary brothers, Cyril and

Methodius of Salonika. They preached and conducted the services in the Slav language, into which Cyril translated the Scriptures, using for this purpose an alphabet said to be of his own construction, which is the origin of the alphabets still used by all the orthodox Slav peoples of to-day.

As there is at this time no mention made of another tongue, it is safe to assume that the original Bulgarian one had dropped out of use, and that Slavonic was not yet differentiated into Servian and Bulgarian. This Slavonic tongue, into which the Bible was translated, is sometimes termed 'Old Bulgarian'; it is more correct to call it 'Old Servian.'

Boris, Prince of the Bulgars, was baptized in 866 with the Byzantine Emperor as sponsor. He hastened the conversion of his people by beheading the unwilling; and being desirous of more freedom in ecclesiastical matters than the Greeks were disposed to allow him, he sent an envoy to Pope Nicholas with 105 questions on Christianity and a request to be allowed a Bulgarian Archbishop. The Pope gave no definite answer anent the Archbishop, but solved the other difficulties. When I was at Ochrida two recurred to me very forcibly.

'When a thief was arrested and lied, it was our custom to hit him on the head with a stick, and poke him in the side with an iron spike till he spoke the truth. What must we do now?'

'You must not do this. His evidence must be voluntary.'

'Before we were Christians we used to find a certain stone, parts of which we used to give to sick folk. Some were cured and some were not. What must we do with the stone now?'

'Throw it away.'

Customs die hard in the Balkan Peninsula. Turkish officers still extract evidence by methods condemned in the ninth century, and local medicine has not advanced in any marked degree.

Boris obtained his Archbishop later from the Greeks, and in spite of waverings not a few, and many efforts on the part of many Popes, both Serb and Bulgar, have to this day remained faithful to the Orthodox Church—a fact which has had a strong influence on the fate of the Balkans.

Boris established Bulgaria. His son and successor, Simeon, led it to glory, and the Bulgarian patriot of to-day looks back fondly on those great days, and sighs for the time when the Bulgar shall 'have his own again.' Simeon was victorious everywhere. He imposed his rule on Serb and Greek, fought his way through the wild tribes of Albania, and won to the Adriatic coast. Servia was his so far as the Drin; Byzantium paid him tribute and retained but a small slip of territory, and he held half Greece. He proclaimed himself 'Tsar' of Bulgaria, and is said to be the first to use that mighty title. Nor did he confine himself to the arts of war. His capital on the Balkan slopes was, we are told, of surpassing magnificence; his nobles were trained in the schools of Byzantium; he encouraged literature, and books were translated from the Greek by means of the new Slavonic alphabet. Byzantine learning, customs, and ceremonial spread through the land.

It should never be forgotten that all the civilization of the Balkan Peninsula is Byzantine in origin, and that that civilization, worked on other lines from that of the West, had other aims and other ideals. The West has since evolved a civilization that it considers so perfect that it is in a hurry to impose it

on all the world, and goes on striving, like the Old Man in 'Alice,' to

'Madly squeeze a right-hand foot
Into a left-hand shoe.'

Most of the troubles of the small Balkan States of to-day arise from the fact that they have had Western ideas, which in no way fit them, forced upon them in a hurry.

Simeon built and embellished his empire. But throughout Balkan history the empires which to-day are looked on with such passionate enthusiasm, and give each people in turn a claim (which each thinks incontrovertible) to the greater part of the peninsula, are 'one-man empires.' Simeon's was no exception. He died in 927; it split almost at once into two states, and Servia fought free. Of the two Bulgarias, the Eastern was the first to fall before Byzantine arms; the Western survived another fifty years, ruled first by Sisman, a Bulgarian noble, and then by his son Samuel, whose capital was latterly at Ochrida.

Bulgarian atrocities are no recent invention. Few things are in the Balkan Peninsula. Basil II., Emperor of Byzantium, nicknamed the Bulgar-Slayer and notorious even in those very liberal-minded days for his unparalleled brutality, made it his life's work to restore the lost glories of Byzantium. Oddly enough, he was of Macedonian descent, so that his hatred of the Bulgar was modern and characteristic. In a forty years' campaign, pursued with extraordinary doggedness, he annihilated all that was left of the great Bulgarian Empire. In 1017 his troops marched into Ochrida and sacked the imperial palace, whose ruins yet crown the hill—sacked it of 10,000 pounds' weight of gold and the imperial crown—and Ochrida has

never again attained to the glory of the eleventh century. The Bulgarian Archbishop was allowed to remain, but under the rule of the Greek Patriarch. Basil continued his conquering march, and subdued the whole peninsula. Serb, Bulgar, and Albanian alike lay under Greek rule. Byzantium avenged her past humiliation by trampling hard on her former conqueror.

But 'every dog has his day,' and from the struggling mass of opposing peoples it was the Serb that now emerged. It is in 1040 that we hear again of Servia. Freeing themselves from Greek rule, the Serbs rose very steadily, and grew in power as Byzantium rotted. About 1150 appears the first of the line of Nemanja Princes, who made Great Servia.

Early Servian history is a long war against Greek, Bulgar, and Hungarian, a dim, blood-stained, one-goes-up-when-t'other-goes-down story, too long to tell here.

In 1203 Byzantium staggered under the shock of the fourth Crusade—a shock from which it never recovered—and Serb and Bulgar at once grew in power. With the weakening of the Greek Empire came a resurrection of the Bulgars, under the leadership of the Asens, some 160 years after the ruin of their first empire. There seems little doubt that these Asens were not Bulgars, but Vlachs.

Of the Vlachs we have as yet made little mention. They are to this day rather a mysterious people, and their origin is not certain. They are scattered all through the Balkan Peninsula in isolated groups, and speak a bastard Latin dialect which resembles, but is not the same as, Roumanian. Some consider them as descendants of the Roman colonists, others as the remains of native Thracian tribes who had adopted

the Latin tongue. This latter theory seems very probable. Be this as it may, all contemporary writers refer to Kalojan (John Asen), one of the most distinguished of the line, as a Vlah. A priest, we are told, who was taken prisoner besought Asen in Vlah, 'which was also his tongue'; Pope Innocent III., with whom he corresponded—for he declared himself for the Roman Church, and was crowned by a Cardinal sent by the Pope—addressed him as a Vlah or Roman; and Villehardouin, in his vivid account of the fourth Crusade and the establishment of the short-lived empire of the Latins at Byzantium, says 'Johannis était un Blaque.' He called himself Tsar of the Bulgars and Vlahs. His son, also a John Asen, almost succeeded in restoring Bulgaria's lost glory. He re-established the Orthodox Bulgarian Patriarchy, this time at Trnovo, his capital; he reconquered all Macedonia, a large part of Albania, and part of Serbia, and threatened Byzantium. But he died in 1241, and by this time the Serbs had to be reckoned with.

The big Bulgaro-Vlah Empire did not live fifty years. Serbia now rose rapidly, established an independent Church, and became the dominant Power. Mediaeval Serbia was not, geographically, the Serbia of to-day. Its heart was the land which is now called 'Old Serbia,' and is still part of the Sultan's empire. Its line of Nemanja Princes who made the Servian Empire are said to have sprung from Docle (in modern Montenegro). Rascia (near Novibazar), Prishtina, and then Prisren, were in turn their capital. Their dominion spread over the peninsula, and the Slav people were at last ruled, not by Bulgar nor by Greek, but by Slav rulers. All that remained of the Bulgarian Empire fell before the Serbs about 1330, and no attempt was made to restore it till the Russians drew up the

Treaty of S. Stefano, after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877.

We now come to a fateful chapter in Balkan history. While Serb, Greek, and Bulgar were struggling for supremacy, rising and falling, each in turn victor and vanquished, the Ottoman Turk, the foe that was to overpower them all, was approaching Europe, checked, it is true, by the Crusades, but ever steadily advancing. And here we must pause to consider another great Balkan hatred—one which, as do all the others, rages to the present day. This is the great Christian hatred.

The long drawn-out and bitter doctrinal controversies which were in the end to sever Rome from Byzantium began at a very early date. Ostensibly they had to do with matters of belief and ceremonial; at the root of them lay the fact that 'East is East and West is West'; and though the actual blow of final separation between the Churches did not take place till 1054, they were already practically divided when the Serbs and Bulgars were converted to Christianity by the Greek missionaries from Salonika.

Nor was the split between East and West the only religious difference which weakened the Balkan Christians. Each race then, as now, strove to extend its power by means of an independent Church, and internally they were torn by the Bogomil heresy. The Bogomils (lit., 'dear to God') differed on vital points from both the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches, and were persecuted by each with great cruelty; notwithstanding which they increased in number and obtained much power, especially in Bosnia, where their rude monuments, carved with grotesque figures of men and beasts, still stand on many a lone hillside. Having suffered much at

Christian hands, they were prepared to hail the Turk as a deliverer rather than a foe, and a large proportion of the very numerous converts to Islam that were made in Bosnia are believed to have been originally Bogomils. But it is said that Bogomil rites were practised in parts of Bosnia down to fifty or sixty years ago.

When the Turk arrived in the Balkan Peninsula he found it divided by four race hatreds, three Churches, and a powerful heresy, and separated from Western help by a religious hatred that was perhaps the bitterest of all. But it must not be forgotten that this state of things was not peculiar to the Balkan Peninsula. All mediæval Europe was suffering from 'growing pains,' and religious toleration is an invention of to-day. Nor is the hatred of the Balkan people for all things Roman to be wondered at, for the Crusaders, though they came nominally in the name of Christianity, and temporarily checked the Turk in Asia, came as enemies to the Eastern Churches, and by their barbarous conduct during the fourth Crusade undoubtedly aided largely in finally opening the gates of Europe to him. The unlearned Orthodox peasant of to-day looks shyly even on the Roman alphabet as possibly connected with the Pope and dangerous; and an Archimandrite who wished to be very friendly began by saying to me, 'We both dislike the Pope.'

It was in the palmy days of the Servian Empire that the Turk drew near. The coming danger was once actually realized by the Balkan people, and, for the first and last time, Greek and Serb united and routed the coming foe in Asia Minor. But this union was only temporary. We again find Serb, Greek, and Bulgar, blind to their coming doom, locked in a life and death struggle, and the Greek actually striving to



St. Sava

King Stefan Dušan.

Frescoes in
the
Church at
Dečani.

King Uroš III

enlist the Turk on his side. But the Serb star was in the ascendant, Servian arms were everywhere victorious, and under the leadership of the mighty warrior Stefan Dushan (1337-1356) Servia touched her highest point of glory. Servia, Bosnia, Albania, Macedonia, all owned his sway. Bulgaria and Thessaly were his vassals. He is celebrated alike as warrior and lawgiver, and the elaborate code which he drew up for the regulation of his Empire is still extant. Prisren was his capital, and there he held his Court with great state and magnificence. You may see him now, stiff and gorgeous, frescoed upon the walls of his father's church at Dechani, bearded, moustachioed, clad in a long, straight Byzantine robe, heavily bordered with gold, and crowned with the imperial diadem, from either side of which hangs a string of gems. Tsar of almost the whole peninsula, he planned to add Greece and Byzantium to his Empire, and to keep the Turk from Europe. Dushan started with a fabulously vast army. Had his enterprise succeeded, and he lived long enough to consolidate his Empire, the fate of East Europe might have been very different, for he was undoubtedly one of the strongest men the peninsula has produced. But in the midst of his power and glory, on the very eve of his great undertaking, he died suddenly (treacherously poisoned, it is said) within a few miles of Byzantium.

Dushan is still a popular hero, and prances on a fiery steed in grotesquely primitive prints on many a cottage wall both in Servia and Montenegro, and in the name of Dushan many a Serb of to-day claims broad lands as his birthright. I remember the sudden joy of a gendarme who was laboriously deciphering my name, printed in Roman type on my passport case. 'It is Dushan,' he cried, 'the name of our great Tsar!'

Alas for the briefness of Balkan glories! Dushan's Great Serbia but added to the fatal list of 'one-man' empires. His one son, Stefan Urosh, was very young, and the large and rapidly-formed State, having no strong hand to hold it together, split almost at once into separate groups under local leaders. Stefan Urosh was murdered, and with him ends the conquering dynasty of Nemanja Princes who had ruled Serbia with ever-increasing success for over two hundred years.

The razzle-dazzle of empires that rise like rockets and fall like sticks is blinding and bewildering until we remember the stuff from which they were constructed. The bulk of the population that was continually changing hands was all divided into tribes with local chieftains. They all had petty quarrels with their next-door neighbours to attend to, and were easily conquered one after another by any bold leader with military skill and an army. When subdued they paid tribute to the conqueror of the day, and went on living as before, with their manners and customs unchanged. To the folk in the heart of the mountains it can have made little difference if an Asen or a Nemanja claimed them. Greek, Serb, and Bulgar each owned a little *pied-à-terre*; the populations between fell to whichever race evolved a Prince who was capable of driving a mixed team. The burning question of to-day is, 'Who shall drive them now?'

Between whiles—that is, while one empire was falling to pieces and the maker of the next had not yet arisen—any local leader or foreign invader who was strong enough built up a little State. Thus, towards the end of the eleventh century the Normans occupied South Albania, and penetrated as far north as Ochrida and Skoplje, and also to Kastoria in the south. But their

THE BURDEN OF THE BALKANS

rule was fleeting, and was shortened by the hostility of Venice, who at an early date began to extend her trade along the shores of the Adriatic.

A lasting and noteworthy rule was that of the Despots of Epirus. When Byzantium was attacked by the Latins, Michael Angelo Comnenus, vaguely related to the imperial family, put himself at the head of the people of South Albania at the beginning of the thirteenth century, and founded a large State called the Despoty of Epirus, which ultimately included Epirus, Thessaly, the Ochrida districts and part of North Albania. At this time most of this land, together with Corfu and the Ionian Islands, was allotted to Venice as her share of the loot of the fourth Crusade; but when the Venetians came to take possession, they found Michael Angelo already established, and not inclined to go. Coast-land and ports were all that Venice really desired, and to turn out Michael Angelo would have been a useless labour. They contented themselves with the islands, Durazzo, and a strip of coast-land, and left him to rule inland, he paying a small tribute and promising to curb the wilder mountain tribes and prevent their harrying the coast towns. Durazzo was Venetian and the seat of a Roman Catholic Archbishop, but not for long.

Michael Angelo was murdered in 1214, and his brother and successor, Theodore, evicted the Venetians altogether. His rule was then interrupted by the invasion of John Asen, who was hard at work building the second Bulgarian Empire. Asen fought Theodore and took him prisoner (about 1230), but, as seems to have been often the case with these large mushroom empires, local rule was not greatly disturbed.

Theodore's brother Manuel succeeded to the Despoty, and married Asen's daughter, and Asen himself made

quite a family party of it by himself marrying Theodore's daughter. The Despots of Epirus outlived Asen's Bulgarian Empire, and in due time fell into the hands of the Serbs. Meantime, another curious complication had ensued: Manfred, King of the two Sicilies, had married the daughter of a Despot of Epirus, and several important Albanian towns were included in her dowry. Charles of Anjou overthrew Manfred and claimed all his realms, the Albanian coast towns along with the rest, and set out to take them. He seized Durazzo, and even reached Berat, in the interior. The Despot of Epirus then thought well to swear fealty to him; but swearing fealty in those days does not seem to have amounted to much more than saying, 'Look here, I don't want to play just now;' and the Despot, fealty forgotten, succeeded shortly in retaking all but Durazzo, which remained Angevin through the reign of the Serb Tsar, Stefan Dushan, and was one of the few places he did not subdue. The rest of the Despoty owned Dushan's sway as it had done Asen's, but the Comnenus line survived him, too, and the Despoty of Epirus was finally absorbed by George Balsha, a Serb noble, and by various Albanian chieftains, of whom more anon.

With this slight sketch to illustrate the slender nature of the threads that bound the big Balkan Empires together, we must pass on to the state of the Peninsula after Dushan's death.

Within a few years it was a mass of separate principalities. Bulgaria and Bosnia both broke loose; the latter, indeed, showed signs of becoming a power under a King of its own, but they were not fulfilled. The district known as the Zeta (which includes modern Montenegro and a large part of North Albania) was ruled by George Balsha, whose capital was Skodra.

Notably this is the beginning of the history of modern Albania. We hear of powerful Albanian chieftains ; of the Topias, lords of Durazzo and Kruja ; of Musaki, whose rule reached as far as and included Kastoria, and who still gives his name to the land near Berat ; and of Gropa, Lord of the Ochrida district. The power of Byzantium was dead, and the Albanians spread rapidly over the land from which they had been formerly driven by the Slavs. Serbia—a much diminished Serbia—was ruled by the usurper Vukashin, one of Dushan's Generals, who murdered young Stefan Urosh and seized his throne. Last and direst fact of all, the Turks had entered Europe, and had come to stay.

Neither Greek nor Bulgar appear at first to have greatly dreaded them, but to have each looked on them rather as a possible ally against the other. No organized opposition was made ; the Turks took Adrianople in 1361 and Philippopolis the year after. Bulgaria soon became a vassal State, and furnished soldiers to the Turkish army.

The Serbs perceived the coming danger, and Vukashin, with a large force, tried to check Turkish advance, but was completely routed, and was murdered, it is said, by a Serb noble, who thus avenged the death of young Urosh.

Meanwhile George Balsha, Prince of the Zeta, was extending his rule. Part of his State lives to-day as Montenegro, the one unconquered survivor of Dushan's Great Serbia. Many of the Albanian chieftains were Balsha's allies, and the Balsha family was connected with several by marriage. There was undoubtedly much Illyrian blood in the Serbs of this district, and at this point it is not easy to understand the hatred which subsequently sprang up between Albania and Montenegro. But while Balsha was building up a

Serbo-Albanian State the Turks were steadily advancing. No great leader opposed them, and they marched onward with little difficulty. By 1385 they had pressed into Macedonia, and in 1386 reached and took Nish. When face to face with the enemy, the Serbs sought a King who should join their scattered forces, and chose Lazar Grebljanovich, the luckless hero of the great ballad cycle which tells of the downfall of Servia. It was in 1389—a fateful year for all the Balkan peoples—that the Serbs made their last stand as a united people.

Lazar summoned his chieftains, and they flocked to his standard from Bosnia, from Albania, the Zeta, and Syrmia, from every fastness and stronghold, with all the heroes of the land—a list of doughty warriors well known to every Serb child of to-day.

Sultan Murad and his Turks were encamped on the broad plain of Kosovo, in the heart of Old Servia. He swore to slaughter the giaours and to mark out the frontiers with their heads. His tents spread all over the plain; the lances of his warriors were like a black forest, and their banners like clouds in the sky. So vast was his army that, had God sent rain, it would have fallen, not on green grass, but on horse-men and horses, spears and banners. A desperate fight ensued; Murad was stabbed in his tent on the morn of the fight by a Serb chieftain, Milosh Obilich, who had sworn to kill him, but the Turks were led by his son Bajazet. Lazar and his men fought fiercely against heavy odds; the waters of the Sitnitsa ran red, and the horses splashed knee-deep in blood. The Turks wavered before the wild onslaught, and were falling back, when the divided state of the Serb people was their own undoing. Lazar was betrayed. His son-in-law, Vuk Brankovich, coveted for himself the

crown of the Nemanjas; he deserted to the enemy with 12,000 followers, and the ground on which they stood has been barren evermore. Then fell Lazar and his heroes thick around him; and the Turks, though they suffered very heavily, remained victors in one of the decisive battles of the world—a battle from which the Balkan peoples still suffer, and whose consequences still threaten the peace of Europe.

Murad's body was buried with great pomp at Broussa, and the precious relics of Lazar rest at Vrđnik, in Syrmia; but the bones of Milosh Obilich, the best-beloved hero of that bloody drama, lie buried on the battlefield. 'Come with me to Kosovo and I will show you the grave of the hero Milosh Obilich that killed Sultan Murad!' cried a gendarme to me. He was a Moslem, and in the Sultan's service; but he was a Bosniak, and, in spite of the apostasy of his forbears, the traditions of his race still loomed large in his imagination.

As for Vuk Brankovich, the accursed, he was buried at Krushevatz, the capital of Tsar Lazar, by the Turks, who are said to have piously burnt lamps upon his grave till the Servian uprising at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Serbs dug up the traitor's bones and scattered their ashes to the four winds.

Kosovo is still in the enemy's hands, and the defeat still rankles. Yearly, on June 15, the fatal day, a solemn service is held in the churches throughout Servian lands, and the crimson and black cap worn by the Montenegrins represents blood and mourning.

Kosovo was the last attempt at a combined defence. But the Turks did not follow up their hard-won victory at once. In most districts the local Prince continued as nominal ruler under Turkish suzerainty, but had to

pay the Sultan a heavy tax, both in money and men, and a tribute of children, to be brought up as Moslems and trained for the celebrated army of the Jannisaries. The cruellest foe of the subject people was thus shaped from their own flesh and blood; and at the same time the withdrawal of their finest boys for this purpose very much weakened their own power of resistance.

As yet, however, they were unaware of the fate in store for them, and in the outlying parts petty princelings continued to war on one another, for still the idea of each was to form a 'one-man empire' at the expense of everyone else. Of these suzerain chiefs, the most celebrated is Marko Kraljevich (Mark, the King's son), son of the usurper Vukashin. He ruled a large part of Old Serbia and Macedonia, and had his capital at Prilep. He was one of the chiefs who fought for Serbia at Kosovo, and after the defeat ruled as a Turkish vassal. The popular hero of a mass of Servian ballad poetry, his exploits, as there chronicled, belong often to the realm rather of mythology than history. He is blood-brother ('pobratim') to a fairy (Vila), rides upon a magic horse, Sharatz, and serves in countless fights under the Sultan. His doughty deeds did not actually affect the fate of his nation, but, handed down in popular song, they have undoubtedly helped largely to keep alive the tradition of Servian nationality through the dark centuries of Turkish rule, and the memory of him is still fresh in the lands that he swayed. After his death these for the most part fell again to the Albanians.

The suzerain Princes soon sealed their own fates, and Turkish Pashas took their places. The last of the Bulgarian princelings was overthrown about 1398; Serbia, with the help of Hungary, survived till 1459, but the distrust of the Orthodox Serbs for the Catholic

Magyars killed all chance of the alliance being a lasting one. Such was their horror of Catholicism, that when Helena, the widow of the last of the local Princes, wished to save Servia by putting it under the protection of the Pope, they made little or no resistance to Turkish invasion, and Servia was wiped out from among the nations.

Bosnia fell a few years later for similar reasons. The Turk was hailed not only by the Orthodox as a protection against the Pope, but also welcomed by the very many followers of the Bogomil heresy as a protection against both Orthodox and Catholic.

Of all the Balkan Peninsula, two districts alone maintained any independence—Albania and Balsha's principality of the Zeta. Here the Turks met with far more resistance. Nevertheless they penetrated the land, and George Balsha II., after hard fighting, was reduced to selling Skodra to the Venetians, who already held Alessio and Durazzo, and falling back upon the mountains of Montenegro. The Turks seized the plains, but the natural fortifications of the mountains were too much for them. Balsha was followed by Stefan Crnoievich, and the mountains of Montenegro have never owned Turkish rule.

Meanwhile the whole of the mountain tribes of Albania defended themselves. Lek Dukagin and his brother Paul remained independent in the highlands between the Drin and the sea, where their tribe and that of the Mirdites still dwell untamed, and ruled by the unwritten 'law of the mountains,' which bears Lek's name to this day, but is rumoured to have come down from a remote antiquity, and to be the oldest existing law in Europe. And so it may be, for it would be hard to find a cruder code. It contains no provision for the trial or punishment of murder. The

relatives of the murdered man are left to avenge him when and how they please. The Topias defended the neighbourhood of Tirana. We hear, too, of the Shpatas, the Musakis, and the Dushmans in the districts where their names are still known, and Venice held most of the coast towns.

CHAPTER II

WE have now seen the pageant of the passing of the nations ; have seen each in turn decked in brief glory, and all in the end overwhelmed by a foreign conqueror. It is time to consider how far they had reached in the history of a nation's development ; for peoples, like individuals, must all pass through certain phases of growth. All Europe, it should be remembered, was at this time busy growing up. As in the Balkan Peninsula, so everywhere else was the struggle carried on by Prince against Prince, Duke against Duke ; one-man empires rose and fell, peoples worked out their salvation or destruction, and the modern Powers of Europe gradually came into being by a long and uninterrupted process of evolution.

With the Balkan peoples it was otherwise. While still in an early stage of national development their growth was arrested—arrested with extraordinary completeness. Till the period of the arrival of the Turks they had been growing. Trade routes had been opened by Greek, Bulgar, and Serb, and considerable traffic took place with Venice and Ragusa. The arts were cultivated ; national literatures were beginning. Judging by the buildings that remain and the frescoes that adorn them, the people of the great Servian Empire were very little behind the average of the rest of Europe, were full of vitality and growing.

The Turks when they came to Europe were a great people—a great military people. In manners and

customs they were probably not more cruel or barbarous than the peoples they conquered ; in the Middle Ages everywhere folk were cruel beyond belief. In point of power of organization and military skill, however, they were very greatly superior, and they were led by Sultans who, in many cases, had a genius for generalship. But beyond conquest they had no ideas. They camped on vanquished territory, and forced the people to feed them ; and they have pursued this policy up to the present day. I have travelled from village to village, and town to town, through the lands which they held and those that they yet hold, and nowhere have I ever seen one monument of Turkish greatness. They have in all these centuries done nothing for the lands which they devastated, and they remain to this day encamped. Public safety is no better where the Turks rule than it was in the Middle Ages, possibly not so good, for Dushan made strict laws on the subject. Now those who travel without an armed escort do so at their own peril, and in case of attack the Government takes no responsibility. It is a wild mediæval land. As the Turks found it, so will they leave it.

In many ways there is little doubt that the subject peoples indeed retrograded. Their primitive customs they clung to instinctively as a means of self-protection. Their acquired knowledge and progress in the arts of peace and war they lost, for they had no chance for the exercise of either. The wholesome exercise of fighting their quarrels out to the end was denied them, and the Turkish policy of making means of communication as difficult as possible to this day prevents the growth of any trade or manufacture. Heavy and irregular taxation, then as now, made the gathering of any capital hopeless. The subject people lay helpless, and suffered bitterly. All travellers who visited

these lands draw painful pictures of the state of the wretched inhabitants. Dr. Brown, writing in 1673, says: 'I could not but pity the poor Christians, seeing under what fear they lived in those parts, when I observed them to make away as soon as they perceived us coming towards them. In Macedonia the men and women would betake themselves into the woods to avoid us.' And Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, travelling across Servia in 1717, writes: 'The oppression of the peasants is so great that they are forced to abandon their tillage, all that they have being a prey to the Janissaries whenever they chose to seize on it.' The mass of the people were no better than slaves. Disarmed and systematically robbed by their conquerors, they were powerless to resist. Only in the mountainous districts were the fiercer spirits able to defend themselves. These fortified their strongholds, and waged a ceaseless guerilla warfare on the Turks, whom they waylaid and plundered at every opportunity. The Herzegovina sheltered many of these Heyduks, whose deeds of daring form the subject of a mass of ballad poetry, which is grim reading enough, and has cast a halo of glory round brigandage which has but lately faded away. A large number of Serbs fled over the Save, and sought refuge in Hungary, where their descendants still live, and others sheltered in the fastnesses of Montenegro.

Nor did the conquered Slavs suffer only from Turkish oppression. The Turks had promised to tolerate the Christian religion, and not to interfere in ecclesiastical matters, and they gave the control of the Christian Church into the hands of the Greek Patriarch at Constantinople, who had also power to deal with many of the civil affairs of the Christians. The enormous power attached to the office of Patriarch

made it of extreme value, and at an early date we find it being sold by the Sultan to the highest bidder. Huge sums were paid, and these were exacted by the ecclesiasts from their unhappy flocks, who dreaded the Church tax-gatherer as much as they did the Turkish one. Gradually the whole of the power was absorbed by the Greeks, and the two autocephalous Slav Churches, Ochrida and Ipek, whose power had gradually shrivelled, were disestablished, and fell into Greek hands in the latter half of the eighteenth century. No Slavonic clergy were allowed high posts under Greek rule; and so eager were the Greeks to get rid of all traces of the previously existing Slavonic Churches that they destroyed a great part of the Slavonic Church books and documents in the monastery libraries. The hatred between Greek and Slav was not only kept alive, but waxed fiercer. Montenegro alone kept a free and independent Slav Church, which survives to this day.

Having briefly sketched the fate of the fallen peoples, we must now follow the fortunes of Albania. The case of Albania is a strange one. At the time of Kosovo we may say of them, as Herodotus said of the Thracians, to whom they are probably allied, 'Were they either under the government of an individual or united among themselves, their strength would, in my opinion, render them invincible.' They allied themselves with the Serb Prince, George Balsha, and, attacking the neighbouring Serb Prince, Marko Kraljevich, they took from him Ochrida, Ipek, and white Prisren, the home of mighty Dushan; for Mark now owned Turkish suzerainty, and, it appears, was treated as an enemy by Balsha. Albanian blood was reasserting itself, and Albanian chiefs ruled as far as Kastoria; but there was still no great leader

who could gather the tribes and mould them into a whole, and when the Turks broke into the land many of the Albanian chiefs accepted Turkish suzerainty.

But not for long.

In 1403 was born Albania's great man, George Kastriot, called Skenderbeg. Into the vexed question of his ancestry we have no space here to enter. His father has been variously described as Lord of Kastoria, of a village near Dibra, and of Kruja. The latter tale is the most popular. Portents, of course, foretold George's greatness, and his mother dreamed she had been delivered of a dragon. George's career began dramatically: his father, so the story runs, fell into Turkish hands, and had to yield all his four sons as tribute children to be reared as Moslems and trained for the Turkish army. George alone survived. He showed great ability, rose in rank, and was given the name and title of Iskender Bey and the command of the Albanian soldiery, tribute children like himself. He covered himself with glory fighting for the Turks, not only in Asia, but also against the Serb Prince, George Brankovich, the first, but by no means the last, of his race to joyfully aid Turk against Slav. The victories won against the Turks by the Hungarian champion, John Hunyades, first seem to have inspired George with the idea of fighting for his own nation. Entering into a pact with Hunyades, he secured his ends by a trick. Giving the Turks no sign that he meant to betray them, he appeared suddenly before the Sultan's secretary and demanded that the post of Lord of Kruja be given him in the Sultan's name. He was backed by his Albanian soldiery; the secretary must either write the order or die, and he wrote it. Off rode George to Dibra—you can fancy him and his men singing as they went in true Albanian fashion.

At Dibra he was hailed joyfully by the chieftain, Mois Golem, who strengthened his forces. Arrived at Kruja with his troops, George presented his official letter to the Turkish Governor, who at once yielded up his post. That night he and every Turk in the town was slain, and George proclaimed himself the champion of Christendom and of free Albania. This was in the year 1443.

As Skenderbeg, Prince of all Albania, George's success was phenomenal. The Albanians had found their strong man and were invincible. Topias, Musakis, Dushmans, Dukagins, all flocked to his standard. Stefan Crnoievich, of Montenegro, with whom he was connected by marriage, was his ally; so, too, were the Venetians, who held some of the coast-towns, and the Turks were beaten everywhere. Vainly they hurled armies on him; they were either cut to pieces on the plains of Dibra or trapped and massacred in the mountain passes. Skenderbeg took few prisoners. Europe rang with his name, and he was called on by the Pope to aid John Hunyades and Vladislav, King of Poland, who were marching on the Turks from the north. Had he succeeded in bringing up his troops in time, the history of the peninsula might have read very differently; but religious differences and the old hatred that lay between Slav and Albanian then, as now, kept the Turk in Europe. Skenderbeg, on his way to help the Catholic troops of Poland and Hungary, was opposed near Belgrade by his old enemy the Serb and Orthodox Prince, George Brankovich. He arrived too late: the field of Varna had been already fought and the Catholic army completely routed.

But Skenderbeg remained invincible in his own lands. Two Turkish Sultans in turn swore to destroy

the Albanian rebel; but though they forced a way into his lands more than once with huge armies and artillery, and besieged Kruja itself for many months, they always had in the end to retreat with very heavy losses. So long as Skenderbeg lived, Albania was un-subdued. He died of fever in 1467, after twenty-four years of victory, and with him died united Albania. He was buried in the cathedral at Alessio, but it has been wrecked by the Turks, and his grave is unknown. They are said to have worn fragments of his body as amulets to make them invincible. 'Such a lion will never again appear on earth' was the verdict of his old enemy, Sultan Mahomed II. His people still wear mourning for him, and his deeds form the topic of popular songs, where the heathen recoil from the light that flashes from his eyes and fall dead in heaps beneath the sword that he alone could swing.

The champion of Christendom was dead; there was none to take his place and hold the tribes together, and the Turks now advanced rapidly. They tore the coast-towns one after another from the Venetians, and took Skodra after two severe sieges. Montenegro, 'the castle God built for us,' as its people say, remained impregnable and ruled by its Crnoievich Princes. The Albanians made terms with the Turks. Fiercely independent by nature, they were as yet in too early a stage of a nation's development to form a body politic. Roman, Byzantine, Bulgar, and Serb alike had each in turn called them vassals, and run off them like the proverbial water from a duck's back. The strong individuality of the people had never been modified. They had acknowledged a nominal master, and had followed the devices of their own hearts. They now continued to do so.

'We Albanians,' said an Albanian kaimmakam to



IMPREGNABLE MONTENEGRO.

me recently, 'have quite peculiar ideas. We must have freedom; we will profess any form of religion which leaves us free to carry a gun. Therefore the majority of us are Moslems.'

The object of each chieftain was to keep his position and widen his lands. Some few in the more remote districts remained Christian, but the majority professed Islamism, and within a short time of the Turkish 'conquest' Albanian power spread. Fighting has always been the Albanians' joy. They now fought for the Turk whenever called upon, and were well paid, for their services were very valuable, and they retained the right to manage their own internal affairs. The heads of noble families were made Pashas or Beys, and given the governorships of the larger towns: Skodra, Ipek, Skoplje, Janina, Prisen—all were ruled by hereditary Albanian Pashas; and the Albanian, as the ally of the Turk, once more spread his rule over lands wrested from him by Greek and Slav. The history of Montenegro is one long fight against Turko-Albanian forces. Albanians penetrated Greece, and settled there in large numbers, and spread up into Bosnia and Servia. As their power increased, they resolutely opposed the Slav on all occasions, and never to this day have they ceased to look on him as a recent foreign invader.

The Turks were all this time spreading into Europe. They even crossed over into Italy, and swore they would banquet in the Vatican. In Italy they were baffled; in Hungary their advance was steady. Finally they reached even to Vienna, where the Crescent was placed above the Cross on the spire of the cathedral to protect it from attack. But they won no further. In 1683 they were completely routed outside its walls, and this is a turning-point in Balkan history.

They were never again a terror to Europe; their power was waning, and they began that slow retreat from the conquered lands which even yet is not accomplished.

From this time onward the history of the Balkan Peninsula is that of the decay of Turkish might, and the consequent resurrection of the subject peoples.

The Turks weakened slowly but steadily. Austria lost little time in turning the tables upon them, and from being the attacked, became the attacker. We now arrive at modern history, and both Russia and Austria appear upon the scenes as players in the Balkan drama. Austria began to aspire to be a Balkan State. The Emperor Leopold marched into Turkish territory, and made a bold attempt to annex Servia. He forced his way even to the historic field of Kosovo, opposed both by Turk and Albanian, but was unable to hold the large tract of land he had taken, and had to withdraw again across the Save. Nor has Austria yet succeeded in annexing those lands, though she desires them greatly, and is still striving. Every quarrel in a Servian market becomes a revolution in the hands of the Vienna journalists; Austria mobilized troops near the frontier, and was ready to march over, when King Alexander was murdered; she industriously circulated reports of possible riots at King Peter's coronation, but, much to her disappointment, she has so far failed to construct an occasion on which, for the sake of the peace of Europe, she would be obliged to occupy Servia. I believe it is no exaggeration to say that every piece of Balkan news that comes viâ Vienna is 'cooked' to suit Austrian plans.

Austria has plotted, and is plotting with as much industry as is Russia, to secure territory in the Balkan Peninsula, and so far with much greater success. Her methods are more finished.

Leopold could not hold Servia, but he did not wish it to become an independent country. The large Servian colony already settled in Syrmia had proved of great use to him, and he now invited the inhabitants of Old Servia to join them. In 1689 Arsen Crnoievich, Archbishop of Ipek, migrated to Hungary with a following of 37,000 families—family groups, that is, in the Servian sense of the word; uncles, brothers, cousins—a vast mass of people; and the Serb claim to Old Servia has never recovered from that loss. It is doubtful if it ever will in our time, for the wholesale emigration of the Serb left the greater part of the land to the Albanian, and in the event of a new delimitation of frontiers it will probably be found impossible to give the whole of it to Servia. The Turks still further weakened the Serb position in 1737 by putting the Church of Ipek under Greek instead of Serb rule. Another Serb migration then took place, but the Turks, who wished to prevent the Serbs from massing in the north and forming a power, checked it by killing a number of the would-be emigrants and selling many as slaves abroad. The land was thus still further depopulated.

But the Austrian invasion had shaken Turkish power badly. It had shown the subject peoples that the Turk was not invincible. Moreover, the Turkish Sultans were no longer the militant heroes of the old days. They had become weak, luxurious, and corrupt. The Turkish nation was on the down grade. The weaker and more corrupt the Government became, the worse was the state of the subject peoples. The local Pashas were free to work their will upon them, and the Janissaries, quite unrestrained, ravaged the lands like wild beasts. Austria made another attempt at the taking of Turkey, this time under the leadership

of the brilliant Prince Eugène, and the Turk reeled from the shock, not conquered but permanently weakened. The subject people arose and attacked him, and the first to do so were the Serbs, under the leadership of Karageorge. Whatever weakness the Serbs may have since displayed, it must always be remembered that theirs is the glory of being the first to struggle for and obtain freedom from the Turkish yoke. Their example was followed very shortly by the Greeks, who, aided by the South Albanians, beloved of Lord Byron, fought free not long afterwards.

Meanwhile Albania, too, had struck out for independence. Had the whole country risen, liberty would then have doubtless been obtained; but the tribal divisions were too strong. There were rival powers within. The north was ruled by the Bushatlis, Pashas of Skodra. There was the powerful Christian tribe of the Mirdites, under Bib Doda; Kurd Pasha ruled in Central Albania, and in the south was the redoubtable Ali Pasha, one of the most remarkable men, after Skenderbeg, that Albania has produced. Ambitious, indomitable, unscrupulous, and possessed of military genius, he overthrew all the local chieftains of the South, and set himself to obtain supreme power. Victorious wherever he went, in a short time he was lord of the whole of South Albania, and quite independent. He held his Court with great splendour at Janina, and tried hard to enlist the friendship and support of England. His lands included Ochrida, Berat, Permeti, Avlona, Arta, and Suli. He planned to attack Bushatli, Pasha of Skodra, and seize North Albania. By way of weakening Turkish power he aided the rising of the Greeks, and Greeks and Albanians made common cause.

Ali's rule, however, was brutal. He was deserted

by many of his officers ; many of his Christian subjects fled from his persecutions ; Bushatli turned against him, and he was attacked by the Turks in great force. But the grim old man kept them at bay. Finally besieged in his castle at Janina, fighting to the last, he fell into the enemy's hands in 1822, in the eighty-first year of his age. They promised to spare his life, but slew him as soon as captured. His head was sent to the Sultan at Constantinople, and exposed on one of the gates. His cruelty was such that his followers showed little ardour in the end in defending him. By his wild and reckless career he freed South Albania and ruined it, for he aimed only at personal power, and thought nothing of the future. He had destroyed the old feudal system by sweeping the local chiefs from his path. He had torn land from the Christians to give it to his own family. On his death the land was leaderless. The Turks massacred his sons, seized their territories, and South Albania fell again largely under Turkish rule.

The independence of Greece was recognised in 1829. It had been obtained largely by Albanian aid, and the Albanians have since been enraged to find that, far from recognising that aid, the Greeks have lost no opportunity to extend their power at the expense of Albania. Lands which the Albanian regards as his birthright the Greeks plan to absorb, by working a ceaseless propaganda which aims at the suppressing of the Albanian tongue and the substitution for it of Greek. Consequently, when the Greeks declared war in 1897, the Albanians flew to arms. They do not admit that it was a Greco-Turkish war at all. It was, they say, an attack by the Greeks, whom they had formerly helped, on Albanian liberty. They drove the Greeks before them like sheep, and the present enmity

between the two peoples is a source of weakness to each.

With the recognition of the freedom of Servia and of Greece we enter into the chapter that is not yet finished—the tale of tottering Sultans supported from without. And we must look back a little, that we may understand the part played by Russia in the still unfinished struggle for their lands.

Russian hordes, it is true, had appeared and given trouble in the Balkan Peninsula in the days of the first Bulgarian Empire, but it was not till the days of Peter the Great that Russia constituted herself the champion of the Slav against the Turk, and planned to extend her power to Constantinople. In 1711 Peter made the still existing alliance between Russia and Montenegro. The local contemporary ballad gives us the key to Russia's great power over the Slav peasants of the Balkans.

'Lo!' says Peter, 'I send you my envoy! I trust myself to Almighty God, and to the strength of the Servian nation, most of all to the brave Montenegrins, to help me to free the Christian peoples and to glorify the Slav name; to break the yoke of the Agas, and to raise up temples to the true faith. Together will we wash out the shame that has been brought by the Turks, the foes of all who will not lick the dust under their feet. Ye are of one blood with the Russians, of one faith, of one tongue! Arise like heroes, oh ye Christians! cry out like falcons! Lift up your weapons and rush upon the Turk! Together let us go to Stamboul!'

Since that day experience and a wider outlook have taught many leaders of the Balkan Slavs that Russia's labours on their behalf are not entirely disinterested, and some have worked hard to thwart her plans.

Diplomatists who know will tell you how fatal it would be to fall under Russian rule, but so far as my own experience goes, the heart of the people is everywhere with Holy Russia as opposed to Austria. Politicians may plan and argue; 'one faith and one blood' has more power than all the reasoning in the world. That the saying is not strictly true is of no moment, for the peasant believes it. But the shadow of Austria rests on Servia, and Russian propoganda have been far more actively worked in Bulgaria and Macedonia.

Peter the Great's attempt in 1711 failed, but the Russians did not cease their efforts, and in 1768 beat the Turks and assumed the right of protecting Wallachia and Moldavia, *i.e.*, Roumania. Austrian jealousy was then aroused, and Russia had to withdraw; but she had obtained a footing in the Balkan Peninsula. These lands were, it is true, beyond the Danube, but on their behalf Russia, in 1774, obtained permission to erect a church in Constantinople, and the following engagement was made:

'The Porte promises to protect the Christian religion and its churches, and it also allows the Court of Russia to make upon all occasions representations as well in favour of the new church as on behalf of its ministers, promising to take such representations into consideration.'

Thus arose Russia's claim to the right of protection over all the Christian subjects of the Sultan, though the right of intervention was originally only accorded for the affairs of one church and its ministers. The Protectorate over Wallachia and Moldavia lasted but a year or two; Russian influence in the affairs of the Churches under the Sultan's rule is paramount. It was directed from the beginning, as it is now, to obtaining power over the Slavonic Christians by free-

ing them from the tyranny of the Greek priesthood which had been placed over them by the Turks, and re-establishing the Slavonic Churches. It has now reached such a pitch that the Bulgarian Bishops plot revolution, and the Sultan is powerless to remove them.

Austria, as we have seen, made violent efforts to enter and become possessed of Balkan lands by way of Serbia. Russia struggled similarly by way of Roumania, and each strove to outwit the other. But the cry of 'one blood and one faith' is a potent one to conjure with, and when the Serbs needed help in their fight for freedom, it was on Russia, not Austria, that they called. Nor did they call in vain. Russian influence grew stronger, and we come to the year 1829, the year when the freedom of Greece was recognised, and one that was near proving fatal to Turkish rule in Europe.

Servia had fought free, but her Prince, Milosh Obrenovich, was not yet recognised by the Sultan. Milosh demanded recognition, and his demand was backed by Russia.

Mustafa Bushatli, Pasha of Skodra, the chief ruler in North Albania, then thought, as other people were obtaining recognition of freedom, it was a good opportunity for him, too, to strike. Albanian power at this moment was very great. Mehemet Ali, an Albanian, had made himself master of Egypt, and threatened daily to yet further curtail the Sultan's power. It is said that he not only encouraged Bushatli to rise, but supplied him with funds.

Bushatli waited till Russia had commenced the attack. When the Russian troops had reached Adrianople, and were ready to march on Constantinople, he hurried up with a large army and captured

Nish. The Sultan was in a parlous position ; he was saved from destruction by the intervention of France and England. Russia had to make terms and withdraw, and Bushatli withdrew as well—a fact that has been much deplored by his compatriots—but a fatal blow had been dealt at the Sultan's throne.

From that day to this Turkish Sultans have ruled in Europe only because the various parties that covet their lands have not yet decided who is to have them. But no external aid has succeeded in doing more than propping a decaying Power. Not all the wits of all the diplomatists have availed to remedy matters. Slowly and steadily the fabric has crumbled and is crumbling. It has now reached a point when no repair is possible, for there is not one inch that is sound in the whole rotten mediæval structure. On paper Turkish laws seem fair enough, but, so far as I can learn, not one of them is honestly administered. As for the treaties, conventions, and promises to reform that have been drawn up and ratified, they have only been made to be broken. No lesson has taught the Turk. He has continued working on the old lines, and has never retrieved a single one of his losses.

Had the Albanians at this period produced a second Skenderbeg, their independence would have been assured. Both the North and the South rose in revolt, but their want of unity brought disaster. They did not rise together, and Reshid Pasha, with a large army, gained a victory over the South before the North was ready. He then offered to make terms, and invited the heads of the noble Tosk families to a banquet of reconciliation at Monastir. They came, and during the feast were surrounded by Turkish troops and slaughtered almost to a man. The South was now hopelessly crippled ; Turkish Governors were

appointed in the chief towns, and the South lost all its independence.

The Northern revolt was nearer success. Albanian troops occupied Sofia and the heights round Monastir, but Mustafa Bushatli proved an incompetent leader. He fled back to Skodra, was pursued thither by the Turks; a four months' siege ensued, Skodra fell, and Bushatli was only saved from the fate of Ali Pasha by the intervention of Austria, who was already beginning to spread nets for the final capture of Albania. Inter-tribal quarrels prevented the North from coming to his assistance *en masse*, he was taken prisoner, and Turkish governors have since ruled nominally in Skodra. It is true that they may have been shot, besieged, hunted away, and have had no power at all over the surrounding mountain tribes; but in spite of the hatred which Albania bears any interference with her liberty, there is still a Turkish Vali at Skodra. Events so fell out that the Albanians thought fit to play again on the Turkish side.



THE CITADEL OF KRUIA.

CHAPTER III

THE Slav, the blood-enemy of more than a thousand years, was gaining power—Russia's great struggle for the peninsula had begun. Albania supplied troops for the Crimean War and the Mirdites, the most independent of all the mountain tribes, led by their Prince, Bib Doda, fought side by side with the Turks against the hated foe.

The tale of the Crimean War needs no retelling. Russia's advance was checked, but in appearance only. Up till this time the Bulgarians alone of all the subject peoples had scarcely shown a sign of life. They had produced no leader, and they aided neither the Servian nor the Greek rising. Russia conceived the plan of constructing a Russo-Bulgarian State which should lead to Constantinople, and set to work with admirable skill. Bulgarian students were welcomed at the University of Odessa, and a national movement was started.

Not to be outdone, Austria began a similar game on the other side of the peninsula, and planted Jesuits in Skodra.

Everything is interesting in the Balkan Peninsula, the great game played by Austria *versus* Russia with human chessmen not the least so. I do not wish either of them to succeed. I should like each of the Balkan peoples to be left to work out its own salvation in its own national way, with fair play and no favour.

Each has an individuality which is worth developing, and may in time evolve a civilization more suitable to itself than that which any outsider can thrust upon it. Nevertheless, when travelling in Balkan lands the subtlety, the skill, the endless patience and perseverance, the extraordinary attention to detail with which Austria and Russia play that game, force my admiration. It is a marvellously fine game to watch. In all the land there are few villages too insignificant for one or the other to manipulate. No less beautiful is the calmness with which each looks forward to ultimately attaining its object.

The British Consul is a solitary thing, who bravely wrestles single-handed with circumstances. Tethered to his lonely consulate, he has little or no chance of even exploring the neighbourhood. The Austrian lives in a palace and has a whole staff of lively youths, whose principal business in life appears to be taking holidays for shooting expeditions, and whose knowledge of the land is minute and exhaustive. When not thus pleasantly occupied they swagger about the town to which they are attached, and try to look as if it belongs to them. They will even take you out for a walk and tell you the improvements which their Government means to introduce in a few years time. 'We are going to do it very much on the same plan as Bosnia,' they say affably.

I remember one who was great on *le sport*. By asking him about the birds and beasts obtainable in various parts, I soon learned that he knew most of the lands that lie within Austria's 'sphere of influence.' He rattled off the names of towns and districts, and said he had amused himself very well.

'Have you been to X——?' I asked.

No, he had not.

'I have been there,' said I.

'*You have!* Mademoiselle, what are you making in this country?'

'Like you, monsieur, I amuse myself very well.'

The Austrian man is ubiquitous in his own 'sphere,' and his assumption of authority is a sight to see. In one place he appeared suddenly upon the scene, and told the Turkish Commissary of Police, who was about to inspect my passport, that Mademoiselle's passport did not require inspecting. As a matter of fact, his was not the consulate that protected Great Britain's interest in this particular district. He, however, gave his orders with a fine air, and told me in German, a tongue unknown to the Police Commissary, that a word from 'us' had more effect on these animals than anything. The Police Commissary obeyed like a dog. According to my interpreter, he said he had not come to see my passport at all, but only to say good-morning, and hope I was quite well. Everyone was sweetly affable and polite; but when young Austria was safe in his office at the consulate that Police Commissary returned. He was brave and commanding; he saw my passport, stamped it, charged the usual fee, and asked all the usual questions about my sisters, and cousins, and aunts.

'Is that only a consulate you are building? It looks large enough for a Governor's palace,' I once remarked.

'Then it will be very useful to us in a few years' time,' said a cheerful Austrian 'sportsman.'

Russian representatives, too, are very pleasant to meet—very cultured, very polite, but they usually ask questions and do not answer them. When one whose discretion I had admired told me suddenly that the British relief work in Macedonia was a great pleasure

to 'us,' for it showed that there was a party in England on 'our' side, I felt grieved that he had so far forgotten his diplomatic self. When in the 'Russian sphere,' however, he is apt to forget himself, and think the place is really his. There was one I was told of who thought he was in Russia. You may do almost anything you like in the Sultan's territories (provided, of course, that you are a foreigner), but there is one thing you had better not : you should not strike an Albanian if you wish to preserve a whole skin. As a Consul of another nationality once said to me, 'Absolument il ne faut pas cravacher ces gens-là!' The Russian Consul struck an Albanian, and the Albanian shot him dead.

One beautiful trait in the operations of both Russia and Austria is their desire to save people's souls. It is purely on this errand that Austrian 'frati' congregate in Albania and Russian monks are planted in 'Old Servia.'

Churches are the most powerful political engines in the Balkan Peninsula, and the raw primæval passions of the Balkans find their bitterest expression under the cloak of religion. When Russia started the Pan-Slavonic propaganda the Servians were free, and had already re-established an independent Church, but it had power only over free Servia. The Bulgarians were still ecclesiastically under Greek rule. Their first sign of reviving national existence was shown in their wish to re-establish the Bulgarian Church. They appealed for clergy of their own. This caused great wrath in the Greek Church. But it has always been the policy of the Turkish Government to foster differences between the subject peoples, and by so doing to lessen all chances of their rising in a body. The Greeks were now a political power, the Bulgars an unknown

quantity. A split in the Christian camp would be useful, and the Porte raised but little objection to the scheme. The Bulgarian Church was re-established in 1870. Its head, called the Exarch, still resides in Constantinople. The Greek Patriarch almost at once pronounced the new Bulgarian Church schismatic, and a war to the death started between the two Churches, which is at present raging, and the Moslems look on at the edifying spectacle of the two Christian parties, who, by slaying one another in the name of the dear God, help to keep the Sultan on the throne.

Russia, though she failed in her immediate object in the Crimean War, continued to follow up her plans with the tireless persistence of a wolf of the steppes. Bulgarian patriots were trained in Russia, and the building of Bulgarian schools and churches in Turkey aided by Russian money. The Servian Church had jurisdiction only over free Servia, and free Servia was not so easily tampered with. All Servian rights and claims were therefore ignored, and every Slavonic district under Turkish rule was therefore pronounced Bulgarian, and no expense was spared to make it so.

Servia had welcomed Bulgars into her schools, and had supported the creation of the Exarchy, only to find it used as a weapon against herself.

Then came the fateful years of the Herzegovinian insurrection, which began in 1874 and was followed shortly by a declaration of war by Servia and Montenegro. Russian-trained patriots, including Stambulov, then quite young, tried hard to rouse the peasants of Bulgaria, but in vain. Bulgaria alone of the subject peoples was to owe her ultimate freedom entirely to foreign aid. As in the recent Macedonian insurrection, no well-organized and simultaneous rising took place.

Scattered villages alone answered to the call and attacked their Turkish neighbours. Turkish methods are mediæval and Oriental. The Turk knows no other way of quieting a district but that of massacring all its inhabitants. The villages in question were annihilated. Nothing was left to tell the tale but corpses and blackened ruins. Even the Turkish Commissioner sent to report on the affair perceived that the results of the punishment would probably be more fatal to Turkish rule than any insurrection, and is said to have remarked bitterly to the responsible Bey, 'What did the Russians pay you for this day's work?'

The 'Bulgarian atrocities' became a by-word through Europe, and Bulgaria learnt that the most effective way of advertising her rights and wrongs was upon bloody posters. The state of things in the Balkan Peninsula was very shortly afterwards taken by Russia as a reason for declaring war and constructing her Russo-Bulgarian province.

The Turk was now attacked by all the Slav peoples at once. Had Greece and Albania risen, too, there would possibly have been an end of Turkey in Europe. But neither race wished to do anything to aid the Slav cause. The Greeks did nothing; the Albanians supported the Turks with enthusiasm. In all the world there is nothing an Albanian hates so much as a Russian. The Russian conquered, and, drunk with blood, crowned his victories by atrocities which rivalled those of the Turks at Batak; and, with the Turk at his feet, cast all diplomacy to the winds and set to work to construct a huge Bulgaria, which was to be under Russian control. To attain this end, Vlah, Bulgar, Serb, Greek, and Albanian, were to have been swept willy-nilly into a Bulgaria almost as large as the fleeting mediæval one—a Bulgaria which was to

have included the great lakes of Ochrida and Presba, spread away beyond them into South Albania, and in the South-East to have extended as far as the Ægean Sea, with a large frontage thereon; a Bulgaria which was, moreover, to be occupied by 50,000 Russian troops. It was an extraordinarily bold scheme, but it was too bold. The Russian Treaty of San Stefano was overthrown by the Powers of Europe in council at Berlin, new frontiers were delimited, and Russia's Great Bulgaria reduced considerably.

Before travelling in the district most immediately concerned I held the rather popular theory that the overthrowing of the San Stefano Treaty was a mistake. When living in the heart of the disputed territory, I learnt that to have supported it would have been a most grievous injustice; the Bulgars, and the Bulgars alone, lament the death of that scheme. Whatever may be the faults of the Berlin Treaty, it does not favour one race at the expense of all the others, though the races dealt with were not entirely content with their new borders; for it is very difficult for any set of diplomatists to map out peoples of which they have little or no personal knowledge, in a land which they have never explored. And, moreover, they had themselves, as well as the races more immediately concerned, to consider.

Like other human inventions, it was not perfect. Its immediate result was an Albanian rising. Up till now the Albanians had been willing and ready to help the Turks against a common foe; they now suddenly woke to the rude fact that Europe classed them in with the Turks, and did not recognise their existence as a people. Worse than this, as someone picturesquely put it, 'the Turks not only remained landlord of the house, but Austria put her foot on the

that other arrangements must be made, and Dulcigno was substituted for Gusinje and Plava.

The population of Dulcigno, also, was almost entirely Albanian, and flew to arms and was aided by bands formed by the Albanian League. The natural and proper port for Montenegro was Spitza, with its Slav population, identical in blood with the Montenegrins; but this the Powers had given to Austria along with a strip of coast. They now insisted on the cession of Dulcigno and its Albanians to Montenegro, and called upon the Porte to see it done.

The Turkish Government, which had at first supported the Albanian League, discovered that Turkish safety depended on its speedy suppression. To enforce the cession of Dulcigno and stop the rising at Gusinje, a large Turkish army was sent to Albania. Some heavy fighting took place, and the Albanians, with Europe and the Turks against them, were forced to cede Dulcigno in June, 1880, but the point is still a very sore one. Spitza and Montenegro still wish to be united, and the Albanians still wish to regain their lost town.

The Greek frontier was not arranged till the following year, and here, too, the Albanians lost land, though they did not yield all that was asked of them.

It is not to be wondered at that, as the game stood, no Albanian rights were recognised by the Berlin Congress; but it was a pity. The Albanians have great capabilities, and in mother-wit are second to none in the Peninsula. Had they been given such chances as was Bulgaria of developing on their own lines under European protection, their advance would certainly have been rapid. Nor, as it is, have they stood still. The Albanian League was suppressed, but the national spirit, which then found voice, has been

growing steadily stronger in spite of Turkish efforts. The printing of the Albanian language is forbidden by the Government, but papers published abroad in it find their way to every town. The teaching of it in the schools is prohibited, but the people learn to read and write it; perhaps it is better not to explain how. The knowledge of reading spreads, and with it Albanian propaganda. Ever since the Treaty of Berlin Albanian patriots have been hard at work, and Moslem and Christian alike are working for Albanian autonomy.

One result, and a good one, of the Berlin Treaty was that, so soon as the various frontiers were drawn, a shifting of population began to take place. Anything that causes the mixture of peoples to sort itself out a little works towards the solution of the Balkan problems. A mass of Albanians left South Serbia and Montenegro, and conversely a quantity of Serbs flowed into the newly-acquired Serb territory. A great exodus of Moslems took place from Bosnia and Bulgaria; a certain amount of Christian Herzegovinians left their homes and settled in Serbia and Montenegro in order to escape Austrian rule. Had Albania been given a definite territory, a still further sorting-out would have taken place. The present tendency to recognise only a strip of mountain-land along the coast as truly Albanian can but lead to disaster; a people so individual and so full of vitality must have sufficient fat plain-land to make a living on. If they are not given it they will take it. This is one of the things that lie at the root of the present difficulties. As long as Albania remains vague and frontierless under so-called Turkish government, so long will it be in a state which is practically anarchy, and improvement in the Balkan situation will be almost impossible.

At present the Albanians regard, and with justice,

the Slav peasant as a tool in the hands of an external power which is working for the destruction of Albanian rights, Were these rights defined and recognised, much of this enmity would disappear with the necessity of struggling for them. 'The Slavs,' says an Albanian paper, 'are a brave people; they may have all sorts of other good qualities too. That is not the question. Our hatred does not extend to individuals, nor even to national groups, but to that spirit of aggression, of religious fanaticism and low political swindling, known under the name of Pan-Slavism.'

That there is much truth in this statement I believe to be a fact, for I have on several occasions seen gangs of Slav workmen in the heart of Albania—men who had voluntarily come on building jobs from districts much further East, and who were working hard and cheerfully among Albanian fellow-workmen.

It is in the no man's land that the acts of aggression take place. As things at present stand we have a free Serbia, a free Bulgaria, a free Greece, a but half ruled and wholly disaffected Albania with no Eastern frontier, and a no man's land of mixed population, which each race hopes ultimately to possess, and over which the Porte has yearly less and less control. The Turk's death is now considered so imminent that the chief concern of each race is how to keep him alive until it has made its own claim clear to Europe.

'My grandfather,' said a man to me, 'did not have my father taught Turkish. He said that by the time he was grown up Turkish rule would be a thing of the past; but the sick man is really dying now.'

'He has been a long time about it,' I said.

'Ah! but it is phtisis that he suffers from. Sometimes they live a surprising time. Every now and then, as with this sick man, there is a great hæmor-

rhage, even very great. Then all say he is dying, but he recovers. But one thing you must always remember with such cases : the disease may be arrested a little while, but they never recover ; each time they are a little weaker. So it is with the sick man. We live and hope.'

Russia's plan for a Russo-Bulgarian State was baffled, but Russia continued to work in the same direction with the perseverance that wrings admiration even from her enemies. She found, however, unexpected difficulties. Bulgaria, having been set free, recognised by Europe, and provided with a German Prince, wished to be independent. National salvation was worked for by Stambulov, the most remarkable man Bulgaria has produced. He toiled not only to thwart Russian influence, but to construct the great Bulgaria as sketched by the Treaty of San Stefano. To this end he spent much time in Macedonia. 'Macedonia,' be it observed, is a conveniently elastic term, which is made to include all the territory anyone wishes to annex. It is a loose, and therefore misleading term. I have even met people who believe there is a special race which they call 'Macedonian,' whose 'cause' they wish to aid. The truth is, that in a district which has no official frontiers, and never has had any stable ones, there are people of six races, who, as we have seen, all have causes to be considered.

I shall not attempt to give statistics here or elsewhere ; they and the ethnographical maps are all compiled for party politics. I have examined a number. None correspond. I do not believe in any of them. Even could a census be taken by that impossible being, a quite impartial outsider, who possessed an intimate knowledge of all the dialects and customs of the different races, a certain proportion of the people

would 'belong to other nations' before he could get it printed. The best example of this Balkan peculiarity which I have met was a man who told me that he was a Greek, but he was born in Bulgaria, his father was a Servian, and his children Montenegrins.

Local types differ much, and the remarks that apply to one district do not fit another. I shall speak only of the parts I have stayed in—the districts of Lakes Ochrida and Presba. Here there are Greeks, Slavs, Albanians, and Vlahs. Of Turks, except officials and such of the army as may be quartered on the spot, there are few. The Albanians, I believe, are all Moslem. Should there be any Christians they would be officially classed as Greeks. A large part of the land near Lake Presba is owned by Moslem Albanians as 'chiftliks' (farms). These are worked by peasants, and the profits are supposed to be halved between the owners and the workers. It is hardly necessary to say that this is not enforced by law. I was often told that all the taxes came out of the peasants' half. Nevertheless, so long as the landlord stayed away, they said they got along pretty well. The 'chiftlik' peasants did not suffer during the insurrection in the same way as did the peasant proprietors, for their houses, being the property of the landlord, were not burnt. One third of the villages I visited were mixed Christian and Moslem. Some of the Moslems, I was told, are Slavs, but this I had no time to investigate. The Christian peasantry is mainly Slavonic, but presents very different types in different villages, caused by the greater or less admixture of Greek, Bulgar, or Albanian blood.

The bulk of these peasants speak a Slav dialect, which is not the Servian of Belgrade or Montenegro. Neither is it, I am told by the people themselves, the

Bulgarian of Sofia. It contains, as is only natural, a large number of Turkish, Greek, and Albanian words, and has some grammatical peculiarities. The third person singular of the present indicative ends always in a 't' (e.g., 'kazat'—'he says'), a form which does not belong to either literary Servian or Bulgarian, but is used by illiterate Serbs in Servia; and the definite article placed after the noun—a characteristic of Bulgarian, and also of Roumanian and Albanian—is by no means generally employed. The noun is often inflected as in Servian, but, on the other hand, the adjective is compared not by inflection, as in Servian, but by prefixing 'more' and 'very,' as in Bulgarian and Albanian. Many genuine Serb words are used with distorted meanings, and the endings of proper names are often clipped off (e.g., 'Danil,' not 'Danilo').

Some words are forms used in Bulgaria and not Servia.

The truth is that the dialect of the Macedonian Slav is neither Servian nor Bulgarian, but 'betwixt and between,' as he is himself, but I doubt if the dialect of Ochrida differs more from literary Servian than does broad 'Zummerzet' from literary English. Much that was incomprehensible at first I found later to be not so much a difference of word as of accent and pronunciation.

Writing of his travels in 1673, Dr. Brown says, 'Schlavianian is spoken in Servia, Bulgaria, and a great part of Macedonia,' which seems to point to the fact that, until they were crystallized into literary form later, Servian and Bulgarian were not markedly differentiated into two tongues.

Standard Bulgarian has, in fact, only been evolved in the last twenty-five years. Previous to that time the language seems to have been as inchoate as

is now Albanian. The author of 'The Peoples of Turkey,' writing in 1878, says: 'The difference between the written and spoken language is so great that the former can scarcely be understood by the bulk of the population. No less than seven grammars are in existence, but they agree neither in general principles nor in details. Some impose the rules of modern Servian or Russian on the language. Others attempt to reduce to rule the vernacular, which is variable, vague, and imperfect.'

So much for the language. These Slav-speaking peasants in the districts I visited are the lowest and least intelligent of all the folk I know in the Balkan Peninsula or elsewhere. They are truly pitiable examples of the human race. Less capable than the other peoples, they have fallen undermost of all in the struggle for existence, though in many districts they are numerically superior. Some attribute their degraded condition entirely to oppression. This I believe to be only partially true. They have probably suffered the most because they are the unfittest. Were it not for the fat lands that they inhabit, it is doubtful whether the other nations would hasten to claim kindred with them. The honest, intelligent, and capable with whom I had to do in that no man's land were all either Greek, Albanian, or Vlah. Of the Albanians and Greeks who worked for us I must speak very highly.

It is this mass of ignorant, low-typed population that politicians struggle to manipulate, and from them that the Russo-Bulgarian State was to have been largely wrought. An enormous amount of money has been spent on making them into Bulgarians. A similar sum otherwise applied could have just as easily made them into Servians. To begin with, they had

no 'patria,' and the propagandists failed to move them. Even Stambulov, with his fiery patriotism and genius for organization, was baffled. 'He grew to dislike the Macedonians,' Beaman tells us in his life of Stambulov, 'on account of their treachery and want of any real sense of patriotism and honour, never feeling sure when he lay down at night whether he would rise again next morning, and being aware that almost any Macedonian, if he found the chance, would murder him to secure the reward on his head. This life could not last long, and though in after-years Stambulov worked hard for Macedonia, he always retained a strong antipathy and contempt for the people of whom he had had so unpleasant an experience.' His estimate of them proved but too just. His strenuous and ceaseless efforts to set Bulgaria free from Russian influence led to his brutal murder in the streets of Sofia, and the hired assassins were Macedonians. One of them, a Resna man, has been lately executed. The others are still at large, I believe, and are said to have been employed also in the murders of Stambulov's friends, Belchev and Vulkovich.

After Stambulov's death Russia regained some of her lost influence. Prince Ferdinand had his son and heir baptized into the Orthodox Church; Russia smiled once again upon the land; and on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the taking of the Shipka Pass Russia and Bulgaria, who for some time had not been on visiting terms, celebrated a sort of family party. To-day Russian influence is at work in Macedonia, and Russia, it would appear, still looks to the peasantry there to help extend her power. The newly-made Bulgars there will do anything for money, and Russia gives it with no mean hand. They are, as Stambulov

found them, very untrustworthy, and in this respect compare most unfavourably with my previous experience of Serbs and Montenegrins. The depressing part of them is that the so-called 'intelligence,' the more or less educated, are the worst of all. If in trade, their only idea was to make money out of the results of the insurrection. Far from showing any desire to help the wretched refugees, the provision dealer and pharmacy man not only presented us with most extortionate bills which had to be beaten down weekly, but the former strove, by sending bad stuff and short measure, to cheat the wretched sick and wounded of his own race. None ever gave me any useful suggestions when I consulted them about the work, but many were anxious to hire out saddles and such-like. I thought that out of all the lot we had hit on one honest man, and then learnt he was stopping our flour ration from some wretched burnt-out peasants who owed him money. The 'Bulgar' of this district is, I fear, the sow's ear from which no silk purses are made.

I trust that Bulgaria will not succeed in making him a reason for obtaining the land he inhabits.

As an act of treachery the capture, a couple of years ago, of Miss Stone, the American missionary, a lady who had spent a large part of her life and her money helping the Bulgarian cause, cannot easily be surpassed. It was a political job, engineered, not by peasants, but by men of education, for the purpose of raising money with which to buy rifles for the insurrection; and the terrors and hardships to which the unfortunate woman, who had trusted them, was subjected I found regarded by them only as a great joke. 'What do we want with her Protestantism? Now, she has really been of use to us, and she ought to be

pleased!' Moreover, those who had had the brilliant idea of capturing her were envied by the others, who pursued the victorious band in hopes of retaking her and securing the coveted ransom themselves. One of her captors is by profession a barber at Ochrida, a heavy, stolid-looking man, who cut my hair very crooked. His tale was that he had had orders to go with some others and take a European lady to a house. They meant to keep her there and give her nice things to eat, but they were hunted by the others, and were afraid of the gendarmes, and so had to rush her about. He came down to a village one day to buy bread, for they were hard up for food, and was caught by the Turkish police and imprisoned. He thought himself very badly used, for all the others had got off scot-free.

Ostensibly, the engineers of little affairs of this sort are working to free the people from Turkish rule; actually, they are the chief obstacles to the improvement of the state of things. They direct the attacks of their bands not only against the Greeks, but against the Serbs, and by exciting new quarrels and fostering old ones among the Christians, they strengthen the hand of the Turk. They claim everything, and do not recognise that any other race has rights. As for their system of provoking massacres for the purpose of persuading Europe that the land should all be Bulgarian, it cannot be too strongly condemned. The fact that Greek, Serb and Vlah stood aloof and gave no support to the last revolution is in itself sufficient to prove that they were well aware of its true character.

Fortunately there is a brighter side even to the blackest things. The great difficulty in dealing with the problems in the disputed lands is the fact that

the various races are so entwined and entangled. Anything that tends to sort them out will help in the end. The late rising, disastrous as it has been in many ways, appears to be working in this direction. There is room enough and to spare for everyone in the Balkan Peninsula. It could carry double the population. The trouble is that everyone wants the whole; and so long as there is land with a mixed population it will be struggled for. Unless the Peninsula is going to be divided by Austria and Russia (which may Heaven forefend!), the territories for each race will have to be delimited at no very distant date. Every time a frontier has been drawn a large emigration and immigration has taken place, and there will have to be yet more before the present difficulties are settled. Bulgaria has lost much population by emigration of Moslems. It is earnestly to be hoped that a large number of the refugees who fled into Bulgaria will not return, but will remain and aid the slow process of sorting out that seems to be gradually taking place. It will cost no more to settle them there than to transport them back and rebuild their houses, and it will tend in the long-run towards peace. The re-settling of Slav peasants in markedly Albanian districts is, for example, strongly to be deprecated. The Albanians as well as the Bulgars must have land to live on. There is, I am aware, a political party in Bulgaria which wishes to resettle every peasant in the spot from whence he came, but this is more from a desire to establish a claim on the land than for the sake of the villagers. And in spite of this it seems to me that there is a tendency for these people to migrate.

For instance, up to the year 1870 travellers comment on the flourishing condition of the Christian quarter of Ochrida, which they contrast with the

Moslem one, greatly to the latter's disadvantage. Ochrida then carried on a large trade in furs and hides with Leipzig, Vienna, and Trieste. In thirty years it almost doubled its population. Its trade route was mainly by way of Durazzo and the Adriatic. With the appointment of the Bulgarian Exarch in 1870 came the Bulgarian propaganda throughout this district. The Christian population, which till then had been united, and called itself Greek, was torn in twain and thereby weakened. The money and energy of the people was used up on party quarrels and political plots. Now the trade is practically dead the Christian quarter is full of empty and ruined houses, is squalid and poorer than the Moslem Albanian one. The Christian population has largely emigrated, and, from what I heard when there, I gathered that only the inability to sell their houses tied many to the spot.

In Turkey you cannot travel without permission, and this is not given to a householder unless a resident in the town will guarantee all the taxes due on a house during the owner's absence. But a good deal of 'flitting by night' takes place nevertheless. I assisted one poor wretch to get away. I thought at first of taking him along with me through Albania, and shipping him off on the Adriatic, but was afraid he would be turned back by the police, as he had been refused a permit. We decided that Servia was the better route. He got successfully across the frontier, and wrote me a pathetically grateful letter from Belgrade. He had never before known, he said, what it was to be, in a free and civilized land. There are people in England who believe that Servia is a wild and dangerous place. They are those who do not understand what it is to be a subject of the Sultan.

CHAPTER IV

It is a terrible thing to live in a land which is in a state of anarchy, for 'anarchy' means that the wicked rule—a land where officials buy their positions and make what they can on them; where the salaries of minor employés exist mainly on paper, and they pay themselves by extorting money from those beneath them; a land where there is no law, order, or justice. Law, like salaries, exists mainly on paper. Whether it is enforced depends entirely upon who has broken it. Every man, if he is strong enough, can be his own policeman.

I once had a curious example of this. Native Christians are, with very few exceptions, forbidden to carry arms, but the Turkish 'Government' kindly permits—nay, encourages—foreign Christians to hire armed Moslems to protect them from the possible consequences of its own inability to govern, and there is no difficulty in finding a stalwart Moslem who is happy to do nothing, in a cartridge-belt, at your door. They are always ornamental, but I am glad to say I have never had occasion to test their powers. I had such a man in my employ, when my interpreter came in one morning with an anxious face. Being a Christian subject of the Sultan, he had naturally inherited a tendency always to expect the worst.

'I think I had better tell you,' he said, 'that something a little unpleasant has happened last night.'

As I was on Turkish territory this did not surprise me, but, though I 'had been there before,' I was unprepared for the sequel.

'Djaffir,' he went on, 'has been having a trouble with a Turkish soldier. It was like this: Djaffir went home to see his wife last night just after sunset, and he found her in a very bad fright. She said that a soldier had come in to rob the house, but she had screamed very loud, and he ran away; but still, she was afraid, for she thought he was hiding somewhere near, and he would come back soon and steal things. Then Djaffir was very angry, for it is a great crime to go into a Moslem house when there is only a woman in it. He went to search, and there he found the soldier hiding in the stable.'

I expressed surprise that the soldier should have been so foolish as to enter a Moslem house when there were plenty of Christian ones which he could have doubtless burgled with impunity.

'Ah, but you see, that soldier, he was drunk! Of course he must have meant to go to a Christian house, but most likely he was too drunk to know where he had gone. So Djaffir seized him, for he was too drunk to defend himself, and beat him and beat him till he was quite tired. Then he just threw him out in the street in the dark and came back here. This morning he told me.'

This was a pretty beginning. Djaffir was a stolid, tough-looking individual, with a singularly inexpressive countenance. He was usually a very unemotional being, but this morning he was the picture of self-satisfaction.

'Would it not have been possible to have handed the soldier over to justice?'

Quite possible, but he preferred inflicting the punish-

ment himself. We suggested that the punishment had been excessive; and he admitted that when he had once begun he forgot everything, and went on hitting the man till he could not hit him any more. Then he had thrown him into the street, so covered with blood 'that no one would have known him.' He did not stay to see if he were alive, but just came home and went to sleep, for it had made him very tired. Thus Djaffir, cheerfully.

The night patrol picked up the poor wretch and took him to the military hospital. I had visions of arrests and trials, law-courts and other unpleasantnesses, complicated by unknown tongues and interpreters, and did not feel particularly happy. Djaffir, however, explained that we need be under no fear, 'for I hit him very hard on the head, and he cannot speak.' This circumstance gave general satisfaction, and we returned to our usual occupations.

Two days afterwards my interpreter appeared with a long face.

'You know that soldier? Well, to-day it is very bad. He has come to his senses, and he has given Djaffir's name. Now, Djaffir has been sent for and questioned, and he has sworn: "How can I have beaten a soldier when I was with the English 'madama' all the time?" This is very bad. Now we shall be asked if it is true. I do not wish to tell a lie if I am asked, but if I tell the truth Djaffir will, perhaps, be punished, and then afterwards he will be revenged on me, and perhaps also on my people. What shall we do?'

The situation was indeed an awkward one for him.

'We have not been asked yet,' said I. 'We will wait and see.'

So we waited. Djaffir, who was well aware that he

held all the trump cards, remained calm, and another day passed. Then both men became quite cheerful.

'You know about Djaffir's soldier? Well, it is all right now. He is dead!'

'All right!' said I, amazed, for it seemed to me to be rapidly getting worse. 'Surely now some sort of an inquiry will be made?'

'Oh no. You see, it is like this: this soldier, he was not a man from these parts. If he had been one of the Albanian regiment it would be different; but he came from a long way—from Asia or somewhere. Here he has no friends to ask questions or avenge him. His people will never hear when or how he died. But Djaffir has many friends; they would not like anything to be done to him. Besides, a great many Turkish soldiers die every year; one more or less makes no difference. The man is dead. What use to make a fuss?'

There was much force in his argument. After all, most things in this world are ruled by expediency. Life is as cheap to-day in the Near East as it was anywhere else in the Middle Ages.

Europe, it is true, was somewhat agitated about Christians, but cared very little what Moslem did to Moslem.

So the unknown soldier went to his unknown grave. Had he been a Christian, his death would have been an 'atrocious' with which to swell consular reports; but he was a mere Moslem, and 'what use to make a fuss?'

Neither was Djaffir the savage that you imagine. He was a very honest man, and could be trusted with large sums of money. The assault, brutal as it was, was in defence of his wife's honour. He was very fond of his child, and was much distressed when it met with a slight accident. He tried to be friendly according

to his lights, and gave me unpleasantly sticky little cakes upon Moslem feast-days. Had he been brought up in a land where the Government can be trusted to attend to the police department, I do not suppose he would have been more murderous than other people. As it was, his training made him set a high value on the power to take life. I fired at a pigeon one day when with him, and, to my disgust, missed it; but the shot raised dust from the ledge where it had been perched.

‘Quite near enough,’ said Djaffir. ‘If it had been a man you had shot at, he would be dead.’

The Turkish ‘Government’s’ extraordinary inability to maintain law and order in the districts which are painted Turkish on the maps is the thing that has struck me the most forcibly in my wanderings; nor is there anything odder than the calmness with which it admits the fact. The Government does not hold itself in any way responsible for outrages on travellers who are without a Government escort. To this day it has never punished the gang that took Miss Stone. I have met with plenty of instances of this. The following, which I will call the story of Marko, is the more striking, because it has nothing to do with revolutionary schemes or politics. It is merely an episode of ordinary village life.

It was a village in the South of Albania. In the town but a few miles away was a Turkish Governor and the usual staff of officials, who write for dear life all day and stow the papers in bags. It was a well-to-do Christian village, very clean and tidy. The inhabitants are industrious, intelligent, and physically a very fine-looking set. I stayed several days, and was treated with great hospitality and courtesy at a number of houses, all of which were well built and comfortably fitted.

‘What did you think of Marko?’ I was asked by my host as we were riding away. I had some difficulty in disentangling Marko from the many to whom I had been introduced. Nor did I ever, to my regret, succeed in calling up a mental picture of his wife when I had heard the tale of her courage and devotion. She had been married to Marko some ten years ago. They were very fond of one another. He had land, they were comfortably off, and all went well. Soon, to their great joy, a child was born to them. Then the Devil came into Paradise in the shape of Mrs. Marko’s cousin. He was a very bad man—a drinker, a gambler, and a doer of the things he should have left undone. He was also clever and amusing. In a short time he gained a very strong influence over Marko, and led him quite astray. Marko left his land unworked, and dissipated his savings. In one year he spent no less than £50 (a huge sum in such a place) on his pleasures. His wife became anxious and deeply distressed, and could not separate him from her cousin, who was a demoralizing influence to all the village. Then the child fell very ill. Marko’s wife prayed him to fetch a doctor, but the nearest one lived in a distant town, and Marko told her angrily that he would not waste his money upon it. The child died. This was more than Marko’s wife could bear. She saw that she must save her husband from her cousin. There was only one way to save him: she killed her cousin.

I think I reined up my horse with astonishment.

‘Yes, she killed him. Naturally, she did not kill him herself: she paid a Moslem to do it. It is very easy.’

‘And how much does one have to pay for such a thing?’ I asked.

‘For about forty piastres (six-and-eightpence!) it can be done.’

‘But what happened?’

‘Nothing. What should happen? He was dead.’

‘But did the village know how he died?’

‘But certainly. They were glad. He was a very bad man. He taught wicked things to the boys. He was a very dangerous person.’

‘You said Nikola was very fond of him. Does he know what his wife has done?’

‘Of course. How should he not know? It is true that he was rather angry with her at first, but he soon saw it was all for the best, and now they are very fond of each other again, and quite happy, as you have seen. You see, she saved him from a great danger, and it was the only way. But God has never given them another child.’

I explained to my companion that in England there would have been no difficulty probably in getting Marko punished for gambling in public, for being drunk and disorderly, or, from the details he gave, for obtaining money under false pretences.

‘Ah, if we had a government like that!’ he said. ‘But here, even if there were such laws, what would be the use to go to a Turkish law-court? The cousin had money! He could have paid someone, and have escaped.’

To those who have never lived in Turkey this tale may seem incredible. My own experience leads me to believe that it is not only true, but not at all exceptional.

This is a tale from the Christian point of view, but from the Sultan's own men I have heard singular reflections on the state of the country, not merely from gendarmes or common peasants, but from men in official positions, who all professed Mohammedanism. One discoursed to me a long while before he came to

the point. I wondered what he was staying for. Finally he got up to say good-bye.

‘You have travelled much,’ he said. ‘I believe you have come as a friend to the people. You have seen the state of the country under this Government. You will understand that in my position it is impossible for me to speak more plainly. What I came to say is this: If you will report truly all you have seen and heard to the English people, you may do a great service to a most unhappy land.’

And he retired in a hurry. The belief in the power of a casual stranger to remedy the state of affairs is extraordinary and rather pathetic.

Another man—and he, too, was a Moslem official—spoke out to an extent that astonished me.

‘This unhappy land,’ he said, ‘is given over to the Devil. You see his work everywhere. The Moslems are breaking the commandments of the Prophet, and the wrath of God is upon them. They are drunken; they kill one another as well as Christians. In your Empire there are more Moslem subjects than there are under the rule of the Sultan, but with you they are good subjects, and practise their religion properly, and live in peace with others. Here there is no law, no peace. You cannot imagine how ignorant our Moslem peasants are. They are taught nothing. It happens that they attack a Christian. I speak to them like this:

“If a man struck your fez off in the street, what would you do?”

“I would shoot him dead.”

“Why did you strike this man? He did nothing to you.”

“I struck him because he is a ‘kaur’” (unbeliever).’

“Why do you strike a ‘kaur’?”

“ Because I wish to kill all ‘kaurs’.”

“ Do you wish the land to be all Moslem ?”

“ Of course I do.”

‘ Then I say to him : “ Do you not understand that what you do is contrary to the will of God ? Do you think you are more powerful than He ? If every Christian were killed the land would be almost without people. Who are you, that you think you can arrange the world ?” Then I give him a large handful of clay and say : “ Take that and make it into a Moslem—make it into a Moslem, I say, at once !” He is astonished, and says he cannot do it. And I say to him : “ The Lord created all the peoples of the world thus with clay by a miracle, and you, you cannot make of it even one Moslem, yet you would destroy the Lord’s work !” Then he is ashamed. It is thus that one must speak to such men. The clay and the words—that they understand. This land is full of bad men and evil. In Egypt there is peace. It is my belief that one day this land, too, will be under Christian rule, and it will be better so.’

On another occasion I was told : ‘ I have been among the Arabs and the black people in Africa, but I tell to you that here in Europe, in this country, there are people more wild, more ignorant, less cared for than any in Africa. The Government has not done well by this miserable land.’

So much for law and order. The gendarmerie, whose business it is to maintain it, have recently leapt from obscurity to frequent notice in the ‘ Latest Intelligence ’ column. A few notes about them as I found them before the advent of foreign officers may be of interest.

There are two classes—the mounted police (suvarris) and the ordinary police (zaptiehs). Until lately,

except in certain Albanian districts, only Moslems have been eligible as gendarmes. Now Christians are enlisted in all districts. Both classes are armed with Peabody-Martini rifles of American pattern, which they call 'Martinis' and cherish dearly, and usually carry a sheath-knife and a revolver as well. The zaptieh is supposed to receive ten shillings a month, which is always in arrears, his rifle, ammunition, and uniform. The suvarri has to provide his own horse, but is supplied with arms and uniform. His pay is £30 a year, and out of this he has to keep his horse. This is considered the best paid of all the lower services, and until lately was fairly regularly paid, and rarely more than two months in arrears. But owing to the expenses of the Bulgarian insurrection, which have fallen very heavily on the other peoples, none of the Moslems who served me had been paid for five or seven months. They used to give their names and that of their officer and regiment, and pray me to ask the British Consul to help them.

The newly-enlisted Christians were in better case, as they had received a month's pay and their uniforms were new. In barracks these men are fed, but when, as is constantly happening, they are sent to patrol outlying districts, or on messages, they have to cater for themselves. Penniless, heavily armed and quite irresponsible, the fact that they do not loot the whole country is greatly to their credit. That they take the food they require if not given to them is not surprising. Our own police, if thus let loose, would not be immaculate. One youth admitted to me quite frankly that he had appropriated the white woollen gaiters he was wearing, but his uniform was long overdue, and his trousers were all in rags. He was, in fact, barely decent. Another man I had, was reduced to wearing

his great-coat in order to be presentable. The very evident poverty of many of them was fair proof that their levying of forced contributions on the villages was usually limited to the bare necessities of life. During the insurrection those in the insurgent districts had, of course, looted, and no wonder.

Out of the very many I had to do with I met with but one surly one. He, a Moslem Albanian, strongly disapproved of me, and said so with engaging frankness. He hated all the English, and knew all about them, for he had lived ten years in Egypt. Had it not been for the English interference Mehemet Ali would have ruled all the Turkish Empire, and all would now be Albanian. He feared now that England would rob them of Macedonia. I was surprised at his knowledge of history. He was very bitter. Everything was spoilt in Egypt, he said; disgusting English customs introduced. But even there it was better than where he was now in Macedonia, which was a beastly place. According to my interpreter, he used naughty language. The situation was a humorous one, for we were in a wild and lonesome spot near Lake Presba, and he, who hated my nation, was my only official protector. He refused all my overtures of friendship the first day—was a Moslem, didn't eat with Christians, sulked and drank cold water. The second day, however, he unbent, accepted my invitation to dinner, was festive, and consumed 'rakija' freely. On my wondering what the time was, he dragged from his tunic a handsome gold watch. His sharp eyes caught my glance at it at once. He dangled it carelessly, and announced with great effrontery that a wealthy Englishman had given it him as backshish! He had, I fancy, done very well for himself in Macedonia.

Nor is it only the villager who loses because the

gendarme is unpaid : the Government also loses. One handsome young dare-devil, who served me very well and rode a very beautiful little horse which he loved dearly, explained that he did not depend on his pay for a living—that merely served to fatten his horse. He ran contraband tobacco and did very well. Before he had the brilliant idea of enlisting, he had led an exciting and very adventurous life, as he had to dodge the gendarmerie as well as the local brigands. As we filed through a thick wood he was much excited. Here, a few years back, he had fought hard for his life. With eight friends and a kirijee he was escorting two pack-mules, loaded with tobacco, to the coast, where, under cover of night, he meant to ship it on a fishing-boat. Some other fellows got wind of the enterprise : ‘ As we came round the corner here, piff-paff a bullet from behind that tree. The kirijee was hit ; he ran all along the path and dropped just over there. We got the mules under cover. We fought for two hours. My God, I did not think we should get through ! I wasn’t hit, but one of my friends was, badly. We hit a lot of the others ; I don’t know how many. We dodged about behind the trees on either side the path, firing at each other. At last they gave up and let us through.’ He burst into a merry laugh. ‘ It makes me sweat to ride along here now. I didn’t think then I should be here again. We picked up the kirijee. He was quite dead, so we buried him. There is his grave.’ He pointed to a long heap of stones by the path-side. ‘ We sold the tobacco very well, but he did not get much good out of it.’

This little affair was rather more than he cared about, so he enlisted, and, under cover of his uniform, found smuggling lucrative and comparatively safe.

The gendarmerie may be reformed before this is printed, and when next I meet it may be as dull and respectable as our own police ; but that reckless young swashbuckler, courteous and dashing, with a rose stuck over one ear, upon whom crime sat so lightly, who enjoyed his life, bubbled with mirth, sang songs, and lavished caresses on his little chestnut horse, showed me the live Middle Ages.

With one exception, all my men were Albanians. Of their patience, kindness, and endurance, I cannot speak too highly. They are not all the brutes some have represented them ; they are the stuff of which fine armies are made, and only require to be properly officered and led. Their faults are those of their training and surroundings. Their virtues are all their own.

The moral of everything is that it is not the Christians alone that would be the better for a change of Government. I have wandered many miles in these lands, I have come in contact with all the various races, and I have failed to see or hear of any benefit which Turkish rule has conferred upon any one of them. It has, on the contrary, often emphasized and brought out their worst qualities. Its promises of reform have never been carried out. In the nature of things it is unable to carry them out, for it has never been a living, growing organism. It was a machine constructed in the Dark Ages, and is now a worn-out mediæval affair—a museum specimen that cannot be adapted to the needs of to-day. If left to itself it will, in the natural order of events, fall to pieces. Nothing can be hoped for from it ; nor can anything much be expected of the reform scheme. It set at liberty most of the imprisoned revolutionaries, and has failed to grapple with the results, and the Macedonian

Committee has been very inadequately muzzled. The plan for the reorganization of the gendarmerie, if honestly worked, is the most reasonable scheme yet propounded; but the Sultan whittled most of it away to begin with, and, if only half of rumour be true, the Powers most interested are using what is left of it to work their own propaganda. Bulgarian Bishops, under Russian protection, are still able to plan brigand bands to raid Serb and Greek villages, under the noses of the reform officers, and Greek and Serb organize rival bands to defend themselves. And while Austria subsidizes Albanian Beys in Kosovo Vilayet, Russian officers ride round Greek villages and swear they shall have no help unless they say they are Bulgar. So runs the tale.

Theoretically, the plan to maintain order with a well-organized police force is admirable. I fear it has been started twenty-five years too late.

As for the alternative plan, which is favoured by some, and greatly disliked by others of the Christian peoples whose interests are concerned—that of appointing a Christian European Governor to a State to be arbitrarily mapped out and called Macedonia—it might stave off for a time the partition of the territories that must ultimately take place, but as it would rest on no historical, geographical, or racial basis, it would do little more. For the crux of the whole matter is not Turk versus Christian any longer. The question now is, how much of the Turk's land shall be occupied by Serb, Bulgar, Greek and Albanian respectively. I met no one on the spot who was in favour of this plan, except inasmuch as it would give him the chance of working out his own propaganda without risk of interference from the Sultan, and of 'nobbling' that Christian Governor, and making him understand the

'real truth.' And the little propaganda of the little Powers will continue to be worked by the big propaganda of the big Powers.

The problems of Turkey in Europe are not confined to one spot, and to 'cultivate a cabbage-garden' in the middle of it with quite artificial boundaries is likely to create as many new difficulties as it cures old ones, and to still further subdivide the already much-divided peoples.

Nationalities, like individuals, must save their own souls. It is little short of impertinence on the part of others to pose as Salvation Army to them. None of the Balkan people are so black as they have often been painted. They all possess many fine qualities which only require opportunity to develop, and their faults in most cases are but those of extreme youth. The atrocities which they will all commit upon occasion are a mere survival of mediæval customs once common to all Europe. 'Humanity' was not invented even in England till the beginning of the nineteenth century; up till then punishments of the most brutal description were inflicted for comparatively trivial offences. In dealing with the Balkan Peninsula, far too much 'copy' has been made out of 'atrocities' for party purposes, and the supply of them has been thereby stimulated. Nor are they presented in proper perspective.

When a Moslem kills a Moslem it does not count; when a Christian kills a Moslem it is a righteous act; when a Christian kills a Christian it is an error of judgment better not talked about; it is only when a Moslem kills a Christian that we arrive at a full-blown 'atrociousness.'

When the circumstances under which the Balkan peoples have lived are considered, the wonder is not

that they are so behindhand, but that they are so advanced.

Their friends hope for them liberty to develop each on their own natural lines. Those who blame the lands already freed, because in a few years they have not reached a pitch of civilization which it has taken the West five centuries to evolve, are unjust to them. And some of their worst enemies are the friends who wish to hurry them up. Their civilization, if it is to be firm and lasting, and suited to their own peculiar needs, must be a solid structure slowly built, and not a mere jerry-built affair hastily run up and smeared over with cheap Western varnish.

To grow up, the Balkan people must pass through certain stages of development and do it for themselves. It is of no use to hurry on events. You cannot change a tadpole into a frog by snipping off its tail.

The present difficulties are no mere struggle of Ottoman against Christian. They are the continuation of the struggles of pre-Turkish days for supremacy in the Balkans. When the Balkan people as a whole wish the Turk to go, go he will, and must. He survives only so long as he is useful to any one of them by preventing the others from expanding, and he knows it.

PART II
IN THE DEBATEABLE LANDS

' Upon the Breaking and Shivering of a great State and Empire, you may be sure to have Warres. For great Empires, while they stand, doe enervate and destroy the Forces of the Natives which they have subdued . . . and when they faile also, all goes to Ruine and they become a Prey.'—BACON.

CHAPTER V

EASTWARD HO !

FROM Vienna to Semlin I suffocated in a cruelly overheated carriage. My companions, all young Magyars, played cards and quarrelled at the top of their voices, and the corridor was crammed with sheepskin-clad peasants who had overflowed from the already packed third-class. They were said to be refugees from Turkish territories who had fled from the wrath to come, and were to be dumped in the Slav-speaking districts.

One of the Magyars spoke to me in his native tongue, and was surprised that I did not know it. Another tried German upon me, and translated for the benefit of the company. 'The Fräulein,' he asked, 'is learning English?' I had an English book in my hand. 'I can read it very easily,' said I. They were astonished, for they had been told it was a very difficult language, and were still more so when I explained my nationality, which none of them had suspected. This has happened to me often before, but never without giving me a curious sense of having lost my identity, and I am always taken for something Slavonic. Now I was supposed to be a Croat: 'Naturally, for you look quite Croatian.' The Croat hates the Magyar, and the Magyar despises the Croat, so this statement amused me vastly.

They left shortly afterwards. The train rushed on

through the dark. There was a blast of cold air from the corridor, a loud yell and a scramble. One of the peasants, unused to railway travelling, tried to get out of the train, and was collared only just in time by a gentleman in the next compartment.

Passports were inspected on the Hungarian frontier, and restored on leaving Semlin. I was already in the lands where everyone is 'suspect.' The train thundered over the iron bridge that joins the banks of the Save, and drew up in Belgrade. The soft Servian accent rang familiarly in my ears, West Europe faded away like a dream, and I plunged into the Near East and the whirlpool of international politics.

It was the night of December 23, 1903. A great black funeral car was drawn up in the lamplit station; black-robed ecclesiasts moved on the platforms; a mourning crowd hung about and candles twinkled. Firmilian, Bishop of Skoplje (Uskub) was dead, and his mortal remains were to be borne back for burial to the seat of that bishopric which Serbia had regained after long years of struggle. Now, after less than two years' triumph, he was dead, and Serbia lamented—not because he was beloved as an individual, but because he had represented a national principle and a political victory. So, as we whirled across Serbia in his funeral train, my comrades spoke much of the dead, and used him as a text on which to preach Great Serbia. They were all Serbs, young and aflame with patriotism. I found that my acquaintance with the clan Vassoievich was a passport, and the name of its leader one to conjure with. Talk all ran on unredeemed Serbia and King Peter, who is to realize the national ideal. 'Now we have a King who is as good as yours,' they said, 'and Serbia will have her own again.' And on the whole long track folk turned

out in crowds with priests, candles, and banners, and wailed funeral chants. This began at Nish, in the black before the dawn with never a star overhead. It went on all day at station after station; we never forgot that Firmilian was dead, and that Old Serbia had yet to be redeemed. This was rubbed into us hard on the frontier—at the best of times there is something uncanny about the Turkish frontier now—where we stayed for an hour and three quarters, and were searched for dynamite. There was no time even to offer backshish; the whole of everybody's possessions were tipped out on to the dirty ground, and we waded knee-deep in one another's worldly goods, in which the officials sought for contraband with the minute industry of monkeys after fleas. Then followed pocket-searching, punching, poking, pommelling, a strict personal examination from which I alone was exempt, and our passports were taken.

We started again, more than an hour late, in the land of the Turk—a land that was all agrin like a dog before a fight. Pickets of lean, ragged Nizams guarded all the line, and were thick by the bridges; officers and men bristled in the stations and crowded the train. My companions lauded the skill which had twice enabled Boris Sarafov to run the gauntlet of military, passport officials, and gendarmes, and escape under the enemy's eyes; and this is noteworthy, for it was the only word I ever heard in favour of Boris in the land where I had expected to find him a hero.

And from every soldier-guarded station rose the harsh, penetrating Servian wail; a black-robed crowd lamented Firmilian, and burned candles for his soul's salvation among the enemy's guns. With the highly-strung and imaginative Serbs, patriotism is almost a nervous disease, and the air was full of 'electricity.'

A gunshot rang out suddenly from beyond the railway bank, there was a rush of officers down the corridor, who tumbled over our legs in their hurry to get to a window. Everyone started visibly, and said, 'It has begun!' But it had not.

We reached Skoplje hours late, and as the authorities dared not run trains after dark, had to stay the night there. The funeral procession formed up, and, with a brave show of banners and candles and golden consular kavasses, the Serbs of Skoplje received their dead Bishop with the bitter knowledge that unless Russia supported their claim this hard-won outpost might be lost to them. And they buried Firmilian on Christmas Day in the morning.

The hotel was filled to overflowing, but I found quarters with a friendly Austrian railway-man, and my kindly host and hostess were grieved for me alone in a strange land on Christmas Eve, and took me with them to a Christmas-tree party. It was a glorious tree, all glitter and twinkle, with a pink Christkind on the top. The children played at railway-trains on the floor, and their elders talked of the expected outbreak. They, as did my friends in the train, timed it for the end of March for certain. We thought neither of peace nor goodwill. A man who often drove the train to Mitrovitza vowed he would not do so much longer, and we drank to each other's long life in little glasses of cognac as if we really meant it. I had never been in a land in a state of war before, and felt as if I were acting charades. No one as yet, here or elsewhere, reckoned Japan as an all-important influence in the affairs of the Near East.

'Things are quiet just now,' they said; 'you can take off your breeches when you go to bed. But some months ago, oh my God! we were ready to fly to the

first consulate at a moment's notice. When the rising begins anywhere the Turks will massacre every Christian they find, and make sure they never rise again in this world. And they will begin here.'

Thus the foreign Christians, and they foretold I should return home by sea.

At five next morning I slopped through mud ankle-deep, with a man and a lantern which only made the darkness blacker, tumbled up against a sleepy sentry, and scrambled up a slippery bank to the station, where a stout and good-natured Jew insisted on standing me a cup of salep. It is a treacly drink made of a species of orchis-root, and was, I believe, a popular drink in England before the days of tea and coffee. Beyond being wet and warm it had no attractions.

Christmas Day dawned marvellously in a blaze of gold over purple mountains, but quickly faded into gray dulness. I spent it wedged between Turkish officers, for the ladies' coupé said it was full, which was a lie, and hurt my feelings. So along a picketed line all down the Vardar River, with no friendly and amusing Gavros and Bogdans to talk to, and over the dull, dull plain till we reached Salonika uneventfully.

'To-day,' remarked the hotel porter with the air of someone imparting information—'to-day is a feast-day of the Catholics!'

Greece put in a claim but a few days later for the bishopric, Bulgaria eyed the spot enviously, but the precedent instituted was followed, and Skoplje's new Bishop is Serb.

CHAPTER VI

ROUND ABOUT RESNA

TRAVELLING in the Near East has been said by many to be difficult, dangerous, and, which is even more alarming to the Cook-reared tourist—uncomfortable. It may be so. I am not capable of judging. When I am there, the only difficulty is to tear myself loose from its enchantments and return Westwards. As for dangers or discomforts, they are all forgotten in the all-absorbing interest of its problems. Its raw, primitive ideas, which date from the world's well-springs, its passionate strivings, its disastrous failures, grip the mind; its blaze of colour, its wildly magnificent scenery hold the eye. Crowded together on one small stage, five races, each with its own wild aspirations, its insistent individuality, its rightful claims and its lawless lusts, are locked together in a life and death struggle—a struggle that never ceases, though it is only now and then that it reaches such a bloody climax that it fills the front columns of the 'Latest Intelligence' sheet. No Roman Emperor ever planned a spectacle on half such a scale.

Salonika lay blotted and smudgy in a gray drizzle, far too much accustomed to alarming rumours to worry about them till obliged. And I hastened up-country to the scene of the latest developments of the international drama.

In many ways the Macedonia of Philip has not progressed in any remarkable degree since his time, but—for the Balkan Peninsula is a land of bizarre incongruities and anachronisms—it is traversed by a railway, and I travelled in the 'dames seules' with two veiled Mohammedan women, who ignored my presence entirely, moved my bag to make room for eight bundles, a cupboard, a chiming clock, and some toys, and considered that my unveiledness put me so completely beyond the pale that, to my amusement, they invited a male relative to travel with them. The train crawled slowly up among great snow-capped mountains and desolate stretches of bare rock with scrub, oak, and juniper. Philip's old capital, Edessa, stood somewhere near Vodena, which lies on the left of the line. Now, far from being the home of a conquering people, the land lay drear and abject, every station crammed with troops, and the whole line picketed by wretched Tommies, standing forlornly by their sodden tents in a condition little less pitiable than that of the refugees from the burnt villages, save that they were at liberty to loot food if any were handy. We skirted the beautiful lake of Ostrovo, and steamed into Monastir as night was falling.

Monastir, called by the Slavs Bitolia, lies snugly against the hills on a big plain some thousand feet above sea-level. It bristles with slim, white minarets, and is boiling over with rival churches. Greek, Bulgar, Serb and Vlah build schools that are surprisingly fine and large, and the place reels with propaganda. For in a school in Turkish territory you do not merely learn the usual subjects: you are taught to which nationality you really belong, and each school is indeed a factory of 'kanonenfutter,' which may some day enable the government which supports it to obtain

territory. That which is able to invest most money in the business will, in all probability, come out as winner in the end. To further complicate the already tangled knot of religions, there is a Roman Catholic mission and a Protestant one, each ready to receive all comers. Most of the Powers have consulates here. The Russian and the Austrian, as representing the two parties most interested in future developments, naturally attract much attention. Russia, 'the only Christian nation,' the beloved of the Slavs and the protector of the Bulgarian Church, is very heartily hated of the Albanian. Austria, by being affable and obliging to everybody, doubtless hopes to include the lot in Austrian territory later, and is meanwhile a popular character with all except the Slavs. But I never met anybody who believed that either had the smallest desire the 'reform' scheme should succeed, except for their own private ends.

The movements of all the Consuls, both great and small, are carefully watched; all the town knows when they call on one another, and ponders the political import of their walks abroad, and each and all spend weary hours in a vain endeavour to get questions answered by Turkish officials, a labour as endless as that of the Danaides, especially in the case of the luckless representatives of countries that have no navy nor army worth mentioning.

Monastir was perfectly quiet outwardly—that is to say, the surface of the lava was cool for the time being—and I walked about alone without any trouble. All trade was said to be at a standstill, and some folk were afraid to go outside the town to cultivate their fields, lest they should fall into the hands of Bulgarian bands. The streets were full of soldiers. Officers pervaded the billiard-rooms, baggage-waggon clattered

down the streets. Meanwhile the agents of the British Relief Fund had been busy for some time organizing depots from which to feed the starving peasantry, and on this work I went up-country so soon as the necessary preliminaries were arranged.

Into the details of this work it is not necessary to enter. They have already become known to the public through the medium of the daily papers. I was attracted to it by the unrivalled opportunities it offered for exploring little-known districts, watching the working of Balkan events from within, and coming into close contact with the people themselves.

Resna was my first post, and my duty was to visit all the villages in the neighbourhood. As the local tongue sounded to me like Servian all gone wrong, I engaged an interpreter, a refugee from one of the burnt villages, who could speak sufficient French. The poor wretch jumped at the idea of earning a little money, and, though picked up by chance, served me very well. His only drawback was his wish to give relief on a far larger scale than funds allowed. He could neither read nor write, and had never tried to learn. His politics consisted of terror and hatred of the Turkish Government, and a belief that all 'Macedonia' should belong to Bulgaria. He told me his story thus :

'My father died when I was young. I have a younger brother and sister. We had a house, and some goats and cows. When I was old enough I went to Constantinople to find work. I was servant at first to some Roman Catholic Sisters. I do not mind what religion people are if they will pay me. I earned money for my sister's dower, and we married her very well as soon as she was old enough. One day, when my brother was eighteen, he was gathering

firewood on the mountain with two other lads, and there came a Mohammedan Bey from Dibra with a large hunting-party. They carried off the three boys to Dibra and shut them in a cellar, and threatened to kill them all unless their friends paid £T.100 for each of them within six months. My mother was in despair. I came home. We sold all our beasts, but with that and all my savings we had only £60. When the time was nearly gone I managed to borrow £40 from X—; he is very rich, and says he is a patriot, but he made me pay 20 per cent. for it. We bought my brother back. He was nearly dead and covered with sores. He had been in the dark all the time. My mother washed his shirt four times, and still little beasts came out of it. He swore he would be revenged some day. When the bands were made he joined. The Turks in Constantinople were very frightened about the bands. All Macedonians were ordered to leave at once. I had to go. My master said it was nonsense, and that all would be over in a few weeks, and he would take me back. Now it is four months, and still we may not return! It is my wife's fault. She is a stupid woman of my village. She has no intelligence. Many times I have begged her to live with me in Constantinople. They are stupid, like animals, these women. She and my mother were afraid to leave the village. If they had come I should not now be a Macedonian. We should be in Constantinople, and I should be having good pay. Also I should have more sons. I came home one evening. In the village was a band, and my brother was already a 'chetnik.' They permit one man in a family to take care of the women. I remained. Next day the fight began. The band was beaten. They escaped to the mountains. Then the Turks



THE CLOCK-TOWER, RESNA.

came and burnt the village to the ground. All my goats and beasts were stolen. I lost everything, even twelve new shirts I had never worn. House and all I have lost to the value of £200. We escaped to the mountains. My poor old mother suffered very much. When it grew cold we came down and found a room in another village. One night my brother comes. He says his life is not safe, and he must fly to Bulgaria. He weeps and kisses me. "Danil," he says, "I leave my wife and children to your care." Now he is safe in Sofia. He writes it is a very nice place. And here am I with three women to take care of and five children. And my sister's husband is shot, and she has three small children. But for the English flour we should all be dead. It would be better to die. How can one live in such a land? Even in peace they rob us! Last time my field was sown with maize the tax-gatherers reckoned two kilos as twelve. They took toll of us at that rate, and we had scarcely any corn left.'

A doleful tale that is typical of this wretched land.

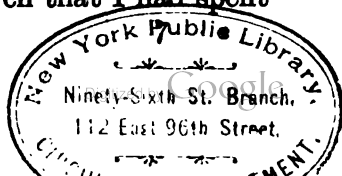
Resna is a dirty little place of recent date. About half the inhabitants are Moslem, most Albanian, some Slav. The Christians, as usual, are split into parties. My landlady was a Vlah, a bright and rather nice-looking woman, and her husband a polyglot mongrel who, when he went to church at all, preferred the Greek variety. Madam's sympathies were emphatically Greek. Of the two churches, the Greek was the smaller and by far the older; the Bulgarian large, brand-new, and, for such a hole of a place, surprisingly gorgeous. Cakes and sweet-stuff were on sale near the door of each on feast-days.

With a desire to be strictly impartial, I attended each upon Christmas Day of the Orthodox, lighted a

twopenny candle in each, and bestowed a similar sum upon the priest who begged for contributions at the door. Each treated me with kind consideration, and classed me as a male—that is, I was conducted to a spot near the front. The women in this land are usually either left outside in a sort of covered passage that frequently surrounds the church, whence they can only see and hear what is taking place through the windows, or they are shut behind a fine lattice screen at the further end of the building. There they while away the time by chattering loudly; the babies squall, and the place is thick with candle-smoke. From my exalted masculine position I observed that chattering and the sucking of sweets was the rule in our department also. And all the time the priest's long, yowling intonation rose above the general talk, the congregation crossed itself, we bowed our heads, were censed and splattered with holy water, and nobody showed the smallest reverence or devotional feeling. Nor was there anything to distinguish the 'Greek' congregation from the 'Bulgarian.'

The attendance at one or the other is merely a case of party politics. I stared at the chattering, careless crowd and the slovenly priest as he helter-skeltered the service, and remembered, with a start at the contrast, the last Orthodox service I had attended but six months before, upon St. Peter's Day, in the heart of the Montenegrin mountains, the rapt attention of the mountaineers, their almost painfully intense devotion, the lordly figure of the Archimandrite, and the reverence with which he read the words. My two Bulgarian comrades got a good deal more of the service than they had at all bargained for. I was too much interested to come away before the end; but as it was in the Bulgarian church that I had spent

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most of my time, they were quite satisfied. My landlady, meanwhile, was herded with the other women in the back part of the Greek church.

A Balkan man is very well aware of his superior position. When he wishes to pay me a compliment he generally says I am as good as a man; when he has added that it is a pity I am not a gendarme or a soldier his imagination is exhausted. Some have even told me, ingeniously, that the views held by the American missionary ladies about Woman were very dangerous, and have expected me to sympathize.

Life up at Resna was rough but wholly fascinating. I lived a very 'native' life, sharing two rooms with an Albanian and his wife, our assistants in the work, and using mine, the larger one of the two, as an office by day. It opened into a wide balcony, which was the correct place to wash in; the wind whistled through the door at night, and the pitcher in my room was a-clink with ice in the morning. Rolled in a native blanket on the floor, the cold did not trouble me, but I was bitterly aware what it meant for the destitute refugees. These often began to bang at my door and try to force an entrance as early as seven in the morning, when the chill gray dawn was breaking—unhappy wretches, clad only in rags, part of whose object in coming was to squat by my stove as soon as it was lit. From dawn to dark I was never alone; case followed case. Now a headman and a priest to beg help for their village, now a woman with a sick child; sometimes a wretched old woman, blue with cold, who cried and prayed for a little bit of blanket, and occasionally a well-fed youth, who demanded a gift because he had fought in the insurrection and was dismissed with difficulty. They all spoke at once. My interpreter and the Albanian translated simultaneously into French

and Servian of a sort. Those who were refused would never take 'No' as an answer, but sat down and prepared to spend the day.

The local doctor—a little man of the Greek persuasion, who was rumoured to possess a kind of diploma—discovered the hour when I was likely to be chewing my hungry way through a lump of boiled mutton, and used the opportunity to bring in patients and strip them, that I might see for myself that suppuration had diminished, and I had one day the pleasure of seeing him dress a small sore with saliva and cigarette-paper. Resna had possessed a properly qualified man, but he was shot in the last rising, and the Greek dared not visit patients outside the town without an armed escort.

Serious cases we sent up to Ochrida, and we mitigated the lot of incurables by the gift of bedding and food in their own homes. There was in this district little illness as the results of the rising, but a number of chronic cases of many years' standing. If ever a gap of a few minutes occurred in the stream of villagers, my landlady hastened up with her mother and the baby to console my solitude, for she was a kindly soul and had a horror of being alone. She meant it so well that I rarely had the heart to object, but I confess that, when I returned one night after a hard day's ride to find ten people and five young children waiting to cheer me up, I was not so pleased as they expected.

It may appear to the reader that the obvious way to secure quiet was to lock the door. I thought so myself at first. But the only result was a sort of bombardment, in which everyone took part. The life of the peasant has deadened his intellect, blunted his feelings, blackened his morals, but he has saved himself from extinction by developing a peculiar mulish, per-

sistent, boring obstinacy. It is a blind instinct, which can scarcely be dignified by the name of perseverance, for he applies it irrationally to every circumstance. It leads not infrequently to his undoing, but, properly directed, will doubtless play a large part in his ultimate liberation. It invariably caused me to open the door after a short resistance, but by no means always secured him the gifts he demanded.

Such was a day in the town—a drama in which most of the human passions turned up, good, bad, and indifferent, and all in the rough, with never a smear of Western varnish.

Then the villages had to be visited, and the truth of the tales sought for. There was a great charm about these expeditions. I swallowed a bowl of hot milk, having first put salt and pepper in it to hide the taste of buffaloes, and was in the saddle about eight. A chill white fog hid all the land; the roads—mere tracks pounded into deep pits—were frozen hard as iron, and need was to ride warily. I let my horse down twice before I had learnt this, but he recovered, luckily, without throwing me. We plunged across country, over hoary grass, cut off from all the world; the gendarme loomed ahead through the fog, sitting loose in his saddle, his rifle across his knees, the collar of his great-coat turned up. My man joggled behind, unhappily, for he was no horseman. We passed a heap of blackened ruins—‘that was a “kafana”’; another by the stream, hung thick with great spears of ice—‘that was the mill.’ We rode under bare and dripping trees at the entrance of a valley, and a village showed dim in the mist. Then came a fierce onslaught of great shaggy dogs, with bared white teeth, followed by the stoning of them and their retreat, vowing vengeance in thunderous undertones. We dismounted;

the gendarme, in whom I always took a great interest, for he was as yet innocent of European officers and reform, and generally an excellent fellow, sat in a shed with the horses and smoked. Then followed the house-to-house visit in company with my man, the headman of the village, and often the priest. We squished and slopped through mud or slipped on ice, according to whether it froze or thawed, climbed rickety wooden ladders to the upper floors, ducked our heads under low doorways. I choked in the pungent wood-smoke, questioned, listened, tried in a tangle of contradictory statements to strike an average of truth; shuddered, was wrung with pity; wondered and was disgusted in turn as adversity cast a fierce searchlight on human nature, and exposed its best and its worst with pitiless impartiality. Now and then we had a joke, and I caught women taking off and hiding their silver waist-clasps and ornaments, in order to look as poor as possible. Then came the writing of the list, on which everyone clamoured to be placed. We remounted and left the village, with its sins and sorrows, for there was yet another to visit before we turned our horses homewards, and cantered back in the dusk over ground now soft, that would freeze again ere morn.

It is ill riding in the dark on such tracks, and we clattered into Resna soon after the Turkish clock on the tower struck twelve, and told that the sun had set. My landlady flew to put wood in the stove, sprawled on her stomach before it, and blew violently into the hot ashes. There was a rush of folk who were waiting to see me, and, having dropped my man at his village, I wrestled with them single-handed. My meal was either cold or frizzled, for my landlady cooked it casually at any hour that occurred to her, and it either waited by the stove or did not, as Fate

ordained. But I was so hungry that a lump of solid food was all I required. I became a mainly carnivorous animal, and after seeing the dirt of the neighbourhood never tasted water.

Asquat on the floor, I wrote lists for the morrow's flour-distribution regardless of the talk carried on all round by people who were paying a visit either to one of my assistants, my host, or myself, and their oft-expressed belief that so much writing would make my head ache. My landlady, in answer to numerous inquiries, explained that I intended washing later in the water that was warming on the stove. This was a topic of never-failing interest. Then good-night, and, with the exception of a dog-fight or two under the window, peace and quiet.

But not always. One dree night I was waked, about one o'clock, by a portentous battering at the outer gate. Trusting it was in honour of some saint or other—for they had ushered in Christmas Day with similar cheeriness—I turned to go to sleep again! No such luck. I heard scrambling below. Someone went to the door; there was a parley. Worse and worse; they were coming upstairs! I vowed that I would not receive a visitor at that hour, even if it were the Vali himself. They knocked. I took no notice. They hammered; I still lay low. They banged, thumped, thundered and shouted. It occurred to me suddenly that to feign sleep under the circumstances was absurd, and laughing, in spite of myself, I cried:

'What is it?'

'Open the door,' they cried.

In these lands everyone sleeps fully clad in all his day garments, therefore it did not occur to them that I was not in a completely presentable condition. My neglect to open the door instantly produced efforts

which threatened to force it. I scrambled into an overcoat and let in an icy blast, my host, my hostess, her mother, and a man with a lantern. There was a 'telegramma' for me, they all said at once.

'To-morrow,' said I, in my limited vocabulary, for I guessed it would be in Turkish and unreadable.

'No, no,' said everyone.

It appeared that I must sign the receipt. Barefoot and frozen, I fumbled in the dark for a pencil, only to learn that it must be signed in ink. This I accomplished. Then the man proposed to translate the message, and the whole party squatted on the floor round the lantern.

After a long pause I was told that all he could understand was that it was for 'Hamham,' and had come from 'Brer.' I got rid of the whole party.

Fortunately few nights were so lively, for next morning meant boot and saddle again, and more tales of misery—hopeless, blank misery. In the burnt villages a few people were still living in the ruins under temporary 'lean-tos' of wattle and thatch. In some cases they had rebuilt their houses. And where the stone ground-floor was only partly ruined this was not a difficult task, as the larger part of the houses in this district are built of mud and wattle on timber frames, and all the necessary material was plentiful. Ten pounds, I was told, built a good house, five, a small one; a habitable shanty was even less. But few started rebuilding, though the Government had given money for the purpose; and they seemed unwilling to help one another. Some said they would only be burnt out again, others that summer and fine weather would soon be coming. Some left the neighbourhood; the majority crowded into villages that had escaped.

If they had money—and some had—the house-owner

charged them rent. If they had none, he not infrequently demanded flour of us as compensation. For one another's troubles they had, as a rule, very little sympathy. Four large families were often crowded into one cowshed, with their few goods, saved from the burning, piled around, the cattle, stabled at one end, providing a grateful warmth. I have seen a party of women warming themselves by sitting in a manure heap with their legs buried up to the knee, but people did not seem to think this an out-of-the-way thing to do.

When first travelling in the Balkan Peninsula, I was struck with the fact that the natives all seemed to feel both heat and cold far more than I do. When, however, I became acquainted with the mysteries of their costume, there was no room for astonishment. I smiled when I read a pathetic tale in the papers about refugee women who had run away 'in their nightgowns.' I knew those 'nightgowns.' Saving a shirt of coarse, handwoven linen, the Christian women of these parts wear nothing at all to cover their legs but a short pair of socks. On their arms and shoulders, however, they crowd as many wadded garments as they can obtain, and they protect the lower part of the body from the chill to which it would otherwise be dangerously exposed, by girding themselves with 20 metres of goat's-hair cord, knotting it all the way up the front so that it projects hideously and forms a sort of shelf upon which the lady rests her arms.

Half the amount of clothing, evenly distributed, would keep them warm, but they pile on garments above and shiver below. I have often stood out of doors bareheaded, and with nothing on my arms but the sleeves of a flannel shirt, interviewing women clad each in a wadded waistcoat and two wadded coats and head-wraps, but I was the only one that

was warm. When hot weather arrives, however, they gasp and perspire, for it rarely occurs to them to shed a garment, and anyone who possesses a fur-lined coat continues to wear it. To give them their due, I am bound to confess that, in the matter of suffering heroically for the sake of the fashion, they are quite up to the highest civilized standards.

In the winter they explain me by saying that I come from a far land where it is always cold. In the summer the highly educated talk of the well-known cold blood of the English.

Those who possessed sound garments felt the cold; those who had been burnt out in the summer, and whose clothes were now reduced to a mass of rags, suffered most bitterly, and there could be no possible doubt of their dire distress. I remember the wild gratitude of a woman, with two little children, who was absolutely destitute, as she sobbed, clung to me, and cried, 'You have saved us!'

In general, the horrors they had seen appeared to have had but slight effect upon them. The three or four intervening months had cured all nervous shock, if 'shock' there had been, for they are people of very low nervous organization. Nor, with their past history, is this to be wondered at. Once only did I find a case of 'terror' in the Resna villages.

A wretched woman sitting at a cottage door, when she saw my gendarme, threw herself at my feet with a blood-curdling shriek, clung to my knees, and prayed to be saved, and then fell on the ground, stiff and only partially conscious. She had seen her husband's brains battered out, and the sight of a man in uniform always brought on an attack, I was told. But as the fit appeared to be of an epileptic nature, she was probably subject to such before. The gendarme, whose

presence caused it, seemed much overpowered. He possibly knew better than any of us what manner of sights she had seen.

One has to be careful about ascribing such cases to the effects of the insurrection, however.

I heard harrowing tales, which were published in some of the papers, about women who had been driven mad, and went about barking like dogs. The only one of these I had the chance of examining proved not to be insane at all, but suffering from a peculiar form of hysteria which I have met with before in other parts of the Peninsula. It is not at all uncommon among the Balkan Slavs, and also, I am told, in Russia, and the so-called 'barking' is a sort of hiccough, caused by rapid and spasmodic contractions of the diaphragm. The local remedy, often efficacious, is to direct the patient to go to church on some special saint's day, to pray for relief and to abstain from making the noise while the service is going on. If she succeeds in doing so she is generally cured. This is an interesting example of cure by suggestion.

In most cases the result of the insurrection had filled them with a dull astonishment. They said they had been told that in the late Greco-Turkish War the Turkish soldiers had behaved very well, and that they had not expected any outrages or deeds of violence. They seemed to think they might kill without exciting reprisals. With their experience of long years and the tradition of centuries this sounds incredible, but they told me so repeatedly. Of the future they seemed to take no heed, and the past was already dulled. They lived from day to day with a sort of bovine stolidity, heavy, apathetic, interested chiefly in petty quarrels, and seeing that they got as much 'relief' as the people next door.

In the villages that were half Mohammedan, there had, as a rule, been no fighting, and therefore little looting, and these were crowded with refugees. When visiting them, I was able to see what the unrobbed houses were like. They, of course, contain nothing at all that West Europe considers necessary for comfort, but are very much better than the mass of the huts in which the peasants of Montenegro and North Albania live. I never, even in a burnt village, had to rough it in Macedonia as I have had to do in normal circumstances in the two other lands. Here the ground is so fertile that even with the rudest cultivation it yields abundantly, and but for the heavy and irregular taxation to which the poor wretches are liable they would, as peasants go, be well off. Even as it is they make a good living, for one of the leading Bulgarians declared to me that before the outbreak there was not a beggar near Resna. The Macedonian Committee has much to answer for. Judged by Balkan standards, the housing and living was a very great deal better than I had expected after reading the published accounts. And the poor physique and bad health of the people appeared to be brought about largely by their ignorance and their habits than by want.

CHAPTER VII

ON THE SHORES OF LAKE PRESBA

MEANWHILE doleful tidings poured in from the villages round Lake Presba—appeals for help from those yet unvisited, and rumours of small-pox. When you have once made up your mind to be Balkan you are always ready to start anywhere, at any minute. I rolled a native blanket in a waterproof sheet, put a spoon, a tin cup, a few medicines, etc., in a little bag, trusted entirely to luck that I should find food and not get wet through, and was ready for a week's travel. Every extra pound is a bother on horseback.

The Mudir decided that I must have two gendarmes, and as he had hitherto let me do just as I liked, I asked for Christians — chiefly because the Bulgars I was working with declared he would never allow it, also in order to 'sample' the new Christian gendarmes. However, he made no difficulty, and the only Christian in the local force was allotted to me.

The start took some time. Almost every man in this land, not excepting troopers and gendarmes, rides upon a fat and squashy pillow, which he straps on his saddle. In default of this he piles up rugs or blanketing, and no one could understand my taste for the bare leather. Regularly every day the pony came round with a 'pernitza' upon it, and regularly every day I had it removed and said it was not to come to-

morrow. But it always did, and they argued the point. A Montenegrin or Albanian horse-boy rarely requires telling a thing of this sort twice. It requires a week's hard labour to drive the glimmer of a new idea into a 'Macedonian.' On the sixth day the pony arrived pillowless, and I thought they had learned. But now, after three days' interval, here it was again. This time the populace was firm. A large crowd had come to see me off, and there was quite an excitement about it. I was not made of leather, they said, and the pillow was to stay where it was. They even brought a larger and fatter one. I began unbuckling the girth, and someone buckled it up again. A dozen people talked at once. According to Danil, they recounted the shocking state of their own persons when fate had deprived them of a pillow.

I learnt the great lesson that the native can be circumvented, but never reasoned with, climbed on top of the 'pernitza,' and, perched squashily, high above my beast, rode from the town. Safely outside, I got rid of the pillow, and the toughness of English hide formed a pleasing topic of conversation for many days. Danil and the gendarmes had to take care of that pillow, and long before the end of the tour said they were sorry they had insisted on its coming.

We left even the semblance of civilization that Resna possesses behind us, and made straight across country at a canter for the shores of the lake; for the gendarmes were in a sportive frame of mind, and poor Danil was left far behind. It was a casual sort of an expedition. Neither of my men knew the way after the first village or two. There are, of course, no roads, often no tracks. We followed trails of misery, picked up guides from place to place, and did not usually

know in the morning where we should spend the night.

The Christian gendarme, a large and jovial Vlah, was a great invention. He had been a tradesman at Resna, had enlisted because all trade was at a standstill, and had friends and clients in almost every village. He wanted me to help everybody, and to rebuild all the churches. He was greeted with great enthusiasm, and was wildly and aggressively Christian. He kissed the priest's hand, got himself blessed and sprinkled with holy water, when there was any about, and crossed himself industriously.

His excessive Christianity and his numerous friends led to his overshooting the mark badly on 'mastic,' the local drink, the second night, and a wild and drunken sing-song raged till past midnight. Next morning, overcome with shame, he came to me and said he had behaved like a pig; that he was sorry, and while he was with me he would drink no more mastic, because when he once began he could never leave off. To my surprise, he kept this promise faithfully, in spite of very great temptation, and Danil explained that the joy of the villagers on seeing for the first time a Christian who was allowed to carry a gun was the cause of the outburst!

The gentleman himself was obviously quite unaccustomed to carrying a weapon. He alternately spent much energy cleaning it and forgot all about it. On one occasion he left it behind him, to the vast amusement of his comrade, and we had to send back for it. He was a liberal-minded man, was bringing up one son as a Serb in Belgrade and the other as a Bulgarian, and his daughter was married to some other nationality, I forget which. His comrade, a Mohammedan Albanian—a long lean man deeply

pitted with small-pox, which gave him an unpleasantly moth-eaten appearance—was rather ‘out of it’ in this Christian company. The two kept up an endless argument about the rights and wrongs of the insurrection. They never agreed, but they never lost their tempers. The Christian pointed out the awful devastation, and the Moslem earnestly defended it.

‘Tell the lady,’ he would say, ‘that we were obliged to. They began it; they attacked us. They would kill every Turk’ (*i.e.*, Moslem) ‘in the land if they could. It is our land. We must defend ourselves.’

To which Danil added :

‘He does not understand. The land is really ours. Naturally it is we that must kill them.’

And no one knew when the killing must begin again. The land was raw with recent fighting—it was, so to speak, an aching wound, and either party lived in terror of the other.

We started often before it was quite light in the morning, whether it were rain, snow, or storm, and we rode till sundown. In all, we visited nineteen villages and two monasteries. I went into more than a thousand houses, and interviewed deputations from four other villages. At night we arrived, if possible, at an unburnt village, and slept and supped at the headman’s house. The horses were stabled below. We climbed up a ladder into the family dwelling. A crowd of women, who called me their ‘golden sister,’ kissed me on both cheeks, unless I resisted violently. They spread rush mats on the mud floor. We took off our boots and squatted round the hearth, and the master of the house threw on brushwood till the fire blazed high, and I could see to write out the necessary lists. In the better houses there was a big hooded hearth of mediæval pattern; in the poorer the rafters

overhead glittered black with smoke, and were festooned with dried fish, and, in houses that had escaped looting, with onions and salt meat cut into dice and threaded on string; often with bunches of plaits of hair, hung on a nail—ends to prolong ladies' pigtailed on bazar days.

Then the priest in his high black cap and shaggy locks and all the chief men of the village flocked in and settled down to hard drinking and tales of the rising. Even in burnt villages where it was hard to find a meal there was always mastic. Everyone drinks from the same bottle—a quaint pewter one decorated with red glass beads. It flew from mouth to mouth, pausing every few minutes for refilling, and the company sucked the bottle and chewed leaves from a bowl of raw salt cabbage, hard and woody, pickled in strong brine, or ate 'paprika,' the local pepper pod, and raised a colossal, incredible thirst. Weak mastic has little alcohol in it, but the strong variety is potent and fiery, and they tipped it down like water.

Many people came to see me, for they said, in most places, I was the only European who had stayed there except the Russian Consul. He had worked the land pretty thoroughly, and had left a tradition of fabulous wealth. The talk ran mostly on 'bands' and 'committees.' Of their poor little victories they were very proud. When they had surprised a small body of soldiers they killed the lot, and poured petroleum on the bodies and burnt them. Then no one would ever know where they had fallen, and they could not be avenged.

'I hope they were all dead when you burnt them,' I said.

'Who knows?' they replied oracularly.

About the committees they were usually very bitter. 'They took all our money, and are safe in Sofia. We have lost all.'

Saravov was very unpopular. The local leader, Arsov, many of them still believed in. But as a whole they dreaded the committee almost as much as they did the Turks.

I heard the same tale day after day—a hideous, squalid tale of wrong. Each village had been visited by secret agents, and the people lured by promises or forced by threats to join the movement. Each family had to pay heavy toll in cash or kind. The guns were mostly smuggled in by women, who carried them hidden in firewood or other goods. Then the rising took place—futile, disastrous, and foredoomed to failure. The wretched peasants, most of whom had rarely handled a gun, were led often by the schoolmaster, who, save that he could read and write, was but little better trained than themselves. They burned a Moslem house or two, made a plot to blow up the mosques which failed, allowed themselves to be trapped in a narrow valley; the survivors fled after a desperate struggle for life, and the troops fell on the village. Chiefly women, children, and old men remained in it and a few insurgents in hiding. There was a wild *sauve qui peut* when the soldiers came; a volley was fired into the thick. Some were killed, others suffered outrages at the hands of the enraged soldiery; the majority got away into the mountains, and stayed there till the cold drove them down. The women went into the villages at night to make bread from the pretty numerous stores of corn which, hidden in holes, had escaped looting. In some cases where the band had given much trouble the village was burnt to the ground, and the wrecking was so complete that

all the pots and pans were piled in heaps and smashed. The church was usually plundered and desecrated. Sometimes its floor was torn up in search of hidden treasure. And the whole rising fizzled out like wet powder. It seemed, in truth, when one was on the spot, to have been planned solely with a view to bringing about a wide-spread slaughter of these unhappy peasants. Had there been anything like a general conflagration planned for a particular day it might have stood a chance of at any rate temporary success. But it was a long drawn out series of petty bonfires. The troops extinguished one and rode on to the next.

The Macedonian Committee's action appeared to me marvellously ill-devised. Had the Moslems chosen they could easily have annihilated every village that rose. Perhaps this was what the Committee hoped.

Round Presba, too, it seemed that the people had believed there would be no reprisals. Their total inability to learn from experience staggered me. This time all was to have been different. 'And what was to have been the end of it?' They were to have had no taxes to pay, and would be allowed to carry guns and shoot Turks. This was their only idea of liberty. Even Danil and the gendarmes were surprised to hear we paid taxes in England. Lastly, they were to be repaid the money that the 'Committee' had 'borrowed' from them. In the whole long tour through the Presba villages, to my astonishment, I did not meet one single patriot (in truth, poor wretches! they had no 'patria'), and I found no trace of knowledge of the Great Bulgarian Empire. Out on the great lake in full view of the villages lies the tiny wooded island called Grad, and here Samuel, the last Tsar of the Bulgarian Empire, built his palace. I asked, by way of picking up local tradition, whether anyone lived on it.

No, but there must have been a monastery once, for there were ruins of a church. That was all they knew, and the ubiquitous Russian Consul had been there. Nor in Resna, among the better informed, did I find any more knowledge. Samuel and his empire were dead and forgotten, and I did not revive their story.

Danil, who was a town-made patriot of recent construction, was vexed with the villagers' apathy; but his efforts at rousing them had little effect. He tried hard to persuade them they were hardly used, because their Church service was in most cases conducted in Greek. But they bolted raw cabbage and washed it down with mastic, and only said it did not matter; many of them spoke Greek. The priest took a suck at the bottle, and was of the same opinion. He spoke the local Slav dialect himself for ordinary purposes, but he had learned all the services in Greek. It was a good service, and what did it matter? Danil was annoyed, and told me that they were very ignorant; really they were all Bulgarians, and ought to have Bulgarian priests, but they did not know. Nor, as far as I could see, did they care here. Once or twice when a man told me that he was a Serb Danil was put out, and told him he was not. A few said they were Greeks, but they all appeared 'much of a muchness.' In type they differed from the people of the Ochrida district. They were, as a whole, better looking the farther south one got. The aquiline nose and well-cut jaw that is common in Albania began to replace the broad flat face, the long upper lip, and the high cheek-bones of the folk farther north; and in the villages at the lower end of the lake the shirt worn outside became fuller and fuller in the skirt and developed into the 'fustanella' worn alike by Greek and Albanian. They confided largely in the Christian

gendarme, and the local fight was fought again for his benefit.

He and the Moslem generally came in with supper. The 'sofra,' a round piece of wood on legs 3 or 4 inches high, was brought in by the women of the house, and while we washed our hands the meal was laid upon it. A bowl of broth, the fowls it was made of scarlet with paprika, often a fish from the lake, a large flat loaf of steaming hot bread, and, if the house were at all well-to-do, a 'komad.' We ate with our fingers and a wooden ladle as tools, and I was the only one who made a mess and slopped things about. 'Komad,' the local idea of a delicacy, is calculated to upset the digestion of a hippopotamus. A huge mass of pastry is whacked and thumped till all possibility of rising is knocked out of it. Then it is rolled between the hands into a long, long rope, and this is coiled round and round in a large flat dish till the dish is full. It is covered with an iron plate, shoved in the ashes, and set to bake. When it is half cooked a quantity of sugar and water is poured over it, and the baking is finished. It comes to table a sodden mass, sticky, slab, leathery, and of incredible weight.

The peasants have suffered from many misfortunes, and 'komad' is one of them. Their diet table is, indeed, an odd one. Meat they seem to prefer heavily salted and dried into chips; some said it was the only way they ate it. Eggs they boiled stone-hard as a rule. Milk they do not care about, unless sour. Of bread, hot and heavy, they eat enough for an elephant, and of salt cabbages and onions cooked in pepper they never tire. I never saw people eat so enormously and get so little good from it. In peace times, and even after the insurrection, in the villages that had not suffered, the people have a far better food-supply, and

are better housed than the mass of Montenegrin peasants, even than some of the Voyvodas.

Barring the effects of the rising indeed, I saw nowhere the dire poverty that I met in Montenegro and the vilayet of Kosovo. But the Montenegrin is fit and strong on milk and maize porridge, while the better-supplied 'Macedonian' is a chronic dyspeptic, and the hardest drinker I know. Often too much accustomed to drink to get honestly drunk, he is soaked and soddened with alcohol so that he cannot do without it. Nor is this surprising, for mothers give mastic to sucking infants, and tiny children drink a heavy dose with no apparent effect.

When I asked how they had lived on the mountains, people almost always said they could not get enough mastic, and had undoubtedly felt the deprivation keenly.

After supper, mastic drinking as before, they discussed politics. No one wanted war, not even the Moslem.

'Everyone would be killed next time,' he said.

'The only thing,' said the Vlah, 'would be for a foreign country to save them. Greece had been freed by a miracle. Why not they?'

I knew nothing about the miracle, and they were astonished. The Turks, they said, outraged a little girl, and threw her body into the sea. Then God made the wind to blow, and the sea carried the corpse, uncorrupted, and threw it up on the shores of England. The people of England came down to the shore and found the dead child. Filled with horror, they went and told their King, and he sent his warships, and Greece was freed. Everyone knew the story, even the Moslem, and believed it firmly, nor could I shake them. I trust it is not equally well known on the coast, for,

driven by superstition, I believe there are many who would not shrink from an attempt to summon the British navy in the same way.

They all gave me messages for the various Consuls—one about his son in prison, another about his stolen pigs, and Danil told about the twelve new shirts he had never worn. The gendarmes begged that the British Consul would apply for their pay.

The Christian, being only newly-enlisted, was but two months in arrears, and the joy of carrying a gun made up somewhat for the deficiency, but the Moslem wanted seven months' pay, and was very unhappy about it. They all discussed what would be the best thing for the Christian gendarmes to do at the next rising, and decided that they would all take their rifles and be off, which the Moslem considered a good joke. One night we talked of the Sultan. He, said the company, had murdered Abdul Aziz, and locked up his brother Murad. Murad was not mad, but was locked up because he wished to be just to the Christians. I remarked that Abdul Aziz was said to have killed himself. Moslem and all, they scouted the idea. It was well known that he had been heard shrieking for help, but the palace guards had kept the doors, and no one had been allowed to enter till there was silence. Danil vowed that his grandfather had been in Constantinople at the time, and had heard it from one of the men employed to sweep up in the palace. Another proof was that the Sultan would kill anyone; 'but naturally!' said Danil. 'So why not Abdul Aziz?'

When I had had enough of the conversation I rolled up in my blanket and went to sleep. Sometimes almost the whole party slept in the room, sometimes they didn't. It depended how many rooms there

were. I believe I was generally favoured with the company of the more exalted.

To detail the tramp from house to house, the inspection of flour-bins and blankets, and the search for disease, the dull monotony of misery in every village, would weary the reader. I will mention only the more striking events of the tour.

Four villages had small-pox. In this almost unvaccinated land you have small-pox before you are five, and either die or are afterwards immune. No doctor visits these outlying parts. No precautions of any kind are taken to prevent the disease spreading, and the family shares the blanket of the patient. I had conscientious scruples about carrying infection myself at first, but came to the conclusion that in the general mix-up one more or less could make no difference. I found few adult cases; those were of a virulent type, semi-conscious, and with confluent pocks. The epidemic was passing over, and the surviving children were beginning to run about scarred, but recovering.

The doctor, indeed, who was sent up, on my report, to vaccinate around the infected area, said it could hardly be called an epidemic; there had not been more than thirty deaths in any place. I thought of the people at home, who are afraid to ride in a St. John's Wood omnibus if they hear of a case at Willesden, and smiled.

The small-pox chase, in fact, was not without a certain grim humour. At one village, when I was leaving, I was asked to give a little backshish to the priest's wife.

'Poor woman!' they said; 'two of her little children are ill of the small-pox, one has died, she has had it herself and is not yet well, but she cooked your

supper in her own house and brought it here for you ! Another time a woman rushed out of a house, seized me in her arms, and kissed me upon either cheek until I struggled free. Her three children were down with small-pox, and this warm greeting was an appeal to me to give help.

That a certain percentage of children must always die of this disease was an accepted fact, as it was in prevaccination days in England, and the people took it stolidly. At one village there were even signs of a festivity. Hardly were we settled round the fire when a lad, very gay and smart in a red sash and a clean white fustanella, came in with a troop of friends. Shyly he offered me a glass of hot mastic.

'Take it,' said Danil ; 'he is a bridegroom. You must drink his health.'

He looked about fifteen. As a matter of fact, he was just seventeen and the bride fifteen.

'They are very young,' said I, as the company chaffed him.

'It is true they are young,' said Danil philosophically. 'But it is better so, they say. Twenty children have just died of the small-pox. *Maintenant on fera des autres, mais naturellement.*'

And the bridegroom withdrew in a storm of jokes which Danil discreetly left untranslated.

A bride is far from holding the exalted position that she does in the West. In one house was a young woman in gaudy costume. A silver waistclasp and strings of obsolete Austrian kreutzers, roughly silvered, gave her an air of importance. But the poor thing had to wait on everybody, women included. She kissed our hands with painful humility, and, as far as I could see, was not even allowed to sit down without permission.

‘But naturally,’ said Danil, ‘she is the son’s wife. They have only been married a few months!’

Sometimes I found traces of the old Slavonic family communities. Once a man, with the popular Servian name Milosh, gave sixty-three as the number of his family, and I found they formed the greatest part of the village. But I only found five other instances (families of from twenty to twenty-nine) in this district.

Many villages had a tale of horror. It is hard to arrive at the truth on this subject, for my experience is that these people are hopelessly inaccurate in reporting everyday affairs even when they have nothing to gain by it and do not mean to be untruthful. It is not so much a wish to deceive as a very low intelligence, which does not know what accuracy is. For instance, ‘five’ means a few; ‘a hundred,’ a great many—quite loosely. Also you may hear of the same murder in several villages from various friends of the deceased, and reckon it as four, if not careful.

I avoided leading questions as likely to suggest answers, and noted the information which dribbled out in the course of conversation. I do not guarantee numbers, but that the usual atrocities of a wild soldiery had been committed was beyond doubt. Podmачeni headed the list with forty-five killed, including twenty women outraged and disembowelled; the village partly burnt and wholly plundered, and the church wrecked. Krani came next with ten women stripped and outraged. There were four villages burnt out, and for dree misery Nakolech was the worst. Save some Moslem houses nothing was left of it, and its wretched inhabitants, squatting in mud-and-wattle huts, were living on the English flour and the fish they caught in the lake. To add to their misfortunes a number of soldiers had been camped alongside the

village since the summer, and stabled their horses in the church.

The state of the church was such that people doubted if I should be allowed to see it. An employé of the relief agency had already been refused.

Some soldiers were washing clothes at the entrance. The gendarmes said I had come to see the church. I added, 'Tell them to be quick,' and after a short delay it was opened for me. It was not only littered with stable manure, but had also been recently and filthily defiled in every way, and was entirely wrecked. The wreckers had even been at the trouble of scratching out the eyes of all the saints they could reach.

The Vlah took off his cap and crossed himself boldly before a group of soldiers who crowded round the door and looked black at us. The state of the church was so disgraceful that it was beyond all words.

I think the Moslem gendarme spoke first.

'Tell the lady,' he said very eagerly, 'they were obliged to, else we should all have been killed. We must do these things to frighten them. They would kill us all and take our land.'

There was a certain feeling of thunder in the air. I withdrew as soon as I had looked well round. Outside were the commanding officer and another, who did not look pleased, but said nothing, and turned away abruptly. The gendarmes went to water the horses, and I went into the priest's hut.

Several men were waiting here to speak to me. They were terrified of the soldiers, and prayed me to have them moved. They accused them of no violence, but said they stole the washing put out to dry, and so the few poor garments saved from the burning were lost. (Here Danil told about his twelve shirts.) What they dreaded was that some day they

would all be massacred. The state of the church was bad enough to report, but no one could tell me the name of either officer or regiment. However, I learnt it later, and the Russian consulate took up the affair. I believe the officer was transferred.

The churches had suffered heavily, and it appeared that the Moslem gendarme's idea about the moral effect of church-wrecking was correct. The people were deeply affected by it. Until the churches were repaired and consecrated all religion was at a standstill. It was impossible to pray.

I asked if they could not hold a service in a room.

The priest was astonished.

It was perfectly impossible, he said. Without the proper apparatus nothing could be done.

Christianity here consisted entirely, apparently, in the ceremonial performed by the priest and a hatred of Mohammedanism.

I do not think I ever saw the picture of a saint in any of these houses. The ikon and lamp so conspicuous in the houses of the Serbs, the Montenegrins, and the Orthodox Albanians, was wanting. Nor did the people invoke Christ or the saints, or cross themselves at meal-times or before going to rest for the night. They seemed to possess none of the religious fervour that usually is so marked a characteristic of Orthodox peasants. They had more faith, apparently, in the amulets they wore than in anything else. Some of these were very odd. One was a green glass heart, two pink beads, and an English sixpence.

At German, named after St. German, one of the first missionary priests to the Slavs, we came across the one cheery episode of that nine days' tour. The village is a 'chiftlik' belonging to the Sultan's mother.

It had been but partially looted, and the church had not suffered. A festival was in full swing in honour, Danil said, 'of St. John, who did things with water.' Gay in their best clothes, the people came in procession from church, the women carrying sheaves of straw prettily plaited, and we followed up the valley. The Moslem thought he would not come, but the Vlah made him.

It was freezing hard, and a white fog spoilt the quaint scene. The priest, robed all in blue and gold, blessed the little stream which ran black between its frosted banks. He threw in a crucifix; there was a great scramble of men and boys to be first at the stream; the women dipped in their sheaves, and everyone crossed themselves three times with the holy water. The Vlah made all the responses in a loud voice, rushed wildly for the water, and came back very wet with his fez full of it for me. I made the proper signs, to the delight of the company, and he threw the rest over his Moslem comrade, who took it calmly.

Shortly after my return to Resna I read an English newspaper article, in which an impassioned young journalist described the crushed condition of the Christian gendarmes, who, he said, were made to black the boots of their Moslem confrères. I don't think I ever saw any gendarmerie boots that had been blacked by anybody, and the Christian gendarmes I had were all very cheerful; but things look so different when seen from newspaper offices.

The priest filled a caldron, and we processed back to the village. Here, I was told, he would like to bless me. I said I should be very pleased, but nothing happened. Then, it appeared, he could not bless me till he knew my name and that of my father. I supplied

them; he murmured a few words; he dabbed holy water on my face with a bunch of dried, sweet basil (the holy 'vasilikon'), signed me with the cross, gave me the crucifix to kiss, I dropped a coin in the water-pot, and the ceremony was complete. When we rode away the Vlah carried a bunch of the holy basil stuck triumphantly in the muzzle of his gun.

At Rambi the usual state of affairs was reversed. It was a mixed village, and the Moslem half, with the exception of the mosque, had been looted and burnt by the Christians. The Moslems had retorted later by looting the Christians pretty completely, but I was told of no outrages. The place appeared to have been a very well-to-do one. It was once the local seat of Government. The headman's house was a really good one, and he valued his losses at £T1,000. They included two gold-coin necklaces. In this house was a mysterious Albanian in a cartridge-belt, who was very polite to me and made me coffee. I asked about him in private.

'He is a good Turk,' I was told. 'The owner of the house pays him to live here, and gives him all his food. He protects the house from being burnt. But all his friends come to feed here, too; and now the master has hardly any money left, and does not know what to do. If he tells the good Turk to go, the house may be burnt down next day.'

When I left, three friends—smart young fellows, with guns and sporting dogs—were occupying the best room. We met many such on our journey. Then the Christians said: 'To-day we dare not gather fire-wood; the Turks are out on a hunting-party. They would shoot us, and say it was an accident.' But I heard of no such thing taking place.

On the shores of the lake I was promised a wonderful

sight; it was the one great sight of the neighbourhood—the hoof-prints of Marko's horse! Did I know about Marko? He was once a great King, and he rode upon a winged horse. Marko Kraljevich, the brave and greatly-admired hero of the Servian ballads, who was the last Serb ruler of this district (fourteenth century), was not forgotten. Christian and Moslem alike knew of his exploits. It was a fine wild scene—fit background for a mediæval warrior on a winged steed—and the fact that the marks bore no resemblance to hoof-prints was of no moment, for Sharatz was a magic horse.

We scrambled by a stony mountain-track to Nivitza, a wretched little fishing village on the other side of the lake. The people here had fled to the island of Grad during the insurrection, so had escaped; but the village had been robbed, their fishing-tackle destroyed, they had an outbreak of small-pox, and were in great distress. It was a miserable hole of a place, but possessed a large new church that was surprisingly fine. This had been robbed of its silver candles and altar-plate, but was otherwise intact. One day, said the people enthusiastically, that great and good man the Russian Consul had come here with some friends to shoot birds. He had stayed a week, paid them lavishly, and had asked if they would like to have a church of their own. Here was the church. He must undoubtedly have been immensely rich.

They begged me to visit the island and see the ruined churches on it. The priest promised to go with me next morning, and I arranged to cross the lake and send the horses round. Unluckily it blew hard when the time came, and the lake was fringed with breakers. It did not look very terrible, but the caiks were cranky affairs, and no one, even for a bribe,



IN THE HEAD MAN'S HOUSE, NIVITZA.

dared put to sea. I was very much disappointed, and had, reluctantly, to return the way I came, meaning, when I had finished my list of villages, to return at once from Resna to explore the island. But the gods thought otherwise.

Children in the villages told curious tales. They played at insurrections, and, oddly enough, the parents found it amusing. At one place a tiny boy of four came straight up to the gendarmes and asked for a 'fisik' (cartridge). This he solemnly wedged into the handle of the tongs, and, at the word of command, went down on one knee and brought his weapon smartly to his shoulder.

'Oganj bit'! ('Fire!') cried his grandfather, and the child dropped flat behind a cushion and aimed at us over the top.

Arsov, the local leader, had taught him this trick, and he repeated it over and over again to the admiration of the company. Even after we had ceased talking to him he wandered round the room uncannily, and continued to cover us with his weapon from different points of vantage till the gendarme restored the 'fisik' to his belt.

Poor little 'oganj bit'! his father had been shot, his mother was quite destitute. I almost volunteered to take him home with me. But in the next village was a little girl who called me 'auntie' straight off and went to sleep in my lap, and I nearly took her too. Danil was delighted with her, and translated all her chatter.

The Turks, she said, were very naughty people, and had stolen her new red stockings and the little shirt her mother had made her. Now she had to wear odd stockings, and was very cross about it. If the Turks came again she should hit them very hard.

They had burned down her house, and her father had gone to build it up again, but she would stay where she was, lest the Turks should steal her new earrings, of which she was very proud.

I was asked to adopt any number of children. I might teach them any religion I pleased if I would only take them to a land where there were no Turks, and give them enough to eat. Some of these unfortunate little things, I am glad to say, have found a home and excellent training in the orphanage started for the purpose at Salonika by the Rev. E. Haskell.

The whole tour was pretty gruesome, and Pretor, the last place on my list, was one of the most miserable. It was a little hole of a place, and all plundered. Even the best house had no glass windows, holes in the floor and a huge hole in the roof for chimney. The master of the house, a broken old man, pointed to a spot near the door. This was where his wife was shot; the blood ran down there by the steps; she died almost at once. Then they had to fly for their lives, and had no time to bury her. When, after three months, they returned, he collected her bones and buried them, but someone, he regretfully added, had broken them. He made no complaint; he simply related the occurrence, and asked that I should be told. Here everyone was in great terror. Tax-collecting had begun. The burnt villages were exempt from taxation, but to make up for the expenses caused by the rising, the taxes were raised everywhere else—the cow tax to 10 piastres per cow per annum, and the pig tax to 12½ (two shillings and sixpence), for only the Christians keep pigs. 'Ici,' as poor Danil said, though it was not quite what he meant—'ici, seulement les cochons sont Chrétiens.' There is a certain grim humour, too, about taking two shillings and tenpence per head road tax

in villages which have no road anywhere near them. Plundered of nearly all their belongings, the poor wretches had been unable to pay the rates they were assessed at, and were in terror lest the gendarmes should return for it. One woman, who came in sobbing, said she had offered her children to the tax-gatherers, for they were all she possessed. Another, old and blind, said the soldiers had taken all her oats in the autumn for their horses, and now she was to pay tax for them.

When night came I found that no one in the village dared sleep with my two guardian angels, so there was nothing for it but to have them myself. This had happened once before. They were very civil, and came and wrapped my feet up tenderly when they thought I was asleep. But the Vlah snored like a thunder-storm, and the Moslem got up and made coffee when ever it occurred to him. So it was about as peaceable as sleeping in a kennel of hounds. When at last I slept, I was wakened by a gentle patting, and there was the Moslem with a cup of coffee he had made for me. It was 3.30 a.m. ! I growled and went to sleep again, but the kind creature made me another at five. They were both wide awake, so it was useless to try to sleep. We piled on fuel, and they smoked by the fire. It was freezing hard, and we could see the stars brilliant through the big chimney-hole. They said they feared I had slept badly, but that one soon got used to this sort of thing, and with a month in barracks and a Martini, I should make an excellent gendarme. Then by the firelight, Danil interpreting, the Moslem said he had something to tell me.

He had a great friend, a Mohammedan Albanian, who came from his own town (a place, by the way, that has a wild, bad reputation for brigandage). This

friend had lived for years near Resna. When the rising took place he said he had always been friends with the Christians, and would not desert them. He joined Arsov's band, fought gallantly, and did much message-carrying, and, being a Moslem, was not suspected by the authorities. Finally, he escaped over the borders with the band. The Government learnt of his doings, captured his three small children, and threatened to cut their throats if he did not appear by a given date. He thereupon returned and gave himself up. He was sent into Asia as an exile, and all his property was confiscated. Now, his wife and children were in hiding near Resna, were entirely dependent on charity, and in dire want. Would I help them? It was true they were Moslems, but they had acted like Christians, said the gendarme naïvely. He was very eager. We talked it all round till the clammy gray dawn crept through the holes in the walls, and having breakfasted on bread and raw mastic, we rode back to Resna through a bitter, icy wind without my having made any promises. I was pretty dirty when I got there, as I had not had my clothes off for eight days, but I learned I was wanted almost at once at Ochrida, and there was such a lot to do that I had to leave such details till the evening.

Resna entirely corroborated the gendarme's tale, and wished help to be given. I asked to see the woman and children, but was told it was impossible; my visit would arouse suspicion. The gendarme came next day, bringing a ragged little boy with him as a specimen. I asked for the woman's name. He told me, but prayed me not to put it in our list, because, as he ingenuously said, the police might find her out. None of our Christian employés had the least fear that the goods would go astray, so the conveying of them was

finally left to the Moslem gendarme, who fetched them in the evening, in order that the Government, of which he was a fanatical supporter, might not find out.

I was asked by the Christians to help this case. Just afterwards I had a very different appeal. Would I knock two names off the list? They had been put on before I came, and had drawn rations once, but they were spies, and must not have any more. They had been in Arsov's band, and had gone with him to bury the guns before leaving for Bulgaria. They left with the band at night, but doubled back in the dark, and were seen next day leaving the town with the Mudir and some troopers. A hundred and fifteen rifles was the result of the ride. Arsov sent a message that they had deserted, and he suspected them, but the deed was already done.

'I wonder,' said the man who had come to take my place—'I wonder that they are alive!'

'Monsieur,' said Danil earnestly, 'there is no one here now that can do it. But later, I swear to you, it will be done. *Mais naturellement.*'

I had been over a month in the district, and was sorry to leave Resna and all the people I was interested in, and especially sorry to give up the visit to the island of Grad, but I was needed urgently, and left for Ochrida next day.

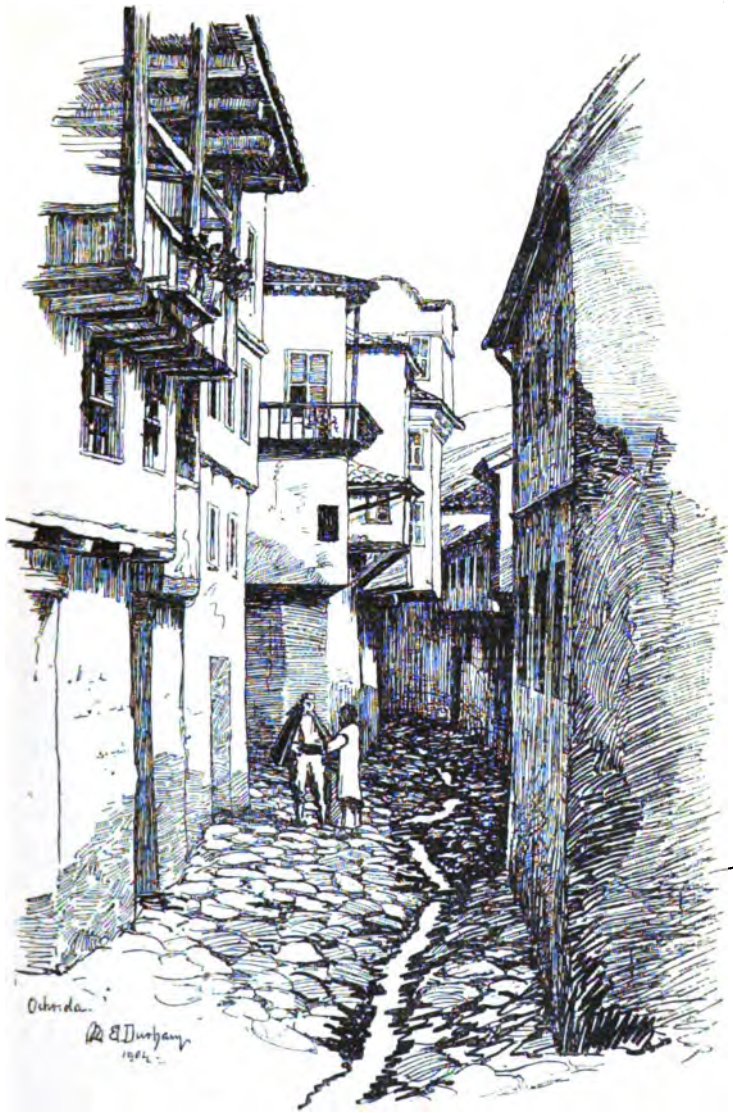
CHAPTER VIII

OCHRIDA

‘Tis all a Chequer-board of Nights and Days
Where Destiny with Men for Pieces plays :
Hither and thither moves, and mates, and slays.’

OCHRIDA hangs on a hillside, and trails along the shores of a lake that half Europe would flock to see were it not in this distressful country—a lake of surpassing beauty, second to none for wild splendour. The purple-and-silver glory of its snow-capped mountains fades into a mauve haze beyond the dazzle of its crystal waters. Its awful magnificence grips the imagination, and, in mad moments, awakes a thrill of sympathy for the unknown men who painfully hewed out tiny chapels in its flanking cliffs, and lived and died alone above its magic waters. There were times when I should not have been surprised to hear the white Vila of the ballads shriek from the mountains ; and the tale of the two brothers, as told by the boatman, explained the structure of the rocks better than geology.

Upon that mountain-side there lived a man many years ago—who knows how long ? He was very rich. He had many hundreds of sheep ; some say thousands. When he died he left them to be divided between his two sons. But the elder was a very wicked man. He took all the finest sheep, and gave only a few that were



A STREET IN OCHRIDA.

weakly to the younger. Then God was angry with the elder brother, and struck his flock with barrenness ; but the ewes of the younger all bore twins. Soon the flock of the elder was the smaller of the two. In great wrath he sent for his brother, and demanded to exchange flocks, and the younger refused. Then they fought on the point of that great rock which you see above you. They fought all day until they were both killed, and their blood ran down the cliff into the lake, and the rocks are red to this day, as any man can see.

‘ If there were only another Government here, how beautiful this lake might be ! ’ sighed my comrade. ‘ We might have a steamboat with coloured lights and a band ! ’

One should even give the Devil his due ; there is one point, and one only, for which I am grateful to the Sultan : so long as he reigns there will never be a road by which a trip tourist can get up-country, nor a hotel in which he can stay and play ‘ Arry.

Ochrida, the town, is mean and squalid. The houses, though modern, have a strangely mediæval appearance, for they are built of timber and plaster with widely-projecting upper storeys, and in the narrower streets folk can almost shake hands with their neighbours over the way. But they are for the most part nineteenth-century buildings hastily run up. The lath and plaster work is of the most gim-crack sort, and tumbles fast to pieces ; the place is poor ; few repairs are undertaken, and modern ruins moulder on all sides. As for the streets, they are steep, narrow, and crooked on the hillside in the Christian quarter, and rugged with the usual Turkish pavement of odd-shaped stones jammed haphazard together. When it rains it pours. Then garbage of every kind is hastily shovelled into the street, and

races down to the lake in stinking torrents. After rain the people drink water that is turbid and yellow—‘*la soupe dysentérique*,’ as the doctor pleasantly called it. It is not surprising that Ochrida’s death-rate is about four times that of London. There are awful central gutters, and black, unspeakable intervals haunted by the unlaid ghosts of the stench of all the centuries; for it is an old, old site, and is claimed by all the peoples of the Balkans with such jealous ardour that I doubt, for example, if the Bulgars would allow a single one even of its foul odours to date from anything but the Great Bulgarian Empire.

It is a town in which you can scarcely look out of a window without being suspected of doing it for political purposes; a town in which each party strives to prevent your views from becoming ‘prejudiced’ by telling you the ‘truth’ (that is, horrible tales) about everybody else. I do not know a spot where ‘earth hunger’ can be better studied and observed. At Resna I was only on the edge. At Ochrida I had a most exhilarating feeling of being in the thick of the fray.

All the land around was a hell of misery! We lived on a thin crust of quiet, beneath which surged a lava-bed of raw primæval passions and red-hot race hatreds into which no Power dare thrust its fingers for fear of having them burnt off. It was a position of such absorbing interest that, with apologies to my friends, I must confess I never wanted either European comrades or books. Someone lent me a George Meredith and a Maeterlinck, but, compared with the human documents around, they were masses of dilute drivel, and unreadable. The study of the forces that underlay the mass of surrounding suffering seemed the only thing worth living for; its temporary relief but court-plaster on a cancer.

War between Russia and Japan, not yet declared, was expected daily. I had wandered about the Balkan Peninsula for four summers, and I had struck recent Russian trails. I believed that the immediate history of the Near East hung on the issue of the inevitable Far Eastern struggle, and I waited to see which would draw first blood with almost savage interest.

Ochrida is gloriously in the thick of things. It has belonged in turn to everyone that has ruled in the Peninsula. First to Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great; then to Rome, when it was an important station on the Via Egnatia. Rome, it is true, does not claim it now, but it lies within Austria's possible line of march to Salonika, and Italy watches her own and Albanian interests with a jealous eye. She has recently, with great skill, planted her own gendarmerie officers in this district, and by thus checking for the time being the designs of both Austria and Russia upon it, has caused them both to explain loudly to Europe that they do not like having an Italian General at the head of the reform scheme.

Ochrida next was included in the Byzantine Empire. Then it was part of Simeon's Big Bulgaria. It was even the capital of Samuel's Western Bulgaria for seventeen years, and the residence of the Bulgarian Patriarch. Therefore, say the Bulgars, it is clearly Bulgarian.

'But we took it then,' say the Greeks. 'We smashed your big Bulgaria, and destroyed your Patriarchy. It was never re-established here. Ochrida is clearly Greek.'

The Normans even held Ochrida for a little while, and they make themselves quite peculiar by being the only ones of its former possessors who do not hanker for it now. I am sure, if they only knew it, they

would like it, for the smaller towns of Normandy are the only ones I know that at all approach it in filth.

Ochrida next belonged to the Despots of Epirus, whose principality, together with North Albania, corresponds fairly well with modern Albanian aspirations, for there is nothing new under the Balkan sun. John Asen came along, and swept the whole territory, Despot and all, into his Bulgar-Vlah Empire. And then it became Servian along with almost all the rest of the Peninsula. Even after the fall of the Servian Empire it formed part of the realm of the beloved Marko Krajevich, and, to come to quite modern days, Ochrida supplied a chieftain who fought under Karageorge for the freeing of Servia. Moreover, the Slavs were there before ever the Bulgar arrived. Ochrida is, therefore, clearly Servian. But if it comes to a prior claim, the Illyrians were there before anyone. Therefore Ochrida belongs to their descendants, the Albanians. Moreover, it was held and fortified by the great Ali Pasha. As we have seen, when Slav power waned the Albanians spread back over the lands from which they had been driven, and regained power. Ochrida has been more or less Albanian ever since, and, until quite lately, both Ochrida and Presba were rightly described by travellers as the Albanian lakes.

Everyone's claim to Ochrida is perfectly clear, but no one else will admit it. Meanwhile, Ochrida is the Sultan's—till the others agree about it. Rather more than half the inhabitants are Moslem, mostly Albanian, and possession is nine points of the law.

The situation would be farcical were it not so bloody. I vow the place is dizzy with propaganda. Even the Vlachs, not to be out of the fashion, have a church (a Greek one, that is) of their own here. The dear little Vlachs! They claim no lands, but they

keep planting little schools wherever they go, and no one knows on which side they mean to play ultimately. Meantime, they are as interesting and as valuable to all parties as is the Irish vote at home, and everybody says fervently, 'For Heaven's sake, don't let us quarrel with the Vlahs!' Even the Sultan, aware that he exists on the differences of his Christian subjects, has smiled upon them recently, and rather encourages their propaganda. As there is money in it, we may confidently expect the number of Vlahs to increase. I heard, for instance, of a priest who had been a Bulgarian for years, but who has now discovered that he is really a Vlah. As the Vlahs pay their priests at a higher rate, the discovery was a very fortunate one for him.*

The Vlahs are waiting to see 'which way the cat hops,' and meanwhile do odd jobs all round. They did a certain amount of letter-carrying for the Bulgars in the insurrection, but they live on very good terms with the Albanians and Turks, and, I fancy, are likely to throw in their lot with Albania ultimately.

Nor is this hurly-burly of history and politics peculiar to Ochrida. It is common, with variations, to every town of any importance in no man's land. While this state of things continues it is useless for anyone to put labour or money into any commercial enterprise. The population lives, like Mr. Micawber, in a constant state of 'waiting for something to turn up,' and, not unnaturally, becomes more and more demoralized.

Ochrida boasts of several antiquities all jealously

* On February 1, 1905, the Turkish Government granted permission to the Vlahs to have a church in which their own language is used. This puts them politically on a level with the Greeks and Bulgars, and is likely to have a marked effect in Balkan politics.

claimed by everyone. On the top of the hill stands the fine old Byzantine red-brick church of St. Klima (Clement), whose body is enshrined within. He was one of the seven wandering priests from Thessalonica who bore Christianity into this wild land, and converted the Slav peoples. His brethren are not far off. St. Naum sleeps at the other end of the lake; the ruined church of St. Zaum on the lakeside and the rock-hewn chapel of St. Spaso (or Erasmo) commemorate others, and bear witness to the fact that it was to Greece primarily that the Slav peoples owed their civilization.

I was amazed to hear a tale that the church was a Bulgarian building of the seventh century. The church itself said it was quite middle-aged, and could not be earlier than the twelfth or thirteenth century, but I had not the knowledge requisite for reading the inscriptions. Germans, however, know everything, and from a heavy archæological work I have since unearthed a translation: 'This church was built (rebuilt?) in the time of Andronikos Paleologos and Irene and Makarios, Archbishop of Justiniana Prima and all Bulgaria, in 1331.' It was probably rebuilt, and the fragments of marble in the walls and some of the piers of the porch, which have 'Ravenna cushions,' belonged to the earlier structure.

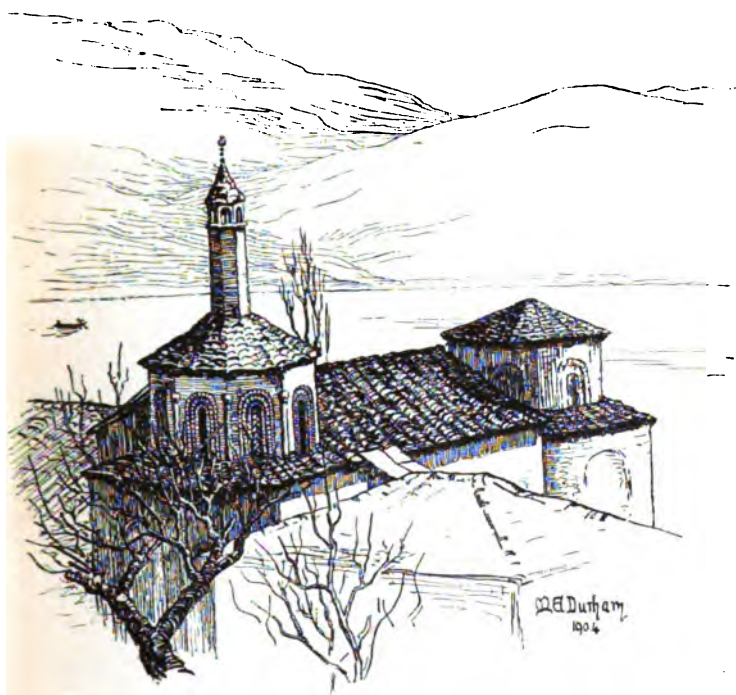
Justiniana Prima was the birthplace of Justinian, who was of Slavonic blood. It was the seat of an Archbishop and of a Prefect. Its exact situation is uncertain. Some have identified it with Ochrida itself or with Struga; other authorities place it at Kostendil, near Sofia. The occurrence of the name in this inscription, and the fact that it comes before Bulgaria in the Bishop's title, is of very great interest. The church is said to possess a valuable old library, notably a church codex extending over very many

years, an examination of which led Von Hahn to doubt whether the Bulgarian tongue had ever again overpowered the Greek in the church at Ochrida.

I was especially anxious to see the old Slavonic books, but though I applied for permission the first week of my arrival, and both the Bishop and his secretary said there would be no difficulty about it, I was put off every week with most childish excuses, and in the end told I might see only the catalogue. Such was the chattering and mystery about it that I wondered at last whether the library, or the Slavonic part of it, had secretly flitted to St. Petersburg, as so many others have done, and should like to hear of someone who has seen it recently.

Down below, nearer the lake, defaced by a minaret, and much mutilated, stands all that is left of Ochrida's old cathedral, St. Sofia. How much truth there is in the tale that it is one of the many built by Justinian, and contemporary with St. Sofia at Constantinople, I cannot ascertain, but the body of the church, now used as a mosque, is undoubtedly very old, and the eagles of Byzantium appear on the pavement.

The Hodja who admitted me told me of a miraculous oil that flows from a certain stone, and also of a part of the roof which no one dare enter for fear of a great evil befalling. It appears to be haunted by a Christian ghost, who defends a little stronghold up aloft. Both miracles, maybe, are connected with its former use as a church. The few fragments of fresco that remain are too faded to tell anything. The Hodja further volunteered that he would have visited me, but feared, for in the present state of things it was not safe for a Moslem to be friends with a Christian. The trouble was all the fault of the Turks, who had treated the Christians very badly. Whether this sentiment was



CHURCH OF ST. SOFIA, OCHRIDA.

intended to increase his backshish or was genuine I do not know.

Joined to the main body of the church at the west end is a large building, which seems to be a later addition. A long Greek inscription in big brick letters forms a frieze, and has been deciphered as: 'Erecting this tent, he taught in all ways the divinely revealed law to the people of Mysia.' Mœsia being the Roman name of Bulgaria and Servia, this building must have been one of the early missionary schools for the Slav people. It is used for military stores, and I could not go inside it. On the hill to the west of the town is a ruined mosque, obviously the remains of a very early church, and on the promontory is a picturesque red-brick church, which is mediæval. None of these buildings, to my mind, belong to Dushan's days.

The last and most disputed of all Ochrida's monuments are the great walls and castle which in old days guarded it from land attack. Massive and majestic, they are built of large irregular gray stones, with round towers, heavy square buttresses, and barrel-vaulted gateways. And nowhere is there any inscription to fix the date. I took a daily tramp, to blow away the hospital iodoform with which I reeked, and climbed, scrambled, nosed, and prodded all over the ruins, except the eastern part, which was occupied by the garrison, and forbidden ground.

The height of the hill, its position at the lakeside, and its very steep slopes make it a place which the first man who came along would choose as a stronghold; and it has been fortified since Roman days. Boué, indeed, in the forties found two Roman statues and a Latin inscription in the eastern castle. The mass of the present buildings are probably mediæval, and founded at the beginning of the eleventh century,

when Ochrida was for some years the capital of Western Bulgaria. But such an important site would have been strengthened by each conqueror in turn, and the present remains are doubtless partly Servian, Turkish, and Albanian.

Much of the rough, irregular masonry is like that of the castle at Uzhitza, in Servia, and Tsar Lazar's tower at Krushevatz. The Bulgarian yarn that it, as well as St. Klima, is Bulgarian work of the seventh century, can be put forward only by a people who have still very much to learn about architecture and other things.

I called on the Bulgarian Bishop once, when his table was adorned with a large white sugar church, a hideous caricature of Gothic style. It was, he said, a correct model of the church of the Exarchate at Constantinople. So childishly delighted was he with his new toy that, when he said the church was made entirely of iron, and there was nothing like it in all England, I agreed, and did not add, 'God forbid!' He then grew eloquent, and declared that to Bulgaria alone of all the other nations had there come the great idea of building churches of iron! He defied me to mention another example.

I told him of the ordinary corrugated iron affairs, and explained that they were not similarly magnificent, for I was far from wishing to hurt his feelings. But at the mention of any other iron structure he lost his temper.

'His Grace,' said his secretary, who spoke English, 'says that what you say is quite untrue. In no other land has another iron church ever been seen.'

It was a frontal attack, but I did not want to fight; I looked at the bastard Gothic edifice, bred of Bulgars and cast-iron, and saw it was an allegory of 'progress.'

Alas for Western ideas planted untimely upon Eastern soil! Perhaps the greatest foes of the Balkan peoples are those well-meaning people who wish to hurry them on.

It was very obvious, within a week of my arrival at Ochrida, that all parties except the Bulgar were not a little anxious lest the British relief work meant that Great Britain would ultimately support Bulgarian claims. Greek and Serb lost no time in assuring me that, sooner than be handed over to Bulgarian rule, they would remain Turk. Then, at any rate, there would be some hope of getting their rights in the end. The Greeks, if they could not have the land themselves, would prefer it to be Servian, and the Serbs similarly made no objection to the Greeks. The Serbs received me with enthusiasm. They said I 'understood' them, and at the feast of St. Sava they photographed me with the school-children in the middle of a Servian group, a copy of which, inscribed to 'Her Excellency,' I still possess. I was the only person at this 'slava' who had been to the shrine of St. Sava's father, St. Simeon, and this was rather a feather in my cap.

A Greek told me that the Greeks were very pleased about this photograph, and it was soon clear that the Bulgars were not. They used to ask to see it when they called on me, and it made them snort. The virulence of the Bulgar party against the Serbs, with whom for all reasons they should be allied, disgusted me extremely.

'I teach the children to be Servian patriots,' said the active little Servian schoolmaster to me; 'their parents are Serb, and they wish their children also to be Serb, but unluckily this is only an elementary school. Those who cannot afford to go elsewhere to finish their education must finish in the Bulgarian

school, and there they will be taught they are Bulgars. It is very sad.'

'How many children did they tell you were Servian in that school?' asked Petrov, a Bulgarian patriot, and he laughed derisively.

'All but the schoolmaster's children are Bulgar,' he said.

'Petrov says he is a Bulgar!' cried Achilles, who is wildly, madly Greek. 'He is not. He is a Greek; but he is a very wicked man. We are almost certain he was concerned in the murder of some Greeks. Since then he has said he is a Bulgar.'

Of Achilles I am told, 'Oh no! He is not really a Greek, but, you see, he was educated at Athens. Now, of course, he is very Greek. I should be had I not been to an American College. I am really Albanian; but because I belong to the Orthodox Church I am described as Greek on my passports.' So, in truth, are all Orthodox Albanians described. A large proportion of the so-called 'Greeks' are Albanian.

As for old Petrov, mentioned above, he amused me vastly. I wish I could make you realize him. He is like a person in a farce.

Enter old P., fat, flabby, effusive, given to tippling, and a great patriot. He is devoted to the cause and ready to do anything for it, but he pestered me daily towards the end of our stay about an old bridle which he said one of the relief agents had lost, and for which he desired to be paid full value. Old P.'s father was a wealthy man who made money in the palmy days of Ochrida fifty years ago, and had property, too, in Sofia. Old P. dissipated his father's fortune, and is reduced to dwelling in Ochrida, where living is very cheap. Old P.'s son followed in his father's footsteps, and is something of a ne'er-do-well. He started life

as a photographer, and then went through Servia as a strolling player. One day he wrote and demanded more cash. He had already got through a good deal, and old P. refused to supply any more. The son thereupon returned to Ochrida minus a 'teskereh' (permit to travel). There is, of course, a penalty attached to this. Great excitement. Old P. refuses to pay.

Enter gendarmes, who arrest son. Son halts in street, vows vengeance, and swears to burn down the paternal establishment. Son removed swearing. Then old P., seriously alarmed, hastens to the Kaimmakam (the representative of the Government, against which he and his party have been industriously conspiring), and prays him on no account to release his son at Ochrida, but, when his term of imprisonment has expired, to let him loose in some distant spot where he cannot slay his father. And the Kaimmakam kindly consents. In Turkey prisoners fare but leanly. It is customary for their families to supply them with clothes and extra food. Old P. cheerfully declines to do anything of the sort, and when I meet him a few days later is in a remarkably fine state of preservation, and as jovial as ever. In spite of his patriotism, he has no kind of shame about exposing his family squabbles to the enemy. Under the Kaimmakam's protection, he goes on cheerfully humming the popular patriotic street-song of the day. This, in fact, was the only way in which he and others displayed their 'patriotism,' and the authorities listened calmly with a fine air of 'It amuses them, and it does not hurt us.'

I was unlucky everywhere in the types of 'Bulgarian patriots' I met. They quite decided me that if Ochrida were mine to give away they would be the very last people upon whom I would bestow it. And

the cultivated and courteous Albanian Kaimmakam sat in the 'konak' and ruled this menagerie with considerable tact. He deprecated all European intervention, but afforded us every facility for relief work, though I gathered from some remarks he let fall that he did not entirely approve of it. Nor was it likely he should, for every Albanian hopes that Ochrida will be his in the end as it was in the beginning, and no support of the loudly-advertised Bulgarian claim is likely to meet with Albanian approval. If the peasants had any complaints to make, he said they should come straight to him, and not to relief agents. Like 'le bon Dieu,' he was accessible to everyone all day long, and an intermediary priest was no more necessary than he was in every sensible man's religion.

Bishops in Turkey are very much fishers of men, and to place Bishops is the chief aim of each party. Bulgaria planted one in Ochrida about twelve years ago; therefore of all the Christian factions the Bulgarian is now the largest. My work entirely concerned this, and brought me into contact with both its leaders and its rank and file. The latter crowded our premises daily for relief, and I was also in charge of them at the hospital.

The care of the hospital, started for the wounded by Mrs. Brailsford, and the visiting of all the sick refugees in the town, took up the greater part of my time. Surgery can be as interesting as politics, and the wrestle with disease as exciting as circumventing the Turks. Suppurating gunshot wounds, which were what we chiefly had in the hospital, were a quite new experience to me, and I found them most fascinating. Nevertheless, as they do not appeal to the general public, the hospital work, except inasmuch as it throws light on the manners and customs of the people, is better

omitted here. But I owe a passing tribute to the skill and perseverance of our young Greek doctor, an Athens-trained man, to whose untiring care the patients were very much more indebted than they had any idea of.

Here, as well as round Resna, chronic dyspepsia was rife among the Christian peasants. Hot bread, red pepper, raw cabbage, and the passion for sour food is quite enough to account for it without taking into consideration the enormous amount of alcohol consumed. So great, I was told, is the love of sour food that dilute oxalic acid, when obtainable, is used as a flavouring. Every day, and especially bazar-day, brought out-patients to see the 'hakimo,' and 'My belly aches' was their usual complaint. 'How long has your belly ached?' brought an answer that varied from 'Always' or 'Fifteen years' to 'Four or five years.' They all gave similar accounts of their diet, and were angry if advised to change it.

Scrofulous and tuberculous subjects were very common; enlarged and broken glands in neck and armpits, white tumours in knee and other joints, and very many cases of diseased bone, especially in the hands and feet. These for the most part were too advanced for anything but amputation, and that no one would hear of. I believe the cutting off of heads is the only form that is common in Turkey, and can be performed without fear of scandal. Overcrowding—for sixteen or twenty people think nothing of sleeping in one room if they can crowd into it, and this from choice, not necessity—filth, and the intermarriage of diseased subjects is working far more havoc among the Christian peasants than are the Turks.

People would insist on keeping limbs that were mere black and offensive lumps of suffering. But though

they could only sit in a corner and die of slow poisoning, nothing would induce them to part with a limb, or a portion of one. At the suggestion of amputation all the relatives set up loud shrieks. When told death was the alternative, they cried, 'Let him die if it is his Kismet!' and the patient echoed the sentiment. The poor wretch had usually come a long day's ride on a pack-animal, and the only thing we could do was to pay his fare back. He invariably preferred death to mutilation. It was a dreary scene enough : the man, long, lean, and pallid, with black, sad, sunken orbits, who clung with both hands to his discoloured and suppurating limb, crying, 'Leh! leh! leh! let me die! let me die!' as he sat in a heap on the floor of a dirty hovel, and his friends chorused round him. I remember several such.

One day a hump-backed woman appeared. She was terribly distressed when told we could do nothing for her, and burst into tears. I was surprised, for it was a case of spinal disease that probably dated from childhood.

She explained that, if we could not cure her, her husband would divorce her. I asked how this was possible, and was told that a divorce could be bought for a small fee from the Bishop. None of the women attendants seemed to think it at all out of the way, and the episode produced a crop of anecdotes about Bishops of a most unholy nature.

One odd superstition, for which I cannot account, is that it is fatal for the wounded to taste fish. The wound will never heal. The lake supplied magnificent trout, but not one of our wounded dared touch it. Two refused fowl for the same reason. Most wore amulets. One boy wore an old silver Slavonic coin which I wanted to buy. He consulted his family, for

he was afraid to sell it. They decided that it was on no account to be parted with. As a matter of curiosity, I asked them to name a price, and, to my surprise, was told that they would not sell on any terms, as it had cured many people.

There are also some peculiar customs about the wearing of finger-rings. Village women who have brothers wear their ring on the first finger; those who have not wear it on the middle finger. They regarded this as important, but there seemed to be no particular custom as to where a wedding-ring should be worn.

Marriage is apt to be a vague and floating sort of affair. Many women had not heard of their husbands for years, the gentlemen in question having gone to Roumania or Bulgaria in search of work. It was taken for granted that they had all married again, and would never come back. Their wives, however, were unable to follow their example, as divorces are not sold to women. The women employed as servants in the hospital were all in this unpleasant predicament, and, on the strength of it, asked me almost every day to make them presents with the frankness and pertinacity of young children. Their very rudimentary minds were an odd compound of childish simplicity and animal craftiness, but a craftiness that was apt to fail because there was no intelligence behind it. The study of it amused me exceedingly. If I dropped in at an unexpected hour, I almost always had to 'tell them they must not.' Then they said, first, that they had not been doing it; secondly, that it was what they always did; thirdly, that the doctor had told them to; fourthly, that they did not know what had been ordered; and, lastly, that they had been just about to carry out the orders when I had arrived. Then we all

laughed, for they did not in the least mind being found out, and the original order was fulfilled in the end. Their inability to learn was noteworthy. The doctor used an ordinary douche that had an indiarubber tube with a tap at the end. It was used every day for five months, but they never succeeded in learning how to turn the tap off, let alone in perceiving whether it were 'on' or 'off.' They persistently filled it when turned on unless the sharpest eye was kept on them, and then shrieked and squirted dilute carbolic about, crying 'Stop it! stop it!'

They seemed to have the intelligence of tortoises, and I began to believe that if their brains were extracted they would go on boiling onions by reflex action.

It would have been no use getting rid of them, for they were fair average specimens. The native can be obstinate, but so also can the Briton, and by persistent efforts I got the rooms cleaned, the bandages boiled, the muck removed, and the odours mitigated with chloride of lime, and a pleasing atmosphere of iodoform. But it was a matter of daily hammering.

One day, ten days after I arrived, we had quite an excitement. A whole ward went out on strike, and said it would not be cleaned again. Neither would it have the window open. Even Vasilika, the head attendant, was on the side of the patients. 'They did not like having the room cleaned,' she said; 'it was a thing they were not accustomed to, and they had quite decided that in future a gentle sweeping was all that the room should have.' I pointed out that even this detail had been omitted. There was a grand chattering. The patients threatened to leave. I said they might, and started the cleaning operations at once. Of course, none of them did leave. They squatted

happily round the fire in Vasilika's room ; we got rid of the rich monkey-house odour which they treasured, and they never struck again.

Patients safely inside the hospital could be tackled. Out-patients in the town were a far harder task ; if they were very bad I had to go more than once a day, for, like animals, these people, when they feel ill, will make no effort at all to take food, and their friends make no attempt to give them any, but let them die of exhaustion. They did not even lift the patient's head by way of helping him. In order to prove to me that he really required no food, they poured something into his mouth, and triumphed when he choked, and both patient and friends assured me he was about to die. I had to go round resuscitating people with raw eggs, milk, broth, etc. It is a simple matter to beat up an egg in England and give it to an invalid. Here, however, no one possesses either a vessel in which to beat it nor anything to beat it with. The whole family drinks from a great earthen jar with a spout, and eats out of a large bowl, and has neither cup, glass, nor small basin. Fingers and a clasp-knife and huge wooden ladles are the only table implements, and I had to take round the necessary 'plant.'

The comic element in the midst of all this was supplied by the 'doctress,' a stout and very voluble lady whose handsome fur-lined coat and general air of well-being spoke of a remunerative practice. She was, of course, the *bête noire* both of our doctor and of the municipal doctor, for she claimed all the cures and credited them with an appalling death-rate, and a ceaseless war raged between them. She had an infallible ointment for everything, especially cancer. We kept her out of the hospital, but she got at the out-patients

and killed a case of typhoid by filling it with parboiled horse-beans. Women of this sort practise in most of the villages. They had 'first go' at most of the wounds, which only came on to us when they were nice and septic, and we were then asked to pay the doctress's bill, which was often heavy.

The municipal doctor had a rusty set of instruments in a dirty case, a truly alarming sight, but I think they were more for show than use. His position was an unenviable one. He was supposed to receive £T6 a month to attend the poor of the district, but he only got £T4, and that at irregular intervals, and after he had signed a receipt for £T6.

Turkish Government appointments are unsatisfactory things to hold, except for the pickings, and there are not many to be gathered by a medical man in a poor district. However, he did his best. When the English reported small-pox, and intimated it was a complaint that required fussing about, the Turkish officials, who had previously ignored it, announced suddenly that they were about to start small-pox hospitals. They collected a few cases and put them in a house in the town, but, of course, made no pretence at isolation or anything European of that sort. The poor 'municipal' had to attend them all, included in his £T4. This did not suit him at all. So, when the first batch was worked off, he made an inspection in the neighbourhood, and found no more.

Now, the 'municipal' was also public vaccinator. There are public vaccinators in most towns, I believe; their chief drawback is that they have no vaccine; so, though the people are willing, and even anxious, to be vaccinated, few are. The municipal really could not be expected to throw in vaccine along with medical attendance for £T4. The people therefore brought

their children to us, saying that their next-door neighbours had small-pox, and revealed the true state of affairs. But there was nothing to be gained by causing more cases to be stored in the town in a Turkish, haphazard manner, so our doctor did a large quantity of vaccinations, and we left the municipal to make up his £T6 by attending people in their own houses.

His methods formed a half-way house between those of the doctress and the properly-qualified Greek, an odd mixture of the various mysterious ointments beloved of the people and recent inventions. He had a perfect passion for antitoxin, even when it was three years old and thick. There was a good deal of diphtheria about, so we sorted out all the swaddled-up throats at once from the crowd of out-patients. The fame of the injection had already spread, and people used to ask to 'be given the needle.' Their necks were generally stained with purple ink. The priest writes a text on two pieces of paper, which are applied, ink downwards, on each side of the throat and bandaged on. They infallibly cure an ordinary 'sore throat' in a fortnight or so. 'Neck' and 'throat' are the same in the local dialect. Sometimes 'My neck hurts' meant inflamed glands. One woman was told to come next day to have them opened. She met the 'municipal,' the rival practitioner, outside.

'Neck hurts? Diphtheria,' said the municipal, and without further investigation he took her off and made an injection, and we saw her no more.

Filled with pride for his superior powers of diagnosis, he came and told us. He and our man had words on the subject. A day or two afterwards the municipal announced that, as the glands had broken of themselves, and an operation had been avoided, his treat-

ment was undoubtedly correct, and that antitoxin was wonderful stuff.

Medicine under the Turkish Government is very odd, but then, so are most things.

Wherever I went I tried to interview the doctors. At one place I met a man who had been trained in Berlin. He was in great despair. All his things, including a good microscope and an electrical apparatus, had been confiscated on the frontier. His most important medical books he had recovered by paying full value for them. His electrical apparatus was refused, because such a thing had never been used before, so why now? The microscope he was to have when the authorities had satisfied themselves it was not dangerous. This was three years ago, and after repeatedly applying for it, he had given up all hope.

'Alles ist verloren!' he cried—'alles, alles! All my bacteriology study—everything! It is a lost land. What can I do here? Give quinine to a fever the nature of which I am not permitted to investigate!'

I was not surprised when he told me he was leaving shortly, and hoped never to return. If the Government had spent only half the energy in encouraging knowledge that it has in suppressing it, I really think Turkey might be one of the best-informed nations in Europe.

The Turk will set his back to the wall and die hard, but he will never learn. 'Alles ist verloren.' The only thing that can develop freely is evil.

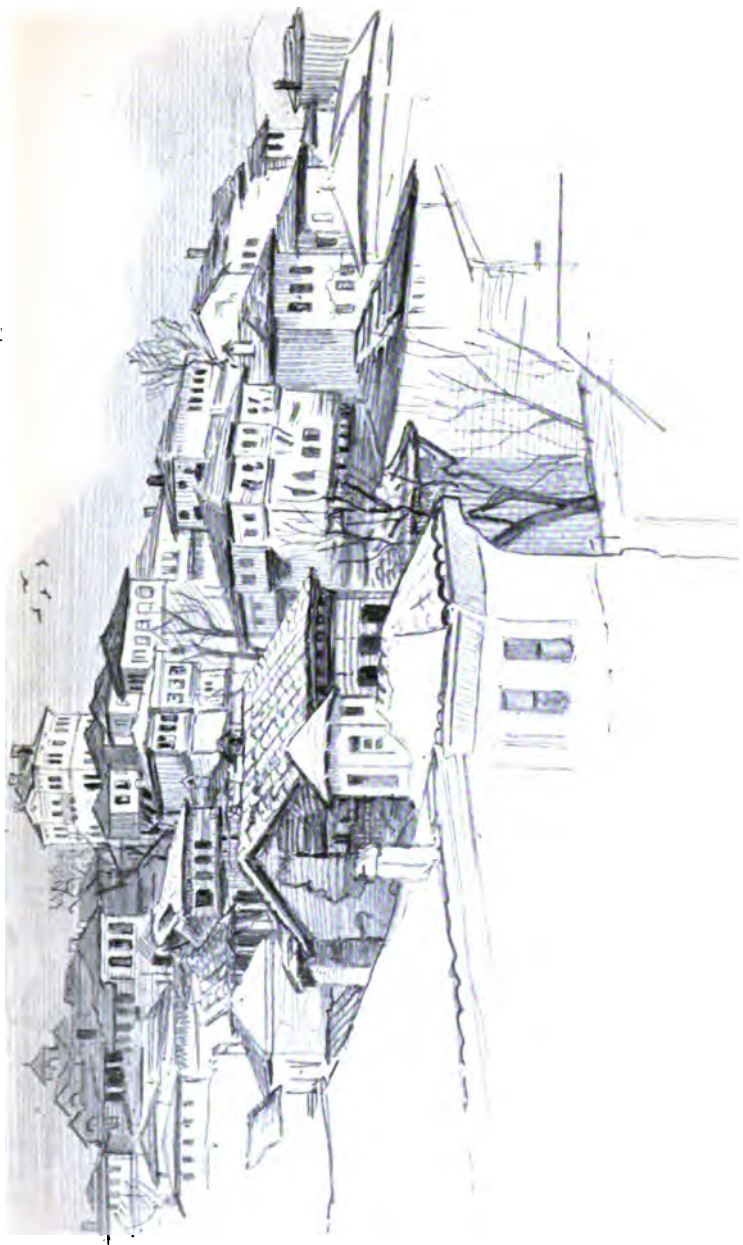
Among the refugees in the town was an unhappy little boy dangerously ill of typhoid fever. His village was burnt, his father had been shot, and he had no relatives but a devoted little sister of about sixteen. She, poor child! against all orders, gave him the coveted delicacy, 'komad,' to eat. He had a violent relapse; all our efforts to save him were in vain, and a few

nights later the long-drawn wails of his sister and the old women of the neighbourhood shrilled weirdly in the dark. He was dead. The little sister was bitterly distressed, and had no friends to help her. I paid for the dish of boiled wheat which she believed a necessary aid to his soul's salvation, and, learning it was the proper thing to do, I advised the Bishop at once, that a priest might be sent. The old women and the little sister waited by the corpse, and no priest came. I sent again. Finally, after fruitless waiting, to his sister's distress he was buried priestless. I had been anxious not to add to the troubles of these poor people by trampling on their religious prejudices, and had mismanaged the affair hopelessly. The explanation was volunteered at once.

'When you sent for a priest you forgot to tell the Bishop you would pay for him.' Alas! it was true. On a third and revised message a priest was forthcoming, who read the correct prayers. He was drunk, but that was a matter of detail.

Every Saturday there was a little crowd up at the church, in front of which is a stone table, where folk commemorated their dead by eating boiled wheat, handfuls of which they offered to the passers-by, for here the funeral feast does not, as in Servia, take place on the grave. But the people, for the most part, took little apparent interest in church-going. I suggested to such of our patients as could walk that they might go to church, but they never did, nor did any priest visit them. It was not till Lent that the power of the Church appeared. Sunday, February 21, was the last day of Carnival. This is usually celebrated by a good deal of gaiety and dressing-up, but this year, naturally, there were no rejoicings.

The two correct things to do were to wash your



CHRISTIAN QUARTERS OF OCHRIDA.
(FROM MY WINDOW.)

head and to eat 'komad.' My landlady appeared in the morning without her sham pigtails and with her locks dripping. She was rather upset to find me dry-headed, and seemed to think I had lost the only chance of a wash for the year. The hospital patients had a head-wash, and I found them all agog for dinner-time and 'komad.' The doctor had gone round with me the day before, and had sorted out those who might eat this delectable delicacy from those who might not. It was impossible to forbid 'komad' altogether, for 'komad' eating was the one religious observance that interested everyone. Vasilika was given strict orders. You might, however, as well give orders to a cat. They all had 'komad.'

Next day our convalescent typhoid, whose temperature had been normal for three days, was in high fever, and so it was with three other patients. They were much surprised when accused of 'komad,' and wondered how the doctor had found out.

We 'went for' Vasilika. She was very pleased with herself, and said they had had their 'komad' in spite of us. Nor, unless I had stayed in the hospital all day and all night, could I have prevented this. Even then they would no doubt have eaten 'komad' in one room while I was in another. But I am afraid it cost the typhoid man his life.

That was the end of Carnival. We began a forty-eight days' fast. On the first day nothing at all is eaten till evening; after that there is complete abstinence from all animal food. Even olive oil is only allowed twice a week, and not at all in the first week. Diet was limited to bread, onions, and dried beans. Beans should be very nourishing, but it is the custom here to only partially boil them. After a heavy feed on 'komad,' a day's abstinence, and (literally) a

'blow-out' of parboiled beans, 'belly-ache' became epidemic among the out-patients. As to the hospital patients, I was on the edge of despair, for they all appeared to be about to commit suicide under my eyes. The low diet told upon them almost at once; wounds ceased healing, and suppuration that had almost ceased began again merrily. Even the arguments of the doctor, who belonged to the Greek Church, were of no avail. One or two consented to take broth, chiefly because they did not consider it food, and we gave a few doses of cod-liver oil under the name of physic, but milk and eggs were totally barred. Some sat up and prayed, with tears in their eyes, not to be made to break the fast, saying the food would go bad in their insides, and such was their nervous terror that it probably would have done so. To add to the difficulty, Vasilika and all the attendants were on the fasting side, and set their energies resolutely to thwart the doctor.

There was an unhappy little boy of four whose foot had been shattered with a Martini ball. A fortnight before I had with difficulty kept him alive by pouring milk down his throat, for he was too weak to move, and refused all food. When the fast started he had just begun to eat with appetite, but liked only soup and meat. His mother then said that I had saved him once, and might give him what I pleased, soup, milk, and all. But I had to ask every day if he had had it.

No, he had had nothing at all since yesterday.

'Why not?'

'Vasilika says there is none to-day.'

Then to the kitchen. Vasilika all smiles.

'Why has not Jonche had his soup?'

'Because there is none, lady; it is not required. There are plenty of beans.'

‘You have been told to make soup every day.’

‘It is impossible. There is no meat in the Christian shops.’

I sent Leonidas out to buy some in the Turkish bazar, and returned in an hour to see if the soup was being made.

‘No.’

Then the same story :

‘There is no meat, but plenty of beans. Also we have asked Jonche, and he says he is not hungry.’

I sent for a Moslem fowl, and Jonche got his soup at last.

To add to my difficulties, the result of low diet was that everyone craved for and obtained raw spirits.

I was on friendly terms with the Bulgarian Bishop, and went to petition him. I explained that I was not a missionary, and did not wish to go against anyone’s religion. What was his rule about food under these circumstances, and would he relax it for a few cases that the doctor considered urgent ?

The Bishop folded his hands upon his stomach, gazed at the ceiling, and delivered his episcopal opinion with an unctuous piety that was a dramatic masterpiece.

Faith, he said, was better than food. Judging by his well-nourished appearance, his faith, I reflected, must be really very great. For his own part, he could not imagine that milk was of any importance if the people truly believed. I did not like to suggest to His Grace that he had, as yet, taken no steps to promote belief among them—for he had never either visited them himself or sent a priest—but I thought about it. For his own part, he said, he did not believe in doctors. You got well or you did not according to the will of God. He was sorry that money which might have been spent in helping ‘the cause’ should have been

wasted on a hospital. After a little more I perceived that the root of the matter was the usual 'Burden of the Balkans.' The doctor was a Greek! His Grace, however, ended by saying that he would send a priest to convince such patients, for whom it was really necessary, that the fast might be broken. But he never did.

However, to my relief, most of the patients succumbed by degrees to the attractions of animal food. The few who bravely persisted suffered in consequence, and, in the end, I was sorry to leave one girl unhealed, who previous to the fast had been mending steadily and well. But enough of hospitals.

The sick I visited. The sound visited me. The relief lists here had been all drawn up previous to my arrival, but this made no difference in the mass of applicants; if anything, it increased them. The yard was full of them daily, and they called me their 'golden sister.' Plainer and heavier built than the Presba women, with faces like Dutch cheeses, they prolonged their draggled pigtaails with string or wool, and ornamented them at the ends with old brass buttons, obsolete Austrian coins, bits of steel chain, or the handle of a broken pair of scissors.

'Give, give, give!' they cried from morning till night.

'I have received nothing,' says one, throwing her arms round me—'nothing at all! Oh, my golden sister, tell them to give to me!'

I take the name of her village. It has been burnt; she is on the list. 'Thou hast received flour.' She admits it reluctantly. Her ticket shows she has also had a blanket and a 'mintan' (wadded coat). This, too, she admits. But all these were given her by another 'madama.' This one (myself) has given her nothing—

nothing at all. She expects a new outfit from me. 'To-day thou hast taken flour for a month! Go, there is no more for thee.' She is very indignant. Someone else has had wool for socks or linen for a shirt. She is well clad, but she has made up her mind to have what the other woman has had, and is left declaiming. When I return at mid-day she will begin again, 'Another woman has had,' etc. Very few families get more than their share—their neighbours see to that; but it is impossible to see that the right member of a family gets the garment, for the stronger ones annex them.

The able-bodied press forward; I search in the background for the aged and infirm. Some of these, who are not on the list—for their villages are not burnt—are more grateful for a small gift of flour than are those who have been receiving it for weeks. One poor old lady crossed herself and threw up her hands heavenward before shouldering her little sack, and some murmured blessings. Two stout and dumpy brides whose marriage coffers had been looted were so overcome with the gift of a length of good cloth apiece that one burst into tears, and both were loud in their thanks. Most, I am sorry to say, on receiving a gift, asked for another.

Twice I was asked for help by women who said their husbands had been roasted to death in the oven by soldiers. 'Like bread!' added a man who thought I did not understand. The ovens are large buildings separate from the houses, and are heated by burning wood inside them. The tale was a possible one, and their manner of telling it inclined me to belief, for mediæval manners prevail in this land. Of excessive flogging inflicted during the search for hidden weapons I had plenty of evidence. And the terror that the

Moslems have of a Christian rising will drive them to great lengths in order to suppress it. It is indeed a wonder that any Christian village was left standing.

If they cannot get what they want at the depot, my 'golden sisters' track me to the hospital, and appear as out-patients. They say they have a pain. When this statement breaks down under the doctor's examination, they say it is not the 'hakim' they want, but 'madama'; they have a ticket for flour, and my servant has refused to give them any. They shout, cry, and all talk at once.

An examination of their tickets shows that a week ago they received flour for a month. They must wait for three more bazar days. This has already been explained to them at the depot, but we explain it all over again. They begin again: 'Listen, my golden sister: I have a ticket for flour, but your servant will not give it to me.' More explanations; but you might as well argue with a cow. Before you have finished speaking they begin again: 'My golden sister, I have come for flour,' etc. After three or four more explanations I tell them to go.

They squat on the ground, and prepare to spend the day. They admit that they have plenty of flour at home, but they know we have flour in the depot, so they mean to have more; and there they squat, and begin again every time I pass, till it is time to return to their village.

Their slow-wittedness and inability to grasp a new idea is almost incredible, their dogged obstinacy even more so. They will probably return every week until the flour is again due. When the doctor has written a prescription and given his instructions, trouble is apt to begin. All his eloquence sometimes fails to make the patient understand that she must take the paper

to the pharmacy and get the 'bilka' there. She does not know where the pharmacy is. It is in the bazar, where the folk of her village are now selling firewood. She has only to go to the bazar, and anyone can point it out to her. 'My golden brother,' she begins (this to the doctor), 'I have come for bilka; you have given me only paper,' etc. Renewed explanations. She is to go straight to the bazar; she leaves reluctantly.

When all the work is finished at the hospital I return to my quarters for lunch. There she is, squatting in the yard, with her prescription still in her hand. She has not been to the bazar—not she—though she will have to go there in the end on her way home. She has come straight to the depot, and she begins at once: 'Listen, my golden sister. I am a poor woman. I have come for bilka,' etc. Not all the eloquence of two interpreters, my landlady, her neighbours, and her mother, can make some women understand.

Their male-folk are only a fraction more intelligent, but, under orders, carrying and dealing out flour-sacks, they worked hard and well. They usually sent their women out to do the begging. My dealings with them were mainly 'political'; and whenever I got the chance I tried to point out to them that the expected rising must not take place.

After what I had seen and heard, it seemed to me that they possessed about as much power of military organization as guinea-pigs, and that if another insurrection took place on the lines of the last they would be slaughtered wholesale; for both Greek and Serb, alarmed lest a new rising should cause Europe to support Bulgarian aspirations, and in many cases maddened by having blackmail forced from them, would probably aid in suppressing it. Also, unless

the country remained fairly quiet, the Turkish troops could not be withdrawn, and it would be impossible to get the 'reform scheme' into working order.

Not that I greatly believed it was meant to succeed by either Austria or Russia, but because I hoped that other Powers might enforce it in spite of them. And I looked forward vainly to the day when a French, Italian, or British officer should ride into the town. A Russian would only mean more 'Pan-Slavonic' money and extension of Russian influence (for at this time the Japanese War was but just begun, and the drain on Russian finances not marked), and as for an Austrian, he would only help to smooth the road from Vienna to Salonika.

The peasants here also were torn between fear of the Turks and of the 'Committee.' A man came one day and asked me to take charge of a lot of ammunition. He was tired of living in hiding with it, and wished to return to work, and did not know what to do. If he gave it up to the Kaimmakam the Committee would kill him; if the Turks found it in his possession they might kill him. He thought it would be safe with me. I was to hand it back again if wanted. I was sorry for him, but could not turn our premises into a storehouse for the Committee.

Politics here cover a multitude of sins. One night a man turned up mysteriously. In his village there were three traitors. Before anything further could be done they must be destroyed. They could not be shot, for this would probably bring down the authorities, and it was impossible to buy poison because the law on the sale of it was very strictly enforced. (This is interesting, as it shows that it is possible to enforce a law in Turkey when expedient.) But 'madama' (myself) was a friend of the doctor. No doubt if she asked

him he would write her something that could be put in coffee. Then the three gentlemen could be asked to supper, and their political differences quietly arranged. Nor had he any doubt that I should fulfil this humble request. An episode such as this is vividly interesting. It is possible to ride hastily through the Balkan Peninsula and credit the people with Western twentieth-century feelings. A short residence among them reveals the Middle Ages, their sentiments, morals, and point of view, all preserved alive by the overlaying stratum of Oriental rule.

There was a man in the town, a refugee from over Dibra way. When he was sober he talked Slav, but when he was drunk enough to straddle on his heels, which was not infrequently, he talked Albanian. He was a Bulgarian patriot. One day he came and begged my protection. Some soldiers had threatened last night to kill him. 'Why did the soldiers want to kill him?' I asked. 'Because they suspected him.' 'What of, and why?' Then he related with pride that he was the man who had made the poisoned bread that had killed fifteen Turkish soldiers. I advised him to clear out, saying that if he did such things I could not possibly help him. He was astonished that I was not aware of his great achievement, and still more so that I did not admire it. This was just before I left Ochrida, so I never knew if he took my advice. Later I learnt whence the poison had been obtained, and also that few, if any, of the soldiers, had really died, though they had all been very ill.

This type of patriot I had no sympathy for, but there were other poor fellows for whom I was very sorry. They had lost their all, and possessed only paper notes given them in exchange for their corn and cattle impounded by the Committee. This was in-

genious, as it gave the Committee a lever for raising another revolt, for the notes are not payable till Macedonia is free. Meantime, what were they to do? Would I cash the notes? A patient in the hospital treasured one in a knot in his handkerchief. It was a printed form, signed by the leader of a band who had made him kill three oxen and turn 'chetnik.' The note was for £5, but the man vowed his cattle had been worth £12. Fortunately, he added, he had not had to fight, as he had been left as a reservist elsewhere, and the fight had taken place while he was away, but the village and all his goods were burnt.

Daily I marvelled more at the crass stupidity of the Turkish Government. Such a very little common-sense and ordinary justice would have saved all this trouble. The Christian peasant here is not a fighting man; if he were allowed to till his fields in peace without having more than the legitimate tax raised off his labour, and were guaranteed the security of himself and his women, revolutions are the last things he would be likely to undertake.

Of the outside world he is absolutely ignorant—so ignorant that it was impossible to make a deputation from a village understand that English or Italian officers were expected at Monastir soon who would ride about the country and see that justice was done. They had heard of Russians, but of no other foreigners. Then the interpreter suggested 'kaurski' officers—that is, *giaours*, unbelievers—and they grasped that the officers would not be Turks, and cheered up. All that the peasant knows is that his life is wretched under the present state of things. Oppressed by the Government and terrorized by the Committee, he rises, and will continue to rise so long as there is anything left of him,

and he is used, poor wretch ! as the cat's-paw to help some Power or other extract territory from the burning. That he rose on behalf of Bulgaria is owing to the fact that the Bulgar party, though Bulgaria is a poor country, has for the last thirty years outbid easily all others. He would have risen as willingly for Servia or Greece had they been able to finance the matter as liberally. When Von Hahn visited Ochrida in 1868 he found one Slav school and four Greek, and the people expressed their preference for the Greek party. Since then money has been poured into the land with a lavishness that is amazing. It comes from 'outside,' and is paid to the Exarch Josef. Or it is a handsome present from the Russian Consul to the neighbourhood. It is called 'Pan-Slavonic,' but it works against the Serb, who is as Slav as anybody. I remembered the bitter cry of Servia as I had heard it eighteen months before : 'Europe did not consider us as peoples ; she mapped the Balkan Peninsula out into spheres of influence, and we are in the Austrian sphere.'

At Ochrida it was certainly not the Austrian sphere that I was in. The dismay of the people on learning that Russia was not conquering speedily was great. Japanese victories were following one another in quick succession. The local outbreak that had been promised for the end of March was put off. All I could learn from the villagers was that they had had no orders and did not know, and there were only two small bands in the neighbourhood.

Once troops were sent out to search Vekchani for a band of twenty-five. The soldiers, who have a poor time in garrison, made, it seems, a sort of picnic of the affair, and were entertained by the Moslem part of the village with coffee and 'tambooras' (guitars) and a sing-song. They came back empty-handed. A rumour

reached Monastir that an affair with troops had taken place. The foreign Consuls made inquiries, and the Vali, not unnaturally, refused to give any details of the affair. After this the 'cheta' was spoken of as very powerful, and my landlady, Maria, told me triumphantly that it had consisted of no less than 250 men, who had all escaped.

Talk turned on 'chetas.'

'Do you know what they are doing?' asked Achilles bitterly.

I did not.

'They are killing Greeks,' he said fiercely.

'Killing Greeks!' said I in amazement.

'Yes,' he replied; 'they are not fighting Turks, but Greeks. They go armed to a village, and they offer the people a petition to sign. It is to ask for a Bulgar priest, and to say they are Bulgars. They do not wish to change their priest, but if they do not sign they will be shot! We Greeks have had enough of this. I myself have had to give money to them. Otherwise I should have been shot from behind a wall the first time my business took me outside the town. Now we have sworn an oath we will stand it no longer. We shall organize Greek bands, and for every Greek that is shot we shall kill ten Bulgars.' He stripped his right arm and slapped it dramatically. 'With this arm I will myself do it,' he said fiercely, 'car vous savez, mademoiselle, nous autres, nous sommes aussi un peu extraordinaire!'

Nor has there been another attack upon the Moslems, but the Bulgars have occupied themselves throughout the summer by making attacks upon Greek villages, which the Greeks have continued to avenge. My life, in fact, at Ochrida was no more dull than a 'penny dreadful.' Something lively happened in each chapter.

I tried to get it in the Greek, the Bulgar, and the Turkish edition; also in the Albanian and Serb if possible, and there was a perfect library of tales all quite different. Then at night, when it was dark outside, and the night-watchman cheerfully went tap-tap-tapping round the town with a staff and a lantern, I squatted by the stove and compared the lot with the accounts given in the English papers I received now and again.

Something happens—the Lord alone knows what. It appears a different colour to each beholder. The report of it floats through bazars and gathers additions; it reaches a town, and is black or white, small or gigantic, according to the nationality which retails it to the correspondent, also in accordance with the sympathies of his interpreter. But it is not finished yet. It has to be painted Radical or Conservative to suit the paper it is going into, for not one of the said papers cares twopenny jam about the good of the Balkan peoples; they merely use them as a lever for tipping home Governments in or out, and thereby building or blowing up the British Empire.

Poor Balkan peoples! the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong, but to him that is most heavily financed by an outside Power. Still, their position is not hopeless, for when Nature is chivied with a pitchfork she comes back with a repeating-rifle, and in time the fittest will probably survive, in spite of European intervention.

At midnight, when all good people are abed, the troops were shifted — tramp, tramp in the dark. Whither or whence? I was keen on knowing, for the Balkans had got into my blood, and I could not bear to leave when the relief work should be finished. I had an idea that the Albanian question was the one that

was most pressing. All the unknown beyonds were a-calling, but I must plan my route to suit political developments. News dribbled through that the last battalion to make a midnight flitting had gone, not south, as was said at first, but up Dibra way, to persuade the Albanians to pay cattle-tax—a vain task. Why should they pay increased tax to make up for damage done by odious Bulgars? On second thoughts, why pay tax at all? They got no return for it; it only paid Turkish governors that they would rather be without. Second thoughts are best, and not even artillery modified their views. It did mine, though, for I knew that the Turkish authorities would find me much easier to tackle than the Dibra Albanians, and that I should be turned back ignominiously and hunted out of the Empire if I appeared near a spot where anything really funny was happening. I gave up a plan to dash through the hottest part of Old Serbia to the back door of Montenegro as foredoomed to failure.

But having lived now with the Montenegrins, the Serbs, and the 'Bulgarian Macedonians,' I clung to the idea that somehow or other I must get right into Albanian territories, and see what the political situation looked like from that side, too.

A day or two after the reports of fighting at Dibra, excitement was nearer home. An old man was shot in the bazar just after sunset. Maria brought the news with my morning milk. Now we were all going to be killed. No Christian could go to the bazar. It was the beginning of the end, etc. The Christian version was that a Moslem had entered the old man's shop and asked for 'rakija'; as he had not paid for some previous drinks, he was refused. He then whipped out a revolver and shot the old man dead. The Moslem version was that the old man was met in the

streets after sunset by the night patrol minus the lantern enforced by law. They challenged him, but as he was unfortunately deaf, he did not hear, so they fired, and he was unfortunately killed. That he was killed was the only part in which the tales corresponded, and as he had two bullets through his chest and one through his arm, it was a fact not easily got over. The result was that the man who sold rakija round the corner mixed a special blend with petroleum especially for Moslems. He said he was very sorry, but he had upset the lamp into it, and the demand for gratis drinks fell off.

Next time it was the turn of a Moslem to figure on the death-list. Two officers were riding over from Monastir, and quarrelled on the way, whereupon one shot the other dead. They were both said to have been drunk.

Oh, it is a gay land for law and order!

I got so used to these episodes that, when one night I heard a row, a running about, and Dooley, the odd-job man, who was rather cracky, screaming, I only half woke up, and went to sleep again at once. Next morning my interpreter explained it.

'I had very bad bellyache,' he said, 'so I cried out "Help!" Then the "kavas" thought something was happening, and he came running in with his rifle and revolver. Then Dooley, when he saw the rifle, was very frightened, so the kavas pretended he would shoot him, and he ran after Dooley with his rifle, and Dooley screamed, and we hope you were not disturbed!'

'Not at all,' said I,

Then more excitement. A man was shot over at Vekchani, a Christian. Who shot which this time? Other Christians. The recent military raid on

Vekchani was connected with this latest death, rumour said. The word 'traitor' was mentioned. The Kaimmakam himself went over hotfoot, but no arrest was made.

The Bishop had been very indignant about the man who was shot in the bazar, and wanted me to act in the matter. So I asked him what should be done in the present case. Oddly enough, though it was much talked about, the Bishop had heard nothing—merely that a man had been shot, that was all; a Christian, he believed. He did not see that anything could be done. Nor did I, for it seemed to be one of those little affairs in which there is more than meets the eye; and in Turkish territory the arranging of who is to be 'removed' is said to be an episcopal function.

The problem of the Bishop fascinated me from the beginning: the old-young man with his inscrutable smile, his veneer of courtesy, and his capacity for flat contradiction; his unctuous piety as he posed as one of the Lord's elect, and his taste for Munich beer; his palace well, even luxuriously, furnished in European style; himself, made Bishop at the callow age of twenty-five, swarthy, black-eyed, with the puffy flesh and dull skin of a man who lives well and takes no exercise. What was his relationship to this mass of miserable peasantry? How did he regard them, and to what end was he working?

The wretched refugees he neither heeded nor helped. I discovered early that he had a terror of infection, and he was not even aware till the end of our stay that the sick, other than those in the hospital, had had British relief. That, being Bulgar, neither Serb, Greek, nor Albanian had a good word to say for him was a matter of course. I waited patiently

for the Bishop to explain himself. Messages flowed constantly between our depot and the palace. I called on the Bishop and the Bishop on me. His Grace's secretary, trained in an American college, a dire example of the mental indigestion caused by rashly overdosing the East with Western ideas it cannot assimilate, haunted my premises and swooped greedily on all my newspapers, which he bore off to the palace. He was European outside, and spoke English very fairly.

The Bishop began to explain himself. He wanted me to supply rations for various 'chetniks.' I perceived that if I were not careful we should have revolutionary schemes carried on under the shelter of the British flag. We were being trusted by the Turkish Government to play no tricks, and were allowed quite extraordinary liberty of action. I replied that our business was to care for the wounded and feed the inhabitants of villages that had been burnt out. I must see the parties and hear particulars. I was told I could not see them. This was the little rift within the lute. His Grace made many similar requests, until at last his secretary was afraid to deliver the message to me, and left it with the interpreter with the remark that he knew it would be of no use. It appeared the relief was not going the way the Bishop had intended. That the peasants had been saved from starvation gave him no pleasure.

'We had expected quite half the population would die as a result of the insurrection,' said his Jackal, 'and not one quarter have. Next time a great many more must die, and Europe will have to listen to us. Next time there will be a great slaughter. Every foreign Consul will be killed as well as every foreigner. It will be their own faults!'

'You propose to set the people free by sending

them to heaven!' I said; 'it is certainly one way.' I added: 'You are not only wrong, but very silly, especially about the Consul-killing.'

And he was much annoyed. We speedily got to the root of the matter—that Great Bulgaria had to be constructed at any cost. What became of the peasants for whose 'freedom' the scheme was supposed to be worked was a matter of small moment. I gathered he had as yet taken no part in the fighting, and intended to be one of the survivors.

At the beginning of March we gave out the last distribution of flour that the funds permitted of, enough to last till the end of April (O.S.). After this, in view of the expected rising, the British Ambassador gave notice that it would be well to wind up the hospital work shortly, and that all agents who stayed up-country must do so at their own risk. At Ochrida it seemed clear, however, that nothing would happen just yet, so, as there were still some wounded to see to, I arranged to stay on a bit, and called on the Bishop to tell him of our plans. He was very angry to hear we were leaving soon, and bade me write to England for more money; he had expected us to feed the people all the summer. If an outbreak took place my presence was the more necessary, as a martyr to the cause would be invaluable.

'You are afraid!' he cried—'you are afraid!'

Up till now I had not entered into party politics with him, but had taken his advice whenever it did not entail active support of 'chetas.' Except for his habit of contradicting flatly, he had always been elaborately polite. Now the natural man burst through the ecclesiastical varnish.

'You are afraid!' he repeated; 'you are running away. You think we shall take you as we did Miss

Stone. And it would be quite possible!' he added wrathfully.

Now, the kidnapping of Miss Stone was one of the most mean and dirty political 'jobs' ever perpetrated. I wonder if the public has any idea how dirty. I had not credited the Bishop with a lofty moral standard, but this was lower than I expected. Also it was silly.

'I like travelling,' said I, 'and it would be cheap. You would never have a piastre for me.'

His Grace and the Jackal were taken aback.

'Fourteen thousand pounds was paid for Miss Stone,' they said.

'Miss Stone was an American,' I answered. 'I am English. I can't afford to pay ransoms.'

'But the British Government would pay.'

'Oh no, it would not—not a piastre.'

'Miss Stone,' said the Bishop sententiously, 'might have been killed!'

There is something highly farcical in being threatened with brigandage and murder in the course of a morning call with a background of European furniture, and I laughed.

'You kill me,' said I, 'and there is the end of your Bulgaria. No civilized Power will help you. I am not going because I am afraid of you. The work is finished here, and I am going to ride through Albania.'

'You can't,' cried the Jackal; 'it is most dangerous.'

'Oh no it isn't,' said I; 'the Albanians won't want "to take me like Miss Stone."'

Check to the Bishop. He changed the subject.

I had been astonished at his outbreak; the cause now appeared. I was black sheep for my nation. England, he said, was attacking Russia under the Japanese flag, with English ships, English officers,

English weapons. England had provoked the declaration of war. The news in the papers I had lent him were lies, English lies. England had never liked the Balkan Slavs, and now she was attacking their only friend.

Blood is thicker than water. 'Scratch a Russian and you find a Tartar,' seemed to apply to Bulgars. He threw off all pretence of friendship for England, and displayed a bitter Balkan hatred—raw and fierce. I was vividly interested. I wanted, of all things, to learn what part Russia plays in Bulgaria's scheme for territorial aggrandisement. Weeks ago I had been convinced that the peasants were only tools. Now, at last, I had it from the Bishop, a head centre of Bulgarian propaganda, that Russia was of paramount importance to their plans. I threw only enough doubt on his information to keep him going, and bore his abuse of my own country with equanimity. He felt better when he had let off steam, and we parted quite politely.

Our depot was empty, and I remained alone with an interpreter to finish the hospital work. My surprise, therefore, was great when, coming home at an unusual hour, I found the yard filled with pack-horses and 'kirijeas,' who were busy stowing bales in our basement, and I learnt they contained men's clothes and shoes, had been consigned to the Bulgarian Bishop, and were to be put in the English premises by his orders.

I waived the usual etiquette of sending to know if it were convenient, went straight to the palace, and asked if His Grace would kindly see me at once on an urgent matter. His Grace and the Jackal seemed flurried. I explained that, doubtless by mistake, goods belonging to the Bishop had been delivered to me. No, there was no mistake. The depot was no longer ours. The

Bishop had taken it. He was going to make a distribution of clothing, and it was more convenient to make it at our place. There was no room at the palace. I added up the situation mentally. Why had I not been told beforehand? Why had the goods been 'dumped' at an hour when I was usually out? Why was there 'no room' in the extensive palace? Why was it more convenient to distribute from what were recognised as British premises? Above all, why were His Grace and his secretary so upset? They conversed together in rapid whispers, and I have rarely felt more uncomfortable. So long as I was in the depot I was bound to see that there was no possibility of a 'cheta' being fitted out under our protection. The Bishop was an adept at wire-pulling, but I would see him somewhere before he wire-pulled Great Britain.

'The house is ours till the end of the month,' I said, 'and has been paid for.'

They were vexed, for it overthrew their first point.

'The distribution can take place while you are out, and will not inconvenience you,' said the secretary, after more whispering.

The situation was unpleasantly strained.

'It is not the inconvenience,' said I, scraping up my courage; 'the difficulty is that so long as I am here any distribution that takes place on our premises will be considered by the authorities to be English, and I know nothing either about the goods or the people who are to have them. I am sorry to disoblige His Grace.'

This left little more to be said, for they did not think fit to enlighten me about their plan. I had it on my mind that I ought to ask for the removal of the bales, for the manner of both men suggested 'there was more than met the eye.' But I did not. I believe I 'fucked it.'

With apologies for troubling His Grace, I withdrew from the somewhat thunderous atmosphere of his study. And at a distance from the palace my interpreter and I looked at each other and burst out laughing. The bales remained where they were, and in order to make all 'square and above-board' so far as the British Relief Fund was concerned, I told the Kaimmakam on leaving that our distribution work had been quite completed.

My last week was a crowded one. I had some money to give away; the question was, how? I thought of buying plough-oxen for one or two villages to aid the spring sowing. This was impossible, as the headmen I interviewed insisted that the beasts must be presents to individuals (= themselves), and not for ploughing land to feed the village. The owner could let them out to his neighbours, and so make money. I had already learnt how the leading men of the villages made money by capturing the flour-tickets and selling them back to the owners—one gang even charged so much a head for letting the people have the flour; and I should have handed them over to the Kaimmakam had I discovered the fraud in time to see the matter through. Then I offered a few sheep and goats to certain villages to start a flock. Everyone quarrelled, and was certain that no one who had them would let anyone else have even one lamb. It was but another example of the 'Burden of the Balkans.' They were too much occupied in 'doing' each other to be able to work together for a common end. I therefore chose three very poor villages, gave money to each widow and child to buy one month's flour, and had almost accomplished the task, which gave very great pleasure, when a 'bazar rumour' raged through the town that £6,000 had arrived from England, and was

to be distributed broadcast ! An Eastern bazar rumour is a fearsome thing.

Within twenty-four hours every woman in the neighbourhood was a widow and every child an orphan, and we were besieged by them. A few enterprising men joined the throng, and said they were widowers. A parley failed utterly. The yard was crammed, and they tried to get into the house. It was an anxious time. The crowd was such, I feared children would be hurt.

We fastened the doors, and from an upper window I roared to them that we had nothing left—neither flour, linen, clothes, nor money. They must go.

The scene beggars descriptions. They refused to believe me, struggled to get in, and cried out in the crush. It was getting unpleasant. I went down with the kavas, managed to squeeze out, ordered every child to leave at once, collected them, and drove them out of the gate, which the kavas shut after them. This caused many women to go in search of their offspring. They were let out with difficulty, as a crowd was trying to get in. The women remaining then squatted on the ground, and declared they would remain till they received something, no matter what. So long as any remained in the yard those outside believed a distribution was going on. More flocked up and tried to get in.

The Moslem kavas was getting excited ; he was itching to play the part of chucker-out. The air was thick with abuse. It had been going on for a couple of hours. The only way to avoid a catastrophe was to evict everyone, so that they might spread a counter-rumour and stop the affair ; but I could not employ a Moslem man to chuck out Christian women.

There was a final and futile parley. Then I turned

to the nearest woman, pointed to the gate, and said :

‘Go!’

‘No,’ said she.

I took her by the belt and collar and ran her down the slope ; the kavas whipped open the gate, and she was outside and the gate shut before she had got over her surprise.

I hoped this would be enough, but never a bit. I was not educated for a policeman, and, as I evicted the fourth, feared they meant to tire me out. However, to my relief the fifth turned the scale, and the rest got up and went. It was one of the most trying episodes I ever had to tackle.

The next bazar rumour proved true. Ochrida was agog with the news that a Russian newspaper correspondent was coming. His possible mission was much canvassed. He arrived from Kastoria with a military escort, and was chaperoned carefully about Ochrida between two Turkish officers. When I called next morning on the Bishop, to make my final farewells, the Russian was coming out, and His Grace, ‘Pan-Slavonically’ consoled, was in high spirits, and adorned once more with his inscrutable smile.

We arranged that the hospital plant should be handed over to him, and he then asked how I was going to Monastir.

‘On horseback over the mountains to-morrow,’ said I.

His Grace was horrified. It was impossible : the fatigue would be terrible. He himself always drove by the carriage road. I preferred riding. He smiled fatuously, and said he was growing old, and horseback was only for the very young.

‘Exercise is good,’ said I. ‘His Grace is younger than I am, but I am English.’

His Grace expressed a total inability to comprehend me. Sporting instincts were naturally beyond him.

'I am going,' he said, 'to ask you a great many questions on your religion, which no doubt is what has caused you to take up this work, and live alone in a wild land.'

Here followed an excursus on faith.

'I came,' said I, 'to help the victims of the insurrection, and to see the Eastern Question from a fresh side. I hope in time to explore the whole Peninsula, and see all its peoples.'

The Bishop folded his hands and cast up his eyes. He could look very holy when he chose.

'I continue to believe,' he said, 'that it was religion that sent you.'

I assured him I had not troubled about my body or my soul; I had come to learn as much as I could of the truth about recent events, and see what could be done.

The Bishop was nonplussed. I do not fancy truth was an article he greatly valued, and he certainly was not afflicted with a thirst for knowledge. He had not even learnt to speak Turkish.

"Knowest thou aught a Corsaint that men call Truth?
Couldst thou aught wissen us the way, where that
wight dwelleth?"

"Nay, so God help me," said the gome then.

"I saw never palmer, with pike nor with scrip
Axen after him ere, till now in this place!"

The lines, vaguely remembered, sketched the situation fairly.

'What have you learned?' said the Bishop eagerly. I hesitated. The Bishop was persistent; so was his

secretary. They questioned and requestioned. I looked at the Bishop, young, smug, unctuous—the man who had faced no bullets, visited no sick-beds, comforted no dying; who had fared softly in his palace while his flock rotted and starved. I thought of his cowardly dread of infection, the priestless burial of the little boy; I heard again the words, ‘Not a quarter of the population are dead,’ etc.; I saw the helpless mass of wretched humanity with whose blood this man and his friends meant to paint red the frontiers of Big Bulgaria. Then I told quite frankly what I had seen of the game. Their interruptions only showed it more clearly, and I tried by questions to make them tell the tale themselves. The bitter sufferings of the people under the Sultan’s Government were nothing to them: better that they should continue to suffer than that Greece or Servia should gain an inch of territory. Both nations they abused freely. The European intervention which they demanded was to support only Bulgarian claims; ‘autonomy for Macedonia’ was to be a half-way house to Great Bulgaria. I wished Bulgaria a fair share of the Sultan’s territories, but I did not admit the justice of all her claims, and I most strongly condemned her methods.

Then it was the Bishop’s turn, and he was equally outspoken. Christianity, he said, was the greatest power in the world, and would eventually triumph. England was not a Christian country, and would be wiped out by Holy Russia; the sooner the better. He had a piece of news for me: Russia had conquered Japan, and was occupying half of it. The other half was occupied by the English, who would shortly be forced to withdraw. We had dropped from tragedy to farce, and I laughed aloud.

‘As England wishes to take Japan herself, you will

be sorry to hear this!' he said. 'Also that Russia is going to occupy all the rest of India.'

Here we had an excursus on geography, concerning which his ideas were suitably mediæval. I explained that for the sake of the human race I always wanted the best man to win. When we were no longer able to defend ourselves we should go, and not before.

'You will,' said the Bishop, 'you will. All the world knows you have no army. You are very proud of your navy. What is a navy? Nothing, I tell you—nothing! I have seen a navy, and I know!'

'His Grace,' said I, 'has perhaps seen the Bulgarian one.'

The audience had now lasted quite long enough. I thanked the Bishop for all he had done for me, and took what I hoped was a last farewell of him. But etiquette had to be maintained. I was told His Grace would return my call that afternoon.

When he arrived I was parleying with two widows of the town, each with an orphan. Maria rushed in: 'The Bishop, the Bishop!' His Grace entered solemnly, Maria kissed his hand humbly, and retired, so did one widow; the other sat firm and ignored His Grace completely. She was a stout, elderly party, with a good deal of presence. I perceived she intended to sit the Bishop out. The Bishop looked at her. She gazed over his head. For a little while he ignored her. Then he said suddenly to the child:

'What school do you go to?'

'The Greek,' said the widow.

'That is a pity,' said the Bishop.

'No, it isn't,' said the widow. 'Greek is more useful.'

'Children should learn the language of their father and their nation,' said the Bishop severely.

'This child's father was an Armenian,' retorted the widow triumphantly. 'It is my daughter's child, and I am Greek.'

The Bishop tried to be clever.

'What did you speak at home?' he asked the child.

'Turkish!' came the answer smartly.

The widow regarded the discomfited Bishop with unspeakable contempt. He arose, made his adieus, and fled.

We wrestled for the last time with the greedy demands of the pharmacy man, and the provision dealer, who was very drunk and more than usually obstreperous, went to bed early, to be ready to start at dawn, and spent a truly Balkan night.

Dooley, the odd-job man of the depot, had been promised work in Monastir, and was to ride there with us. In the black hours before dawn came an awful row in the street — battering on the gates, shouts, screams, soldiers and what not, all mixed up in the dark. Dooley was arrested by the night patrol and taken to prison. I dressed hastily; friends flocked in. It was a brutal outrage: poor Dooley had been merely coming to make final arrangements; had been attacked and beaten by the soldiers. I was called on to act promptly and save him from a Turkish prison.

Day dawned and our horses were ready, but the Kaimmakam, who had to be appealed to, was naturally not yet up. My chances of getting through to Monastir that night were slipping away, and my plans depended on it. Finally, when, to everyone's joy, Dooley was released—for the Kaimmakam acceded at once to my request—the victim of the brutal outrage was crazy drunk. Riding on horses was very cruel, he spluttered; he had gone out at three in the morning to hire a carriage; he didn't mind the expense—

not he; he wouldn't ride—not he; was looking for a carriage when the soldiers arrested him! I made a final effort to save the poor devil, but it was in vain. He was too drunk to sit in a saddle even could we induce him to try.

We left him behind, and, owing to this final piece of local colour, had a stiff ride to Monastir; for though we pushed on as fast as the mountain-tracks allowed, the sun went down before we got in. A bitter wind arose, and we crawled along at a foot's pace, for it was pitch-dark, and the road a mass of loose stones and holes; also it was freezing hard. I clung to the saddle-peak, and comforted myself only by reflecting what fun it would have been to have brought the Bulgarian Bishop along.

Finally the lights of Monastir came in sight. I dismounted, cold and stiff, at the door of the Hôtel Stamboul; high time, too, for my luckless interpreter, who was no horseman, was about done up, and my landlord, who had taken advantage of our escort to come to Monastir too, had had quite enough.

But I was in a tearing, raging hurry, for an unique chance had offered itself for getting right through Albania, and I did not wish to lose it. A well-known society was sending an agent from one end of the country to the other on business, and was willing that I should accompany him. He was an Albanian, and spoke some French. The one drawback was that I had never seen him; he had already started, and I must pick him up—an unknown quantity in a quite unknown land. As, however, I was going alone and on my own account, and so was responsible for no one's money or life, I was free to take any risk. The one thing necessary was to obtain Turkish Government permission for the expedition. Without this

I should be fairly certain to be turned back somewhere, and the society might get into trouble, as Turkish officials were very suspicious of strangers. Some of my friends on the relief work were of opinion that to ask permission was to court failure, and that a refusal was certain. The British Consul, however, knew best; he advised me to call by myself on the Vali, and predicted success.

Calling by yourself at a Government Konak is a nervous task. There is a yard full of soldiers and gendarmes, and several staircases more or less muddy that lead to unknown heights, and, naturally, all the directions are scribbled up in Turkish. Upstairs there are corridors where officers hang about and smoke, and messengers hurry from one heavily-curtained door to another. No one took the faintest notice of me, so I addressed the most gorgeous in French. He did not understand, but called someone who did, and in two minutes I was in the presence of His Excellency. He was much amazed at my request, but very affable, and gave me leave to wander as long as I liked, though he was sure that cold and hardships would prevent my carrying out my proposed route. I fancy the fact that we both painted in water-colours was a bond of sympathy. He hoped I had my apparatus with me, and assured me I should see 'des choses très bizarres.' I thanked him, and was about to leave, when he said that, as I had been on hospital work at Ochrida, I should perhaps like to see the Turkish hospital, over the arrangements of which he had taken much trouble, and he called up a soldier to take me there.

It is a very decent building, airy, clean, and bright, with good wards, big windows, and a large garden. Mine was a surprise visit, and I found the bed-linen all clean. I do not know what the doctoring is like,

but the patients almost all looked cheery and comfortable, with the exception of some in the typhoid ward, where there were some very bad cases. The pharmacy man took me round, and told me the prescriptions. Patients of every race and religion are received, but lack of funds prevent it from opening all its wards.

I had now nothing left to do but buy a second-hand gendarmerie saddle and bridle, with a blue saddle-cloth adorned with scarlet crescents, cram the necessaries of life into a pair of saddle-bags, roll up my blanket in a waterproof sheet, and be off.

PART III

IN THE LAND OF THE EAGLE

‘ If New and Old, disastrous feud,
Must ever shock like armèd foes,
And this be true till time shall close,
That Principles are rained in blood ;
Not yet the wise of heart would cease
To hold his hope through shame and guilt,
But with his hand upon the hilt,
Would pace the troubled land like peace ;
Would love the gleams of good that broke
From either side, nor veil his eyes :
And if some dreadful need should rise,
Would strike and firmly, and one stroke.’

CHAPTER IX

OF THE ALBANIAN

'OH, I know all about the Albanians,' cried a lady; 'they are those funny people with pink eyes and white hair.'

But the Albanian is not so quickly explainable; and of all the Balkan peoples he is least known to the English.

His European name, 'Albanian' is said to be connected with the word 'Alp.' He calls himself 'Shkyipetar,' and his land 'Shkyiperia'—that is, 'son of an eagle,' and 'land of the eagle'; nor could a more fitting name be found for the untamed mountain man, with his keen eyes, aquiline nose, and proud bearing.

There are two marked Albanian types, the dark and the fair. The fair is commoner, so far as I have seen, in the South. The characteristic man has a nose like Dante's, with a drooping tip, narrow in the bridge and fine cut; very marked eyebrows that start straight and drop in a slant below the orbit bone; a long jawbone that sweeps down in a fine line and ends in a firm chin cleft at the tip. The skull is straight-backed, as though a piece has been chopped off, and there is great width just above the ears, this especially in the fair type, which has



TYPICAL
ALBANIAN
HEAD.

brown, sometimes almost flaxen, hair and gray eyes. In figure he is tall (not so tall as the Montenegrin), lightly built, slim-hipped, and as supple as a panther. The dark type, which near Ipek and Gusinje is very dark, is often longer skulled, rather shorter in height. The tribal system and lack of communication has accentuated local differences.

Albania is divided by the river Skumbi into two parts—Ghegaria, or North Albania, and Toskeria, or South. In the South there is a considerable population also of Greeks and Vlachs, with both of which the Albanians have intermarried. North of the Skumbi, with the exception of some foreign traders and Turkish soldiers and officials, the population is entirely Albanian. In the debateable vilayet of Kosovo there is still a considerable Servian population, but it is largely outnumbered. Among the Ghegs the tribal system still flourishes in the mountain districts. A man when asked his name says he is So-and-so, of the Hotti or Shala. No outside man, I am told, can become a member of a tribe, and the tribe has power to decide whether a man may sell all his property away from it. He may, and often does, marry a wife from another tribe. The marriage of cousins is forbidden.

The largest tribe is that of the Mirdites, said to number 30,000. Dibra is also a large tribe. Then come the Dukagini, the Pulati (including Shala and Shoshi), the Matija, the Kastrati, the Hotti, the Klementi and the Skreli, which average 10,000 apiece, and there are a number of minor tribes of from 1,000 to 5,000 strong. (The figures are only approximate.) These tribes contain both Moslems and Roman Catholics, have their own leaders, and are not liable for conscription in the Turkish army.

In Toskeria, though certain Begs can command an



W. H. Durham.

TOSK COSTUME, SOUTHERN ALBANIA.

armed following, the tribal system is practically dead ; but the people still fall into three main divisions : the Tosks, between the Skumbi and the Viosa ; the Liabs, south of the Tosks ; and the Chiams, further south still. All these have minor divisions.

The language also is divided into two main dialects, Tosk and Gheg, and the difference in accent is marked. A man from Korché in the South finds Skodra talk as difficult to follow as a Cockney does broad Yorkshire. The Mirdites claim that their dialect is the purest of all, and their isolation from the world makes this highly probable. All the place-names in and around Mirdita are pure Shkyip, which points to the fact that no foreigner has ever occupied it.

Shkyip is an Aryan tongue, and has as marked an individuality as the men who speak it. Much of its vocabulary resembles early Greek and Latin ; but the words often appear to be allied to, and not derived from, those tongues. It possesses, also, many odd consonant combinations peculiar to itself. Unlike any other European tongue, it has a definite and an indefinite form of declension for nouns. The adjective follows the indefinite form, and is placed after the noun, and between noun and adjective comes what the grammar calls a 'characteristic'—a kind of article which agrees in gender with the noun and has a declension of its own. Thus : 'diale i mire,' a good boy ; 'diali i mire,' the good boy. The comparison of adjectives is formed, not by inflection, but merely by prefixing 'more' ('ma') or 'very' ('shum').

The verbs are capable of expressing very subtle shades of meaning, and have, according to the latest grammar, no less than eleven moods and fifty-five cases. Many of these, however, are compounds with 'to have' or 'to be.'

No written line exists to show how the tongue grew or changed. Its past is wrapped in darkness. Long historical ballads have been passed from memory to memory. Literature, save of to-day, there is none. A uniform method of writing has not yet been adopted, and Albanian is awaiting an author to crystallize it. There is a tradition of an old Albanian alphabet both at Elbasan and at Skodra, but no successful attempt to find an alphabet in which the language could be printed was made till 1879. A special alphabet was then arbitrarily constructed, a sadly mongrel affair compounded of Greek, Latin, and Cyrillic characters and some specially invented letters. With modifications it is still used by the press at Sofia, which publishes the *Drita*, a paper in the Tosk dialect, and various books; also by the British and Foreign Bible Society for the translation of the Gospels. But it is hopelessly unpractical and very expensive, requiring special type and type-setter, and will soon be superseded. Many attempts have been made to use the Latin alphabet, and the extremely practical system invented by Mgr. Premi Dëchi, the Abbot of the Mirdites, has overcome most of the difficulties, and, owing to its great simplicity, is making rapid way.

The first book in the alphabet of 1879 was published at Constantinople, but the printing of the language was not long after forbidden on Turkish soil. The Sultan had learnt from experience that schools are centres of revolution, and would hear of no more national educational movements. Latterly he has made very active efforts to suppress the tongue altogether. In the South many people have been imprisoned for possessing books or papers printed in it, and all schools teaching it are forbidden.

But North Albania is a circumstance over which the Sultan has little control; it possesses a printing-press and several schools.

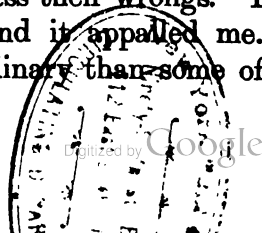
A language may die a natural death. I doubt if one has ever been killed. Persecution has perhaps supplied the necessary fillip. The knowledge of reading and writing the language is spreading rapidly. You find it in very unexpected quarters, and as a common bond of sympathy it is knitting together all classes of the people. Papers printed in London, in Rome, in Sofia, and Bukarest are smuggled in and read by Moslem and Christian alike all over the land. A literary language shows signs of developing.

In Albania, even the prosaic work of dictionary-making is spiced with a dash of romance and adventure. The story of Kristoforidh is told throughout the land with bitter indignation. A native of Elbasan, a patriot and enthusiast, he devoted some forty years of his life to the building of a monumental dictionary, collecting not only the main dialects, but visiting village after village in search of local words. He died in 1892, and bequeathed to his son the manuscript, which is reported to have contained no less than forty thousand words. The Greek Consul at Durazzo offered young Kristoforidh several thousand francs for the manuscript, and represented that his Government wished to publish it. The Greek offer was accepted; the Consul received the manuscript. Far from paying for it, he denounced the young man to the Turks for national propaganda, and he was imprisoned for two years. The fate of the dictionary is unknown. A rumour was spread that the Greeks had destroyed it. Some believe it exists and will yet see light.

The language is but part of the national question. The whole country wishes for independence. This it cannot obtain without the consent of the Powers. A successful revolt, many fear, might lead to European intervention, and to a further extension of Slav territory. The Albanians have no rich relations to support them as have the Bulgars, but as any extension of Russian influence is adverse to Austria, Austria is playing on the Albanian side. When Russia put a Consul into Mitrovitza in Slav interests, Austria hurried, not only to plant a rival Consul, but an Albanian school. So far Austria has 'come out top' in this district, and has neatly planted her gendarmerie officers there.

Italy, meanwhile, who would like to control both sides of the Adriatic, works hard to prove to the Albanian 'Codlin's your friend, not Short.' The astute Albanian listens to either charmer, accepts the money of both, and weighs the pros and cons.

So far as I learnt, what Albania really wants is independence, recognised by Europe, and a Prince, preferably a European one, approved of by the Powers. I met few in favour of creating an Albanian royal family, nor did I hear any of the so-called Albanian claimants to that position spoken of as having any following in the country. They are mostly outsiders, unacquainted with the land. People of all classes throughout the land hastened to explain their hopes and fears for their fatherland, and to pray for English recognition of its existence. My presence in some towns caused a most painful amount of hope. People hailed me as a saviour, and treated me as though I were a knight-errant come to redress their wrongs. I was quite unprepared for this, and it appalled me. I remember nothing more extraordinary than some of



these interviews in the heart of the country, when I heard freedom preached passionately by keen-faced men with burning eyes, urgent, insistent, who prayed me almost with tears to lay their case before the British Government, saying, 'England is a just country, and she will listen to the truth.' Nor shall I easily forget the day when I was taken in at a back-door after a long roundabout walk, and heard an address in French. It was torn into pieces as soon as read, for it bore many signatures, but I wrote it from memory very shortly afterwards :

'HONOURED LADY,

'We cannot express to you the joy that your journey gives us. We know very well the terrible sufferings you must have undergone upon the road. They must be for some good purpose. We believe that God has sent you to save us. Only in your country in all the world does true freedom exist. You have seen the misery of our land! Between the Moslem Beggars, who are permitted to extort money from us, and the Government, which takes our money and gives us nothing in return, the majority of us are reduced to dire poverty. There are many who have scarcely a shirt to cover them. After a bad harvest many die of cold and hunger on the mountains. The people of our villages are ignorant savages, and there is none to help them. We pray you in God's name to write all day and all night, to print our misery in every paper and to ask for justice. The Slavs have Russia to help them. We have no one. We entreat you to continue the journey that you have begun. For you there will be no danger, and you will be preserved through all difficulties. We thank you from our hearts. May God save you !'

It reads coldly in black and white. Set in the aching desolation of the land it was an exceeding bitter cry—poignant, tragic, helpless, and it is but one example out of many. I protested in vain I had neither power nor influence.

Nor did folk waste time over revolutionary rhetoric. They lucidly unfolded the situation. 'Russia's interest in and work for the Bulgarians,' they said, 'has been, and is, purely for her own purposes. This England has long known. Russia is her foe and ours. Together we fought her in the Crimea. The recent risings in Macedonia are the result of long years of Russian intrigue. That land is ours. It was ours before any Bulgar set foot in it. Now they work to persuade Europe that it is theirs. Bulgaria, as all the world knows, is a poor country. Financed by Russia, these people strive to take our land. We could easily have killed them all had we wished. Europe calls them patriots when they kill us, and condemns us if we avenge ourselves. England has just given money to feed these people. We do not wish these peasants to starve, for they are the victims of political intrigue, and are very ignorant. But if England means by giving this help that she will aid Pan-Slavonic plots and help Russia to take our land, then we think it shows great ignorance of the issues at stake and great injustice. If England will give us as much support as she has given the Bulgars, we will rise as soon as Lord Lansdowne is ready, and will make a far better job of it than they have.'

Should independence under a European Prince be denied them, they must accept the protection either of Italy or Austria. They then choose Austria unhesitatingly. In common with all the Balkan people, they believe the Austrian Empire will not last long. Austria

will provide them with roads and railways, and then break up and leave them free and provided with modern improvements. Austria has promised to allow liberty of language, and has permitted an Albanian school at Borgo Erizzo, in Dalmatia.

Italy, on the contrary, strives hard to Italianize the large Albanian colonies in Calabria and Sicily (who belong, by the way, mainly to the Uniate Church), and, having once got a footing on the further side of the Adriatic, would never voluntarily withdraw, but would pour in Italians and suppress the Albanian tongue. An anti-Italian propaganda is being worked evidently, for I was told by some villagers that union with Italy would be fraught with great danger. 'Italy possesses the holiest thing in the world—the picture of the Blessed Virgin which the angels carried over the sea from Skodra and saved from the Turks. Yet Italy has behaved impiously, and has insulted the Pope, and the curse of God is upon her. Her people are starving, and her lands are desolate. Naturally we do not wish to fall under this curse.' Also Italy has married Montenegro, and is regarded as Pan-Slavonic.

As for Greece, her name in the places I visited produced only a torrent of abuse. It must be independence or Austria. South Albania, having suffered far more from Turkish rule than the North, seemed more ready to accept Austria. The North preferred independence, but might take Austria for want of better.

The Dibra tigers, as their fellow-countrymen even call them, are all for independence. Austria is reported to be striving to tame their ferocity with gold. I believe the whole country desires release from the Sultan's Government, and that they will press for it ere long.

Oddly enough, Albania's hereditary foe, Montenegro, is inclined to support her claim for independence. The wheels within wheels of Balkan politics are almost endless. An Austrian occupation of Albania would be something like a deathblow to Servian national hopes.

Such, in brief, is the present political situation ; but it would take a volume to enter into the endless subterfuges, entanglements, and shufflings by which the external Powers strive to gain their ends, and the Albanians to outwit the lot. A large proportion of the sons of the eagle have always had their own way, and mean to continue doing so.

An unhappy Greek, who held a Government appointment under the 'reform' scheme, said to me in despair :

'What is the use of my staying here? I can do nothing. These people do not want Turkish laws. They simply tell me so. They will yield to nothing that will increase the Sultan's power. When I first came here, I went up into the mountains with four gendarmes as escort to parley with the leaders of a tribe, and to ask them to deliver up certain murderers, that they might be tried and punished according to law. They received me with great courtesy and hospitality. I explained my errand. They thanked me, and said they were perfectly well able to punish their own criminals, and required no assistance from the Turkish Government. I pressed the point. They said :

“ We are fond of visitors, and happy to receive you as our guest. You are welcome to stay here so long as you like as a friend, but if you mean to interfere in our affairs, we beg to point out to you that you are here with only four gendarmes, and every man of us

is armed, and we recommend you to return whence you came while you can !”

‘ I thought so, too. They were very polite, and gave me to eat and drink of their best, and I said good-bye. I have not been there again. We can do nothing ! If we sent up troops, there would be terrible bloodshed. These mountain men fight like devils. Probably all the tribes in the North would rise, too. The Turkish Government cannot afford this. These men can neither read nor write, but they know very well how they stand. They have brains, I tell you—they have brains. We have arrested a few, but what is the use ? Their friends come to give evidence. I have assisted at the cross-examination of people of very many nationalities, and I have seen nothing like the intelligence of these wild men. They see at once where the question will lead them. You cannot catch them. You may feel certain they are lying, but they baffle you. They have never learned to read, therefore they have memories. They make up the story beforehand ; they never forget, and they make no mistakes. Natives of some wild lands are overawed at the sight of officials and men in European costume. These men are afraid of nothing. I confess they are too clever for me. It is true they are savage. They have had to be in order to keep their liberty. When they are no longer obliged to live cut off from the world, they will awake and realize their strength. I assure you they are Bismarcks—veritable Bismarcks. Some day they will demand, and Europe will have to give them what they ask !’

He was so much impressed with the futility of his errand that he talked of throwing up his appointment.

The reform scheme as first put forth provided for

the appointment of qualified Christian judges. Until then, under Turkish law, Christian judges were a mere matter of form, and appointed by the local prefect, who could put in any little shopman he pleased, regardless of qualification. They were paid about £25 a year, and their power was nil. Now they are appointed by the Minister of Justice, must be trained lawyers, and receive about £100 a year. There are two Moslem and two Christian judges on the Bench, and the president is Moslem. The Christians can, therefore, be outvoted; but I heard no complaints of this having been unfairly done. The Christians of Turkey have, no doubt, scored by this concession, but in Albania it has given very little satisfaction.

The poorer part of the population is glad when a tyrannical Beg is locked up, but, on the whole, the people look with great distrust on any scheme likely to give the Turkish Government a stronger hold on them. Moreover, it is only in Turk-ridden districts that one hears tales of religious oppression. Once north of the Skumbi, I heard no more talk of oppressed Christians, save in Skodra, the seat of the Turkish Vali.

The Albanian is always an Albanian. The Moslem Serb and the Moslem Bulgar have all sense of nationality swept away by the mighty power of Islam. They are reputed the most fanatical Turks in Europe, and are greatly dreaded by their Christian kinsmen. 'Turk,' it cannot too strongly be said, means in the Balkan Peninsula Moslem, and has nothing to do with race. Many 'Turks' know no Turkish, and talk pure Serb.

With the Albanian it is otherwise. He is Albanian first. His religion comes afterwards. The celebrated fights among the Albanians are always intertribal, or

the quarrels of rival Begs. Christians may then fight Christians, and Moslems Moslems. The Christian the Albanian persecutes is the Slav Christian, and this is the old, old race hatred. Of all the passions that sway human fortunes, race hatred is, perhaps, the strongest and the most lasting.

The dread that Europe, under Pan-Slavonic pressure, will give more land to the Slavs has, since the Treaty of Berlin, led to a merciless oppression of the Serbs in Kosovo vilayet, an oppression which is partly vengeance for the loss of Dulcigno.

In the face of a common foe, Moslem and Christian Albania unite. Some nations have a genius for religion. The Albanians, as a race, are singularly devoid of it. Their Mohammedanism and their Christianity sits but lightly upon them, and in his heart the wild mountaineer is swayed more by unwritten beliefs that date from the world's well-springs. Of the primitive paganism of the land little is known, and I have failed to learn what man or men converted this very conservative people to Christianity. Some may have listened to St. Paul himself and to his preachers. For at that time the Slav was unknown, and the neighbourhood of Thessalonica was largely inhabited by the aboriginal race. But the teaching must have penetrated the wilder parts very slowly. Preachers from Salonika bore it across South Albania in course of time, and the wild tribes ceased from human sacrifices and other barbarous rites. But they seem to have taken far less interest in it than did the other converted peoples, who hastened to found independent Churches, and to conduct their services (as is permitted by the Orthodox Church) in the language of the people.

The South Albanians alone neither troubled to do

this nor to translate the Scriptures. They left all Church matters in Greek hands, and threw in their lot with the Greeks when the final split between the two Churches took place. The services are still in Greek, and the Bible was not translated into Albanian till the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Recently, with the desire for autonomy, a desire for an independent Church has arisen. It is bitterly opposed by the Greek Patriarch, and the Sultan, who has seen the results of a Bulgarian Church, has refused his consent. Albania has no 'Russia' behind her to enforce her claims. A large proportion of the priests are Greek, and there is a tendency to replace Albanians by Greeks in the higher posts. Sermons in Albanian are strictly prohibited. This causes great wrath, and I was asked several times to tell the British public that the Greek Patriarch was 'a thief, a liar, and perhaps an assassin!'

'The old people,' said the young, 'say that the Japanese are not Christian, and that the Russians are of our Church. What do we care about the Church? We hate the Russians! Here, I tell you, we are all Japanese!'

The effect of all this is to set on foot a scheme for a Uniate Church, under Austrian protection, which would tend to unite more closely North and South.

In the North matters are different. The mountain tribes which have not turned Moslem have always been faithful to Rome, and have consequently retained much more national independence.

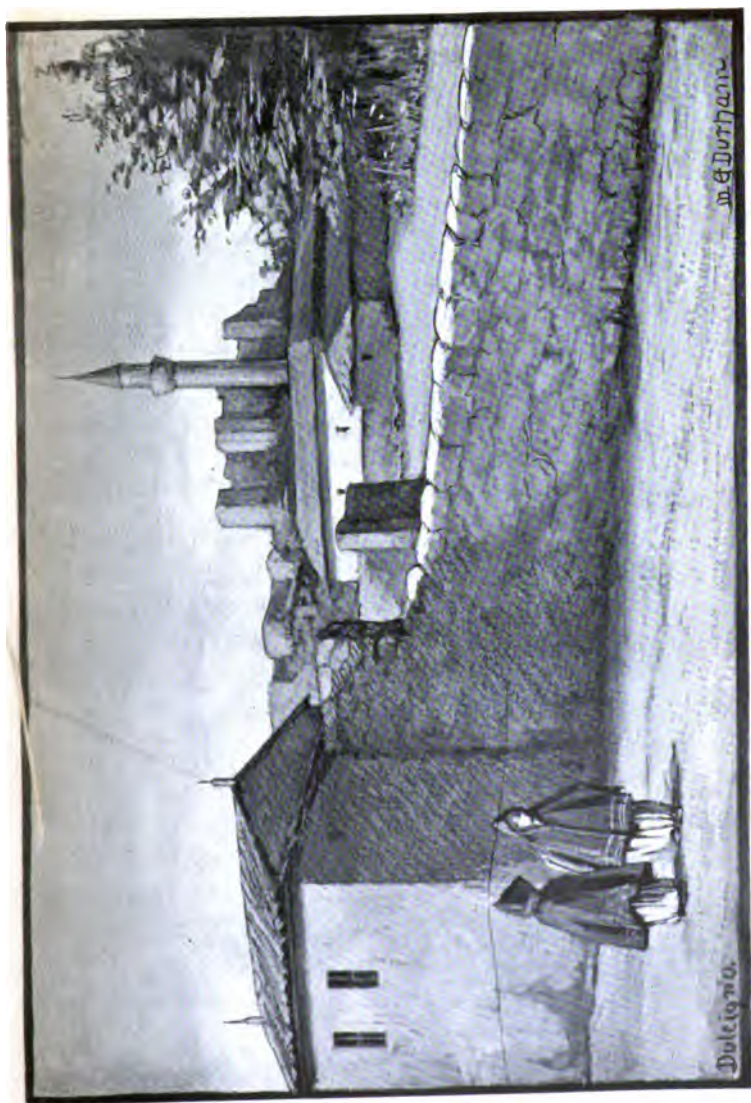
But in neither north nor south did Christianity succeed in gripping the Albanians firmly. At the end of the fifteenth century, when Skenderbeg died, they soon came to terms with the Turks, and, mainly to retain freedom, began to 'turn Turk' in considerable

numbers: the chieftains' families that they might retain command, and the peasants, who were in contact with the Turks, in order to escape spoliation. In outlying parts they remained Christian, while their Begs went over to Islam.

I believe the Mirdites and their Prince are the one example of an entire tribe which has remained Christian throughout. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries conversions to Mohammedanism were, for various reasons, very numerous, and many more were brought about at the beginning of the nineteenth century by Ali Pasha, who, during part of his lurid career, made religion a reason for robbing his Christian subjects of much property.

But the Albanian, even when he appears to yield to circumstances, as often as not makes them yield to him. He took Christianity very lightly, and Mohammedanism, too, seems to have had but little effect upon him. Many of the people are extraordinarily lax about it; in no place that I know have the Albanians taken the trouble to build a really fine mosque, and there are whole districts where the women are unveiled. Oddly enough, where they are veiled they are veiled extra thickly. A good Mohammedan should turn Mecca-wards and pray five times a day. I have spent day after day with Moslem gendarmes and horse-boys, and never seen an attempt at a prayer. But, on the other hand, once, when passing some soldiers of an Anatolian regiment who were devoutly praying by the wayside, my mounted escort pointed them out to me and laughed as though it were the best of jokes.

Under the veneer of Mohammedanism often lies a thin layer of Christianity. In many villages 'Moslems' still give each other red eggs at Easter, and I have



A CORNER OF DULCIGNO.

seen them making pilgrimages to a Christian shrine. I am told that some swear by the Virgin. There are often Christians and Moslems in the same family. If a Moslem charm fails to cure they try a Christian one, or *vice versa*. The cross or the verses out of the Koran are simply amulets. Under all lies a bed-rock of pre-historic paganism, which has, perhaps, more influence in their lives than either of the other two.

The Northern Moslems are Sunnites, or profess to be; but the Moslems of the South all belong to a very unorthodox sect of Dervishes, the Bektashites. Hadji Bektash, variously reported to have come from Bokhara and Khorassan, founded the order éarly in the fourteenth century. But the Dervish spiritual principles are far older than Mohammed's time, and Hadji Bektash, in so far as he was a Moslem, was a follower, it is said, of the Kaliph Ali.

The present Bektashites, I am told, do not observe the Mohammedan fasts, and trouble very little about the prophet. They are very tolerant of other religions. Jella-a-din, nephew of Ali Pasha, and formerly Governor of Ochrida, had a Christian wife, whom he allowed to go regularly to church, stipulating only that she should be veiled. The teaching is said to be highly mystical and of a pantheistic nature, with a flavour of Omar Kayyam. Lately, I am told, it has been a good deal persecuted, and the Sultan has been working a Sunnite propaganda. A Governor who went only to the Bektashite 'tekieh,' and not to mosque, would lose his post now. At one place I was told, 'It is better not to talk about it. We are afraid of trouble.'

In the event of a free Albania, it seems probable that many of the sect will turn Christian. For the lower classes, as do most religions, Bektashism supplies a quantity of miracles, and large numbers of

lambs are sacrificed at the shrines of popular saints. Khizi, a mythical character, who is said to figure largely in Oriental spiritualism, is identified by many with St. George of dragon fame, and the Bektashites keep St. George's Day with ceremony.

The Albanian, in short, stands out in marked contrast to all the rest of the Sultan's subjects. In appearance he usually impresses the stranger very favourably. The 'magnificent Turk' that the Cook's tourist admires in Constantinople is almost always an Albanian. So is the faithful and honest kavas that protects him. When you meet someone who cries up the splendid physique of the Turkish army, you always find he has seen the Albanian regiment.

And alone, of all the Balkan peoples, the Albanian is an artist. His peculiarly indomitable personality always brings him prominently forward. Where he has been handed over with part of the territory to Montenegro he is rapidly absorbing all the trade. When he ceases to obtain money by fighting he does so by commerce. He owns half the shops of Cetinje, and you may find him driving a flourishing trade all the way up the Dalmatian coast, and also in Italy, and in Bosnia. Commercial travellers who have to do with him will tell you that he understands business, and is reliable. He has, it appears, only to live under a decent Government to prosper.

His aspirations are very great. As the aboriginal inhabitant, he claims all the five vilayets—Kosovo, Skodra, Monastir, Janina, and Salonika. The claims of other peoples also have to be considered, but when the division of the debateable lands takes place it is to be hoped that the rights of the Albanian will not again be ignored, and that his land will be extended eastward. It is said of him sometimes that he has no definite plan

of Government, and has not succeeded in obtaining his own independence ; but it must be remembered that, though Bulgaria owes her position entirely to outside help, when once started she has done very well. And the Albanian considers the Bulgar 'a thick-headed Scythian.'

CHAPTER X

MONASTIR TO TEPELEN

‘ Turn we to survey,
Where rougher climes a nobler race display ;
No product here the barren hills afford,
But man and steel, the soldier and the sword.’

It was two o'clock a.m., pitch dark, and freezing hard, when I left Monastir in a large ramshackle carriage, with four horses abreast and a Bulgarian driver, two gendarmes riding ahead as escort, and two Albanians (our assistant at Ochrida and his brother) as travelling companions. The road was frozen into deep ruts, and we were rattled about like dried peas in a pod. As I had had no time to rest since leaving Ochrida, and had been riding all the previous afternoon to make sure my new saddle was all right, I nevertheless dozed till dawn, and dreamed I was on board ship. The pallid sun crawled up, the white fog lifted off the frozen land, and we all got out and walked to thaw our toes.

Leaving Resna on our right, we turned along the western side of Lake Presba. Ploughing was in full swing, and in some fields the young green corn was already sprouting and promising food for the hungry land, and the big lake was extraordinarily beautiful in the morning light. Ochrida is magnificent, but Presba is faery-like in its loveliness.

My comrades held out hopes of a ‘ han ’ and a possible

fire, where we should rest and refresh at midday, but we arrived only to find it had been burnt down during the late insurrection, and a party of Albanian soldiers encamped in the ruins, as lonesome, melancholy, and comfortless as any Bulgarian refugees. I bought for twopence a very neatly-made wooden spoon, with an ingenious folding handle, from a trooper, who was whiling away the time by carving such from a lump of boxwood, and producing artistic results with no other tools but a clumsy pocket-knife; for the Albanian is a born arts-and-craftsman, clever-fingered and inventive, with an instinctive sense of design and a power of boldly handling strong colours that rarely fails him.

No fire, no shelter, frozen ground, and a bitter wind. I took refuge in the carriage again, and having had nothing but a cup of black coffee since last night's dinner, ate a whole fowl without any help. Then on again through a pass that was Montenegrin in its wild ruggedness—all loose gray rocks and big box-bushes, whose leaves were nipped red with the frost. Here my comrade pointed out the split in the cliffs whence a band of brigands had swooped down on his brother some twelve years ago, and carried him off into the mountains, where he suffered great hardships for six months as their prisoner. Now, however, the country had been reported safe, and no one had been 'held up' for two years, for the chief brigand bands had surrendered their rifles and been amnestied.

We zigzagged down a steep and long descent, saw below us the small lake of Malik, the third of the Albanian lake group, whence flows the river Devoli, and reached the big fertile plain. No more wooden, lath-and-plaster houses, but well-built stone ones, with red-tile roofs, neat villages, and scattered on the hill-slopes, the big wealthy-looking dwellings of the local

Begs. The land was well cultivated, and the road very fair, and the men by the way walked with a swinging stride, and held their heads up. 'All here is Albanian,' said my comrade, and I felt I was once again in a part of the Peninsula where I felt at home. Part of the population is also claimed by Greece, some is Vlah, and it is clearly not Bulgarian. Nevertheless, part of this land, too, was to have been swept into Russia's Big Bulgaria of S. Stefano fame.

Koritzza (Korché, Alb.) is a surprising town. It is clean, really clean—the cleanest town I know in the Turkish Empire—with straight, well-paved streets that are quite free from dogs and garbage. It lies high on a mountain-ringed plain, over 2,000 feet above sea-level, is healthy, and has a good water-supply.

Scarcely more than a third of the inhabitants are Moslem. In the mountains hard by inferior coal is quarried, and the town actually boasts a steam flour-mill. Were Korché connected by a railway with the coast, there is no doubt it would develop rapidly, for the coal is good enough for export. Even with the present difficulties of communication there are a surprising number of foreign goods in the shops. Much of its wealth has been made abroad, for though under present circumstances the Albanian finds it difficult to progress at home, he shows great business capacity in other lands, and proves his patriotism by spending his earnings in his native land.

Korché is the more interesting because writers of forty years ago compare it most unfavourably with Ochrida. But while the Christian population there has been led to disaster by political propaganda, that of Korché has progressed steadily and surely.

Ochrida is still mediæval, but Korché is civilized. I was received with very great hospitality at the Albanian

girls' school, which is so much 'up-to-date' that I felt as if I had been suddenly dropped back into Europe. It is the only recognised school in all South Albania in which Albanian children can learn to read and write their own language. It uses the special Albanian, and not the Latin alphabet.

A boys' school, which was started in Korché seventeen years ago, with Government permission, went on very successfully for fifteen years, when the authorities suddenly swooped down, closed it, and imprisoned the masters at Salonika without any form of trial. Korché being one of the places the Greeks wish to annex, the Greek Bishop of Korché objects to the teaching of the vernacular. But the girls' school lives under Austrian and American protection, and has so far weathered all storms.

I called on the Turkish Muttasarif, just to show that I was on a free-and-above-board Government-permitted expedition. He was affable, spoke French, and told me that the population consisted entirely of Greeks and Turks. Albania was a word we did not mention. I might have, he said, as large an escort of gendarmes as I pleased. I told him I believed there was no danger, and one would be enough just to show that I had leave to travel. He heaved a sigh of relief.

'No,' he said, 'there is no danger. Here, thank God, we have no Bulgarians!'

Bulgarians are not beloved in Korché, the trade of which suffered much last year when the roads to Salonika and Monastir were infested by Bulgarian bands, and almost unpassable for many months. Korché was very kind to me. It greeted my plan of riding all through Albania with enthusiasm. The houses I visited were all Albanian; very good houses, too, comfortably and prettily arranged, and at each I

was begged to tell England that there are better people than Bulgars to be freed. Here and elsewhere I was distressed at the high hopes raised by the mere fact that someone had come from England to see what the land was really like. Nor were my assurances that I possessed no political power ever of any avail.

The political situation always fills the foreground in the free States of the Balkan Peninsula. In the lands that are yet Turkish it obscures the heavens and pervades all space. Many wanderings had shown it me from the Servian and Montenegrin points of view. I had seen it at Resna and Ochrida through Exarchist and Patriarchist eyes. I knew what it looked like in the vilayet of Kosovo, and was now to be shown it in a new light. You cannot escape it; if you shut your eyes to it some one will rub your nose in it. I stayed a few pleasant days at Korché, and then plunged alone into the unknown.

One a.m. is a dree hour, and though my kind host supplied me with a breakfast of hot milk, I cannot say that I started to explore Albania with much enthusiasm. It was a brilliant, starlight night, and bitterly cold. I said good-bye to all my friends, and started in the same four-horsed carriage in search of the strange man who was to pilot me through a wild land. The road was terribly rough. I dozed unhappily till six, and stared through the white dawn on a lone bare land, as rugged as Montenegro, with narrow cultivated patches in the valleys and great snow-peaks above.

At 9.30 we rattled into Kolonia, a group of tiny houses on a small and lofty plain, ringed round with bleak heights.

My driver, a Bulgar, made me understand we must

rest for two hours, and put me down at a forlorn han. The owner showed me up to the empty and unfurnished den which is the cold comfort offered by these hostelries. Albanian was the only tongue spoken. Several people came and stared at me, and retired. Then an officer appeared, the Izbashi. I tried him in Servian, as a sort of forlorn hope. He rose to it at once, for his Mama was a Bosniak. In came the Kaimmakam, in great state, with several police—a mild-looking, elderly man, who spoke only Turkish. The Izbashi translated. I was to go to the Kaimmakam's house, where there was a fire, and all was very good. So off we went. Arrived there, the Izbashi fetched his Bosnian mama, a funny old girl, who was not veiled, but was particular to keep a shawl over the top of her head and carefully pinned under her chin while the Kaimmakam was in the room. Otherwise she did not treat the gentlemen with any respect, but chattered and joked away at a great rate. To entertain me the Kaimmakam produced a Turkish book, with pictures of the Marble Arch and the Bank, and was delighted when I recognised them. I fancy he imagined I resided, when at home, in one or the other. They were exceedingly hospitable, asked whether it was a day on which I ate meat, and insisted on preparing me a meal.

Meanwhile the two men withdrew, and sent their ladies in—the wife of each and several daughters—all closely veiled, giggling wildly and in great excitement. They unwound themselves, and appeared in would-be European attire of the most appalling cut and design. The Izbashi's Bosnian mama showed me off, and was so voluble that I did not understand much; but as she greatly preferred doing all the talking, this was of no consequence. Suddenly a hand was heard at the door.

There was a wild seizing of wraps, several shrieks, and a rapid veiling. Even the Izbashi's mama put on her shawl again. The door opened, discreetly, a few inches, and a small boy of four squeezed in. This was considered a vast joke. My lord, who was the Izbashi's only hope, was well aware that he was the sole representative of the superior sex, and gave himself the airs of a Pasha. Cross-legged on the Kaimmakam's couch, he received the homage of the ladies with much dignity and satisfaction, and perpetrated many witticisms at my expense, which were unfortunately lost upon me. More knocks and a parley. The ladies reswathed themselves, and went giggling out again, and, after sufficient interval had been left for their escape, the gentlemen and the dinner appeared. A beefsteak, bread and honey, a glass of wine, and a brand-new knife and fork to eat with—'quite alla Franca,' as the Izbashi said. They begged me to stay the night, but I made them understand that I was expected at Leskovik.

Kolonia is entirely Moslem, and there are not more than 100 houses. There is little cultivable land in the neighbourhood, and the place, until quite recently, has been famed as a nest of brigands. The present disturbed state of the Turkish Empire has, however, given a good deal of employment to fighting men, and there has been no brigandage in this part for two years. Kolonia treated me, at any rate, very handsomely, and sent me on my way rested and refreshed, and escorted by a fresh couple of gendarmes.

On through a wild, bleak land of gray rock, sparsely inhabited, and for the most part uninhabitable. I grinned when I remembered that, in drawing-room meetings in England, people seriously propose to pen the 'naughty' Albanians into territory of this sort,

and ask Lord Lansdowne to make the Sultan see that they stop there.

A huge white wall of snow-clad mountain with an almost level sky-line towered on one hand, grim and impassable. Leskovik, small and stony, hung high on its slope. The Police Commissary and a mounted escort dashed out to meet me, and we clattered into the main street a little before sundown, after a sixteen hours' journey.

The usual crowd gathered to see me, and it was an anxious moment, for here I was to meet my unknown travelling companion, and on him the success of my tour would largely depend. He appeared at once, and took me off to the house of a relative. I owe him many thanks, for though he had never before undertaken dragoman work, he piloted me successfully all through Albania. That I might see the wilds of the land he left his usual business route, and through all the consequent hardships and fatigues he was always cheery and helpful and good-natured.

Leskovik is a quite small place, solid and stony, built much like a North Wales village, but clean and tidy, the population mostly Bektashite Moslems. Some of the Christian women had a small cross tattooed between their eyebrows. There is a small church and a Greek school. The town exports dried meat, the flesh of the mountain sheep, and has to import almost all its corn. Such cultivable land as there is is well worked.

I was now in the vilayet of Janina, which is more under Turkish power than any other part of Albania. Its Vali is much hated, and it is the only one of the three Albanian vilayets I went through in which the Christian Albanians complained of persecution. This arises from the fact that the taxes in this part are

farmed out to several powerful and notorious Moslem Begg, who, by exacting double and treble, even ten times, the dues by force of arms, and keeping the difference, find it worth while to support the Turkish Government. I was assured there were plenty of 'good' Begg, but that only the 'bad' ones had Government appointments.

Nor does the Christian population alone fear persecution. I was given a message to the effect that the Moslems were very pleased that I should visit their town, and were sorry they could not ask me to visit them, but some years ago an Austrian Consul had passed this way, and by invitation had spent the night at a Moslem house. Its master was shortly afterwards arrested and sent into exile without trial. The Kaimmakam, a young Albanian who speaks French well, came to see me twice, and expressed very liberal views. All religions to him were but paths to the same place: we must travel by the road; whether we go by the church or the mosque makes no matter. It is the same God. When he went anywhere he went to mosque, 'but what we have to remember is that we are all Albanians. In England,' he added, 'there are many religions, and people do not kill each other about it.' Poor man! he thought we were civilized, and had never heard of Passive Resisters. He questioned me about the Bulgarians, and was eager for news. This hatred of the Exarchists for the Patriarchists—could I explain it? In order to free themselves from Moslem rule, here are the Christians who amuse themselves by killing each other! For himself, he did not like the Bulgarians, but he was sorry for the poor devils of peasants who were the victims of politicians. He asked me to tell him the truth about the state of the burnt villages,

and said he was glad someone had supplied food. 'But, I believe,' he added with a smile, 'that they did not make an Exarchist of you! Mademoiselle, I can promise you that you will find friends in Albania.'

From Leskovik I rode to Postenani, my guide's home, by a rough track through wild mountains skirt-ing round Malesin, a huge isolated sugar-loaf which, sixty-five years ago, was held as a fortress by one of Ali Pasha's Beks, who defended it successfully against the Turk for several years. Finally they discovered and cut off his water-supply, and he surrendered. He had three houses upon it: one at the top, one at the base, and one halfway up. Only the latter remains, and his son, the present Bek, is very poor.

Postenani, a small village, lies very high, with a valley below it and a huge and almost perpendicular cliff towering at the back. It is almost all Christian. My arrival caused great excitement, no foreigner having been there lately, and never a woman; and I was received with the greatest kindness and lavish hospitality. Any amount of visitors called on me, and I paid return visits on all. I am afraid to say how much black coffee, rakija, jam, water, and sweet-stuff I swallowed. They all had to be partaken of in each house. Few houses possessed chairs or tables, but they were comfortable and well-to-do.

The floor, covered with scarlet and black rugs of good design; the walls, panelled with dark wood almost up to the rafters, often well-carved, ceiling, the hooded stone fire-place, with its blazing logs, made a rich setting for the athletic figures of the young men, with their white fustanellas frilling round them, and the handsome women, clad for the most part in dark blue—grave, dignified, sober people, strong, well set up, and healthy. Much ceremony is observed. The young

treat the elder with great deference. The women always kissed me, and laid my hand against their foreheads. The elder lady of the house sits with the guests, the son's wife waits on everyone, stands all the time, and leaves the room backwards. The houses were specklessly clean, the boards scrubbed to whiteness, the cups and cooking utensils shining.

The fame of the help given to Macedonia had spread and raised high hopes. Surely, if England had helped the Bulgars they would help the Albanians when they knew their needs. I was distressed by the hopes founded on my visit. One woman declared that good could not fail to come of it.

Brigandage and the Government, I was told, were what they suffered from. The Government robbed them, and gave them no protection at all. The richer men paid armed guards; the others subscribed for two more. They greatly feared the men of the Kolonia district, but vowed I was safe, as there was no one in the village who would betray my presence to outsiders. Were it known, they would probably be raided, as I was worth putting to ransom. Moslems took to brigandage to escape conscription and to gain money to pay for exemption from military service. They were chiefly from rugged districts where there no means of earning enough otherwise.

It was a dog's life in the Turkish army. Many of those who had taken up brigandage were amongst the strongest and most intelligent. In any other land such men would be good citizens. Here they lived like wild beasts on the mountain, and robbed rather than be robbed and oppressed by the Government. Such is brigandage from the native point of view. They dreaded the brigands, but they pitied them, and regarded them as the victims of circumstances. My



Malesin,
1904
W. H. Durham.

MALESIN,
(NEAR TESKOVIK, SOUTH ALBANIA.)

The fortifications are solid and well built of hewn stone. Ali meant Tepelen to rank high as a town, and so it may do some day, for the Viosa valley is the only route from the sea through the mountains to the interior, and it is an old, old trade-route, and the ancient way from Apollonia to Dodona. Fragments of ancient walls still stand within those of Ali. They are very rudely built, without mortar, of unhewn stones of unequal sizes somewhat smoothed on the outer surface, and roughly battlemented. They are called the walls of Helen. Tepe (Turkish) is a hill according to the Kaimmakam, and Tepe Eleni Helen's Hill. 'Helène,' he added, was 'une femme très connue dans l'antiquité,' and the walls must therefore be Roman! (Greek and Latin are not compulsory in Turkish colleges.) I can assign no date to these walls, and have failed to learn anything about them. The ruins of former greatness and the filthy herd of human monkeys at present squatting within them make up one of the most melancholy pictures that I know.

The Kaimmakam and the Police Commissary were, I believe, genuinely pleased to see anyone from the outer world, and made me most welcome. I was the only European who had been that way for several years. He selected the hour of 7 a.m. as the most suitable for receiving me at the konak. I was asked if I wished to call officially or in a friendly manner, and replied I would do whichever they wished.

They wished to be friends. The Kaimmakam's sitting-room was heavily scented with musk, and entirely furnished with the snow-white rugs woven in the neighbourhood, huge fluffy things into which you sink comfortably, and the walls were hung with quantities of photographs, for the Kaimmakam is an enthusiastic photographer. He recounted the diffi-

culties of his post among these wild people, and told me that, in accordance with the new reform scheme, he had just received instructions to start schools in two of the neighbouring villages. They were to be in the Turkish tongue, because the people were Moslems ; but he admitted that none of them understood it. He hoped that next time I came I should find the bridge built and the roads made.

He was doing his best. Arrangements were being made. He showed me all his photographic plates, and begged me to take any I liked, for I must not leave Tepelen without a recollection of it, and unluckily he had no prints ready to offer me. I accepted four, and, oddly enough, brought them unbroken to England in my saddle-bags. He also gave me coffee, for which I was truly thankful, for as no one ever breakfasts in these lands, I had not succeeded in getting a mouthful of anything before paying my call.

My visit to him is a bright spot in my experience of Turks. He was the only Turk I had to do with in Albania who did not cross-examine me and treat me as though it was only lack of evidence which prevented his ordering my immediate arrest. Tepelin is a savage spot, but it did not make me feel that I was living in the witness-box, or that life is but alternate games of 'poker' and 'patience.'

CHAPTER XI

TEPELEN TO ELBASAN

AVLONA was the next place on our route. It was said to be distant but a ten hours' ride, and the track *assez bien*. The kirijee who had brought us from Postenani offered to take us on for a moderate sum, and further volunteered that he had a friend, one Zadig, in the Tepelen police, who would gladly be armed escort for us. The kindly Kaimmakam said I might have whatever escort I pleased, a military one if I wished, but for safety a couple of zaptiehs were enough. Zaptiehs, I should note, are far better escorts on rough tracks than suvarris, for when the 'going' is really bad the suvarri is entirely occupied in keeping his own horse on its legs, and has no spare hand to pull you out of a hole.

Off we went. It was a fine day, and Zadig and the kirijee sang weird duets at the tops of their voices. We started along the river Benchi, but soon reached the Viosa, and followed its left bank down-stream on a more or less bad track.

About half an hour from Tepelen we passed on the left a hill with a much-ruined ancient wall ringing its summit. The place is called Dukut, and has been identified by some, according to the Kaimmakam, with Dodona, but Dodona has with fair certainty been

located close to Janina. I dared not afford time to climb up to investigate it, as in this wretched land the loss of a few hours may mean that night will overtake you in the wilderness, and the nights were as yet far too chill and damp to risk sleeping out in. In spite of flannel bandages and salicylate, the ghost of rheumatism still haunted me.

We pushed on. At the door of a little tekieh a fine white-bearded old dervish was dealing out bread to the poor. After this the way grew worse and worse, and the land was almost uninhabited. Only a tiny village showed white on the mountain-side here and there, and, save a goatherd or two, we met no one the whole day. All the land looked like an undiscovered country, and as wild as the day it was created. We pounded over loose wet stones and then into awful liquid mud and stiff wet clay. The legs of the poor mules sank in knee-deep, and came out with a loud plop.

I had to sit my beast as long as possible, though I felt it was cruel, as I could not have tramped far in such 'heavy going.' Mules are singularly stupid animals. They climb, it is true, with cat-like agility, but those that are used to travelling in a caravan persist in following the beast in front, no matter what happens, and when the first mule has fallen into a mud-hole and been hauled out, the others fight desperately to be allowed to do the same.

We made many détours with but slight benefit, and I went down all the worst descents on foot, as the animals pretty well rolled down them, and arrived in a heap at the bottom, and the pack-mule, often on its knees or haunches, had to be hauled on to its legs again by the two zaptiehs.

Zadig ('the faithful') was fitly so called, and showed strength, skill, and patience that was beyond all

praise. I was nearly thrown once as my mount fell forward suddenly with one foreleg into a deep mud-hole, overbalanced, could not get a footing, and plunged violently, to the terror of the zaptiehs, who thought I was going to be smashed. I could not dismount without falling under the beast in the mud, but managed to steady him down, and he climbed out all right. My saddle and bridle saved me many a spill. The bridle is specially necessary, as the kirijees supply only halters, and the beasts when scared are then quite out of control.

The zaptiehs were anxious at our slow progress. The kirijee was in despair, and said he had never travelled a worse way. We made only a half-hour's halt for lunch, and to let the beasts browse, and then pushed on. Life, so far as I was concerned, resolved itself into a ceaseless struggle to keep my mule on its legs when I was mounted, and to keep my own balance when on foot. The valley narrowed, and we skirted along the mountain-side high above the yellow, swollen Viosa. Beyond it lay the district of Malakstra, of evil repute. The natives of the neighbourhood do not hesitate to call it the 'slave country.' I made many efforts to learn the truth about this, and repeat the facts as told me.

Since the Egyptian slave-trade has been checked, the natives of Malakstra, who are a lazy lot and all Moslems, have taken to selling their daughters into service for, some said, as little as £T5 or £T6 to anyone who requires 'servants.' The houses of the wealthy Begs are, in many instances, served entirely by these girls, who remain from ten to fifteen years according to the terms of the agreement, and are then free, and usually return home and marry. At Permeti I was told that some men with a gang of thirty girls had

very recently passed through, *en route* for the larger towns. And at another place I heard of a girl who had escaped, after having been frightfully beaten, and had been recaptured. The Government is aware of the trade, but winks at it, and pretends that the service is voluntary. The zaptiehs were surprised at my doubting the possibility of the fact, and declared that the Malakastrans sold all their female children. They (the zaptiehs) lived on the slave route, and often saw men bringing along parties of girls. Many people spoke to me about the disgrace of this traffic, and begged me to make the facts known. These were all Albanians. When, however, I asked a foreign Consul about it, he laughed, and said it was only a custom of the country, and as the girls were set free in the end, it was all right; also that they probably did not have a harder time than they would if they stayed at home. All of which is true. Nevertheless, the system is one which must be open to the grossest abuse, for, so everyone assured me, the girl is her master's property, and cannot leave before the expiry of the agreed term of years. If it is not slavery, it is something unpleasantly like it.

Malakastra, as seen across the river, is a wild, mountainous land. The only village in sight was a solidly-built stone one. There was good land, too, I was told, but the people till little of it. The valley narrowed again, and became a rocky gorge. We made an abrupt descent on foot to the river's edge. How the beasts got down with unbroken legs I do not know. On either side the river were various almost inaccessible caverns high in the cliff face. These are all fabled to contain magic treasure, if you only know how to find it.

In spite of the long march he had already made, the kirijee thought it worth while to scramble up to one

of them, but returned to say that the entrance was blocked and he could not get in. Evening was drawing in, and we were still in the wilderness. We had been nearly ten hours on the march, and were barely half-way to Avlona. Men and beasts were exhausted; it would be impossible to push on in the dark even were they not. There was a han on the river's edge but a little further on, and there, said the zaptiehs, we must pass the night.

It was a ramshackle wooden and stone affair, with a peculiarly villainous-looking owner. I rode into the yard and dismounted stiffly, while Zadig and his comrade parleyed with the hanjee. The odd part of this sort of travelling is, that so long as you know you have another mile to go, you go, mechanically almost, dropping to sleep, swaying in the saddle, and waking with a start, but always hanging on somehow, dismounting and scrambling over yet another obstacle, even after you are past thinking of anything except that there is a goal you will reach some day; there always seems another ounce left in you to be squeezed out until you know you have really arrived. Five minutes after the strain is off you know you are dead-dog-tired, could eat refuse, or sleep in a mud-hole.

The only room in this han was, like that at Dragut, used as a storeroom for hides and maize, but it had a sound roof, and we were soon squatting round a crackling blaze of brushwood. The zaptiehs came in, very pleased with themselves. It was a bad neighbourhood they said, so, to insure my safety, they had told the hanjee that I was a prisoner. Now he would think I had no money, and there would only be a few pence to pay next morning. I was a much greater responsibility than a real prisoner, for if a prisoner escapes it is no great matter, whereas if I were taken by

the natives the ransom asked for me would be something enormous. Kolouri, the village on the hill above, was a bad place, but they were going to sleep with the hanjee, and we should get away all right next morning.

Luckily my guide had providently brought so much bread and eggs that we had plenty left for supper. The hanjee supplied wine and coffee, and I made maggi. I should pity myself if I had to do a hard day's work on nothing but white European bread, but the brown, very slightly bitter, bread of the Near East, made, I am told, of a mixture of wheat and rye, is far more sustaining.

Warmed and fed, we rolled up in our coverings to sleep. But there was no chimney at all, and the smoke escaped only through the shuttered window holes. Even on the floor it was so dense that my eyes and nose streamed and smarted. The tired kirijee and my guide were sleeping sweetly, and I could only choke, till, remembering that when saving people from a fire you should tie a wet handkerchief over your mouth and nose, I spread a damp towel over my head, and was asleep in five minutes.

All too soon the gray dawn was crawling through the shutters, and the kirijee was declaring that, as it was raining, we had better start before it got worse. No food of any sort could be obtained, and a few crusts were all we had left. We took the usual nip of black coffee. It was boot and saddle at once, and we started in a fine drizzle, Zadig triumphant, for the bill was excessively moderate. The hanjee eyed my very superior saddle suspiciously, and said he didn't believe I was a prisoner after all.

We were told we should find the way better, but it was worse; there was no track at all. We struck up across country, over any kind of ground, always

very steep up or very steep down. Wherever it was not rough stone that had to be climbed, it was sappy clay that had to be waded. The mules had repeatedly to be hauled out of mud-holes by their tails. The zaptiehs were extremely kind to me, but I got into great difficulties with them, as their idea of getting me over a bad place was to grip me by both hands and leap wildly, without giving me time to get a footing or see where I was flying too. Then we landed anywhere all of a heap. When this happened on a sort of shelf of wet rock and mud overhanging the raging river I had to yell to my guide, who was struggling along another shelf, to tell them to let me pick my own way, and turn their attention to the beasts.

All things come to an end in time. We emerged from the gorge, were on level ground again, reached the Shushitza, a tributary of the Viosa, and crossed it by a brand-new stone bridge. I don't think I was ever so surprised to see anything. Down came the rain in torrents; we rushed into the han alongside—a highly superior han, which supplied not only maize bread but excellent olives, plenty of oil and rakija, off which we feasted gratefully. It poured for an hour, then the sun came out and we with it.

We were told it was but three hours to Avlona. There was a splendid paved road—as good as anyone could desire—for nearly 200 yards, and I felt most cheery. Then it gradually faded away; bushes at least six years old appeared in the middle of it, there came a sea of clay for a quarter of a mile, and then, now and again, a few yards of pavement all alone in the wilderness. Three or four natives going our way said that soon it would be really very bad. And it was. It became a narrow shelf, trodden in

a very steep hillside of wet clay; the hoof-pits were knee-deep; the whole was streaming. I was ahead, and wanted to dismount, but they all cried, 'No!' I sat the struggling beast for a few awful minutes as he reeled and fought for a footing on the giddy edge, then there was a wild yell, and the pack-mule rolled over on its side and lay stuck fast. This was enough for me. I dismounted into the squash, and followed the peasants, who were treading a new track higher up the hillside.

The kirijee and zaptiehs dug the mule out, and got it on its legs with difficulty after partly unloading it. The Kaimmakam's photographic plates were on its upper side and were unhurt! We crawled round somehow. I felt as though I had been going to Avlona all my life, and should continue doing so throughout eternity.

We struck a hard track again, over land all glorious with anemones, purple, scarlet, and salmon colour, and reached high pastures on the hilltop, misty with pink asphodel and rich with thick turf—the best grazing-land in Albania, so they said. Below lay grassy valleys, and beyond the hill, the district of Klimari, a group of five Christian villages, which have resisted the tax-gatherers so successfully that they pay only three-and-fourpence yearly tax per house, and are the envy and admiration of the neighbourhood. Here we yelled for directions to the goatherds—ruffianly-looking fellows, surrounded by wolfish hounds and armed with very long sheath-knives, something like the swords of the ancient Romans. Till last year they all carried guns as well, but were then disarmed under the 'reform' scheme.

Except for the folk of Klimari, all the people scattered through this part are Moslems. But the women are unveiled and work in the fields, which

points to the fact that they are but recently converted, and have taken Islam in a very superficial manner; for as Zadig, a Moslem, pointed out, it is only Christians who let their wives do all the work.

Over the crest of a hill the Adriatic shone suddenly with a glare of sunlight upon it, and an ultramarine island out beyond. Thalassa! I thought we had almost arrived, but we asked a shepherd, 'How far to Avlona?' and he said, 'Three hours,' which was what they had told us at the han several hours ago. Again we struck a track. This time it was intersected by streams, and all the bridges had fallen. Oh the joys of living under the Turkish Government! But there are people who wonder why the Albanians say it is a waste of money to pay road-tax. The first gully was some 10 feet deep with abrupt sides. The fallen bridge formed wobbly stepping-stones by which we crossed, and, by damming the stream, made a wide deep pool. The mules tumbled down the bank, and the leader pitched straight into the deepest part, clawed, went down on his haunches, and was got out with difficulty. The kirijee forced my saddle-mule, much against his will, to a better spot, but the pack-mule hurled himself after the first one, stood in deep water, and fought to be allowed to climb the worst part, for where one mule has been the next madly persists in following. An awful plunging ensued, and the three men got him up finally by one hauling his tail while the others supported him on either side. It took a good twenty minutes, and there were several more gullies to cross, all unrideable.

The long rays of the evening light came slant and low. We passed through an olive-wood, grotesque, gray, and weird, haunted by black demoniac buffaloes, the most magic sight I have ever seen, and then, far

away down below us, lay Avlona, with the sea and bay and island, like a map.

There was an abrupt and rough descent over what looked like pure mica, all sharp and glittering, in great chunks. More mud, more olives. I recognised the funnel of a Lloyd steamer in the bay. We reached the paved road at the entrance of the town, and at the special request of the zaptiehs I mounted and rode to the inn door.

We had been just twelve hours on the road. The elder zaptieh said he had been twenty years in the force, and never made such an awful journey. We had been two days on the road instead of one. The kirijee said it was because we had started on a Tuesday, the unluckiest day in all the week. Men and beasts were dead-tired. I felt a brute for having brought them along. I and my mule were the best preserved of the party, for he had carried the lightest weight, and I had ridden a good deal, but even I had only one idea in my head, and that was, that as soon as I had supped I would go on board that Lloyd steamer and leave the rest of Albania to take care of itself. Having eaten mutton for a solid half-hour, however, I did nothing of the sort.

Zadig and his comrade came next morning to say good-bye. I was sorry to part with them. They had served me very faithfully, and without their help I should still be sticking in the clay. Touchingly grateful for their backshish, which I am sure they had earned many times over, the poor chaps said they had had no money for six months, and this was a godsend. They had tried to do their best for me. They kissed my hands and left me with a shower of good wishes.

Avlona is a small town with about 5,000 inhabitants,

and lies on low, swampy ground, about half an hour from the port; is surrounded with olive and cypress, is picturesque, gaily coloured and haunted by great white storks that build on wall and roof and keep up a lively clapper-clapper with their long red beaks. But the large undrained marshes breed fever, and the stricken population drags miserably through the hot summer months, under a Government which regards all disease as Kismet.

Three foreign consulates—Austrian, Italian, and Greek—are ‘watching Albanian interests’; the fourth, Russian, of course, is watching the other three. Propaganda rage. The school and language question burns. Greece is active. Italy comes into line with the others here, has planted two Italian schools, and is working to plant two others in the neighbourhood. An Austrian post-office makes the sending and receiving of letters safe. Throughout my tour I was begged by Albanians to commit nothing I had written about the state of the country to the Turkish post.

A French company is successfully working the asphalt beds at Selenitza, some miles north of the town, and strings of little pack-donkeys carry the big black cakes down to the port. Avlona exports, also Vallonea, a species of acorn used for dyeing and tanning, and some hides and olive oil. Were it joined by roads to the interior, Avlona should be rich, for the bay is the finest on the coast for harbour purposes.

Now, the port, as someone naïvely said, ‘is not very good. It is just as God made it.’ But Austrian steamers call regularly, and Avlona is accustomed to the sight of foreigners; not to those, however, who drop down suddenly upon it from the wild interior. This was a quite unprecedented and alarming event.

The Kaimmakam, a Turk, a dark, Eastern-looking

thing, suspected me enormously. He began as usual by saying that the country was inhabited entirely by Greeks and Turks, that next year there would be excellent carriagable roads everywhere, and bridges galore, and that quantities of Greek schools were about to be erected. Then he got to business; he asked hundreds of questions.

'No, monsieur, I am not a journalist nor a missionary. Je suis Anglaise. No, my father was not an ambassador, nor a Consul, nor a journalist, nor did he "make politics." My brothers are not officers, neither are they in the diplomatic service. No; none of them have visited the Turkish Empire; nor have my uncles, nor my cousins. They have no intention of so doing.'

As he seemed anxious to learn about my family, I yarned to him about it till he was sick of the subject. There was nothing suspicious about me, and he was greatly bothered. He would like to know how many countries I had visited, and what places. I gave him strings of names in France, Germany, Italy, Austria, Servia, Montenegro and Bosnia. I was strictly truthful, and he believed no word I said. He must hear, also, all the Turkish places I had visited, why, when and how. I told him exactly. He was greasy-polite, and talked general conversation for a bit. Then he asked suddenly if I had an English passport as well as a teskereh. I gave it him. He examined all the visas with minute care, and I laughed aloud.

It was a most barefaced attempt to 'catch me out.' His surprise was beautiful.

'Mademoiselle, it appears, has really been to all these places!'

'As I have already told you, monsieur.'

Finally he decided that 'to do me honour' the Police Commissary had better accompany me everywhere.

He did. I had only to appear in the street, and he sprang out of the ground and watched me as a cat does a mouse. I walked him round and round the bazar for the sole purpose of exercising him till he was sincerely sorry I was 'suspect.' I offered, also, to show him the contents of both my saddle-bags. He knew I was laughing at him, and could not see the joke.

Several Christians asked me to visit them, but sent afterwards to say they were afraid of receiving me lest they should be persecuted by the Government when I had left. 'The Vali of Janina, the head of the vilayet, is a "Turk of Turks,"' I was told by some foreign residents, 'and persecutes the Albanian language, and everything that tends towards instructing the Christians. The Kaimmakam is not really a bad man, but terrified of the Vali. Among the Albanians themselves there is no religious hatred, but the party for the liberation of Albania has been held back till lately by the jealousies of the local Albanian Begs.'

News came in while I was at Avlona that the new 'reform scheme' had been accepted but was not to apply to this vilayet, and caused great dismay. All the money would now go to the pockets of the foreign officers, who were doubtless already rich, nobody else would be paid, and no good would be done anywhere. The recent increase of the beast-tax is falling very hardly on these people, as they are great meat-eaters. One of the foreign Consuls said it could not possibly be enforced and was atrocious, for it was high for oxen, and in the case of lambs, more than the market value of the animal. The Bulgars had revolted, and the other peoples were being robbed to pay the expenses. The only thing for the others to do was to revolt too—the sooner the better; the Albanian movement was

organizing and consolidating rapidly, and we should soon see results. The Turk is at death's door, and the final struggle imminent. And so on, and so on. And the poor Police Commissary had to wait outside.

I rode out to see the ruins at Canina on the hill behind the town. It is a suburb of Avlona, and consists chiefly of houses of the better-to-do Moslems. Several of these have lately been subject to severe police espionage, and one imprisoned for national propaganda. The Police Commissary and a soldier had to go with me to see that I was not mixed up in the affair. Afterwards I was asked to pay the hire of the Police Commissary's horse and of his saddle!

The details of the Turkish Government are incomparably grotesque. It is a Gilbert and Sullivan opera written in blood. It got tired of hunting me after two or three days, and left me to wander round alone and draw and photograph as I pleased, for my traveling companion's business took some time more to transact.

Orthodox Good Friday was very solemn, and everyone flocked to church in black. Avlona has a large Christian population, all Orthodox. The service lasted the whole day; a painted crucifix, draped with black, stood in the middle of the church, and each one kissed the foot on entering. Halfway through the service it was removed, and a table put in its place, on which lay a bier, covered with a black cloth, painted with the body of the dead Christ, for no images are allowed by this church. Two priests carried the bier round the Church on their heads, preceded by an incense-bearer, walking backwards, and followed by a procession. The service was all in Greek, and the singing a tuneless nasal yowl. In the late evening the church was crammed to suffocation, and as each one held a

lighted candle, it was a glare of yellow light and foggy with smoke. In the middle of the service some of the Turkish police pushed their way in and had a look at the bier, their red fezzes conspicuous above the bare-headed crowd. The raucous voices, barbaric music, and gaudy, shabby trappings, dim through the smoke, made a dramatic scene which culminated when the priests lifted the bier and carried it from the church; there was a wild scramble of men and boys, who all strove to shove a shoulder under it, if only for a second, as it was borne all round the building, and the whole congregation followed with twinkling candles.

Almost all the kirijeas are Christians, and were holiday-making, and we had difficulty in finding anyone to take us on till after Easter. We finally got off on Sunday morning with a couple of Moslems and very good horses. The Kaimmakam told me he was short of police, and could not give me more than one suvarri, which, after the amount he had recklessly wasted upon me a few days before, was amusing.

We rode along the edge of the 'lake' of Avlona, a shallow, brackish lagoon in a swamp from which the sea has retreated, a place that breeds fever all the summer, and crossed it on a stone causeway to the village of Lart. It was about seven in the morning, the village lay bright-white by a great dazzle of water, and the sky was exquisitely clear.

'Christ is risen!' cried the villagers as we rode through, and in front of every house curls of blue smoke rose from the big wood fire over which the Easter lamb was roasting, spitted lengthwise on a pole. Once through the village our troubles began; they always do on a Turkish road. When starting on a journey in this land people give you an elaborate 'send-off'— 'May the road be smooth for thee!

May no harm befall thee ! Mayest thou arrive safely at thy journey's end !' and so forth.

I was told that no language contained so many and such beautiful farewells as does Albanian. I replied that there is no country in which they are so urgently required. We had to cross several miles of swamp, fetlock-deep at best, often hock-deep, and quite foggy with mosquitoes. Progress was frightfully slow ; the mud black, oily, and smelly. We rode knee-deep in the sea at last, as the bottom was a little firmer there.

Finally we reached our old friend the Viosa, here wide, shallow, and tame, and crossed without difficulty, horses and all, in a big caik made of two dug-out tree-trunks, after the pack-animal had refused, rolled down the bank, nearly fallen into the river, been unloaded, and picked up again. Landing from these caiks is a gymnastic feat. You have to make your horse jump into the water first ; then you persuade him to stand alongside, and you climb into the saddle from the caik's edge. After this we had a good track, and rode along merrily past a small Vlah village, where folk were dancing and singing weird songs.

Soon, on a hilltop, we saw a solitary column, short and fluted, shining white on the blue sky, and the suvarri told how, long ago, a great city stood there, the sea came right up to the hill, and that was the post to which the ships were tied. Such is all that local legend tells of Apollonia—Apollonia, once one of the most important cities on the coast, celebrated alike for its commerce and its learning.

From his studies here young Octavius hastened when he heard of the murder of his uncle, Julius Cæsar, and it was one of the starting-points of the

Egnatian Road, the great military road between Rome and the East. Now the sea has crept back, leaving a fever-stricken swamp in place of the port where Rome disembarked her legions, and not one wall stands of all the city.

We rode up the next hill to the monastery of Pojana, and our horses' hoofs chipped black and white tesserae out of the path, part doubtless of the mosaic floor of a villa. Pojana and Avlona are both probably corruptions of the word 'Apollonia,' but Pojana is, judging by the remains found, the site of the old town, and Avlona a new port with the old name, made when the sea left Apollonia high and dry. (It should be noted that this was not the 'Apollonia' visited by St. Paul. That was a town not far from Salonika.) The monastery church is Byzantine. It is evidently of early date, but the people of the monastery could give me no history at all. At one time it has evidently been unroofed and partly destroyed, as the whole of the upper part is of later workmanship. It is built of stone. At the west end is a long open narthex, or porch, supported by a colonnade, the capitals of which are all grotesque beasts and bogies. The interior of the building is entirely whitewashed. Outside, the walls of both church and monastery are set with a quantity of classic fragments, many of them of great beauty.

One little white marble Amazon kneeling to support a cornice is an admirable work, and with the exception of a lost foot and arm, as sharp-cut and perfect as when new. There are also a Medusa head in relief, some very good tomb reliefs, some inferior ones, and also some extraordinary and grotesque Byzantine reliefs, notably one of a goat grazing. Leaning against one of the doors of the church was the torso

of what has been a draped male Roman portrait statue. The head, I was told cheerfully, had been knocked off and taken to a house in Avlona. Also it had hands a little while ago, but they are 'gone.' White and crystalline scars showed that folds of the toga had been quite recently broken off. Near it was the lower part of a draped female statue. Both fragments were of the finest white marble, and the best style of Roman work.

It was Easter Sunday, and the courtyard was full of peasants in their best—tall men in dazzling white fustanellas, dark blue leggings, crimson waistcoats with two bands of silver chains crossed on the breast, and white coats with hanging sleeves embroidered in black; women in long-skirted, sleeveless coats striped diagonally with scarlet—brilliantly aproned, and a-dangle with coins—who flashed and glittered like parrots in the sunshine. Dead Rome, Byzantium, and live Albanians, past culture and present desolation made an entirely fascinating whole.

The head of the monastery, an Albanian, tall, haughty, a sort of ecclesiastical pasha, served by a most humble priest, and a host of fustanelled retainers, received me with affability, and offered hospitality. I decided to stay the night. All the land round, it appears, is swayed by him, and the monastery is wealthy though barbaric. Our horses were supplied lavishly with hay and corn. I was informed that a sumptuous meal would be prepared for me, too, and particularly asked not to eat the food I had brought.

The people who had come up to afternoon service had not expected anything half so amusing as a foreign female, and were most friendly. When I began a drawing of the church, a man who could speak a little Italian came forward and said :

‘Signorina, we are ignorant Albanians out of the village. We should like to see what you are doing, for we have never seen such a thing before. But, if it troubles you, we will go at once.’

In all civilized countries an artist is reckoned fair game; I have rarely met with such consideration, and could but reply that they were all welcome. When I inquired if they had any ‘anticas’ to sell, they were overjoyed, and, so soon as afternoon service was over, invited me to go back to the village with them. It was an odd walk. They were far too polite to lead the way, and made me walk first, in solitary grandeur, while they followed in a troop. As I did not know the path, the plan, though well meant, was not wholly successful. All the hillside was covered with copse-wood in full leaf and masses of wild-plum blossom, and was alive with butterflies—swallow-tails, fritillaries, red Admirals, tortoiseshells, brimstones, clouded yellows, and great coppers. The ground was thick with primroses and bee orchises, and beyond was the blue Adriatic.

Pojana, the village, lay at the hill’s foot. It is very tiny, and wretchedly poor. Pieces of columns, carved capitals, and hewn blocks of marble have been used as building material, and give the place a forlorn, *sic transit* look. An altar with a bull’s head and a fine acanthus-leaved capital lay by the door of the first hut. I sat on a stone and held a court.

The arrival of a wealthy foreigner caused great excitement. Every house possessed a bagful of coins and other odds and ends. I tried to buy something of everybody, so as not to disappoint them, and for a few francs got a number of late Roman Emperors and some of the little bronze coins of Apollonia itself, with Apollo on one side and his lyre on the other,

to the great satisfaction of the villagers and myself.

The sun was setting when I reached the top of the hill again; the wet marsh down below burned scarlet-gold between bars of purple land. A huge bay-tree stood up monumental against the glare. I never knew what 'to flourish like a green bay-tree' meant before. The day faded and darkened into night. I was tired and hungry. I had lunched at 11 a.m., and it was now 8.30 p.m. There was no sign of that sumptuous meal.

I asked my guide to unpack some food. He went off, and returned dolefully to say that an Easter lamb was being prepared for us, and we had better wait. We waited hungrily. I bolted two tubes of maggi raw, and should have gnawed a crust had not the head of the monastery thought it his duty to keep me company. Buoyed up always with the belief that the British Empire, if it buckles to the task, can outstay the world, I waited for that Easter lamb. It came at 9.30 p.m. There was plenty of it. I had it in solitary grandeur. Two men came in with a chair, and placed upon it a whole shoulder and a pile of fragments, and gave me a huge and heavy loaf to nurse. On the floor they put a great bowl of milk, reeking of wood smoke, the grinning, blackened head of the lamb, and a dish of what looked like prunes and cream, but was really the lamb's liver chopped in lumps, half burnt, and mixed with clotted sour milk. A handful of salt and a bottle of sour wine completed the menu. It was a fleshy, barbaric meal. I believe I ate for three-quarters of an hour, and made no visible impression on it. The kirijee and the suvarris in the next room, however, subjugated it entirely.

My room had two doors, neither of which fastened,

but with my saddle for pillow I slept the sleep of repletion and exhaustion. Getting up in these places wastes no time. You have only to put your boots on, and the retainers help you to wash all that shows.

The sun was just up ; the world was still and gray ; all was exquisite in the keen pure dawn. The people were flocking up to Easter Monday service, the women, Vlah and Albanian, all bearing in large flat baskets on their heads Easter offerings—eggs, bread, milk, and fowls. 'Christ is risen,' they said. The air seemed full of the joy of life.

I swallowed a bowl of milk hastily, and bestowed a handsome backshish on the head of the monastery, which he received with the condescending air of a Prince conferring a favour, and was in the saddle before 7.30 a.m., and away over trackless land with an extraordinary feeling of exultation.

The world was all before me, and the beyond was ever a-calling. Easter lamb had agreed with everyone, and both kirijeas and suvarri were as gay as birds. Away we went over undulating ground, through bushes and asphodel and small hooky acacias, which tear the clothes to ribbons. In a dip in the hills was a graveyard, and fragments of classical columns kept guard over dead Moslems. The mud had all dried. We got along at a good pace, and reached Fieri in a couple of hours. The Fieri police were much exercised about us ; they had been telegraphed to by Avlona to expect us for the night. They had intended arranging the private house and military escort business, but, by staying at Pojano, I had out-manceuvred them. They wanted me to stay while an escort was arranged, but I had shaken off all 'honours' with great difficulty, did not want to start them again, and vowed I could not wait. My suvarri had to leave at Fieri. I asked

for another to take me to Berat, and won my point. We halted only long enough to water and feed the beasts.

Fieri is a big village belonging to a very enterprising Beg who wants to make it a trade centre, and has rebuilt all the market-place with large solid-looking houses of stone, which have a surprisingly up-to-date appearance. It was all agog with Easter Monday, and reminded me of 'Benkoliday,' so gay it was. I heard music that twanged and squealed like bagpipes. It was an Albanian gipsy-band with four performers : two guitars, a violin, and a sort of clarinet. It came out and performed for my special benefit. I asked for Albanian music only. The clarinet squealed a jiggle-jaggle, bagpipey air, and the stringed instruments went buzz, buzz, buzz with great vigour. The performers burst into song, and sang until the sweat poured down them. The crowd, in its best fustanellas, applauded and kept its eyes fixed on me. When I paid for this treat, the leader of the band clapped the coin on his sticky, sweaty forehead, and withdrew backwards, fiddling, thus adorned.

A fresh suvarri turned up, and we started for Berat, cheered to learn that the track had so dried up that, if we pushed on, we might arrive by nightfall, and not have to stay at a wayside han. We crossed the Janica, and reached the Lumi Beratit (River of Berat), a fair-sized river, thick and muddy. Following its left bank, we got along quickly. On our right was the mountain district, Malakastra, the 'slave country,' as I was assured here also. We rode over plain land—the 'Muzakija,' named after the Muzaki, a celebrated line of chiefs who once ruled as far as Kastoria. The Muzakija includes all the coast land as far as Durazzo. The inhabitants are Christians,

wretchedly poor, who live in mud-and-wattle shanties. The land is owned by Moslem Begg as chiftliks, and the peasants who work it are little better than serfs. A franc a day, I was assured, was the utmost a man could earn for a long day's work, but that is rare and exceptional pay. Two piastres (4d.) is the usual price for road- or wall-making.

These Begg, I was told, grow rich on the corn and olives they export, and are hand-in-glove with the Turkish Government, which winks at their extortions so long as they send in tax enough. The poverty of Macedonia was child's play to that of the Muzakija. I saw women with barely enough clothing to cover their nakedness, and much of the housing was on a par with that of the temporary shelters run up by the refugees in the burnt villages.

'Ils ont assassiné l'Albanie,' said a Consul to me, speaking of the Government.

If the British public wants to intervene on behalf of the Balkan people, common justice demands that it should investigate the case of each, and not run only to the help of that which hoists the most bloody posters.

The land of the Muzakija is very good, but waterlogged in parts, and requires draining. Much is rudely cultivated and yields well. The breed of fiery little horses it was noted for has become scarce. There is good pasture on the hills, but owing to the badness of the roads few beasts are raised for export, the wretched beasts, except in very fine weather, arriving at port too exhausted to fetch good prices. We crossed the Lumi Beratit on a fine stone bridge built some seventy years ago by an Albanian Beg, and reached Berat about sunset.

Berat is in an extraordinarily lovely situation, and

scrambles down the hillside all bowery and flowery to the brink of the Beratit; quaint wood-and-plaster houses overhang the river; the ruined fortress crowns the height above; the huge mountain range of Tomor (alt. 2,416 metres) towers square-headed, barren and snow-clad on one side, and the slopes of the neighbour-hills are gray with olives. The river, all unbanked, has wrought terrible devastation. Great tracts of land lie denuded, stagnant water festers in the hollows, and all the summer fever rages. Only the Christian quarter on the hill-top is fairly free.

Malarial fevers are the curse of Albania, especially in the South. The doctors assured me that with this exception the people are very healthy, recover from very severe accidents, and often heal quite clean from wounds without any antiseptics.

Now it was springtime, and no fever due for six weeks, and Berat looked an earthly Paradise.

The Muttasarif, a cheery, stout old Turk, received me affably, and said I was the first Englishwoman in Berat within the memory of man. He detailed his plans for the improvement of the town, and was great on the new road about to be made from Avlona. I had my doubts about it, as I had already learnt that the engineer was afraid it would not be a very good road. Half of the money had already evaporated in Constantinople. Out of the rest he must pay himself for 'il faut vivre.' Mashallah, the road would last two years if there were not much rain.

According to the Muttasarif, however, Berat, next year, would have a perfect road, and simply bristle with schools of every description, always excepting one in the vernacular. I encouraged the good man's plans, and added that with such a force of water in the river he could light the town with electricity, work all the

shoemaking (Berat's chief trade) with it, and run a light railway to Avlona. This completely staggered him.

'You have only been here twenty-four hours, and you have already thought of all this! You,' he added piously, 'think only of people's bodies; I—of their souls.'

Berat has but one consulate, and that a Greek one. People cling to it as their one link with the outside world, and a safe means of receiving foreign correspondence, and the Greeks, having no rivals here, are working an active propaganda. There are four Greek schools, to which Greece is said to contribute £300 a year, and there is a Greek Bishop. But Italy is striving hard to plant a school of her own to counteract Greek influence. The town has about 11,000 inhabitants, rather more than half Moslem.

The neighbour-lands are very savage. Blood-feuds rage and brigandage was rife till a year ago, when active efforts were made against it, many men captured, and some executed. But the land is in a mediæval state of barbarism, and the quarrels of the rival Beks have a Montague and Capulet flavour. The latest excitement was the case of Suli Bek. A certain man wished to give his daughter in marriage to a Vlah. But one of Suli Bek's followers coveted her as bride. He appealed to Suli to help him. The girl's father, on the other hand, belonged to a rival Bek's party. The rival Bek said the girl should marry the Vlah; Suli said she should not. Each party sent a troop of some thirty armed men, and a fight took place. Several were killed, others badly wounded, including three women and the girl herself, who was captured by Suli's men, carried off, and kept prisoner for a month. They were then forced to yield her, and she married the Vlah. This very fourteenth-century

affair took place two years ago. It caused such excitement that Suli was captured, tried, and condemned to three and a half years' imprisonment. He had appealed, and the case was to be retried in a higher court. I expressed fear that perhaps he might, after all, escape punishment.

'Oh no,' said my informant. 'You see, in this land things go very slowly. It has already taken much time to appeal and obtain promise of a new trial; the trial itself will take much longer. Meanwhile Suli is in prison. Even if he succeed in proving himself innocent, and reversing the judgment, he will still have had his three and a half years. It is so with us!'

Berat was swarming with beggars. Some lived in holes in the banks outside the town. Communication with the outer world is difficult and very limited; agriculture is archaic, and if the local crops fail dire want follows. After the drought of 1902 numbers of peasants died of starvation, vainly striving to eat leaves and bark, and the place, I was told, had not yet recovered from the losses it then suffered. Berat, when I arrived, had just been asked for £3,000 tax, and said bitterly, 'It will all go to pay European officers, who are rich already. Europe had better leave the place alone than rob one district to pay for another. If we rise, will England guarantee us the same amount of help she has given the Bulgarians?'

Berat's chief trade is in hides, 'opanke' (the local leathern sandal), and saddlery. It has a fascinating bazar. I wandered about alone when my guide was busy, and met with the greatest courtesy. If any little boys tried to follow me, they were stopped by the nearest man. The odd part of all these towns is that the wild are so wild and the civilized so civilized. All the centuries are jumbled together. The better-to-

do wear European clothes and are quite smart, and at the pharmacy you can buy Vichy water and Giesshubel from a man who speaks French ; but, coming to market, you meet long, lean men of the mountains, in ragged fustanellas, armed with flintlocks of a pattern quite 250 years old, though of modern make. And the wildest thing of all I met was a sort of fakir—swarthy, half-stripped, mad-eyed—who carried a begging-bowl and a battle-axe that looked as if it hailed from the Far East.

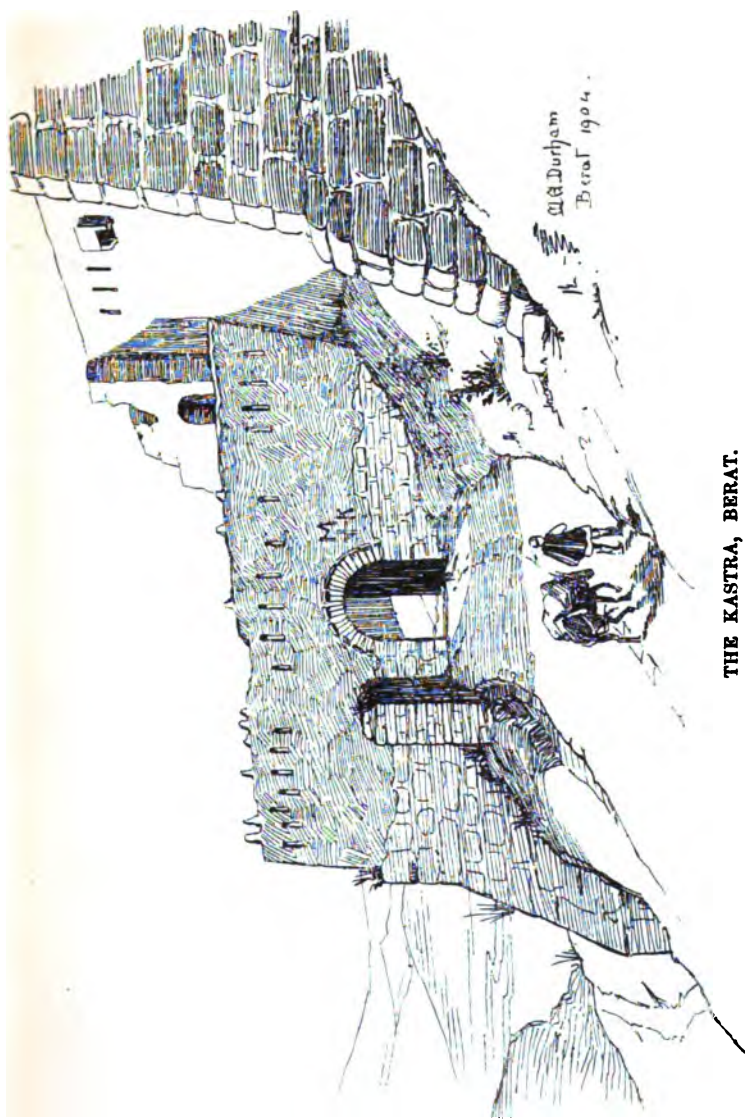
In the han I had a small, unfurnished room, with three swallows' nests in it, and a large hole in the floor, and I lived on lumps of meat from the cookshop. You select what looks most eatable. The man asks how many penn'orth you require. You indicate the size ; he hacks it off, and, seizing a handful of salt in large, dirty-gray crystals from a pot alongside, he rubs it between his palms and sprinkles your dish. He lends you the plate, and sends for it later. The food is rough, but it is nourishing. The meat is meat, and the bread is bread. It has not had half the goodness removed by freezing, by borates, by chemical processes or adulteration.

The old town called the Kastrá, which sounds as though the Romans had had a say in the matter (and that they had a town here seems shown also by some sculptures built into a church wall), stands on a hill high above the river. One side is precipitous and the other steep, and the summit is walled all round with fortifications of varying age. The lower courses are in many places of huge, irregular stones ; above this comes, at the main entrance, rubble and flat tiles set in plaster. On the right of the gate are the letters 'M.K.' and a cross in red tiles. These are believed to show that this part was built by Michael Komnenus,

who founded the Despoty of Epirus in 1202. The rest of the walls date from all or any of the intervening periods up to Ali Pasha's time. The Kastrá has had an exciting existence. Here Skenderbeg besieged the Turks, and near here fell Muzaki, Lord of the Muzakija. Later Berat was the capital of Toskeria, and was ruled by Pashas who claimed descent from the Kastriot family, till the end of the eighteenth century. The last of them, Kurd Pasha, waged fierce war with Kara Mahmoud, Pasha of Skodra. The Tosks were defeated and lost very heavily. But Kurd survived his foe, who was killed by the Montenegrins, and lived to capture young Ali of Tepelen, then practising as the leader of a brigand band. But for Kurd's mercy there would have been no Ali Pasha. Kurd is reputed rich and generous. It was he that built the bridge that still crosses the river. The builder he consulted said that such a swift stream could not be bridged, for he did not believe the Pasha would pay enough. Kurd, to show him money was nothing to him, pulled out a bag of gold and threw it into the water. The builder thereupon said it would be quite possible to build a good bridge, and did so. Thus runs the tale.

After Kurd's death Ali Pasha seized Berat, and largely refortified the Kastrá. And since his time it has been Turkish.

On one of its bastions lie seven fine old bronze guns, two of them on rotting gun-carriages. Any other country would put them in a museum. On one, which is of iron, is the date '1684,' and the letters 'T.W.' in Roman characters, which makes it likely that it is of English make. If so, it has seen many adventures before finding a final resting-place at Berat.



THE KASTRA, BERAT.

The Kastrá is now the Christian quarter. An old pre-Turkish church still stands, and in the hillside are hewn two tiny chapels.

Outside the town are large Moslem cemeteries, and on the grave of more than one Bektashite saint many lambs are slaughtered. Moslem grave-yards always spread far and wide. Of Orthodox Christian ones almost nothing is seen, either here or in Macedonia, as it is the custom among the members of the Greek Church—in these parts, at any rate—to disinter the corpses after three years' burial, wash the bones, hold a service over them, and store them in a special building. Should the corpse be not entirely decayed, it is considered a very bad omen. This digging up of remains seems very unpleasant to us, but several times Orthodox Christians remarked to me with disgust that the Moslems, owing to their horrible habit of leaving their dead undisturbed, wasted much good ground.

I spent the inside of a week at Berat, received much hospitality, and was free from police supervision. My comrade was not so lucky. The Vali of Janina telegraphed that he was suspect the day after our arrival, and he had to take his bags to the konak for police inspection. I went too, just to see that he was not bullied. The two police and a Pasha, said to be a great friend of the Sultan, were not at all pleased to see me, but did not like to turn me out. The search was very amusing. They were greatly excited over it, and at last I laughed, which surprised them greatly. They seemed to expect me to be alarmed and impressed. They spoke only Turkish, and my guide flatly refused to translate several quite funny things I wanted to say. He was of opinion, however, that my presence mitigated matters considerably.

We left Berat for Elbasan at about six in the morning, I on the most painful horse I have ever ridden, for it could neither trot nor amble, but joggled continuously. I do not mind a 'Tommyjog' for a reasonable time, but when it comes to jolting for twelve hours on end it is fatiguing. I was thankful when the track was too bad for anything but a walk. Otherwise the way was most amusing. We soon reached the river Devoli, a tributary of the Beratit, and followed its left bank.

The suvarri, a very cheery, wiry young thing, who was pleased to consider my journey a commendably sporting affair, and to approve of it highly, declared that, barring a man's own little private affairs, the road was pretty safe. His own family, unluckily, had a great deal of blood upon it. His poor old father, who at his age could no longer settle these affairs of honour, had had to fly the neighbourhood. For himself it was not so bad, especially since he had joined the gendarmerie. This afforded him some protection and kept him well armed. For my sake he sincerely hoped we should meet none of his foes to-day; and he kept a sharp look-out with his gray hawk's eyes. Luckily, they did not live near the track; but his presence would be reported, and they would be expecting his return. He was never such a fool as to go back the way he had come! The number of forlorn graves by the track were silent witnesses of the truth of his remarks.

All the men ploughing wore flintlocks, and the young goatherds on the uplands each carried a Martini and a well-filled cartridge-belt. Some of them were quite boys — fine-looking young savages, too; upstanding and alert, with a swagger 'do-you-bite-your-thumb-at-me' air. Life in the outlying districts is very hard,

and only the fittest of all have any chance of surviving. About a quarter of the land was cultivated, and clearances were being made in a forest, where the soil was rich. We rode out into a fair open grass plot, with two big walnut-trees in the middle. Here the suvarri halted us to admire the deep bullet trenches with which trunks and boughs were freely scored. A year ago two wretched men, a father and son, the owners of that house on the hill, had here dodged bullets until hit. A big tumulus of stones covered all that was left of them. Why were they killed? The suvarri did not know. Probably they had blood on them. If so, it was very foolish of them to go out not properly armed. (To go out without a gun under these circumstances is as foolish as to go out without an umbrella in England, and then complain if you get wet.) The judges had sent the assailants to Hades. This is a wild Pagan land, called Moslem, but neither church nor mosque, priest nor 'hodja,' is to be found in many of the scattered villages.

Stones jammed in the fork of many a wayside branch told of the beliefs that really sway the people. They are put as resting-places for the feet of the dead as they pass through the air, and the neighbourhood had very considerably furnished the route with plenty. I fancy my kirijee added one.

When called on for military service, the men of these vague villages will often declare themselves Christians and exempt, and afterwards repel with guns the men sent to collect army tax on the grounds that they are Moslems, and not liable.

At last, in the valley, some stumps and a broken arch showed where the bridge had been. We steered for the river, and the suvarri, yelling and bawling to some peasants on the bank to know where it was

fordable, took to the water. I won his esteem by following without hesitation. We just did not have to swim, and the others made the plunge with obvious reluctance. This amused him vastly; and to prove that I was not afraid of anything, 'not even Martinas,' he swung round his horse, and threw his rifle to his shoulder playfully.

After this we bustled along over a fair track, and saw Elbasan out on a big plain—white minarets a-twinkle among cypresses—and we never seemed to get any nearer.

Finally, we crossed the Skumbi, the frontier of Ghegaria, on another of Kurd Pasha's bridges, trailed into the town at sunset, and drew rein at the han. I was horribly tired, for I had been too joggled to eat more than an egg and a bit of bread at midday, and I fondly hoped for rest and refreshment, but no such luck. The Police Commissary at Berat, who was reputed among the Christians to 'have Satan in his heart,' had telegraphed that two suspicious and revolutionary characters were coming, and the police at Elbasan were awaiting us. I had scarcely time to climb up to a tiny unfurnished room that gave on the balcony, and the hanjee was hospitably chasing the dust about the floor with a bundle of twigs when they were upon us.

But Ghegaria is very differently managed from Toskeria. These police were a most gentlemanly couple of fellows. We were tired, they said, so any search that was required should be put off till to-morrow. As for me, I was most welcome. But with the best of intentions they enlarged upon the theme, and, as the language is a flowery one, it was an hour before we could think of food.

CHAPTER XII

ELBASAN TO SKODRA

I DID not appear next morning till 8 a.m., which is considered in this land such an abnormally late hour that everyone hammered madly on my door, and thought I must be ill. The police had been waiting patiently for hours to arrange to take me on a friendly visit to the Muttasarif, an Albanian but recently appointed—a big, jovial, white-haired old boy, who said I was his adopted sister, and could not do too much for me. Even through an interpreter his conversation was interesting, full of quaint parables and pithy sayings. He loved his country, and told about its beauties and its strange wild peoples. He struck me as well fitted to cope with them, more especially as he is Albanian, for no foreigner ever seems to win the confidence of the mountain-man.

‘The other nations are old,’ he said; ‘my poor Albania is a child among them. She has much to learn.’

He was anxious to encourage European visitors to the town and to open up traffic. I was to do anything I pleased, and to ask for as many guards as I liked. In the town it was quite safe; outside he would rather send someone with me. The village people were as tame as sheep in the bazar, but in their own villages they were a little wild, he said merrily.



COSTUME, ELBASAN.

Elbasan took its cue from the Muttasarif, and was extraordinarily kind, from the soldier who, when asked to show the way, came along and took me and my travelling companion for a walk, and flatly refused a backshish on the grounds that we were friends, to the Begs, who are the big landowners. Upon these I was told it was my duty to call. I had my doubts myself about it, but was assured that it was not etiquette for them to call on me, and that it would please them extremely to see the only Englishwoman who had been to Elbasan, as far as anyone knew.

It was correct to begin at the wealthiest and to proceed afterwards to the less rich. They were all, of course, amazed to see me, but exceedingly polite, and made me very welcome. All but one had succeeded in looking quite European. He had spoilt the effect with quite the most killing waistcoat the mind can imagine. A tall, soldierly, fair man was so like an Englishman that I should have taken him for one at first sight had I come across him in a foreign hotel. Their houses strove all to be European, and I saw with regret that European carpets and walls badly frescoed by foreign workmen were more *à la mode* than the panelled walls and native rugs that I had admired in humbler dwellings. They all owned large estates, and were said to be good landlords.

Elbasan has about 10,000 inhabitants; rather more than half are Moslems. The Christians are Orthodox, but the recent appointment to the district of a Greek Bishop, who is making great Hellenizing efforts in the schools, as successor to an Albanian one, has caused fierce discontent. Elbasan is tempted Romewards, and is striving hard for the establishment of an Uniate Church and school, in which teaching and preaching in the vernacular would be possible under Austrian

protection. Could such a Church be established, I was told the Christian Albanians would go over to it almost in a body, and a number of Moslems would send their children to its school.

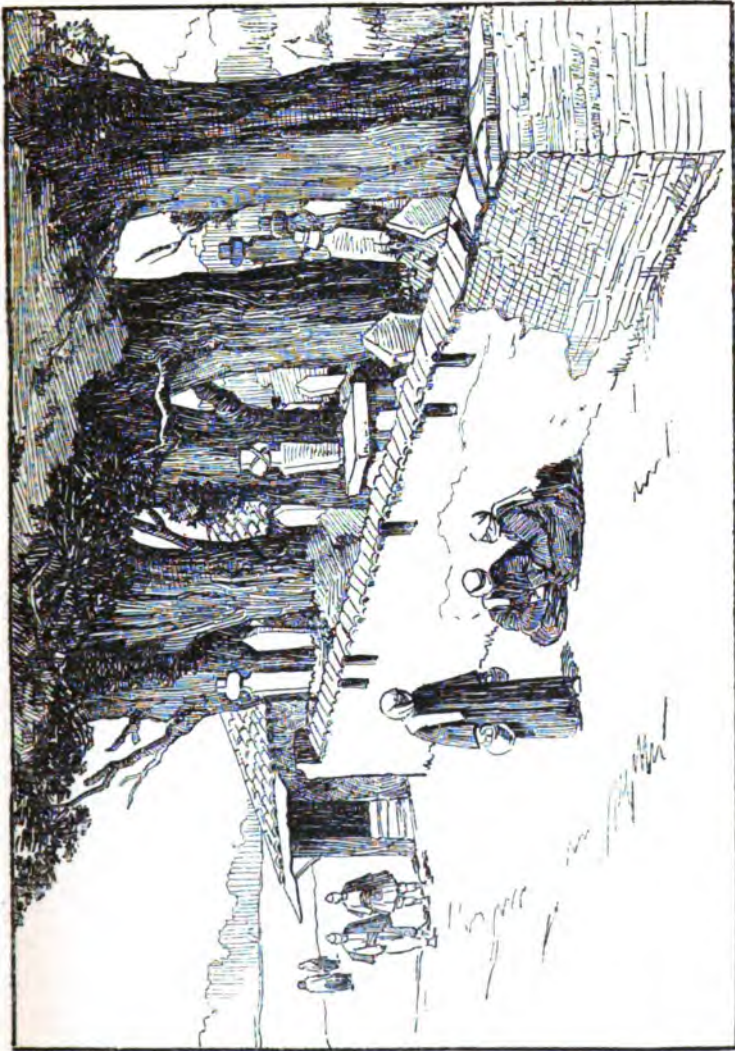
Patriotism flames in this district, and is far stronger than doctrinal religion. Much that I saw and heard indicated that, once freed from Turkish rule, whole villages that now call themselves Moslem would revert to Christianity at no distant date. Many Christians have declared themselves Romans. The Orthodox Church, they said, meant Russia, Greece, and tyranny; Rome means men trained in the West and civilization.

Elbasan's struggle for knowledge is very pathetic. You may find people who are bravely wrestling, unaided, with French and even German grammars. When it is remembered that no book can be imported into the Turkish Empire, except by smuggling, without passing the Turkish censor, which suspects everything it cannot understand, that no book can be sold that has not the stamp of the local Vali in it, and that before any book can be read these people have to learn a foreign language, the number of well-informed and educated persons is very remarkable. The failure, so far, even with Austrian aid, to obtain the firman for the coveted Uniate Church and school is ascribed to Russia, who is said to terrorize the Sultan, and is hated with a hatred almost incredible in its virulence. In truth, the struggle in the Balkan Peninsula from some points of view is mainly Austro-Albanian versus Russo-Bulgarian, and anyone between is liable to be squashed. Albania vows that Russia encourages the absorption of South Albania by Greece, in order that Greece may be satisfied with territory there, and resign the rest of the Peninsula to be distributed according to Russian views.

The large number of Vlachs who live in and near Elbasan, here as elsewhere, are in favour of Albanian independence.

Elbasan does not merely talk. It was the only place where I was not told that 'the road was going to be made next year.' The road to Ochrida was already begun—begun so elaborately, too, that I wondered if it could possibly keep up that standard and arrive at the other end. Elbasan covets roads to Durazzo and Berat as well, and is anxious for trade. It has already a soap factory that supplies all the neighbourhood with a very good article, made from olive oil, the crushed remains of the olive forming the fuel for boiling the soap, which is thus very economically turned out. Elbasan dreams of a great future, and its central situation would make it admirably suited for the capital of the country.

Town life and country life are not the same thing. I had but just missed some local colour on the Berat track. News came in of a shooting affair the morning after I had passed. It was a characteristic and complicated tale of the Shpata district. A shepherd drove his flock to pasture on a tract of grass by that grave-marked path, but an hour's ride from the town. The owner came down and ordered him to go. The shepherd refused. Thereon the owner fired at him and missed, a thing you should never do in Albania. The shepherd then shot him dead, but was seen and recognised. Off went the gendarmerie hotfoot; the shepherd had been 'wanted' for some time. Ten years ago, as a lad of eighteen years, he had shot another youth dead. For this he was imprisoned at Elbasan. The police had a fit of activity, and the prison became so crowded that it was arranged to draft a number of prisoners down to Monastir, this



MOSLEM CEMETERY, ELBASAN.

lad among them. They were nearly all Shpatiotes. The convoy was ambushed by a rescue party from the wilds of Shpata, and a fierce fight took place. The gendarmerie were beaten, and all the prisoners escaped. A punitive expedition was sent up next day, and another battle took place at one of the mountain villages. The gendarmerie officer was killed, but four prisoners taken, all of them fresh ones. As the gendarmes were returning with them to Elbasan the escaped murderer (the shepherd of the Berat road) leapt up suddenly from behind a rock, shot a gendarme dead, and got clean away. The gendarmes, enraged by the deaths of both officer and comrades, shot all four prisoners dead there and then on the track, and there the affair ended. The shepherd was still at large when I left, and it was said he could not be taken without much bloodshed.

We talked of murder, violence, and brigandage. Things look very different in the East and the West. You may travel among the Balkan people alone, and drop for the time being every Western habit ; you may eat with the natives, drink with them, sleep with them, ride with them, live as they do, and watch them patiently for months ; you may visit and revisit their lands, and think that you are beginning to understand them, when something occurs that turns a sudden searchlight upon them, and you perceive in a flash that you were as far as ever from seeing things from their point of view. To do this you must leap back across the centuries, wipe the West and all its ideas from out you, let loose all that there is in you of primitive man, and learn six languages, all quite useless in other parts of the world.

The difficulty, perhaps the impossibility, of this task is probably the reason why, up till the present, all

intervention by the Western Powers, however well intentioned, has, when loosening one knot of the tangled skein of Balkan politics, generally succeeded only in tightening all the others.

The flashlight of revelation dies away, but afterwards the face of the land is changed. You cannot see it with Eastern eyes ; you never again see it with Western ones. It occurs to you that when the revolution begins, you might borrow the kavas's revolver, and that there is someone you would like to get rid of. You know that the West would be scandalized by the ideas that are surging through your mind. You are equally aware that the men with whom you are squatting round a wood fire would be shocked at your inability to go as far as they do.

You are in the greatest danger of finding yourself in the position of the man of whom it was said : ' Hit him hard ! He ain't got no friends ! ' And the flashlight episodes are often so far removed from Western ideas and experiences that it is almost waste of breath to talk about them, for the West thinks it knows better, and flatly refuses to believe in them ; or the truth of the tale is proved beyond all doubt, and the West is so immeasurably shocked that it loses all sense of proportion and power of judgment, and blubbers hysterically, as it did, for instance, over Alexander and Draga. For the West has a short memory, and has forgotten the things it did but a few generations ago when it, too, was young : how it carried the heads of fellow-countrymen on pikes and stuck their quarters about the town ; almost, if not quite, within living memory corpses rotted and stank on wayside gibbets even in England, and the heads of the Cato Street conspirators were hacked from their dead bodies in the year 1820.

And these are some of the things the West should

remember, for in spite of them it has evolved a civilization that it admires so much that it wishes to force it on all the world. Through Western glasses the Shpata shepherd is seen as a mad dog, but he was explained otherwise to me.

He had played the game according to the code of his district. The first was an affair of honour; here a man's honour is very dear to him. His life is nothing compared to his honour. He was a Shpatiote; he followed the Albanian rule. But the Turkish Government put him in prison for it. In Shpata they do not recognise the right of the Turkish Government to interfere in their private affairs.

Afterwards, when he shot the gendarme, it was vengeance for those in the village who had been wounded and captured, and for his own wrongs. His last exploit upon the Berat road was not clearly explicable for want of details, but the other man had fired first, and had brought the consequences on himself. If he was to be avenged, it was the business of the dead man's family, and not of the Turkish Government. If there were an Albanian Government, that would be another thing. But the Turks!—no, thank you.

'You think in England you are civilized, and can teach us,' said someone passionately to me. 'I tell you there is no one here that would commit crimes such as are found in London. There you can find men who live by selling the honour of women. This has been printed in your own newspapers. You have no feeling of honour. How do you punish such a man? You make him pay money and put him in prison! You let him live, and he is a disgrace to humanity. Bah! we would shoot him like a wild beast! Our brigands are poor men. By working hard in the fields they can only just live. They are quite ignorant, and

have never been to any school. They rob to live, and do so at the risk of their lives. But your brigands have often been to a university, and rob to obtain luxuries by lies and false promises. You have had all the advantages of education and civilization for years, and this is what you do. But you call us savages because we shoot people! And it all depends upon the point of view.

I was eager to see the Shpatiotés at home. The Muttasarif sent the Police Commissary and two gendarmes with me, as he said the people were entirely unused to strangers; and we started early, that we might visit two villages and return before nightfall.

I was told not to hire a horse, as I was to be lent the best one in the town. It turned out to be a very handsome gray, and had it not been bitted with a curb that would hold leviathan, would have been very many sizes too good for me. It began by biting the tails of both the suvarris' horses, which promptly lashed out. The Police Commissary begged me to dismount and change to something quieter, but I felt it was quite impossible for Great Britain to climb down before Albania. Nevertheless, as my gallant mount pranced sideways down the street, snapping wildly at the leading suvarri's horse, I was almost forced to admit that 'L'Empire c'est moi' was an attitude I could not maintain. The animal, however, had a splendid action, and, after the first quarter of an hour, I never enjoyed a ride more.

We crossed Kurd Pasha's bridge, followed the river up-stream a little, and then struck into the Shpata district. It was a quite perfect spring day; the hill-sides, well covered with copse-wood, were full of wild-plum and cherry all blossoming, and the ground was gay with big butterfly and bee orchises. As for the

lizards, they were the fattest and greenest I have ever met. The valley was but feebly cultivated. Men in cartridge-belts and fustanellas were guiding their primitive ploughs—crooked bits of wood, iron-shod, each drawn by a couple of buffaloes—through what appeared to be very rich soil. We halted a few minutes at a very lovely spot, to which the town comes for 'kief' in the summer. 'Kief' means



COFFEE-SELLER.

pleasure, and pleasure means doing nothing in the shade, by running water. A kavajee brings a tray of hot charcoal, on which he makes coffee, and everyone is content. A group of vast plane-trees shaded a grassy meadow, through which ran a clear and ice-cold stream which bubbled out of a cliff of gray rock that rose on one side. An ideal spot. In event of an Austrian occupation, it will be filled, no doubt, with marble tables, beer, sausages, and merry-go-rounds. Civilization has its drawbacks.

We rode on, and in a field where a whole family was at work I was amused to see a Martini laid across the baby's cradle. We were nearing a village. 'Villages' here consist of districts with houses scattered about them, often not within sight of one another. It may be two hours' ride from one end of a 'village' to the other. We passed a few cottages among the bushes, and I was told we had arrived at the Moslem village Shushitza.

We dismounted, and left the horses with the suvarris, and the Police Commissary, my travelling companion, and I went up to the nearest house. The

two men sat down outside, and told me to go into the yard and see the women. These stared at me like startled deer, and then dashed into the house, calling for help to an elderly man ploughing in the field below. He picked up his rifle and hastened with an anxious face. The Police Commissary promptly hailed him, and said he was 'mik' (a friend).

The man's countenance cleared; he laughed, and came up and shook hands very heartily. We were very welcome as friends, he said. When his wife had cried that there were suvarris near he had been much alarmed, and had made sure that they had come for someone. He sat down and chattered gaily. The Police Commissary explained my errand. A lady from a distant land had come on purpose to see him. He was delighted and amused. I must see all the family. He ran into the house and called his wife and daughters. Though Moslem, they were all unveiled. He tried to make them come out and talk to us, but the sight of the police was too much for them, and they would only peer round the gate-post and laugh, so I went in to them. Drawing was impossible, as they all crowded round to examine me, and I only got one snapshot, for a dozen hands were eager to play with the camera.

They were a healthy, well-built lot, and were clad in long drawers to the ankle, and skirts, sometimes so full and short that they were like the men's fustanellas, white, sleeveless coats resembling those of the Montenegrin women, but skimpier, and orange and scarlet aprons. Plenty of silver waist-clasps and coins completed the costume. One child's chest was entirely covered with coins, cockle-shells, and odd bits of metal, and very proud she was of herself.

They examined my garments carefully, and kept bobbing out to see the police, and then popping back

again. The man took it all as a great joke, and asked us to stay and have coffee, but as we had much further to go we did not accept. He said I might come and see him whenever I pleased. We said, 'T'un ngiate tjete!' ('Long life to you!') to one another, and departed. Half the male population of Shpata, so the Police Commissary said, was wanted by the police, which explained the poor man's first anxiety. Consequently, almost all the trade with the town is done by the women. Anyone who knew the language could, I believe, travel through the whole district without escort if he started with a good introduction. The laws of hospitality to a guest would often be a better protection than rifles.



PEASANT, VRCHA DISTRICT, SHPATA.

The two suvarris were well mounted, and my gallant gray was eager to race them, so we went up the mountain at a surprising pace, leaving the Police Commissary and my travelling companion far behind on hired steeds. The leading suvarri, a young Christian, enlivened the route by a song, which the other answered in a high falsetto. It afforded them great satisfaction, and was a naughty song, for they firmly refused to offer it for translation later. I replied with the 'British Grenadiers.' After an hour or two we again sighted scattered houses and a woman or two. This was the outskirts of the Christian village of Selchan. We halted, and after a somewhat lengthy parley and some message-carrying, were told we were 'mik' and might

come on. We waited for the rest of our party, and then made for a group of houses on the crest of the hill.

Out came an old, old man, the patriarch of the place. His beak was hooky, his eyes keen, his shaven head and chin glittered with silver stubble, and though bent with age, he bore himself royally. Every stranger was his guest, he said with lofty courtesy; a meal was to be made for us at once. The fore-quarter of lamb we had brought with us was handed over to the woman to be cooked, and while the feast was preparing she came and sat with us. He had not been pleased when he first saw us, as he feared the police meant mischief; 'but,' he added frankly, with a gleam in his old eyes, 'if you have come for anything, I have plenty of guns ready.'

He picked up the suvarri's Martini, and said his own were the same pattern. I told him that in our villages no one ever carried rifles. He was much interested.

'It is much better so,' he said. 'Yours must be a fortunate land. Here we cannot live without them. I am eighty years old. Every year all my life people have said that things will be better, but they never are. Now they are talking again about reforms. I have heard it all so often before, and I shall die without seeing peace.'

His simple dignity was very impressive. I asked his name.

'I am Suliman to the Turks,' he replied, 'but I was baptized Constantine.'

I asked if all the children had double names. The Police Commissary doubted it. They were all squatting round us, eager, healthy, bright-eyed little chaps, as keen as terriers.

'What is your name?'

'Petro.'

‘And your Turkish name?’

‘Regep.’

‘And yours?’

‘Giorgi.’

‘And your Turkish name?’

‘Hussein.’

And so forth. All had a double set of names, and explained they used whichever was expedient. The young suvarri, the Christian one, was very much grieved about them; they were such nice boys, and would all grow up to be shot. He spoke to them very kindly, and tried to persuade them they must go to school and learn to read, or they would all grow up ‘haiduks’ (brigands). They laughed. When each boy was fifteen, said the suvarri, he would be given a rifle and revolver, and taught to keep up the honour of the house. He himself had wanted to set up as a schoolmaster in Shpata, but to his great disappointment had failed, and had but recently joined the police. He had a great desire to reclaim his compatriots by civilized methods, but a school in the vernacular would be stopped, and to teach these little wild animals in Greek was almost impossible.

This was one of the worst districts for blood-feuds, and every man in the village had blood upon him.

‘But,’ said both suvarris, ‘they have never been taught anything better.’

Four or five were ‘wanted badly,’ and had been hunted for in vain. This was the reason why Constantine Suliman was the only man present, and why we had been kept waiting. The other men were probably all in hiding near. The old boy laughed when it was suggested to him, and said we were all friends to-day, and would not talk of such things. I was whiling

away the time by drawing, and having my sight focussed upon a distant bush, suddenly saw a head bob up and disappear, then a second.

‘The men are over there.’

The young suvarri snatched his rifle, but the Police Commissary said we were all ‘mik’ to-day, and stopped his search. His movement had been observed, though, for no head showed again. I learnt later that Constantine Suliman was reckoned at forty rifles.

Dinner was a great ceremony, and excellently cooked. It was served out of doors, and Constantine Suliman ate with us. We had broiled lamb, stewed fowl, a big bowl of milk, cheese, scrambled eggs, and huge loaves of maize bread.

Constantine Suliman’s conversation, translated, made me grieve that I could not talk to him directly.

‘We are poor ignorant people,’ he said, ‘and cannot travel and see the world. We thank you very much for coming to see us and us show what people from another land are like. Mountains cannot visit mountains, but men can visit men.’ He regretted deeply that I could not talk his language. ‘Though they tell you what I say,’ he said, ‘you will never understand what we feel about you in our hearts. You have trusted us, and you are quite safe among us.’

He pressed me to stay the night, and offered me the best of all he had. I should not have had the smallest fear of staying alone; but the gendarmes had orders not to leave me, and if we had all stayed a search-party might have been sent from the town and trouble started. It was, therefore, impossible. I promised, however, that I would not visit Elbasan again without coming to see him. My men managed to consume the whole of the colossal meal. Constantine Suliman picked up the fowl’s breast-bone to divine the future.

Holding it up against the sun, he traced the shapes in it carefully.

'One of us who is here will be shot dead in a fortnight,' he said solemnly.

But he could not tell which. I trust it was not himself.

When we left I asked what was the etiquette about remuneration, and was told that something might be given to the eldest woman, but that to Suliman himself such a thing must not even be hinted at. Judging by the great joy the gift gave, money was extremely scarce in Shpata. We mounted, and the old man came with us to put us on another track. When I last saw him he was standing high on a rock, silhouetted against the sky, waving farewells to us, a noble old savage. Constantine Suliman, dignified and self-respecting, according to his lights has kept clean the honour of his house upon the mountains, and will die, unconquered, without ever seeing peace. The pity of it!

As we rode away I reflected upon the Bishop of Ochrida, a man who was supposed to be educated and civilized, and of Constantine Suliman, and his people, who had lived for eighty years cut off from all the world. Which of the two is made of the finer stuff?

We stopped at a second house on the way down. A little man in European garb rushed out; he was the schoolmaster. I was begged to wait while he fetched the school. He returned with the whole of it—two little boys and a little girl, set them in a row, and began asking them what was the Greek for 'a hand,' 'a foot,' etc. The little girl stood in the middle and answered loudly and correctly. The boys were very shy. Imagine the difficulty of taking an English village child, and having to begin by teaching it

French before you can teach it to read! The young suvarri took the book from the schoolmaster and started examining the children himself. It was at once clear that he had been right in his desire to be a schoolmaster, for he got far better results from all three than did the excited teacher. These three children were all that could be mustered from thirty houses. There was a great prejudice against school. Some years ago a villager had been persuaded to let his son go to a school in one of the large towns, and the boy had returned home to die. You cannot cage falcons all at once.

Our return to Elbasan in the evening was uneventful.

My eight days there passed all too fast, paying visits and making water-colour sketches of the wonderful costumes of the neighbourhood. This was a sport that the Muttasarif entered into with great zest. Of all things, I was to stay and see the bazar on Saturday. Meantime he walked me off to his own house, and entertained me while his wife and daughters put on their best dresses for my benefit. Then I went into the harem.

Cut off from my male interpreter, I had to make shift as best I could, for the three ladies spoke Albanian only. But the pictures in my sketch-book explained themselves, and I knew the Albanian for most of the things in it. Madame was magnificent in full native dress, and sat cross-legged in flowery bloomers, a most beautiful crimson velvet and gold jacket, and a white silk gauze shirt all gold embroidered. The whole, set off with native ornaments, was a fine rich colour scheme. Her daughters, alas! were 'European' in long-trained skirts of pink flannel and silk blouses of bright yellow and purple



WOMEN, CHERMENIK, SHPATA, NEAR ELBASAN.

plaid (Teutonic, I'll swear), trimmed with a plenty of yellow chiffon. Their hospitality was extreme. We sat on a divan, and they put bits of orange in my mouth. Papa looked on and beamed, and when I left gave me a bunch of beautiful ostrich-feathers. He had been told, he said, that English ladies wore them on their heads. He used them for penholders. I told him he was correctly informed, and that, moreover, they were always worn at Court, which pleased him much.

On market-day, before seven in the morning, when I was but half-clad, there came a battering at my door and excited voices. The police wanted me at once. I hustled into a coat, and came on to the balcony, to find that by the Muttasarif's orders they had captured a woman of the village of Chermenik, in Shpata, for me to draw, as it was the oddest dress of the neighbourhood. She had a string of bark to sell, and was told I wanted to buy it. A crowd assembled and bargained with her for it while she raged and stamped, while I, in a most *déshabillé* condition and stockingless, jotted her down as fast as I could lay brush to paper. She never knew she had been drawn, and we bought her stuff and let her go in about ten minutes.

I spent all the day happily in the bazar with a host of strange folk, a blaze of colour, bizarre, old-world, decorative, all-glorious in the sunshine, and backgrounded by the mysterious depths of hot shadow in the little wooden shops.

But all good things come to an end. The Muttasarif, kindly to the last, gave me a large bagful of oranges from his garden to eat on the way, I said good-bye regretfully, and we started early in the morning, along the Egnatian way, for Durazzo, passing through Pekin and Kavaia. Neither calls for

much description, and the Roman way is almost all destroyed. According to one of the foreign Cousins, the Turks tore it up pretty recently in a blind rage, with the intent to destroy all communications as far as possible.

The hanjee at Pekin, when I remarked that the town was small, replied promptly :

‘A gold coin is small, but it is very good.’

The Albanian talks in similies very neatly—*e.g.*, ‘He went on a horse and came back on a donkey’ (he failed in his errand).

The cuckoo was hollaing loudly, and I tried to collect folk-lore about it, but learnt only that the first time you hear her you should eat something, and will then have plenty all the year. The flowers we call cuckoo flowers are here ‘lambs’ flowers.’

We spent the night at Kavaia, and left for Durazzo at five next morning. It was an easy ride, much of it along the seashore.

Durazzo is in Skodra vilayet. Roman Catholicism begins here, but out of the 1,000 houses only 120 are Roman Catholic. Books printed in Albanian by the Church press at Skodra circulate quite freely, and Turkey has no say in the matter. To show that they still possessed some authority, however, the police asked me how many letters I had sent off by the Austrian mail, and why I had been to the Austrian consulate!

I had an interesting talk with one of the priests, a dark man, keen-eyed and vehement, putting all the energy of his nature into his religion, as his forefathers would have into a vendetta, never yielding an inch of his opinion, but accepting what was said to him with the fine courtesy that is the birthright of the Albanian and the Montenegrin. He told me the work of the

Roman Catholic Church in Albania had been for a long time hampered by the lack of native priests, but Austria is now training numbers; all the Christian villages of the mountains are now supplied, and a great civilizing work is being done. I never attended service in any of the Catholic churches without being struck with the difference between the grip they have on the people, who listen in awe-struck silence to their eloquent sermons, and the slack, indifferent spirit shown in the Greek churches of the South.

Durazzo (Dyrrachium), formerly an island, is joined to the mainland by a huge marsh, partly salt, where the Government saltworks are, and partly fresh, and haunted by storks, frogs and fevers. For a Turkish port it is fairly flourishing. The Government, with unwonted energy, is making a road round the point by building a rough sea-wall, largely of smashed-up Roman remains, funeral slabs, columns and inscriptions. But Durazzo is often visited by boat, and is well known to Europeans. I will, therefore, not describe its antiquities.

I lived luxuriously at the big han, for my room had not only a bedstead, but a chair and table—the first I had met for many a long day—and a convenient cook-shop over the way supplied food that tasted better than it looked. The han, like an old English one, is built round a yard, and has big balconies, in one of which lived a huge pet ram called Napoleon, with curly horns and a massive Roman nose, which the serving-men usually stopped to kiss as they passed. When it wanted a drink it baa'd loudly, and someone escorted it downstairs to the horse-trough in the yard, which was always picturesque with zaptiehs and suvarris, kirijees, and pack-beasts. The Albanians are fond of animals. I have never seen even the wildest

of them torturing an animal for fun, a sight too common in South Italy.

There is a really good carriageable road to Tirana, the only one I had seen since crossing the Turkish frontier months ago. The fact that I had not to be perpetually balancing, steering, scrambling, and dismounting, struck me as one of the most extraordinary experiences of my journey — as though a dream of years ago had come true. I had great difficulty in realizing that I had lived most of my life with roads as good. We went along quickly, and I saw at once by his splendid seat on horseback that the suvarri was not an Albanian. When we halted halfway he poured out a strange tale of sorrow. He was a Russian subject and a Circassian. He hated Russia with a bitter hatred, had escaped over the borders and got to Trebizond. His one desire was to go to Europe. He managed to be taken as horse-boy by a Turkish officer, and came with him to Durazzo. He then turned suvarri and married. This was two years ago. Now it had been discovered he was a Russian subject, and he must leave the force. If he became a Turkish one he must do military service, in which case he would have no pay, and his wife and child would be left alone to starve; or he must pay exemption, which was impossible. The only thing left for him was to fly in a foreign ship with them. Perhaps if he sold his horse and gun he could manage it. His great terror was that he should be given back to Russia. All he wanted was to serve the Sultan faithfully as a suvarri. Such is the curious irony of fate. The only man I met who told me he loved the Turk had to fly. To add to his trouble, his child was very ill. He looked wretchedly unhappy, and when he left, prayed me to write a note to his Bimbashi to say he had served me

well. He had a forlorn hope that a certificate of character from a foreigner would help him to keep his place.

We passed a place called Shiak, near which is a group of some fifty houses, all inhabited by Moslem Albanians who left Bosnia at the time of the Austrian occupation. Ideas have changed a good deal in Albania since those days.

Tirana (12,000 inhabitants), having a good road to the port, is remarkably flourishing. A fine bazar was in full swing, crowded with country folk in costumes all different from those of Elbasan. Tirana was founded in 1600 by a rich Beg, who named it to commemorate a Turkish victory at Teheran in Persia. The present Beks, the Toptans, who claim descent from the Topias of old, and are exceedingly popular, have not only constructed the road at their own expense, but have imported agricultural implements and engaged Italians to teach the people how to use them. One of the family is in exile for 'patriotism,' and the town laments. The land being well cultivated, the soil rich, and the road good, export trade is increasing rapidly. All the houses stand in large gardens, which are a mass of cherry, fig, quince, plum, and walnut trees, and water is laid on by a channel to most of them. It is an extraordinarily clean town, and most picturesque. The mosques are exceptionally pretty, all coloured and painted with wonderful landscapes. It is an artist's paradise, and I regretted that I could only stay three days.

To remind me, perhaps, that Tirana is in the heart of a wild land, a madman walked the streets stark-naked—a big man, well fed, tall, and white-haired, with skin dark-red and leathery from the exposure of many years—who gibbered inarticulately to the sheep

and donkeys. Folk seemed to stand in awe of him, and did whatever he wanted. When he insisted on walking down the street arm-in-arm with a smart officer, the effect was incomparably ludicrous.

The few Christians of Tirana are all Orthodox. The Christian schoolmistress was active and intelligent, as were all the Albanian schoolmistresses I met. Educated women are much looked up to, and very much hold their own opinions in Albania, and men seemed to be as anxious to have their daughters educated as their sons.



MOSLEM WOMAN.

Even among the wild tribes, women, though the work they have to do is cruelly severe, are by no means the slaves they sometimes appear to be, but are treated with a certain rough chivalry and respected by the men. I was once with a party of men when news came in that a man in a neighbouring village had shot his wife, believing her to be unfaithful. They said indignantly this was impossible; he must have been stark-mad; the honour of Albanian women was quite untarnished; only gipsies did such things, and they lived like beasts.

Each sang the praises of his wife, and explained his views on marriage with a naïveté that would shock the West, though no impropriety was intended.

So great were they on women's rights, that when, in answer to questions, I told them that there were still Universities in England that did not grant degrees to women, they were horrified: it was, they said, unjust, unreasonable, and uncivilized.

Tirana was most kind to me. Only the Turkish Kaimmakam made it obvious that he thought my

presence superfluous, and sent the police to ask me why I was always writing, and what? I had been sketching from my window.

The road to Tirana lay over the rich plain-land which belongs to the Begs of Tirana, except a piece near the coast, which the Sultan has 'obtained,' it is said, by exiling the owner. Turning towards the mountains, we saw Kruja high above us, and reached it by a steep ascent up a stony track—a six hours' ride in all.

Kruja was most friendly. Police and all were Albanian, and delighted to see me. The young, newly-appointed 'reform' judge, a Greek—the only Christian in the place—took a golden view of everything. The people were most industrious, he said. He was surprised to find them so amenable; there was much less crime than he had expected in such an outlying part. Robberies were rare, and there had been but three murders in six months in his very large district. All these people wanted was just and reasonable treatment.

Kruja was the only place that did not demand and stamp my passport. From a friend passports were not required. The police were hurt when I offered it.

Modern Kruja consists of 700 houses, scattered up and down the slopes among olive-gardens, in the midst of which Skenderbeg's famous stronghold towers up from the mountain-side on an isolated crag. On the land side it drops precipitately to a stony valley, beyond which tower the mountains in an abrupt and rugged wall. On the sea side it slopes steeply to the plain and the Adriatic beyond.

Twice did the Turks vainly besiege this rock. The invincible Skenderbeg held it for five months against Murad II. and 40,000 men in 1450, and forced them

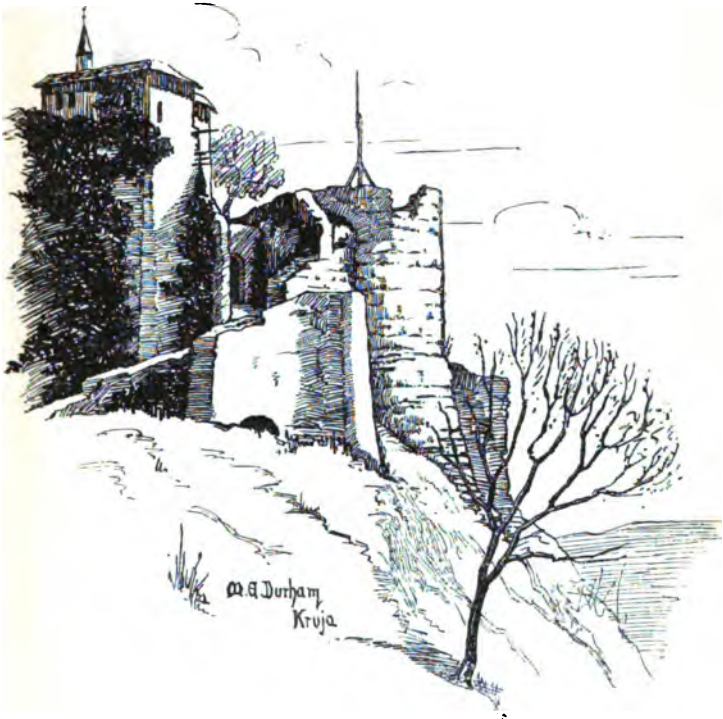
back. Fifteen years later his successor, Mahomet II., swore to destroy the fortress, and led a yet greater force to the attack. This time the valiant Mirdites held it while Skenderbeg and his men incessantly raided the Turkish army from the surrounding rocky fastnesses. Mahomet, like Murad, was forced to retire from Kruja after losing, it is said, 30,000 men under its walls. Such is the tale of that grim rock.

A very poor, covered bazar street now leads up to the citadel, and within the walls stand only the konak, a mosque or two, three or four houses, and a tall tower. The walls are vast and solid, much of them later than Skenderbeg's time, for the crag has been defended since, both by Venetian and Turk. Some fine bronze cannon, lying on the grass, were seventy years old, and dated from the time of Sultan Mahmoud, the present Sultan's grandfather, said the Police Commissary who read the twiddly inscription for me.

High in the mountain-side above the town, in a cavern, is a Bektashite tekieh—the shrine of a very holy Dervish, Sari Salik. His body had been removed to Corfu (I give the tale as told me), and there it is revered, under the name of St. Spiridion, as a Christian saint. But, of course, said my informant, he was not really Christian.

I repeat the tale as an example of the strange mix-up of the creeds in the people's minds. The truth about saint and Dervish I have failed to discover.

Much of the population now is Sunnite, and I gathered there is some friction between them and the Bektashites. But pilgrimages are regularly made to Sari Salik's shrine, and St. George is held in very high honour. His festival was due in a week, and I was begged to stay for it, as it was the great festival of the year.



THE CASTLE, KRUIA.

‘I thought you were all Moslem here?’ I said.

‘So we are,’ was the answer, ‘but, of course, we keep St. George’s Day.’

But time was flying; I was already overdue in England, and, to my regret, I had to fly too.

We left Kruja very, very early. The moon hung delicately green in a sky rosy with approaching dawn, and the silver olives were magical. We left with nothing inside us but black coffee, and had been able to buy nothing overnight for the journey but some bread. The cookshop is a very lean one. A han halfway, we were assured, would supply us.

The first part of the track is as fine as any I know—huge wooded rocks and a wild stream. The sun came out hot and brilliant, and the young greenery was all aglow. Much of the way was too rough to ride. Then came a grand oak forest, where clearings had but recently been made, and men were tilling the rich fat leaf-mould. Presently the air was diabolic with brimstone, and we rode out of the trees to a clear and brilliant spring that spread and formed a little lake, reeking of sulphur that thickly coated bank and reed and stone. As a cure, the peasants value the spring highly. Hard by stands a little open shed, railed in front; within is a cross, and above a belfry. It is a Roman Catholic chapel, on a very old site, and the Christians of the neighbourhood flock to the service, which is held once a year. Otherwise it is left open and alone, protected only by its sanctity. The Albanians respect one another’s holy things. In districts largely Moslem you may see a rough wooden cross standing all alone by the trackside with a little money-box attached to it.

About midday we reached the halfway han. But ‘when we got there the cupboard was bare.’ Not a

bite of anything did it afford. We sat under a tree, and munched our dry bread; it was yesterday and very, very dry. But the hanjee's black coat put fresh energy into us.

Just as we were ready to start one of the kijses found he had dropped his best waistcoat on the way, and must rush back to find it. He knew he had had it at the sulphur spring, and required it urgently, I believe, to go to a party in. So we waited.

To while away the time, up came a detachment of the Turkish army, some officers, and twenty-four ragged savages, three of them pure negro, one Arab, all the rest freely 'tar-brushed,' and camped under our oak-tree. The Bimbashi, with huge white, tusky mustachios, had his blanket spread near us, squatted down with his Izbashi, and proceeded to eat a hearty lunch, remarking truthfully that 'it was better in the belly than in the bag.' It was a very good lunch, and plenty of it. He kept throwing nice little meaty bones to his dog. Such was my ravenous hunger that I should have picked them up and eaten them myself had he not been looking. But I could not steal, and to beg I was ashamed. The poor lean Tommies fared yet harder. They had nothing at all but cold water, and, like us, had been on the road since four in the morning. They and I watched the dog with common interest.

Two wild-looking youths came out of the han and squatted by us, one quite a boy, with a dull, ferocious face, the other rather older, a good-looking fellow, gray-eyed and yellow-moustached; both of them short and wiry, cartridge-belted, and armed with rifle and revolver. They were Mirdite zaptiehs, they said. I asked why they were here outside their frontiers.

The better-looking one was delighted. He wrinkled up his eyes and laughed out frankly.

'We are free Mirdites,' he said joyously. 'If they did not pay us here to protect them we should come and pay ourselves. We are the men of the mountains.'

I laughed aloud. He was very pleased.

'Tell the lady,' he said, 'that in all Mirdita we only pay 100 paras of tax' (5d. = no taxes).



ROMAN CATHOLIC LADY,
SKODRA.

I hoped the Mirdites would let me visit their land. He declared I should be very welcome, but I had better go up from Skodra. Here we were but five hours from his frontiers, but the track was such that only a Mirdite could climb it. Was he regularly paid? He roared with laughter. It would be very bad for them if they did not pay him. He was the gayest young thing, and looked one straight in the face with honest eyes. I think he played the game straight as he understood it. I had three parts of a mind to ask him to take me up

to Mirdita there and then, for the wilder these creatures are, the safer you are with them, if they mean to be friends. But a sudden trip to Mirdita would not have suited my companion's business.

A pack of gipsies were camped close by. The Mirdite hailed a small boy and began to chaff him. The little 'gippo,' lean, black, and monkey-like, came up cautiously. He was nine years old, he said. His

brown hide showed through his ragged shirt, and he had a big pistol stuck in his sash. He snarled till his white teeth glittered, clapped his hand on his pistol, and said he could shoot us if he liked. I asked if it were really loaded, and the Mirdite was of opinion that if he were teased enough he would shoot for certain. Hand on weapon, the little wild animal swaggered off defiant.

The kirijee turned up, happy about his waistcoat, and the young Mirdite kindly set us on the right track.

All along this fat plain-land the peasants own their farms and are well-to-do. Most of them are Roman Catholics. One who hailed us owned ninety head of cattle and seven hundred sheep, and was accounted wealthy. Everyone in Skodra vilayet goes armed, whether Moslem or Christian. My two kirijeas carried rifles, and said they never travelled that road unarmed for fear of the hill-tribes. They were Kruja men, and sang an almost endless song about Skenderbeg, which went on at intervals all day. Skenderbeg is a great hero in his own land.

We passed Debristina, the seat of a Catholic bishopric, and crossed the river Mati in a fine caik, made of two dug-out tree-trunks lashed together. We were now on the marshy flats called Bregu Matit, and could see on the hilltop over near Alessio the holy tomb of a Moslem saint. The kirijeas told his story.

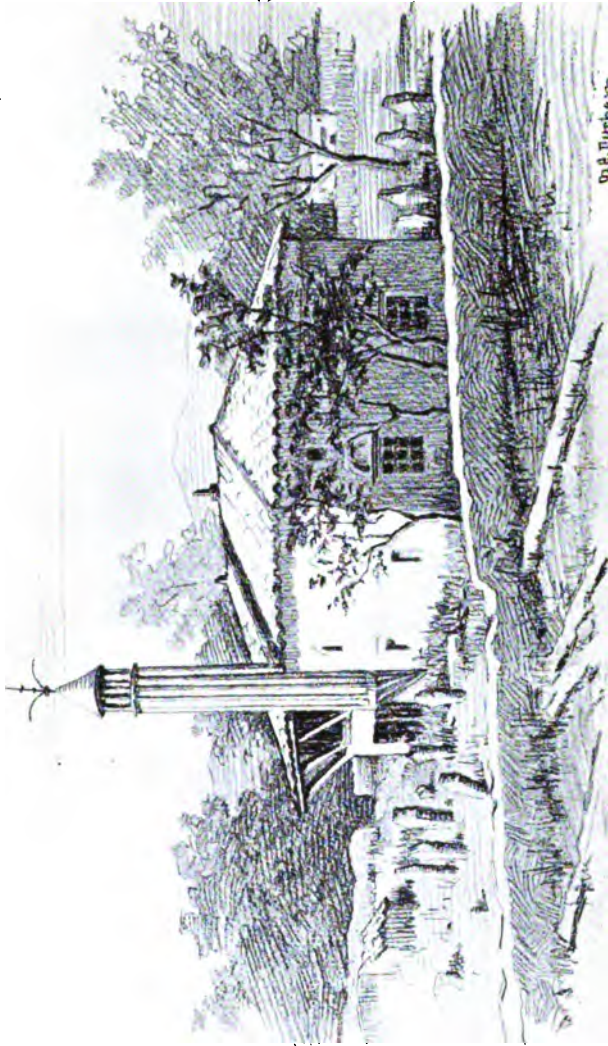
He lived long, long ago in the town, and was a butcher. One day a man came and bought some goat's flesh. Presently he returned and said it was not good. The butcher had none left, so killed another goat and gave him of it in exchange. Back came the man shortly, and said the flesh of this goat, too, was bad. The butcher slew another. This went on and on,

and the butcher never complained or lost his patience. When he had killed his fortieth and last goat, in despair he hurled his knife into the air. Spirits seized on the knife, and it flew away and away and dropped on the very top of the hill. Then all the people saw that the butcher was very holy. From that day forth, indeed, he seems to have been a 'made man.' He was held in great repute, and when he died was buried on the spot where the knife miraculously fell, and even now it is a very good place to which to make a pilgrimage.

As we approached Alessio I felt as if I were nearing home. The dresses of the peasants were all such as I had seen a hundred times in Skodra, and they looked like old friends. But Alessio is but a dreary place, and cannot be recommended for a prolonged stay. Its inn is the very leanest I know, which is saying a good deal. A man very kindly turned out of one of its wretched cock-lofts for my benefit, but it was stacked with all the belongings of himself and a friend, including their dirty clothes, had five swallows' nests on its outer wall, only holes for windows, and large slits between the floor-boards, and the cookshop had nothing in it. We had to go to the butcher's and buy a sheep's head and liver and take it to be cooked.

It was five when we reached Alessio, and we had left Kruja a little after 4 a.m. We had had nothing to eat but some dry bread all day, and when the dinner would be ready the cookshop man alone knew. I had to drink half a bottle of wine before I mustered energy to explore the town.

It is a mean little place, mostly Christian, and stands on the river Drin, which I looked at with interest, for it rises in Lake Ochrida, but it is here a shrunken, dwindled Drin. In 1858 it suddenly forced for itself



D. B. Turhan
Mosque, Skodra

MOSQUE AT SKODRA.

a new channel, and the mass of its waters now pour into the Bojana just below Skodra, and, by blocking the current of water from the lake, causes dire floods every winter.

Beyond the river is a church and monastery. Of the old cathedral nothing remains, and the site of Skenderbeg's grave is unknown. All that remains of the Venetian occupation is the ruined citadel on the hill above. A sprinkling of houses and a wretched little bazar make up all there is of Alessio now.

A gendarme came up and hailed me in Serb :

'How is thy sister, and hast thou made many pictures this year? I know thee well. Every year dost thou come to Skodra.'

He was going with some others to try and collect taxes, but did not think they would get much.

'Ah, if thou didst but know my fatherland! I come from X——.'

I knew it. He was delighted. If I had only seen his brother and his 'stara maika' (old mother)!

'Knowest thou, when the Austrians came I was a boy. People told me it would be much better with the Turks. I did not know. I was a fool. My brother stayed with our mother, and I came to the Turks. Two years ago I went back "kod nas" to see my stara maika. Now the town is very beautiful. My brother is rich; he has sheep and a fine house. Look at me!' He pointed to his ragged uniform. 'By God, I was a fool!'

It was dark before we got our sheep's liver, which was swimming in gravy in a large bowl. I shall never, never eat such a delicious one again.

At night the han was so picturesque that its deficiencies could be forgiven it. It was a great ramshackle barn, with lofty roof all rafters and cobwebs.

The floor was spread with straw and hay, and the pack-mules and horses of passing traders tethered to the walls. On a raised stone platform in the middle the kirijeos and peasants cooked their evening meal and passed the night. The flickering fire-light cast bogy shadows, and threw red light on their keen faces. I climbed to my dirty cock-loft, blocked the window-hole with a shutter, for the wind blew cold, heard the grind, grind of the pack-beasts munching below, and was soon asleep with my head on my saddle.

I was waked at very earliest dawn by the swallows. By putting up the shutter I had shut them all in, and they were dashing about the room, banging on the walls, and cursing loudly.

It was Holy Cross Day, and folk all carried little crosses of two sticks, tied together like the cross of the infant St. John in the old masters. The ride to Skodra is a very easy one, all along the Drin, over the plains called Zadrima. Most of the villages are Christian; some possess very old churches.

San Giovanni di Medua (in Albanian 'Sinjin'), the port for Skodra, lies on the coast but a mile or so away from Alessio. But though it is Skodra's port, and Skodra is the capital of North Albania, it has only just occurred to the authorities that it would be a good thing to make a carriageable road. 'Next year' is to see that accomplished! The kirijeos left their rifles at Alessio, to be picked up on their return, the way being of the safest, but the authorities thought fit to send a suvarri with me. As I was used to messing about Skodra unprotected, I felt much humiliated to enter it thus.

We arrived without adventure at Bachelik, the suburb of Skodra, on the banks of the Drinazzo, and it all looked as familiar as Oxford Street. But I had

never arrived at the town by that route before, and had not realized that a Custom-house examination had to take place on the bridge.

‘Give me a medjidieh’ (3s. 4d.), said I to my comrade.

Alas! he had not a penny of change, and nor had I. Change is a great difficulty when travelling in Turkey, and can only be got from professional changers.

Out came every ragged, dirty article from my saddle-bags. Down squatted everyone and searched them. I had a couple of books, which I should have hidden had I known beforehand. They were harmless works, but I had reasons for not wishing them to fall into official hands. They were seized at once. Then came my travelling inkpot, hard, heavy, suspicious. They set it on the ground, and someone applied a finger to the spring. Up went the lid with a pop, and they jumped out of the way with a hurry that showed they feared explosives. I dipped my little finger in the ink, and approached it to the nose of the nearest man. This is the sort of joke they think really funny, and it soothed them at once. They replaced everything except the two books. I put out a hand carelessly, picked them up, and put them in. No; they were at once removed. My guide said it was no use. I must get them back later through the consulate. His goods were then examined. It took some time. My books lay on the sill of the Custom-house. Everyone spoke only Albanian. On the off-chance I cried aloud in Serb :

‘Please give me my books.’

Up came an officer who who was hanging around.

‘Ah, thou speakest my language! I am Bosniak!’

He babbled of his fatherland, and examined the books. One was a French dictionary, the other an

Italian work on Albania. He was troubled about them, especially the dictionary, put them down again, and I gave up all hope. To my surprise, just as I was mounting, he suddenly exclaimed :

‘ Here, lady ! I give thee thy books because thou speakest my language !’

I shoved them into my holsters, unspeakably relieved, and in another twenty minutes drew rein at the door of the Hôtel de l’Europe. Out rushed the family, and before I had time to dismount, cried : ‘ Your sister sent us some Christmas cards !’ and quite a number of unknown persons hailed me as an old friend.

CHAPTER XIII

MIRDITA

SKODRA again at last. I did not know if I were glad or sorry I had arrived. There is a certain charm about reaching a goal that has been before one for weeks. But the grip of the wilderness was upon me, and the charm of the mountains. When I saw myself in a mirror for the first time after all these glorious weeks, I was sorry for the ragged, copper-coloured thing, as 'fit as a fiddle,' that had to be caged in the West in a few weeks' time. I must see Mirdita before I tore myself away.

Skodra previously had always resolutely opposed all my schemes for seeing the interior. It declared the life was too rough. Now it was prepared to give me any amount of help.

The vilayet of Skodra is the freest of all. It gives only voluntary military service, and does not pay tobacco duty. The Turkish garrison lives for the most part in the town, 'because,' as the Albanians will tell you, 'we do not like them to walk about the country.' For Skodra vilayet is the home of the Maljsore, the mountaineers—the true sons of the eagle.

The Turkish Government is well aware that there are limits that cannot be transgressed without bloodshed, and both parties keep the peace with loaded

rifles. I did not visit the Turkish Vali here. I put myself in Albanian hands, and was introduced to the Princess of the Mirdites, mother of Prenk Bib Doda, their exiled chieftain.

The Mirdites, since the days when they are first heard of, have been famed the finest fighting men in all Albania, and of all the tribes the most independent. Old Bib Doda, with his Mirdites, fought gallantly on the British side at the Crimea.



PEASANT, ENVIRONS OF
SKODRA.

The Turks dreaded the growing power of the tribe, and at the beginning of the war in 1876 detained at first one of the princely family as a hostage for Mirdite fidelity. Prince Prenk, then a youth, took no part in the war, but planned to strike for complete independence. It is said he was in treaty with the Montenegrins. Most unfortunately for the Mirdites, an armistice was proclaimed between Turk and Serb (1877), and the Turk having thus a very large army at liberty, turned it suddenly against the Mirdites. Till then the Mirdites had been uncon-

quered and invincible. Modern arms and methods were too much for them. It is said also they were outnumbered. They made a valiant stand, but Dervish Pasha forced his way to the capital, Oroshi, and burnt it. The princely family escaped, but the young Prince was afterwards captured, and has ever since been an exile at Kastamundi in Asia Minor. A Turkish

Governor was appointed to Mirdita, but has to live without its frontiers.

The Mirdites having lost their leader, the Turks thought it as well to leave them alone, and for twenty-five years they have lived ungoverned and leaderless. The fate of some of the other mountain tribes has been similar. Europe has treated them scurvily, and the Turk has made scapegoats of them.

The aged Princess and her daughter the Princess Davidica, received me with the greatest kindness at her house in Skodra. She wore native dress and spoke only Albanian. Dark, dignified, and with an eternal sadness in her eyes, she is a mother eagle, mourning always for her captured son, and her heart is up in the highlands with the wild men of her dead husband's tribe.

She and her daughter, whose personality is as marked as her mother's, kindly offered at once to send me up the country with their own men, and with an introduction to Monsignor the Abbot of the Mirdites. If I would only tell England about them, that was all she asked. It will be long before I forget the aged Princess, when she begged me to ask the help of England, that loves freedom for her exiled son and his friendless people.

My travelling companion had come to his journey's end at Skodra, and had only to do his business and return, and my former guide, Dutsi, was now in service, so I hired one Jin to come up with me to Oroshi, for the Princess's men spoke Albanian only. Jin was rather a dear old thing; had been kavas to both the Austrian and British consulates; had been in the habit of valeting his masters, and, with the best of intentions, strove to do the same for me. As the above-mentioned gentlemen wore garments quite

other to mine, poor Jin came badly to grief when he took it upon himself to explore my saddle-bags. The result of his well-meant efforts was far too funny for publication.

With Jin and two magnificent Mirdites—one the Princess's own kavas and the other a Mirdite zaptieh—both in brave attire, I started through the back of the town and over the plain towards the river. A tall block of antique masonry near the track and a second in the distance were, so Jin said, the remains of a bridge that used to bring water from the mountains many hundred years ago. A Roman aqueduct, probably, for Skodra was a Roman station.

Soon the plain ceased abruptly. High mountains rose suddenly, and the Drin rushed from out a narrow valley. We crossed over in a caik to the village opposite, which was full of soldiers. Close by, at Mjet, is the residence of the so-called Turkish Governor of Mirdita.

Having lunched at the village han, we struck up into the mountains of the Mirdites. It is all mountainous, but quite unlike any of the other Albanian districts that I know. The soil is a light brown sandy loam with but little rock. Roads could be made here without much difficulty, as little or no blasting would be required. And the whole is thickly wooded. Mirdita, in fact, so far as I saw it, is a huge tract of forest-land, a large part valueless, except for firewood, as the young trees have been browsed by goats and ignorantly lopped, but there are thousands of pounds' worth of fine timber too, for the most part oak on the lower slopes, and pine above. But though timber can be floated down the Drin from the heart of the land, the Turkish Government, unwilling that Mirdita should earn money, stops the wood before it reaches

the sea, and has forbidden the Princess to export. With all its capital locked up, development is a matter of extreme difficulty, and Mirdita is bitterly poor. The people make a little money by selling firewood, sheep's and goat's hides, fox and wolf skins, and the roots and bark of the sumach-tree (for dyeing and tanning). They buy some of their maize from the plain-land, otherwise the country is almost 'self-contained.' Everything is home-made, and all a man has to buy is his gun and ammunition. Every man is armed, usually with 'Martina' and revolver.

Oroshi can be reached in one day from Skodra, but my friends there, unaware of the iron condition into which Albania had wrought me, arranged that I should take two over it. We tracked along in leisurely fashion up the Gjadri, a small tributary of the Drin, meeting now and again a party of natives heavily laden, carrying their goods for sale at the frontier, or a herdsboy, who stared with astonished eyes. Otherwise a few scattered huts were all that told it was an inhabited land. But after the gray desolation of the other mountain tracts of Albania, its greenness and the warm colour of the soil looked almost English.

At eventide we all arrived at a nice little house on a hilltop, with a great wooden cross alongside and a little old priest at the door—a charming old man, who spoke just enough Italian for me to understand him. He was devoted to the Princess, could not do enough for anyone sent by her, and prayed me for news of the exiled Prince and all the family. He made me sit on the couch and take my boots off at once, insisted on my putting on his slippers because they were warm, and was most anxious I should take off my leathern belt. In these lands, where a heavy belt full of cartridges and weapons is always worn, the first

thing a man does on entering a friendly house is to divest himself of the burden with a sigh of relief. Mine, on the contrary, was rather urgently required by the make of my garments. The poor old gentleman, to my horror, thought that my refusal to take it off was because it was full of money that I would not trust him with, and so distressed was he that, in sign of good faith, off it had to come. I, on the contrary, would trust all my belongings, not merely to a worthy old priest, but to any Montenegrin or Albanian tribesman, providing always that he dwells so far in the wilderness as to be uncorrupted by civilization, and has received me as his guest. Petty priggishness is not one of his vices, and his boast that he never betrays a friend nor spares a foe is not an idle one.

The kindly old priest bustled about, and assured me he was treating me exactly as he should treat the King of England if he called on the way to Oroshi.

'I am giving you my best, and I could do no more for him!'

One thing puzzled him much, he said. It was very strange that the King should be called Edward when his mother's name was Victoria. He expressed great admiration for Queen Victoria, reminded me that the Mirdites had fought on our side in the Crimea, and was fiercely anti-Russian. Of all things he wanted to hear about the Japanese. A little nun came in to lay the supper, and, by the oddest chance in the world, two out of his few European plates had Japanese people upon them. He had been unaware of this, and was much interested.

England was the only nation that could be trusted to act fairly towards Albania, he said. All the others that pretended to be friendly only wanted to take it.

'Ah, la povera Albania!' he cried, 'e morta ma'—with a little smile—'non ancora sepolta.'

We had the cheeriest little supper of roast mutton, macaroni, and cheese, excellently cooked and served by the little nun, and I shared her tidy little bedroom at night.

Next morning the worthy old man took me out to see his garden, where the roses hung heavy with dew. His village, Kasinjete, is scattered, as all the villages are, and but a house or two showed among the trees. Below us lay the densely-wooded valleys, and far away snow-clad peaks showed clean-cut and sharp through the clear pure air of the dawn—an incomparably magnificent view, all wild nature, as unmarked by man as though Adam had not yet been created; and, travelling express, it can be reached from London in seven days!

With a sparse and scattered population the task of education is one of great difficulty. The children have to come long distances over wild tracks, and the parents, whose forbears from the beginning of time have never been taught, greatly prefer to keep the children at home to mind the goats. The London School Board, however, at the beginning had to wrestle with a similar difficulty.

A newly-built school-house near the priest's dwelling, a schoolmaster, and eight or nine pupils, show that a start has been made. The children are very bright and learn quickly. Should this catch the eye of any Roman Catholic who has the missionary spirit, and



PEASANT WOMAN,
ENVIRONS OF SKODRA.

does not mind roughing it, I commend to his notice these sound, healthy, intelligent European children as offering a far better field for useful work than the blacks farther from home. None but Roman Catholics should apply.

The little nun made me up a packet of food for the journey; the Princess's kavas returned to Skodra, and, having said farewell to my most kindly entertainers, I went my way with Jin and Antonio, the Mirdite zaptieh, up into the heart of the land. We crossed the Fan i ma, a tributary of the Mati, climbed a hill, descended into another valley, and reached and forded the Fan i vogle (Little Fani).

We had been steadily going up all day. Near the river stood the zaptieh's house, and this he begged us to visit. He and his cousin had built it, and the interior was not yet quite finished. It was a solid stone house—nothing more nor less, in fact, than a block-house constructed for defence, the ground-floor pitch-dark and windowless, intended merely as store-house and stable, the upper floor reached by a ladder, and lighted by slits and loopholes. The floors and beams were all of oak, and very solid.

Antonio was very proud of and pleased with the house that was his castle, and hurried to do the honours of it. Such was his hospitality that he would not let me off with less than six coffees and five rakijas. He was a dark man with strongly-marked features, tall, lean, and very long-necked. The long neck seemed to me a Mirdite peculiarity. As a whole, the Mirdites, as I saw them, did not strike me as so tall as the rest of the Albanians, but they are extraordinarily supple, wiry and active, have very good brainpans and bright, keen faces. I could not decide whether dark or fair predominated.



CHURCH AT OROSLI.

The women wear a costume unlike any of the others that I have met—a long white shirt, tied round the waist with a long red woollen fringe that forms an apron in front, and long linen trousers to the ankle elaborately embroidered with dark red. Over the shirt either a white, sleeveless coat with red patterns appliqué over the seams, or, instead of the coat, the short black, square-collared jacket ('djurdin') worn always by the men in other parts of North Albania, and said to be mourning for Skenderbeg. The Mirdites assured me they were Skenderbeg's own men, and that is why both men and women wear this garment.

The Mirdite women cut their hair in a straight fringe over the forehead, but plait that at the back, and tie it up in a handkerchief. They were decidedly short, but very strongly-built and deep-chested. I should think lung diseases were unknown in Mirdita.

From the zaptieh's house it is but a short way to Oroshi, and Oroshi was a great surprise. It is in the midst of what is, perhaps, one of the least-known and most isolated peoples of Europe, and it contains one of the most civilized houses in all Albania, the home of a man who is one of the strong personalities of the Near East, Monsignor the Abbot of the Mirdites, who, single-hearted and single-handed, a man of culture and learning, has devoted himself to the saving of his wild brethren, and lives in the wilderness cut off from all the world.

The Abbot is his own engineer and his own architect. On a wide shelf on the mountain-side stand the church he has planned and built, his house, and the school. The tall white bell-tower of the church stood up white against the mountain beyond, which is cleft by a wide gully, terraced and cultivated. Some twenty

houses are scattered up it. This is Oroshi, the capital of the Mirdites. Before the inroad of Dervish Pasha it was a flourishing village of a hundred houses. Now ruins mark where many a house has stood, and the home of the Bib Dodas has never been rebuilt.

The Abbot, whose title is the traditional one for the head of the Church in Mirdita, is in reality a secular priest, for the Benedictine abbey of Oroshi was long ago destroyed. His position is quite a unique one. This wild land of 30,000 people has no temporal head. It is princeless, and there is no tribunal of any kind before which a criminal can be brought. The Abbot is the only power in the land, and his power is purely spiritual.

Exiled by the Turkish Government when quite a young man, he spent the years of his exile, not as do so many Turkish subjects, in Asia Minor, but, by the aid of the Church, under British government, first in Newfoundland and afterwards at Bombay, where he used to hear confessions in English. But his heart was always with his poor Mirdites, all unhelped in the wilderness, and after long years of exile he succeeded in obtaining a hearing at Constantinople, pleaded his cause, and won it. Now for fifteen years he has toiled for his brethren, striving by prayer, preaching, and example to win them from their state of prehistoric savagery.

He has fifteen parishes under him, all of which he personally superintends. The difficulties to be struggled with are such as would crush a less able man, for it must be remembered that the land is without any form of government, and any attempt on his part to establish a tribunal to punish crime would be exceeding his duties as a churchman, and be regarded as a breach of faith with the Porte.

He has one powerful weapon to wield, and one only—that is, excommunication. Only by his own religious and moral power can he influence the people. He was extremely modest about the success of his efforts, but the respect in which he is held is marked and obvious, and the fact that his house is a quite European one, with large windows, speaks for itself in a land where every other house that is not a mere wooden hut is a loopholed block-house.

‘Those that I can induce to come to church I can influence,’ he said. ‘With the others I have the greatest difficulty. When a crime is reported to me, all I can do is to denounce it from the altar and call upon the man to come and speak with me. He is usually not present, but the message is taken to him. Sometimes I fail entirely; sometimes he comes after many messages, and I speak to him of what he has done and what it means.’

It is almost always murder. These people are not thieves among one another, but on human life they set not the smallest value. I have been told that a man, after killing his enemy, has been known to regret having wasted a cartridge on such a paltry object. The vendettas, as in Shpata, are so numerous that most families owe somebody blood.

The fifty Mirdite zaptiehs instituted by the Turks when they ‘conquered’ Mirdita are, like other Turk-appointed officials, rarely paid by the Government, and as there is no prison to which to take a prisoner nor anyone to try him, there is little use in arresting him. The chief use of the zaptiehs is in providing armed escort to such as require it. Every stranger not properly introduced and vouched for is looked on with suspicion, and may be shot at sight. And the people cling jealously to the right of private vengeance given

them by the law of the mountain, the prehistoric code which is all they know. Few of them go even to Skodra. They live in the same way as did their ancestors in Alexander the Great's day, and, having seen nothing else, are entirely content with it.

The Abbot spoke with a sigh of the comfortable cottages of Newfoundland, with curtains in the windows and pots of flowers.

'My poor people,' he said, 'have not the least idea what comfort is.'

Under his teaching, however, they are raising more flocks and tilling more ground. His own well-cared-for flocks and fields form a good object-lesson.

He was extremely busy, for next Sunday was the feast of St. Alexander, the patron saint of Mirdita, he expected a gathering of the nation, and was to put up twenty-five priests in his own house. A gang of men was at work levelling the ground by the church and putting up a shrine. Preliminary services were being held in the church, and monsignore was wanted here, there, and everywhere. Had it not been that I was his guest, and there was nowhere else that I could stay, I should have much liked to have seen the gathering, but I could not trespass on his hospitality at such a time. Of his kindness I cannot speak too highly, and in all his rush of work he made time to tell me about his land and people.

He said, with a laugh, that when he came back from his long exile he was surprised to find how English luxuries had unfitted him for roughing it. He had had no idea before how rough the life in Albania really was. He declared that he was the only person I should ever meet who not only knew the life I had been brought up to, but the one I had been leading for the past weeks. It ought to have killed

me! We laughed over the fact that, on the contrary, it had suited me passing well; as a matter of fact, by this time it was European habits that struck me as strange, and when he served me with afternoon tea and biscuits I was amazed.

I spent the next day walking about, seeing the school, and talking with its master, who spoke French. In the afternoon there came down two wild men to speak with monsignore, one of them quite young. All three walked up and down and up and down in deep and earnest conversation. Monsignore had a chair brought out at last and sat, and still the talk went on, and evening drew near. When at last they left, he came and told me the story. I can tell it but briefly. I can give no idea of the power of the man who told it.

The younger of the two men was an orphan. He had been brought up by an uncle, who had been a father to him and whom he loved much. Two years ago, as the uncle was returning home one evening, he was shot dead on the track. It was a cold-blooded and brutal murder, founded on some fancied slight or dislike, and had no hereditary blood-feud as an excuse. By the law of the mountains it was the young man's duty to avenge his uncle. There was no other way of punishing the murderer; but by so doing he would start yet another blood-feud and a long train of murders. Monsignore sent for him, sympathized with him in his grief, and exhorted him not to follow up one crime with another.

After hours of prayer and persuasion he won his point. The young man gave his word to withhold his vengeance for a year. These people live in a state of 'gyak' (blood) or 'bessa' (peace). When they have sworn bessa they never break their word. He went

back home, and the murderer lived. When the year was almost ended monsignore sent for him again. He came. This time his *bessa* was obtained with very great difficulty.

Now, the end of the second year was coming, and monsignore had given out in church that the young man was to come to him; but this time he sent a message that he had waited long enough for his vengeance, and would not come. Monsignore sent as before, I believe, three or four times, and feared that this time he was about to fail. But no. This afternoon the youth had come, with an older friend, to explain that his mind was quite made up, and this year his uncle should be avenged.

Then had followed the long argument which I had witnessed. It had been a severe wrestle; monsignore looked worn out, but he had conquered. A third time his intense individuality, supported with all the power of his creed, had triumphed over the hereditary instinct of the mountain-man, public opinion, and the traditional law of all his race. The youth had once more given his *bessa* and had returned home.

‘He will keep it?’ I asked.

‘He will keep it.’

‘And is there no way in which the murderer can be punished?’

‘None.’

‘And what will be the end of it?’

‘God knows. Every year that puts off the starting of more blood-feuds is so much to the good.’

The episode tells more vividly what manner of man is monsignore, than any description I can add to it.

In person he is tall and dark, and he bears his years very lightly. He is polished, courtly, and dignified. None who do not know what life means

in that wilderness can realize the nobility of his self-sacrifice. He gave me his blessing when I left, and as I rode away I knew it would be many a long day before I should again meet a man who can tame the wolf of the mountains by words.

There is little left to tell. With Antonio as guard, we followed the route we had come by as far as the Fan i vogele, which we crossed and followed downstream by the track to Kolouri. This led through a more populated district. Stone block-houses with cultivated patches of ground were more frequent. In one lonely valley a woman's voice shrilled from the rocks above, a long, melancholy recitative; a rhythmic, barbaric chant in strange harmony with the landscape.

'Someone is dead,' said Jin. 'She is telling all about him and what he did.'

He hailed the nearest herdsboy. A man had been shot, he said briefly; that was all. We rode on, and the wild notes died away in the distance.

Kolouri possesses the only shop in Mirdita—a wooden shanty, whose owner serves as go-between in trade between Mirdita and Skodra, and who sells petroleum and tin-pots, the only luxuries in which Mirdita indulges. Here I passed the night and had a festive supper with Jin, Antonio, and the two shopmen.

A short ride next day brought me to the borders of Mirdita. Far below lay the plain of Alessio, and a steep descent brought us down to the village of Kalmeti and the Princess Bib Doda's country-house by midday.

Antonio was in a hurry to depart and prepare for guests at home on St. Alexander's Day. He said good-bye, and as I sat in the shade of the trees, and looked

at the great mountain-wall I had just descended, I realized with a pang that Mirdita, too, was now in the past. Time had flown. Five months had gone all too quickly. The tribes of the mountains all called me. The Shali and the Shoshi, the Klementi; there were Gusinje and Plava all to see, and they were all within my reach. But I had overstayed my time by weeks, and had little more than the clothes I stood up in. For ten wild minutes I believe I cherished the idea of buying native garments, flying back to the mountains, and ultimately borrowing my return fare from the nearest British Consul. But my route lay over the plain to Skodra, and thence viâ Cetinje to London.

After Cetinje the charm was broken. I dropped into the West with a shock. Nor did I look as though I belonged to it, for most of those that I met on the four days' whirl to England said: 'May I ask where you have come from?' And I said: 'I have come out of the wilderness, and I am going back there some day!'



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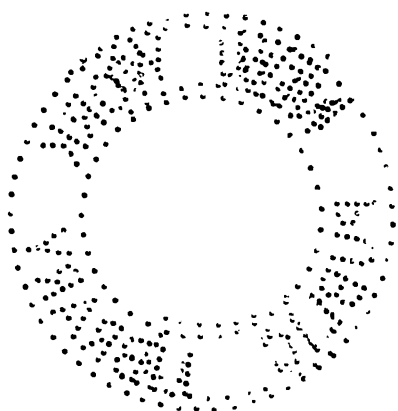
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