

Travels and Politics
in the Near East

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

THE BALKANS

Roumania, Bulgaria, Servia, and
Montenegro.

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STAMBÛL AND THE GOLDEN HORN.

Travels and Politics
IN
THE NEAR EAST

By
William Miller

WITH MAP AND ILLUSTRATIONS



ATHENS.

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1898

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TO
MY WIFE,
THRICE MY COMPANION ON
THE BALKAN

* *
*

“Εἰ δὲ ὑπ’ ἐνὸς ἄρχοιτο, ἢ φρονέοι κατὰ τὸντοῦ, ἀμαχόν
τ’ ἂν εἶη, καὶ πολλῶν κράτιστον πάντων ἐθνέων, κατὰ γνώμην
τὴν ἐμήν. Ἄλλὰ γὰρ τοῦτο ἄπορὸν σφί καὶ ἀμήχανον μὴ κοτε
ἔν γένηται.”—HERODOTUS, v. 3.

PREFACE

THIS book is the result of four visits to the Balkan Peninsula in the years 1894, 1896, 1897,* and 1898, and of a long study of the Eastern question. While I can honestly say that I have acquainted myself with all the principal works which have appeared on the Near East during the last ten years, I have in all cases relied upon my own personal observations and inquiries, conducted upon the spot, for the statements made in the following pages. Most persons who have written upon South-Eastern Europe have treated the subject in a partisan spirit, some championing the claims of one nationality, others espousing the cause of another. Not being an enthusiastic admirer of any one Balkan race to the exclusion of all others, I have endeavoured to discover what is most for the material progress and welfare of them all. The critics of "The Balkans" were kind enough to say that I had been impartial in narrating the history of the Peninsula; I trust that I may be found to have been equally so in describing its present condition.

I have to acknowledge my indebtedness to a host of persons who have assisted me with in-

Preface

formation and advice. Among them I would specially mention Baron Kutschera, Baron von Benko and Baron von Mollináry, of Sarajevo; Baron de Goumoëns and M. Bohumil Pára of Plevlje; Mr. R. J. Kennedy, C.M.G., British Minister to Montenegro; the Montenegrin Prime Minister and his colleague, the Minister of Finance; M. Zaïmis, the present, and M. Rhallis, the ex-Prime Minister of Greece; General Constantine Smolenski, the Greek Minister of War; M. Deligeorgis, M. Lambros Coromelas, and Mr. Arthur Hill, of Athens, as well as the editors of the *Ἄστυ* and the *Ἀκρόπολις*; Dr. and Mrs. Dawes, of Corfu, and Professor G. Gelcić, of Ragusa; Sir A. Biliotti, Herr Pinter, Herr Berinda, and M. Lyghounes in Crete; H.H. the Prince of Samos and Mr. Denys L. Marc, British Consul in that island; H.E. Baron Von Calice, Austro-Hungarian Ambassador at Constantinople; Mr. Block, dragoman of the British Embassy, and Mr. Tarring, late judge of the Consular Court; Sir J. W. Whittall, Mr. F. S. Cobb, British Postmaster, Mr. Edwin Pears, Dr. Washburn, Professor Panaretoff, Dr. Dickson and Mr. Whitaker, of the same place; Consul-General and Mrs. Blunt and Dr. House, of Salonica; Mr. Wratislaw, M. Shopoff, and M. Constantine Caltcheff, of Philippopolis; Dr. Clark and Dr. Kingsbury, of Samakov; M. Grekoff and Professor Slaveikoff, of Sofia; and the Bulgarian

* Left office November 10.

Preface

diplomatic agents at Constantinople, Athens, and Cetinje. I am also much obliged to Miss M. Chadwick for a number of photographs.

I have adopted the Croatian system of spelling the Slav names of persons and places, because it is usually found in the best books, and avoids the confusion which other methods of transliteration produce. Moreover, Croatian has this advantage for Western readers—that it employs the Latin character. For those who are not familiar with it I append a short table of pronunciation.

c	is pronounced tz	<i>e.g.</i> Marica = Maritza
ć	„	ch <i>e.g.</i> Petrović = Petrovich
č	„	tch <i>e.g.</i> Bočac = Botchatz
j	„	y <i>e.g.</i> Jablanica = Yablanitza
š	„	sh <i>e.g.</i> Dušan = Dushan
ž	„	j <i>e.g.</i> Žabliak = Jabliak

No good English map of the Peninsula being in existence, I have obtained permission to use the best German map, which I have corrected so as to show the strategic rectification of the Thessalian frontier at the peace of December 4, 1897. Unfortunately this has necessitated leaving the bulk of the names in the map in their German dress.

W. M.

10, CHEYNE GARDENS, CHELSEA.

October 31, 1898.

INTRODUCTION

WHEN the inhabitants of the Balkan Peninsula are meditating a journey to any of the countries which lie to the west of them, they speak of "going to Europe," thereby avowedly considering themselves as quite apart from the European system. So far as "Europe" is concerned this geographical inaccuracy possesses considerable justification. For of all parts of our continent none is so little known to the average traveller as the Near East, from which he is nowadays but two-and-a-half days' distant by rail. It is no exaggeration to say that many regions of Africa are more familiar to the cultured Englishman or German than the lands which lie beyond the Adriatic. Only when a newspaper correspondent reports from time to time that some fresh conspiracy has been detected against the King of Servia or the Prince of Bulgaria, that the Greeks are fighting against the Turks or paying their creditors, and that Prince Nicholas of Montenegro is disposing of one of his daughters in marriage, does public attention turn for a moment to the Balkan States. Yet to the politician and the historical student, to the traveller and the artist, to

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the man of business and the man of letters, few countries should prove so interesting as these. In the Balkan Peninsula that uncanny bird, the Eastern question, has its eyrie, and there one day, when Russia is ready, the fate of the Ottoman Empire may be decided. There, too, under the auspices of Austria-Hungary, perhaps the most remarkable experiment in the government of an Oriental country is being conducted; while, in other parts of the same Peninsula, young and newly-emancipated nations are demonstrating their capacity, or incapacity, for managing their own affairs on European lines with all the modern apparatus of Parliament and Press. It has been reserved for the Balkans, too, to present us with the most curious instance of patriarchal government now extant; and, in common with Asiatic Turkey, to prove to the world that great military power may co-exist with the feeblest and most corrupt of civil administrations. Here again, in the past, great empires, of which Western Europe is almost unconscious, rose up at the bidding of some Bulgarian or Servian Tsar, and then fell at his death, yet, falling, left memories behind them which have had a lasting effect on the politics of our time. The battlefield of Kossovo, the exploits of the great Emperor Dušan, and the feats of the mediæval rulers of Bulgaria—these are scarcely even names to most of us in the West, but in the Balkans are living, and sometimes very awkward, realities. Here, four times within the present century, the armies of the Russian and the

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Turk have met ; and here, just twenty years ago, the collective wisdom of Europe closed the last great war of our time. The traveller in pursuit of the picturesque or in flight from the commonplace will find here what he seeks and can escape what he shuns. Full justice has scarcely even now been done to the natural beauties of South-Eastern Europe. The splendid primæval forests of Bosnia, the azure fiords of Dalmatia, the snow mountains on the Macedonian frontier of Bŭlgaria, the gentle English scenery of Servia, and the grim magnificence of Montenegro's limestone citadel—these remain, even now, almost unvisited. And in the Balkan Peninsula the interest of travel and the beauties of the landscape are immensely enhanced by the extraordinary variety of costume and customs, which still happily linger on in most parts of the Near East. No Italian market-place can show such an amount of colour as the squares of the Dalmatian coast-towns ; no Swiss mountaineer can compare in physique or in dress with the gigantic, crimson-clad highlanders of Cetinje ; no artist's model is half so artistic as the shaven Albanian, with his arsenal of weapons. From the practical standpoint, too, the British trader might with advantage turn more attention to countries which, though individually small, between them muster over ten million inhabitants, and where the British commercial traveller is almost unknown. And, finally, to the literary man, the Balkan Peninsula, with its extraordinary medley of races and languages,

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affords a field of observation which is all but virgin soil. Here the Bulgarian and the Greek, the Albanian and the Serb, the Osmanli, the Spanish Jew and the Roumanian, live side by side. Here we have the curious phenomena of people speaking practically the same language yet using a different alphabet; of the same race, split up into three distinct religions; of converts from Christianity becoming more Mussulman than the Turks themselves. In short, the Balkan Peninsula is, broadly speaking, the land of contradictions. Everything is the exact opposite of what it might reasonably be expected to be; the traveller finds himself in the realms of romance, where all his wonted ideas are turned topsy-turvy, and soon falls into the native distinction between what they do "on the Balkan" and what they do in "Europe."

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