



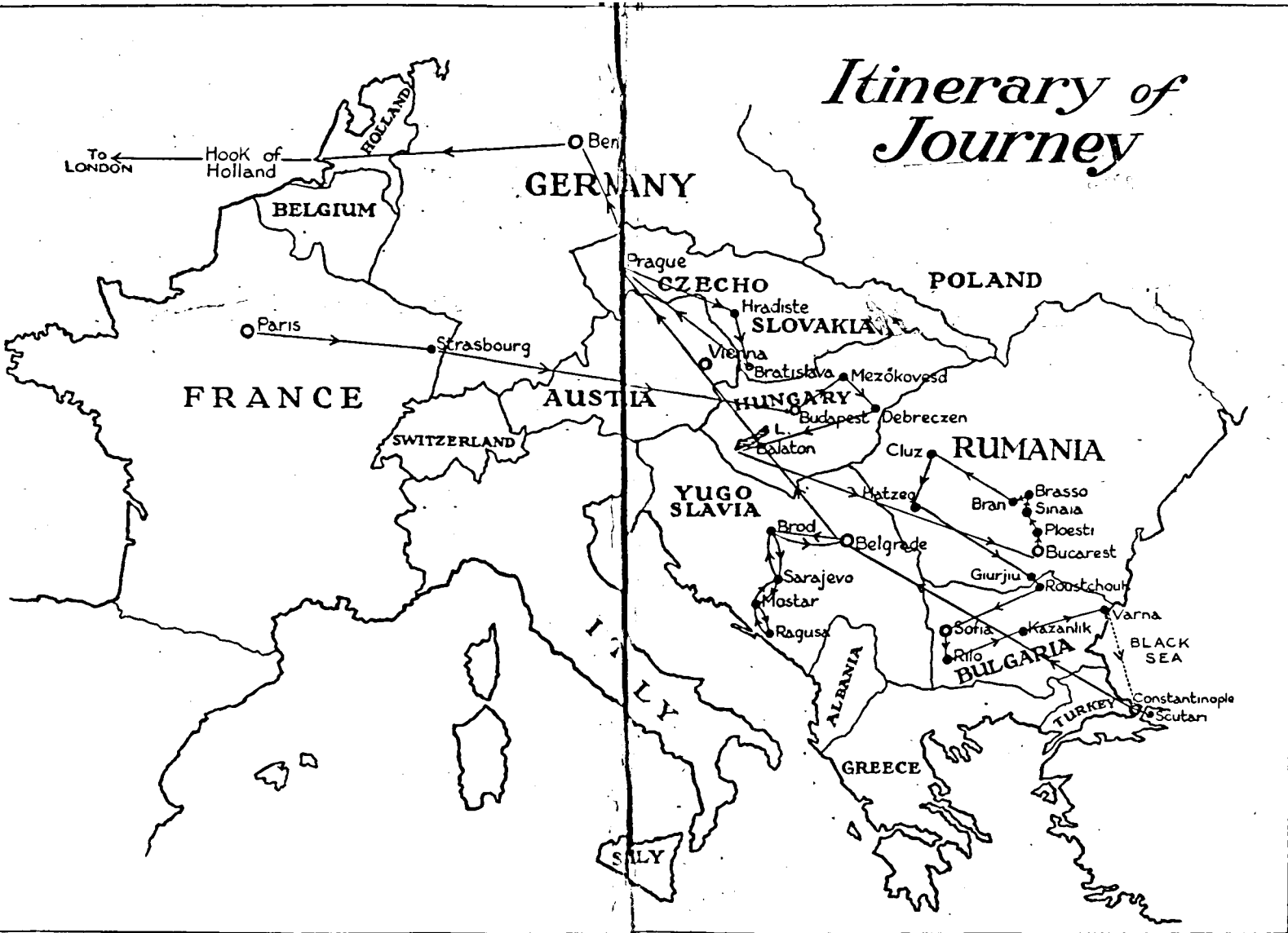
# MY WANDERINGS IN THE BALKANS

*By*  
DUDLEY HEATHCOTE

*With 32 illustrations*

Macrae · Smith · Company

# *Itinerary of Journey*



**MY WANDERINGS IN THE BALKANS**



Marie 1924

THE QUEEN OF ROUMANIA.

*Frontispiece.*

# MY WANDERINGS IN THE BALKANS

By  
DUDLEY HEATHCOTE

*WITH 32 ILLUSTRATIONS  
AND 2 MAPS*

MACRAE—SMITH—COMPANY,  
PUBLISHERS, PHILADELPHIA

*Printed in Great Britain.*

## PREFACE

Certain it is that my anticipations with regard to the journey that I was contemplating in the Balkans were not *couleur de rose*. I realised that a new Europe had been moulded out of the old, and that a variety of new States had come into being on the alleged reason that the majority of their populations were demanding independence. It mattered little whether it was economically sound or unsound that this or that race should be given national status ; the only fact that they demanded, or were assumed to be demanding, such independence was in itself sufficient to justify the map of Europe being made out anew.

And, consequently, upon schoolboys, and even those among their elders who had forgotten how to learn, was imposed the disagreeable necessity of assimilating entirely new geographical data.

For many of the countries that I was going to visit, moreover, I entertained great sympathies. Some I had visited ; others were only known to me through what others had written or told me about them. Try as I would, I could not overcome a latent doubt that I would find dissatisfaction among many, and a certain suspicion that at least in some cases the old régime was as good as the present.

I was told that travelling in many parts of the Balkans would be comfortless ; far more, in fact, than what I could ever imagine to be possible from my previous experience ; that trains would be unpunctual ; and that, as I doubtless knew, I would have in some regions to put up with very mediocre food and most primitive hygienic conditions.

All these things I realised, yet, overcoming every possible objection and stilling every voice, was the Call which impels man to leave his home and explore new fields, and which, when

he really has heard it, will continue to haunt his footsteps and impel him forward on a new quest, as long as infirmity or old age do not come to check his roving aspirations.

There is, in reality, no higher pleasure in life than to explore new lands . . . and, like in a story, it is not the dénouement that matters—for all can successfully terminate a journey; it is the beginning and the body; the bones of the bone and the blood of the blood of the beginning.

And with that I will leave off this preface with apologies for a travel book that can only pretend to give my own personal impressions. If I can, however, only make the reader visualise something of the variety of elements that have contributed to the making of them, I shall be content.



## THE BALKANS

FOR many years the Balkan district has bred unrest and war and constituted a grave peril to the rest of Europe, the inextricable medley of races that was found in it being undoubtedly at the root of most of the mischief.

Everywhere the same features abounded. Races scattered all over the region, rarely found in large groups together, but more usually inextricably mixed with other races; settlements that were forced upon men by circumstances and upheld by force . . . Slovaks and Slovenes, Serbs and Croatians, Czechs and Poles, Ruthenians, Italians, Bosnian Moslems, Germans and Magyars, Roumanians, Turks and Bulgars . . . a very Tower of Babel.

Of these, part were included in realms that gave economic unity to the various disparate elements that constituted them; part were subjected to the most strenuous assimilation.

It was, in fact, a region in which races were constantly clashing together or combining in the hope of rectifying conditions to which there seemed no possible solution.

Prominent among these nations, two great Empires, the first, the Austro-Hungarian, with a population of fifty-three millions, of which only seven millions were Austrians; the second, the Turkish, with an equally disparate population of over eighteen millions.

Then with the War and the defeat of the Central Powers a new solution was found by which it was hoped to bring peace to a very distracted world, and an attempt was made to rectify boundaries and to make them more clean-cut ethnically.

How has this solution worked? We know that, applying the principle of self-determination, the Allies not only dismembered Austria and Turkey, but earnestly sought to evolve order out of the prevailing chaos. All elements within these two countries, which were not German or Turkish respectively, were merged into the neighbouring countries.

Transylvania was ceded to Roumania; Croatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Slovenia and Dalmatia were incorporated into the Kingdom of the Serbs; a separate existence was vouchsafed to Hungary, and a new republic called Czecho-Slovakia constituted out of the provinces of Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia.

This was a settlement which at first sight appeared likely to meet with success, but in which the policy at first adopted by most of the new Succession States has done much to undo the good work that has been accomplished.

It is evident that the new Powers have so far failed to realise the enormous difficulties of the problem that they are essaying to solve, and that the present settlement having only tended to create further ethnical difficulties, since clean-cut ethnical boundaries are out of the question from the very nature of the Balkans, it is preferable to adopt an entirely different policy from the one which hitherto has found favour among the nations of Eastern Europe.

Let the new States, therefore, abandon the idea that the alien races, which are subject to their rule, can and will become assimilated by the process of force, but rather let them inaugurate a series of federations of free nations on an economic or political basis. Herein lies, in my opinion, the only way in which national unity can be attained and our only hope of terminating the unstable conditions that we are so used to associate with anything Balkanic

Still, there are far better and more attractive things in the Balkans than wars and rumours of wars. Here the feeling of the East is ever in the air; the riot of colour and rhythm, fine scenery, picturesque costumes—all the things that carry beauty and the feeling of adventure with them; while, sordid as are the conditions of many of the poor, they, too, seem to possess

some wonderful armour that lifts them above their surroundings, for even in the places where you least expect it you will find a striving after beauty. . . .

All the primitive nations inhabiting this region, in fact, achieve beauty without apparent effort, thanks to a passionate search for order and self-expression, which has enabled them to create and keep alive a folk-lore and art of which more civilised nations are utterly incapable.

# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
PREFACE - - - - -	v
THE BALKANS - - - - -	vii
ACKNOWLEDGMENT - - - - -	xv
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS - - - - -	xvii
<b>BOOK I</b> <b>HUNGARY</b>	
INTRODUCTION - - - - -	21
I. IN BUDAPEST—IN THE CORSO - - - - -	25
II. GAY RESTAURANTS - - - - -	26
III. THE CHURCH OF ST. STEPHEN - - - - -	28
IV. THE CHARM OF BUDAPEST - - - - -	30
V. HUNGARIAN WEDDINGS—A VISIT TO MEZOKOVESD - - - - -	32
VI. DEBRECZEN, THE CALVINIST CITY - - - - -	40
VII. DEBRECZEN ( <i>continued</i> )—A VISIT TO THE MEDICAL SCHOOL - - - - -	45
VIII. AN EXCURSION TO LAKE BALATON - - - - -	47
IX. WHAT BOLSHEVISM COST HUNGARY—A POLITICAL DIGRESSION - - - - -	50
<b>BOOK II</b> <b>ROUMANIA</b>	
INTRODUCTION - - - - -	57
I. BUCAREST—"PETIT PARIS" - - - - -	59
II. VISITING THE OIL MINES - - - - -	64
III. A ROUMANIAN MONASTERY AT SINAIA - - - - -	70
IV. IN BRASSO—THE BLACK CHURCH - - - - -	73
V. A VISIT TO THE QUEEN OF ROUMANIA AT THE CASTLE OF BRAN - - - - -	79
VI. CLUJ - - - - -	87
VII. A STRONG, SILENT MAN—INTERVIEW WITH THE ROUMANIAN PREMIER - - - - -	94
VIII. ROUMANIAN FOLK-LORE AND CUSTOMS - - - - -	100

## BOOK III

## BULGARIA

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION - - - - -	109
I. WHERE EAST AND WEST ARE ONE—IN ROUSTOUK -	111
II. DANCING THE HORO - - - - -	114
III. THE ROOKS OF SOFIA - - - - -	116
IV. THE CHURCH OF ALEXANDER NEVSKY - - - - -	118
V. THE VALLEY OF ROSES - - - - -	120
VI. PILGRIMS IN THE NIGHT - - - - -	123
VII. RILO MONASTERY - - - - -	128
VIII. IMPRESSIONS OF KING BORIS - - - - -	135
IX. INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL VOLKOFF - - - - -	140
X. INTERVIEW WITH ALEXANDROFF - - - - -	147
XI. BULGARIAN LIFE AND FOLK-LORE - - - - -	151

## BOOK IV

## TURKEY

INTRODUCTION - - - - -	157
I. ON THE WAY TO CONSTANTINOPLE - - - - -	159
II. A TURKISH DOCTOR - - - - -	162
III. HOWLING DERVISHES - - - - -	165
IV. THE SELAMLIK - - - - -	169
V. THE LURE OF THE BAZAARS - - - - -	172
VI. THE OLD SERAI - - - - -	176
VII. "MINARETS ARE STEEPLES IN WHICH THE HUMAN VOICE TAKES THE PLACE OF THE BELLS" -	178
VIII. ON THE BRIDGE OF GALATA - - - - -	180
IX. EUNUCHS - - - - -	182
X. THE NEW TURKEY - - - - -	188
XI. THE WOMEN OF TURKEY - - - - -	198

BOOK V

THE KINGDOM OF THE SERBS, CROATS AND  
SLOVENES

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION - - - - -	203
I. BELGRADE—AT THE COURT BALL - - -	205
II. A VISIT TO THE ETHNOGRAPHICAL MUSEUM -	211
III. IN BELGRADE, THE WHITE CITY—STREET SCENES -	214
IV. THE VIEW FROM THE KALMEGDAN (PUBLIC GARDENS) - - - - -	216
V. AT THE RUSSIAN RESTAURANT - - - - -	218
VI. SARAJEVO - - - - -	222
VII. MOSTAR, A MOSLEM CITY - - - - -	230
VIII. WHERE THE SUN SHINES—A VISIT TO DUBROVNIC (RAGUSA) - - - - -	236
IX. INTERVIEW WITH KING ALEXANDER - - - - -	249
X. THE CROATIAN PROBLEM - - - - -	251
XI. THE PROBLEM OF ALBANIA - - - - -	258
XII. THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF THE SERBS, CROATS, AND SLOVENES -	261

BOOK VI

CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

INTRODUCTION - - - - -	269
I. PRAGUE THE IMMORTAL - - - - -	273
II. A SLOVAK MUSICIAN—IN BRATISLAVA - - -	281
III. A NOBLE PRESIDENT—INTERVIEW WITH PRESI- DENT MASARYK - - - - -	286
IV. THE PROBLEM OF SLOVAKIA - - - - -	291
V. THE LAND FOR THE PEOPLE - - - - -	295
VI. SLOVAK PEASANT ARTISTS - - - - -	299
VII. A COMPARISON OF VARIOUS FORMS OF PEASANT ART - - - - -	306

BOOK VII

GENERAL

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. WOMEN OF THE BALKANS - -	311
II. FORMS OF BACKSHICH IN MANY LANDS - -	315

I have to thank the Editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, the Editor of the *Contemporary Review*, the Editor of the *Weekly Westminster*, the Editor of the *Daily News*, the Editor of the *Daily Sketch*, the Editor of the *Graphic*, the Editor of the *Sphere*. and the Editor of the *Sunday Illustrated Herald* for permission to republish certain chapters of this book.



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The Queen of Roumania	-	-	-	<i>Frontispiece</i>
				FACING PAGE
Hungarian National Costume. Bride and Bridegroom (N. Hungary)	-	-	-	30
Hungarian National Costume, Mezokovesd	-	-	-	34
Roumanian Banat Costume	-	-	-	60
Roumanian Banat Costume	-	-	-	70
Transylvanian Costume	-	-	-	90
Monsieur Bratiano, Prime Minister of Roumania	-	-	-	96
Peasant of Cornarera-Banat	-	-	-	102
National Costumes, Roumania. Young Girls of Borlova	-	-	-	106
The Cathedral of Alexander Nevsky, Sofia	-	-	-	114
The Cathedral of Alexander Nevsky, Sofia	-	-	-	118
Interior of Cathedral of Alexander Nevsky, Sofia	-	-	-	126
The Church of Rilo	-	-	-	130
A View of Rilo from the Hills	-	-	-	134
Mosque of the Sultan Achmed, Constantinople	-	-	-	164
St. Sophia, Constantinople	-	-	-	178
Serbian Musicians	-	-	-	212
Croat National Costume	-	-	-	226
King Alexander of Yugo-Slavia	-	-	-	248
Cathedral of San Barbara, Prague	-	-	-	269
Spanish Hall in the Castle of Prague	-	-	-	276
Clock of the Old Town Hall, Prague	-	-	-	278
Palace of the Archbishop of Prague	-	-	-	280
Cathedral of St. Guy, Prague	-	-	-	282
Refectory, Strahof Monastery, Prague	-	-	-	284
President Masaryk	-	-	-	288
Library of the Monastery of Strahof, Prague	-	-	-	294
Village of Slovakia	-	-	-	296
Slovak Costume	-	-	-	302
Slovak Costumes at Wedys	-	-	-	314
The Old Town Hall, Prague	-	-	-	316
Castle of Hluboka, Czecho-Slovakia	-	-	-	318

**BOOK I**  
**HUNGARY**

# My Wanderings in the Balkans

## INTRODUCTION

BEFORE the Great War, Hungary was a great fertile plain, ringed round by mountains and connected with the sea at Fiume, through her dependent provinces of Croatia and Slavonia. All her rivers flowed inward ; the plain exchanged its food produce for the timber and minerals of the mountains. . . . But if the land was a unity, the people were not. Seven races dwelt within her borders : Roumanians, Germans, Slovaks, Croats, Serbs, Ruthenians and Magyars, these last forming about 50 per cent of the total population.

Now Hungary is a ghost of her old self. The treaty of Trianon gave Transylvania to Roumania ; Croatia and Slavonia to Yugo-Slavia ; Slovakia and Ruthenia to Czecho-Slovakia. Her area was reduced from 125,000 square miles to about 38,000 square miles ; her population from 20,000,000 to just over 8,000,000 and—what was worse—she lost so large a proportion of the raw materials necessary to the development of her industry that her commercial balance soon began to show a deficit, the result being that she was compelled to resort to inflation without which she could not have paid even the most indispensable State expenses.

Such, however, are the courage and patience of her people that little despondency exists with regard to her future, and now that a loan has been granted to her by the League of Nations, which will be earmarked for definite reproductive purposes, her restoration to normal health will only be a question of a few years.

Hungary is at present a kingdom without a king. Temporarily Admiral Horthy, formerly Commander-in-chief of the Austro-Hungarian Navy, is acting as Governor. He is accorded royal honours, for no country is more royalist than Hungary, and, unlike most countries that surround them, the people have retained an instinctive affection for the Crown and their aristocracy. That a king will rule again in Budapest no one doubts for a moment, though many are divided with regard to the man whom they would like to elect to that high office. Some, of course, favour the eldest son of the late Emperor Charles, but a greater number would prefer to have a member of their old aristocracy, or, better still, some English royalty.

Passionate and proud, the Hungarians will never rest until they have recovered provinces that, in their estimation, are as part and parcel of their body politic as Alsace and Lorraine were part of France. They realise their present powerlessness, but are confident that the day will ultimately come when Transylvania and Slovakia will return to their rule. Of Transylvania they say that, though it is in itself a geographical unity, it can communicate far more easily with Hungary than with the Regat. Of Slovakia they profess to feel certain that it will of necessity break away from the Czechs and come back to them. . . . Above all, they are ever mindful of the three million Hungarians who are at present living under alien rule.

. . . . .

Leaving Paris at night brings you in two days to Budapest, the capital of Hungary, perhaps the best situated city in Europe. In the Corso under locust trees overlooking the Danube, tall, well-groomed officers are walking to and fro. . . . This is the rendezvous of Budapestians. . . .

## CHAPTER I

## IN BUDAPEST—IN THE CORSO

UNDER the locust trees in the promenade, overlooking the Danube, we sat one evening, as the sun was setting, watching the crowds strolling by.

All sorts and conditions were here: Jews, conspicuous in their fine clothing, smoking big cigars; tall, aristocratic officers in tight-fitting uniforms; handsome, clear-complexioned women of the aristocracy; a few peasants in long homespun top-coats; and many middle-class officials, some in threadbare clothes.

Across the river, one of the fairest prospects in Europe; quays with many black barges, two torpedo-boats belonging to the French patrol . . . and, beyond these, lines of rambling houses with—at their backs—hills rising in terraced gardens to the palace above, a large, mansarded roof building with many colonnades and a large central dome. To the left, the grim old fortress crowning the Gellert heights, and on the right the Church of St. Stephen, symbol of a glorious past with its exquisite cupola and its campanile standing on guard beside it.

Now, over the spires and hilltops of old Buda, the sun is setting in all its crimson glory, and very suddenly we hear the sound of martial music drifting across the river . . . and see fluttering proudly in the glow of sunset the Hungarian flag, red, white and green. It is the hour when the Guard is changing, and we almost fancy we hear the words of command ringing clear and the feet treading firmly in unison. . . .

## CHAPTER II

## GAY RESTAURANTS

ONE evening at half-past eight, we sat down to dinner at Kovacs. This restaurant is small but the most select in Budapest and almost exclusively patronised by the aristocracy.

The dining-room held perhaps twenty tables ; some of these in a smaller room that was reached by steps. . . . Between the two rooms in a recess a band of gypsies with sombre, glowing eyes.

Everything discreet and *de bon ton* ; attentive waiters moving quietly among the tables, a lighting arrangement that was most becoming, with shaded electric light candles on each table ; and an atmosphere of innate good breeding as if nothing ill-bred or vulgar had ever penetrated.

A distinct note of intimacy, and everywhere women and men who conveyed an indescribable air of ancient lineage.

Turning to our host and friend, Baron Inkey, I asked him to point me out various interesting people among those who were dining at the tables near us, and soon realised that there was hardly a diner on that evening who did not belong to the Hungarian aristocracy. Here was Count Csaki, bald-headed but urbane, still wondering why his overtures to France, when he was Foreign Minister, had always met with rebuff ; here Andrassy, the real type of the *vieux seigneur* ; here representatives of the Karolyi and Szecheniji families. . . . The women were nearly all handsome and mostly wore hats with their evening gowns ; the men were in dinner jackets or full evening dress.

The food was excellent and, after cocktails, we had an almost entirely Hungarian meal ; some sturgeon done in the

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Hungarian manner; chicken with paprikas sauce and a delicious *soufflé*. For wine, we drank a very good Hungarian white wine and finished with Tokay.

About ten o'clock many other guests appeared from the theatres, and with their arrival the gaiety increased. Glasses clinked above the conversation, and the gypsies, who hitherto had played in a very subdued manner, began to fill and permeate the room.

First they played sentimental airs recalling early days before the war, waltzes that one remembered hearing in childhood, or music-hall ditties that had had a vogue in the days of King Edward. Then, urged on to further and more characteristic effort, they suddenly began to play Hungarian melodies until nothing existed save the music to which they gave expression. Tense, and with eyes which showed the mixed passion and melancholy of their race, they played not only on their strings, but on the very tissues of our bodies, until we felt as if we, too, became part of the music, and longed to give active expression to every mood that it portrayed. At times, sadness was the feeling dominating, but very quickly this feeling would change into passion, fierce and uncontrollable.

All the forces of Nature were there; the booming thunder of a savage sea, the whimper of fallen leaves, the fierceness of the winter gale. . . . And like moths to flame we responded, held our breath or surrendered ourselves to its frenzy. Shall I ever forget that evening?

Baron Inkey and his wife had closed their eyes; dim and pale, my wife listened as if in a trance, while I sat enthralled, holding my breath, as a long-drawn note of triumph hovered and hung in the air.

And so an evening passed, while around us people sat tensely attentive and rigid as if under the sway of some potent spell. Then, when all was over, we slowly made our way back to the Vaczi Utca, and from thence to the Embankment and to our hotel, utterly worn out emotionally and physically, but feeling that we had caught a glimpse of a new world.

Such was our first impression of Hungarian music.



## CHAPTER III

## THE CHURCH OF ST. STEPHEN

FACING us was the most beautiful church and building in Buda ; a church that, more than any other, symbolises the undying spirit of Hungary and her belief in her ultimate regeneration. For if Arpad was the name of the illustrious chieftain who first conquered a new country for the Hungarians and invested the royal power in his dynasty, it was Stephen, his most famous descendant, who first embraced Christianity, converted his people, and donned the royal crown that had been sent him by Pope Sylvester.

To regain the territories that he formerly possessed is, consequently, the cherished ideal that every good Magyar nourishes, and though their present prospects of regaining them to-day are inconsiderable, and they realise that they are surrounded on all sides and hopelessly outnumbered, serene and hopeful they await the day when at least Slovakia and Transylvania will become again part of their kingdom. *Restitutio in integrum* is their motto, and in the words of Francis Deak they plead that, what violence robs them of, the fortunes of time and circumstances may restore . . . but that if they themselves surrender their rights they will be for ever and irrevocably lost. . . . The whole history of this people told in a few words. . . .

It is, therefore, only fitting that their finest building should commemorate his memory, and certain it is that, compared with the other fine buildings that are to be found in Budapest, it is immeasurably superior. Some are impressed by the noble dimensions of the Parliament House on the Pest side, but to me

this last building is not in any measure comparable. Its Gothic lines are too bare, and the sense of grandeur that it nearly achieves is marred irretrievably by the excessive predominance of slate that characterises its pyramidal roof, while the other is a gem set without flaw or blemish, with certain distinctive characteristics that only add to its charm.

As you enter, you realise that it is vastly different from our Gothic Cathedrals, and perhaps you miss their vastness and spaciousness . . . ; but very soon its more than compensatory advantages grow upon you, so that you will wonder why you criticised it. Its designs are so distinctive and its ornamentation so sober that you gradually find yourself admiring it even beyond your expectations and long to return to see it when you will have left it.

Such, in short, were the impressions that I received when I first visited St. Stephen, with its exquisite campanile standing as sentinel beside it. Yes, the Church of St. Stephen is the ineffaceable impression of Hungary maimed but immortal.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE CHARM OF BUDAPEST

THE charm of Budapest is indescribable, ; there is really no city like it, for it stands to-day as yesterday, as the imperishable symbol of a nation's soul.

It is not that its beauty is beyond compare—there are evidently one or two cities that are as beautifully situated, and at least one, Prague, that, architecturally speaking, is of greater interest ; it is simply that there is something inherent in its beauty that evokes a time when we, like the Magyars, were nomads and haunted, like them, by a crying need that we knew would never be satisfied.

It is just the city that a race, wearied after years and centuries of restless nomad life, would choose unto itself as permanent resting-place. Around it is the endless Plain with its wild freedom, the melancholy that resides in loneliness, and sunsets so beautiful that one would love to linger eternally in admiration before them. And flowing through it one of the noblest rivers in Europe, a river infinite as an interminable dream and merging gradually into an equally indefinite distant horizon.

To see it at its best, however, I shall always return to it in the spring, when the Plain is awakening from its long sleep to the sudden loveliness of budding life.

And standing on a spur of one of the many hills that look down upon Pest, I shall have a view of it that is ever memorable.

Below me is the immense river, flowing interminably below cobweb bridges, past Margaret Island, away to the east,



HUNGARIAN NATIONAL COSTUME. BRIDE AND BRIDEGROOM.  
(N. HUNGARY.)

and facing me the town of Pest, with its fine promenades and stately hotels lining the banks of the river, and the Houses of Parliament, recalling those of Westminster, with a broad terrace looking across the Danube to the Palace on the other side.

Wherein lies its charm ?

Does it lie in its many broad thoroughfares and busy, humming streets, with their luxurious shops and countless cafés and restaurants, where tziganes play on the very fibres of your brain and mesmerise you into every conceivable feeling of which man is capable ? Or does it lie in the people that throng its streets ?

It lies, I imagine, in the character of the race and the very distinct atmosphere that clings to their simplest act.

Here the men are very men, brave, defiant of fate, impulsive and temperamental; unpractical, perhaps, but essentially lovable and boon companions; the women beautiful and accomplished, while even the humblest mortal is like his betters, a gentleman by heart and in feeling; full of innate courtesy and loyalty to his lord, knowing, like the Spaniard, whom he closely resembles in certain respects, how to impart an air and glamour of romance to even the simplest act.

And consequently it follows that there are few people who can go to Hungary and leave her without falling in love with her fascinating people and sympathising with her needs. Such is the attraction, moreover, exercised by the Magyars on all those with whom they come in touch that there are few visitors to Budapest who do not leave it firmly convinced that the peace conditions that were imposed upon her were not only iniquitous but that they were a violation of the very principles which the Allies had set out to defend.

## CHAPTER V

## HUNGARIAN WEDDINGS—A VISIT TO MEZOKOVESD

OF my visit to Mezokovesd I shall always retain an undying remembrance. It was only a day that I spent there, but every minute of it was charged with emotion. Here was an enchanted spot where men and women apparently live much as their ancestors did before them ; here a race of people who, though tolerating the civilisation that time has brought to them, continues to maintain inviolate their old customs and traditions.

Hearing that I wanted to see a few peasant weddings, a kindly Foreign Office official at Budapest undertook to arrange that I should see some, and when we arrived at the east station to take our train, on the morning of our departure, we were not only informed by our friend, Commander X, who was coming with us, that three weddings were taking place on that very morning, but that the old Abbot of Mezokovesd had invited us to lunch after the ceremony.

The journey proved fairly uneventful, as the country that we traversed was not particularly Hungarian in character, but as we neared Mezokovesd we began to approach the Plain of the Hortobagy and were greatly impressed by its apparent endlessness.

Arriving at the station, we found the Abbot's carriage waiting for us, an open landau drawn by two splendid bays, and with a most picturesque coachman wearing a small Trilby hat with long streamers hanging down from it ; a double-breasted, navy-blue coat embroidered with braid, short breeches and top boots completed his attire.

Soon we were tearing down the streets which lead to the

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big square near the church, and were slowing down before the Presbytery.

Hastily we climbed down from our carriage and, ringing the front bell, were admitted into a pleasant-looking house and conducted to a large sitting-room in which were many beautiful specimens of Hungarian peasant work.

“ We are only just in time,” said the Commander.

Almost as he spoke these words a fine-looking old priest, erect and alert in spite of his old age, entered and came courteously towards us. The usual presentations were made, our friend serving as interpreter.

“ Would we excuse his hurrying us off so unceremoniously to the Church ? ” the old man asked. “ But as I gather that you have come to see our weddings, we had better go now . . . ” and, leading the way, he passed into an old-world garden and from thence into a small church in which two score peasants were already assembled.

Standing almost in line with us were the three couples who were awaiting to be joined by Holy Church, and behind them a few parents and friends all in their finest array.

It was a scene that almost made you doubt that you were not a prey to some wondrous dream of phantasy, for it recalled nothing that you had ever seen or thought of, and yet was so attractively picturesque that it set you wondering why others had not copied it.

The brides all wore enormous head-dresses nearly a foot high, decorated with tinsel and artificial flowers. Blouses with puffy sleeves, starched to the elbow; and embroidered frills, shawls that were crossed on the breast and allowed fringes of wool to hang over the sleeves, and skirts embroidered round the end with dainty flowered ribbons hanging down from the waist; a harmonious blending of the brightest tints with every conceivable shade of red and blue and pink. And if the brides were picturesque, the bridegrooms were even more so: shirts with very long hanging sleeves embroidered up to the elbow and setting off elaborate worsted waistcoats, and long black aprons likewise embroidered half-way up in vivid colours. In their right hand they carried hats that were something

between a bowler and a trilby and which were embellished with cockades of coloured flowers or corn.

Then after the ceremony we hurried out of the church and caught a fleeting glance of the happy couples hurrying to their homes for the festivities that invariably follow a wedding. Large carts were waiting at the door, and in these the brides and bridegrooms, together with their vofelys (best men) and the chief guests, were rapidly swept away before we could obtain any satisfactory view of them.

As we were returning somewhat dissatisfied to the Presbytery, and feeling that we had somehow not made the best of our opportunities, Commander X came rushing after us with the good news that it had been arranged that we should visit one of the peasant's houses in which the wedding festivities were taking place some time after lunch.

"These festivities usually last twenty-four hours," he said, "so you will have ample time to get as much local colour as you may want."

Then with imagination pleasantly stirred by the picturesque scenes that we had witnessed, we returned to the Presbytery for lunch.

In the large dining-room of the Presbytery we sat, ten guests round the Abbot's table. At the head was the Abbot, Ladislaus Kiss de Nagysitke, and on his right my wife. The rest of the company included the Commander, three priests of the diocese whom the Abbot called each by their Christian names, the Abbot's niece and his sister who acted as his house-keeper, myself, and a friend of the family who was also President of the local Awakening Magyar Association.

And well and heartily did the Abbot do the honours of his table. Hungarian hosts are world-famous for their hospitality and the warmth of their welcome, and here, as in every house that I visited, we could not have been better entertained.

We began with soup in which were little dumplings ; then after the fish course, which consisted of the inevitable fogas, we had a very tender chicken and paprikas, followed by a delicious cheese *soufflé* and some quite good coffee. Before each guest a small decanter of white wine and a carafe of



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water . . . and as a winding-up to this delectable meal some wonderful old Tokay with a rare bouquet and aroma.

For a long time we talked of our impressions of the country. Was not Budapest a beautiful city? We should have seen it in pre-war days, for now the country was so impoverished that it did not do itself justice.

Were we interested in native embroideries? Ah! he would show us some after luncheon that were the real thing. His sister collected them, but, like everything else, they were becoming rare and more difficult to find. . . .

We both fell in love with our noble host, for noble he was and of very ancient lineage, and with his wondrous simplicity of heart and innate courtliness.

He showed us a silver cross that he wore round his neck, and told us how the Bolshevists had threatened to kill him if he did not hand it over to them.

“Of course I told them that I would only part with it with my life . . . so they left me in peace, as it was not worth their taking both.”

Words breathing a quiet courage and steadfastness that could not but impress.

The other priests talked little. One was big and portly, the other two small and spare . . . yet with the Tokay they too brightened, and began to describe peasant weddings at which they had officiated.

And how they loved their peasants—their very good peasants, as they called them!

There were no better or sounder men in the world, and nothing that Bolshevists might do would ever destroy their deeply ingrained belief in what was traditional.

After coffee the Abbot's sister showed us some beautiful embroideries of her collection: several pairs of men's sleeves in which everything was the peasants' work—the weaving of the material, the dyeing of the thread, the beautiful embroidery that made it a thing of beauty. . . . Everything was, in fact, of the best quality and with designs that revealed a natural love for beauty and an equally natural talent for expressing it that many an artist would have been happy to possess.

“There are still many old and valuable embroideries to be obtained in our town,” she declared, “but the peasants know too well their value, and they are consequently exorbitantly dear—much dearer than in Budapest. Present-day embroideries are not anything like so good as those we used to have in the old days. Peasants now embroider on black satin, sateen or silk of inferior quality. Instead of making their own threads they buy artificial silk threads, so that the so-called Mezokovesd embroidery that is often sold to the unwary is but a cheap and vulgar imitation of the real article.”

For half an hour we lingered while our courteous host rambled round and round the field of his reminiscences. He told us how important the *vofely*, or best man, was to every marriage ceremony, and that he not only escorted the bride to the church and signed the register, but was responsible for seeing that all wedding presents and furniture belonging to the newly-married couple were conveyed without accident from the old homes of the bride and bridegroom to their new abode.

“But you will be able to see for yourselves what our marriage festivities are like, and I have arranged that my niece Marie and our young friend shall take you to one of the houses in which dancing and merry-making are taking place this afternoon.”

And, escorted by his very pretty and charming niece, who spoke quite good English, and our friend the Awakening Magyar, who could not disguise his determination not to recognise the peace treaties, we then duly left the Presbytery *en route* for the peasant quarter.

Here were narrow, unpaved roads that at this season were a sea of mud, and on each side quaint, one-storied cottages with old-world eaves and verandahs running along the whole front. Most of these were white thatched with roofs that looked at every moment as if they were going to fall over the colonnades below. Everywhere pigs and nondescript chickens running in and out of large open sheds showing piles of ruddy pumpkins. A few slender poplars motionless in the still air, and round each cottage large yards with enormous dung-hills and stacks of hay.

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Approaching one of the larger cottages we heard the sound of revelry, and Mademoiselle Marie told us that we had arrived.

Blocking the entrance to the courtyard on one side of the house was a crowd of peasants, young and old, all in their most picturesque and beautiful national costumes ; men with buttoned or unbuttoned dolmans thrown over their shoulders and shirts with embroidered hanging sleeves ; women with enormous head-dresses and *pompons* that in the distance made them look like Chinese goddesses, all quaintly barbaric yet representing some ancient symbolism.

At the further end of the courtyard was an open place in which stood half-a-dozen musicians, gypsies, recognisable by their swarthy complexions, and near the front door of the house, also looking out on the court, was a huge cart in which the vofely and several other young men were piling up articles of furniture, obvious care being taken to spread the finest pieces on the top. Smiling and looking very happy, the bride and bridegroom, a handsome and attractive couple, came to greet us, and we were taken into one of the three rooms of the house, the living-room, and were offered some red and white wine, that were home grown. The present seemed far remote, for nothing could have been more removed from civilisation than our present surroundings. In one corner of the room was a large table with a few rush chairs, and piled up on various shelves and rolled up was the bedding of the household, which is only taken down at night. Seated near the window and nursing her baby was a beautiful girl of eighteen, who, we were informed, had been married the year before. Would we take more wine ? It was useless protesting. We had perforce to drink again and again to the health of the bride and bridegroom.

What a strange world it was and how dull and unromantic everything else seemed when compared with it ! I felt some subtle stirring of the blood within me, as if I were in a strange fairy-tale country where people still lived and thought primitively.

Outside the clamour had grown into a very riot of sound,

for the gypsies had started to play, and, seeing the bride and bridegroom aching to join the other dancers, we asked if we could go and watch them too.

"Of course we could!" Quickly we passed through the kitchen where, impassive, and crouching on a stool smoking a pipe, was the old man of the family, the great-grandfather of the bride . . . and then into the yard, and to the improvised dancing floor.

I close my eyes and see again the strangely barbaric figures swaying and shuffling to right and left to some equally barbaric—but oh, how haunting!—music. . . .

There was little emotion in the faces of the dancers, but solemnly, as if performing some ancient rite, they danced in rhythm to the weirdly haunting melodies. One of the musicians had a violin, another a lute; the others had strange instruments, one that was fashioned out of buffalo horn "kurt."

And equally primitive was the method of dancing; for, clutching each other, the man by putting his hands on the hips of his partner, the woman by putting hers on his shoulders, the dancers began a series of shuffling steps, now to the right, now to the left, or of side steps moving from the hips, while they alternated these movements by occasionally whirling round with arms across each other's shoulders or even dancing separately facing one another. There was little pause in these dances, but every now and then a man would spring forward from the crowd and bear a girl away from her partner to begin the same mad evolutions.

We seemed to be living in a world endlessly remote and distant in which the picturesque swaying figures of the dancers were but emanations, of the spirit of music that had become the measure of all things.

And, entranced by what we saw, we remained for over an hour, until recalled to reality by the Commander, who, on looking at his watch, realised that we had barely time to return to the Presbytery for some light refreshment if we wished to catch our train.

"How long do these festivities continue?" I asked the Commander as we were making our way back to the Presbytery

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after bidding goodbye to our peasant hosts and thanking them for their warm hospitality.

“ Oh! they will last till to-morrow morning or even later,” was his reply. “ Dances alternated with the singing of folk songs and a big banquet at night at which much wine will be drunk. Some of these peasants spend a little fortune entertaining their friends on such occasions. I have known of peasant farmers who spent as much as £120 on the weddings of their daughters.”

I gathered that these popular festivities rarely degenerated into rowdiness, and that the only feature to which exception might be taken was the way in which the vofely made *risqué* jokes concerning the bride and bridegroom, both in the speech that he was supposed to make at the end of the banquet and when he was entertaining the large crowd of young men and maidens who, according to old tradition, gathered outside the nuptial chamber after the newly-married couple had retired to rest.

“ The vofely,” said the Commander, “ is not only the right-hand man of the host, but he is also the official entertainer, who has to improvise various speeches in honour of the occasion and to see that every guest is duly amused and entertained by his witticism and small talk. He plays a part in the life of the village community compared to which even the priest’s rôle is hardly more important ! ”

And, pondering over these things, we returned to the Presbytery and took a hurried tea. Then, after thanking our courteous host and hostesses for the charming manner in which they had entertained us, took our leave and drove quickly to the station, there to entrain for Budapest.

And as the train steamed away from the station the sun was setting in all its glory over the Plain, and we began to realise that the Hungarians’ most lovable characteristics were in a sense derived from the Nature, in which they find such consolation. It is this Nature, so rich and, above all, so lavish in its unfulfilled promise, that has engendered that insouciant fatalism and denial of what is unpleasant in reality that are so characteristic of the modern Hungarian.

## CHAPTER VI

## DEBRECZEN, THE CALVINIST CITY

EVERY man who visits Debreczen feels through him the antiquity and the aloofness of the town, but especially if he comes, as I came, direct from Budapest.

It is a city that is steeped in Calvinism, for, unlike most Hungarian cities, the majority of its population is composed of Protestants. The result has been to create a type of Hungarian that is sensibly different from that of his fellows in other parts.

The Hungarian of Debreczen possesses an individuality as strongly marked as that of any of his countrymen. He is as passionately devoted to his country and as incorrigible an optimist, but whereas the Catholic wins hearts by his fanciful and charming waywardness, the Calvinist gains respect and affection by the solid and practical common sense that is undoubtedly one of his chief assets.

There is something very much akin to the Scotch, in the people whom you meet in this city, for, like the men who live across the Scottish border, they possess an austere moral sense and practical abilities that have often proved a god-send to their more mercurial fellow-countrymen. The Bethlens belong to this persuasion, and it is certain that many other prominent statesmen, and especially those who have proved the more level-headed, have hailed from the district of Debreczen or from those portions of Transylvania where Calvinism is the dominant religion.

Arriving at the station, we found waiting for us two carriages of the municipality and two councillors. One of these wore

side-whiskers and had a quaint and very skirty grey coat, which, coupled with his trilby hat, gave him a very old-world appearance; in fact, he reminded us irresistibly of certain drawings that we had seen in old numbers of "Punch" of the 'seventies.

After the usual presentations, we got into our two carriages, my wife and one councillor in the first, Commander X (who was accompanying us), the other councillor and myself in the second, and drove rapidly through the main street to our hotel.

All at once we felt as if we had stepped clean out of modern life into a bygone century. The spirit of this placid, provincial town, remote from tourists and motor-cars, dreaming its own quiet life under the autumn sun, rose up and cast its spell over us.

Large wide streets in which both men and women wore clothes of antiquated pattern; picturesque peasants in national costume, the men with long, wrinkled top-boots, and the women with short inflated petticoats which did not reach the ankle.

We passed one of the main churches and noted its tower that through some accident leaned away from the perpendicular almost as much as the more celebrated Tower of Pisa; then alighted before the inn, a rambling old house with a large café on the ground floor. We passed into the hall and, entering the lift, were taken up to our room on the first floor.

The room was a long one with two curtained windows on one side. At the end was a white china stove that reached almost to the ceiling. The furniture was old-fashioned but comfortable, and on the two twin beds were the inevitable bed-clothes all carefully buttoned on to the quilt. I remembered the first night that we had come across a similar arrangement at the beginning of our tour and how I had spent most of my time in trying to keep under the annoying thing.

I pointed to it and murmured:

"We are more adept now. . . . Do you remember how often your quilt rolled off the bed?"

Then a pretty, fair-complexioned country lass came into the room, in a green cotton dress, with a white scarf that was

tied round her head, and passed into the white-tiled bathroom leading out of the bedroom, carrying towels.

It was all very charming, very archaic.

In the restaurant below we found the usual gypsy band and almost as many small square tables as in Budapest. Around these were men who smoked pipes and played chess or dominoes or a species of poker.

Solemnly we sat round a table and partook of a meal that consisted of some kind of pike and the inevitable paprikas and gulash, this last exceedingly palatable, and drunk Riezling and toasted our kindly hosts.

I realised that Debreczen is quite near the Plain of the Hortogaby and asked the Mayor if it would be possible for us to catch a glimpse of it.

“Of course, this has been included in the programme of your visit,” he replied. “We will first show you our public buildings, the Library of the University and the market-place; then, before darkness sets in, we will drive over to our municipal stables and breeding establishment. Here you will be able to see for yourself how good our horses are, and that none are better. And incidentally you will also get a good idea of what the Hortogaby looks like. Though we are some miles from what is called the Hortogaby, we, too, have our Plain; a Hortogaby in miniature.”

And so we went all over the town together and were shown its chief interest: a sombre, aristocratic-looking mansion, where the Prefect of the county greeted us; the market-place, where peasants sell scarlet pyramids of paprikas in large open stalls, and curious-looking pipes such as the country folk smoke.

Our Dundreary-looking councillor kept up a lively running stream of conversation about it all.

After visiting the University Library, and admiring various illuminated old MSS. dating from the 17th Century, and two or three old Bibles, one purporting to be the first ever published in Hungarian, we reached the countryside, and saw stretching before us vast and apparently never-ending grassy plains, blue, grey and purple in the gathering mists.

Here we visited some well-kept stables belonging to the



Municipality, and saw over two score horses of the famous Rarst breed.

I was told that the admixture of English and Arab blood by thoroughbred English and Arabian stallions that had been attempted here, as in other parts of the country, had met with great success, and that one of the best stud farms for English thoroughbreds was Mezohegyes, near the Roumanian border. Judging from what I saw then, and afterwards, in Budapest and in the countryside, I imagine that Magyar horses are among the finest in the world, and that they are in all probability the descendants of the horses which the Hungarians brought over with them from the East in 895.

Leaving the stables we went further in the country to see something of the Plain, and soon reached a common that led to these vast level distances. Here we saw one of the horseherds standing near a well-head, with its tall balancing pole stark against the sky. Beyond him were a few trees, growing beyond some outhouses, but to the left, and as far as the eye could see, were interminable stretches of meadow, where roamed hundreds of horses . . . ; and further on some beautiful white-horned cattle somewhat resembling the Chillingham breed.

Dressed in a cream, homespun coat, embroidered in red and black, that hung loosely over his shoulders, and wearing a large brown felt hat, the chiko looked the picture of contentment and happiness.

He spoke to us about the sunsets on the Plain, and said that nowhere in Hungary were they as beautiful.

"I ride nearly all the day," he said, "and am always out of doors, looking after my horses; and in the evening I often sit and watch our sunsets as I play my wooden pipe. . . . It is very sad, but very beautiful.

"Yes, the winter is perhaps hard to bear," he continued, "for the Plain is terrible in its loneliness to many, and when the wind is blowing it is certainly not very pleasant. But we surround ourselves with screens of rushes and find solace in the thought that very soon the winter will disappear and spring awake in all its glory."

The chiko also told us that in his opinion the English thoroughbred was the descendant of the Hungarian horse, then, after allowing us to photograph him, swiftly mounted his horse and rode away.

For a few minutes we stood watching him gradually disappearing in the distance and, seeing his perfect seat and fine horsemanship, concluded that even in America no finer horsemen exist than the chikos or horse-herds of the Plain.

Then returning to our own carriages we drove back to the town.

## CHAPTER VII

DEBRECZEN (*continued*)—A VISIT TO THE MEDICAL SCHOOL

NOT being a medical man, I shall not be expected to wax enthusiastic about the visit that we paid next morning to the Medical School of Debreczen. Yet even my lay mind could not but acknowledge that a more beautifully situated and better appointed Medical School would be difficult to imagine.

Certain it is that its situation is exceptional, for, unlike most medical schools that are to be found in other towns, it constitutes a little world of its own and one, withal, that is placed in the fairest setting imaginable.

Built in a clearance in a wood that is at an easy distance from the city, it consists of two rows of buildings, set on each side of a lovely tree-bordered avenue nearly a mile long, each of these buildings specialising in one particular branch of medicine.

Every comfort and facility that a student can possibly need: class-rooms, wards and laboratories all beautifully kept and containing the last word in scientific apparatus and appliances; hospitals for every conceivable disease; lecture-rooms and reading-rooms for the students; living quarters for both professors and their charges; football grounds, laundries, dairies and electric stations.

On arriving at the hospital we were immediately taken to see the Rector, Professor Verzer, one of the most eminent physiologists in Europe, and, after being shown many beautifully-kept wards and laboratories and radiographic apparatus that have not their equal in Europe, were taken down to the

underground passage which is one of the chief features of this establishment.

We found ourselves in a passage nearly a mile long, which is so arranged that it connects every hospital and part of the school, and so heated from the main central building that there is little risk of any patient catching cold when, as occasionally happens, it has suddenly been decided to transfer him from one ward to another.

Here, too, but nearer to the main entrance of the central building, was a large changing room and some bathrooms. In these every incoming patient is thoroughly cleansed and made to change from his ordinary clothes into hospital garments and every out-going patient given back his own clothes thoroughly fumigated and disinfected.

There seemed nothing, in fact, that was not thoroughly modern and up-to-date.

Professor Verzer told me that most of the Professors had come from the University of Cluj (Kolosvar), in Transylvania, and that it was intended that the University of Debreczen should in time take the position that had been once held by the former University.

"For many years," he said, "we have waited for money sufficient to enable us to open the school. It was only last month that we obtained enough funds to allow us to complete our arrangements, receive patients and open our classes."

Professor Verzer impressed me with his charm and patriotic fervour. He declared that the only way in which Hungary could ever hope to regain her lost provinces was by so developing her own culture and learning that the inhabitants of these territories would of their own free will and initiative ask to return to her rule.

I fancy he is right and that were all Hungarians to concentrate on these aims their chances of ultimately recovering some of the provinces that they have lost would be materially improved.

We then took a reluctant farewell of our host, and, walking down the main avenue to the main gate, were driven back to the town just in time to catch the last train for Budapest.

**CHAPTER VIII****AN EXCURSION TO LAKE BALATON**

FOR over two hours or more we had driven through the beautiful Bakony Forest and had evoked old Hungarian days when the Szagenylegnyek robbers had rivalled the deeds of Robin Hood, when very suddenly, after passing the ancient town of Veszprem, set among beautiful hills and valleys, we reached the northern side of the lake and, slowing down, came to a standstill in a little cove from which we saw a magnificent panorama unfolding itself.

“This is our only sea,” murmured the Commandant, “our only summer resort,” and there was a ring of bitterness in these words that even his genial, breezy manner could not conceal. For now that Hungary is but a shadow of her old self, the Magyar tourist can spare neither the time nor money to go as of old to the Adriatic, even if he were inclined to select for his summer outing places that are no longer Hungarian. And consequently all those who can afford a holiday either take the steamer up the Danube from the capital to one or the other of those little village watering-places that fringe the Danube, or travel by train to Balaton as the one and only place in their beloved country that is capable of giving them an illusion of the sea.

For if Balaton is only a lake, it is at any rate the largest lake in southern Europe, being over fifty miles in length and nearly ten miles at its widest parts, and consequently, if the weather is at all hazy, the illusion of the sea is perfect.

Sands that, especially on its southern coast in the direction

of Balaton Foldvar, are as firm and smooth as those of the Breton sea coast, water that is often delightfully warm, any amount of good bathing, boating and fishing, all this coupled with excursions by boat or train that everywhere afford delightful views.

Following the road that skirts its northern slope, in which we were pointed out basaltic cones, which are the finest in Europe, we soon reached Balaton Furad. We there left our carriage, and proceeded to the quay to take a motor-boat for Tihany Point.

Jutting out into the lake, this promontory is crowned by an ancient abbey, from which a splendid view of Balaton can be obtained, but what attracted me even more and made me especially desirous of visiting it was the fact that the luckless Emperor Charles was imprisoned here after his second attempt to regain his throne in 1921.

Having crossed the lake, we climbed up a steep path that leads to the Monastery, and after waiting a little time in the Monastery church were taken upstairs to see the Abbot, a venerable old man in whose eyes, dimmed by age, I read the most sublime contentment and peace.

Courteously he greeted us, and talked to us awhile of England and London, of which he spoke as of something that he had long desired to see, but which was far beyond the world to which God had called him.

"Did we wish to visit the Monastery?" he asked us. Nothing was easier, but he would have to forego the pleasure of taking us himself over the church. His infirmities were too great and it was with difficulty that he managed to carry out his duties. But before calling upon the Dean to be our escort—this was an alert ecclesiastic whose manner betrayed an evident expectation that the time was fast approaching when he would succeed the old man as Abbot—he insisted on taking us himself to the rooms where Charles and his consort had spent their last two days in their kingdom. And leaning heavily upon a stick he conducted us to the royal apartments and showed us the various rooms that they had inhabited.

"We have disturbed nothing in these rooms," he whispered,

“ and they are just the same as when the King and Queen were our guests.”

He spoke to us with infinite pathos of the last day which the Royal couple had spent in the Monastery and alluded particularly to the King's sadness and dejection, and in his words I could trace the sorrow that he still felt at having been so powerless to prevent this catastrophe.

Then, after glancing at some portraits of the Emperor Francis Joseph and the Archduke Joseph which adorned the walls of the little sitting-room, we returned to the Abbot's study and, escorted by the Dean, were taken to see the church.

Nothing very distinctive here, except an unusual amount of rococo ornamentation ; a profusion of severe-looking old saints made of painted wood and a Cardinal wearing a hat that reminded me of Sinbad the Sailor.

A little later on in the afternoon a country lad led us to a spot on the hill-side which is celebrated for its echoing propensities and, making the usual cry, we were surprised at hearing it repeated thrice ; then in the stillness of the evening, when the sun was setting over the north-western side of the lake, we crossed the lake once more and, as long as the crossing lasted, feasted our eyes on the glory and wonder that were before us.

The sea a dead white save where the sun's reflection threw long bands of orange and grey, which seemed to move towards it as it sank beneath the hills to the north-west, and in the distance, fast receding in the horizon, Tihon promontory, looking every minute more and more like an island in a boundless ocean.

Such were my dominating impressions of Balaton, the wonder of which is written for all times upon my mind.

## CHAPTER IX

## WHAT BOLSHHEVISM COST HUNGARY—A POLITICAL DIGRESSION

IN no country that I have visited have I found such passionate hatred and loathing for Bolshevism as I found in Hungary, for even the most placid individual with whom I conversed would seem to lose command of himself whenever I made mention of Bela Khun.

Remembering the terrorism that had run rampant during the Bolshevist régime and how bitter the cup of humiliation that Hungarians had been compelled to drink from the moment Count Karolyi, that misguided visionary, had entrusted the destinies of his country to a band of Communist Jews, I could hardly wonder at the resentment that the mere allusion to his name produced. Yet it needed a visit to Count Bethlen, the Premier, and a further conversation that I had with him prior to leaving Budapest for Roumania, to make me fully realise the very tragic character of the régime that had led to the Roumanian occupation.

I knew that the Hungarians had entered the War out of sheer loyalty to their Allies, and that they were, nevertheless, prepared to carry out, loyally, every provision in the Peace Treaty, including the payment of whatever reparations would be demanded of them, but that they found it extremely difficult to accept the further grievous conditions which had been imposed upon them, conditions which they declared were purely the result of the Bolshevist wave that had involved them in chaos.

And of the truth of this last assertion, which I heard repeated





*ad infinitum*, I have had abundant proof, and certain documents were laid before me that left me in no doubt as to its veracity, while there is also a certain map on which a celebrated allied diplomat (who will remain nameless) pencilled out for me in red the actual frontiers which the Western nations and Little Entente were prepared to grant to Hungary before the Bolshevik interregnum, a document that I had confirmed from another source, and which I reproduce in this volume to illustrate my contention.

Glancing at it, the reader will notice that, compared to the frontiers that were ultimately assigned to Hungary, those that were allotted to her prior to Bela Khun's régime would not only have proved more acceptable to the Hungarian nation but amply have satisfied that very principle of nationalism on behalf of which our Western nations had fought the War; that whereas the present settlement has subjected large Hungarian populations to alien yoke simply because these annexed portions of Hungarian territory had coal mines or oil wells or important railway junctions, the prior settlement would have amply repaid the exertions of the Allies without infringing the claims of nationality.

Taking the southern frontier of Slovakia first of all, we find that a large belt of territory, stretching along the whole length of Slovakia and broadest from Bratislava to Parkany, where it attains a breadth of some forty to fifty miles, was originally granted to Hungary in view of the fact that its population was predominantly Magyar; and, furthermore, that the province of Ruthenia was also left to Hungary, a circumstance that recalls to my mind the last conversation which I had with Count Bethlen, the Hungarian Premier.

"If Ruthenia had been left to Hungary as originally intended before the Communist régime," he stated, "we would have little reason to grumble at our lot. We were beaten in war, and, though we never entered into it with any too good grace, we are prepared to pay the piper and to make amends. But the economic development of our country has been almost fatally injured by the settlement that was imposed upon us, and for this the Bolshevik régime that Karolyi's folly brought

about is mainly responsible. The prior settlement would at least have left us with the forests that we need, and possessing Ruthenia we would have had less reason to deplore the loss of the Tatra."

On the Roumanian side, moreover, the frontier that was originally suggested—though it left considerable numbers of Hungarians within Roumanian territory, a circumstance that cannot possibly be remedied as they are shut off completely from their Magyar brethren by large territories in which the Roumanian element predominates—at least extended the eastern frontier of Hungary to include the district known as the Korosvolgy. This area, varying in breadth from some eight to twenty miles, extends from three miles north of Avasfelsofalu to Versecz and includes a Hungarian majority, especially in the towns of Arad, Oradea Mare, Temesvar and Satu Mare.

This being the case, it can hardly be wondered at if the mere mention of Count Karolyi's or Bela Khun's name always suffices to rouse the average Hungarian to fury, especially when we come to realise the reasons that were put forward by the nations of the Little Entente for drawing up fresh frontiers for the Hungarian people. It was urged that, Communism having already infected Hungary, this country would always be exposed to revolution and chaos, and that the only way in which her neighbours could be safeguarded against similar trouble at home was by ensuring her inability to do any mischief.

Seeing that certain railway lines ran parallel to the western and eastern frontiers that had originally been drawn up for Hungary—a circumstance which was urged might prove to the Little Entente's undoing—the frontiers of Hungary in the north and east were so remodelled that any railways that could be utilised for mobilising troops in war time, or for linking up one part of the country with another, were included within her neighbour's territories. Consequently both Czecho-Slovakia and Roumania possess at the present moment lines of railways which, running more or less parallel to their frontiers, will enable them at any moment to concentrate their troops at any given point against the Hungarians.

Another argument that was put forward at the time against allowing Hungary to retain the Korosvolgy was that it would deprive Roumania of the only railway line linking up the south of Transylvania with the north, but I think the former consideration far outweighed all others, and that it afforded a good pretext for the cutting down of Hungarian territories, which the Little Entente finally induced the Allies to agree to.

Every Hungarian statesman with whom I discussed this most interesting point ascribed the changes that were made in the final settlement to the Communist régime, while Count Bethlen pointed out that, whereas it had been implied that the Hungarian people, through tasting of Communist fare, were the most inclined to adopt it as a staple food, the contrary was the fact.

“ Our country has lost sixty-five per cent of its territory,” he said, “ two-thirds of its population, most of its forests, minerals and pasturage, mainly owing to the alleged belief that we were a danger to our neighbours because we had tasted of Communism. All this in spite of the fact that no more conservative country exists than our own, and that, as a certain English peer \* expressed it in a speech some time ago, our country was in many respects an exaggeration of that which Englishmen imagined to have been the state of their own country some time in the eighteenth century.” Further comment is superfluous.

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\* Lord Newton in the House of Lords.

**BOOK II**  
**ROUMANIA**

## INTRODUCTION

ROUMANIA does not form a geographical unity. One of her component parts, Transylvania, is encircled on two sides by the Carpathian Mountains separating it from the rest of Roumania ; the other, the Roumanian lowland, is joined in the east by the plains of Moldavia and Bessarabia stretching from north to south.

Her population, seven millions before the War, now approaches sixteen millions. Bastioned strongly on the north and west by the Carpathians, protected on the south by the Danube, and on the east by the Dniester, her potential military strength has more than doubled.

In addition to doubling the country's population, the annexation of the new provinces of Transylvania, the Banat, Bessarabia and Bukovina has brought within the country's frontier several hostile minorities whose assimilation is proving a highly difficult task.

Over a million-and-a-half Hungarians scattered in most districts, but found in considerable groups in Eastern Transylvania and the Banat, and nearly eight hundred thousand Germans also found in the same provinces.

It is a country with enormous natural resources. Oil mines in Old Roumania located chiefly around Dombovitz and furnishing two per cent. of the world's total oil supply ; undeveloped deposits of copper and manganese ; salt producing nearly 200,000 tons yearly ; large quantities of black and brown lignite ; a few gold, iron and silver mines and enormous forests, not to mention great tracts of unexcelled grain lands in Old Roumania and Bessarabia.

Eastward some four hundred miles through the hills of Transylvania is Bucarest, "Petit Paris." The cafés are crowded, and in the Calea Victoriei the cream of Roumanian Society is walking, talking or sipping ices as they watch the fashionable beauties driving past in two-horse open carriages driven by Siamese-looking cabmen. . . .

## CHAPTER I

## BUCAREST—"PETIT PARIS"

TRULY, we thought, it has rightly been called "Petit Paris"! In the lounge of the hotel we saw romantic-looking men and red-lipped women hailing each other in perfect French to the distant accompaniment of tinkling china and a modern orchestra. Our *femme de chambre* was a little out of the picture as she did not speak French, but in hushed German which she had learnt in her native Transylvania she told lurid tales of "*die damen*" of Bucarest. How they amused themselves! How they cared not to stay at home! and how on that very day the wife of a well-known man had come to the hotel to manicure the hands of a Greek diplomat! Trying to look shocked, but hoping in vain to hear more, we hurried out to see for ourselves the gay life of the city.

The carriages are a very important factor in the life of Bucarest. They are in constant demand, for not only are they very cheap, but for women they are a pleasant means of letting themselves be seen and for men a swifter method of scanning the beauties of the hour. But it was the coachmen who first held our attention. Their faces, smooth, fat, and of a yellowish pallor, give no hint of their age and have a somewhat Siamese expression. They were clad in long black velvet coats, much padded within and somewhat faded without, a red sash or a jewelled girdle adding to their strange appearance. We were tempted to speak of them to a friend, and learned that most of them are followers of the Russian Lipovan sect, a strange brotherhood who, after enjoying life to a certain



age and contributing a minimum to the race, deliberately deprive themselves of whatever manhood still remains. This sect was banished from Russia, but in Bucarest it thrives, for the Roumanians love contrast !

The Calea Victoriei is the Bond Street of Bucarest, and as our hotel, the Athenée Palace, is on a small square at one end of it, it was natural that our first drive should take us there. It is a long, narrow street with a couple of open spaces for the Palace and other unpleasant buildings. It is not straight or gracefully crooked or in any way beautiful, but at any hour of the day or night it is buzzing with humanity. At some hours it buzzes more than others, notably about midday, when the cream of Bucarest Society sallies forth to keep up the myth that was created by someone's hasty glimpse of this thoroughfare. Poor Paris ! They have taken your vices and exaggerated them and left your virtues by the wayside ! The generous painted mouths of the Roumanian women beneath their roving black eyes give them the appearance of beautiful carnivora ; so different from the skilful way in which the Parisienne just lets you know that she has a mouth and that you may think what you like of it. In Hungary it had often occurred to us that the mobilisation of all the gold teeth would go far to pay the War debt ; but here in Bucarest we could scarcely doubt that the rouge of the women and officers would be enough to turn the Black Sea red. It is said that during the War there was an army order stating that it was unnecessary for Roumanian officers to take their make-up to the front, in spite of which the Bulgarians after one engagement captured 250 boxes of rouge ; I have no doubt that Bulgarian perfumeurs have not used much since.

There are many little rules and conventions about this little Paris. Officers stand in groups at corners, and pretty ladies when approaching do not turn away, and do not look surprised when they hear their beauty commented upon. Some of the gilded manhood pursue the tactics of driving up and down the Calea, and if they meet an eye that pleases them and does not say them nay, they stop a few paces further and turn back to hail the lady as an old friend.

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But these are conventions ; rules are a different matter. And one of the rules is that the one glittering street shall not be marred by oxen-drawn carts or gypsies picnicking on the pavements. In any other street not more than two minutes' distance from the Calea Victoriei, you may have to tread carefully so as not to fall down a shell hole ; or you may photograph ragged gypsies squatting and smoking their after-dinner cigarettes in one of the many ruins ; or you may watch the picturesque peasant in white tunic and red sash leading his oxen over the cobble-stones. But if you happen, as we did, to see a peasant attempt to enter the Calea, you will see the police fall on him and rush him from the spot as if he were an infidel in the most sacred of harems :

Beyond the dwindling end of the Calea Victoriei one comes upon the Dambovitza river. It looks like a great ditch with walls banked up like a canal, and any water that it contains is so far down and so hidden by weeds that we had to be told what it was. Crossing the insignificant bridge, we were relieved to find ourselves where the real Roumanians could lounge about as they liked or hang their gay-coloured carpets on the walls overlooking the river. Here, as in any other street except the Calea, the street vendors are a joy to the eye. They are of many nationalities—Turks, Serbians, Bulgarians, and Gypsies—and all carry their wares in two flat brown baskets slung across their shoulders on the ends of an arched bough. Coal, water, vegetables, and oranges form their burdens ; and with their varied races and costumes they make one realise that here the East is bordering on the West.

That night we dined at the excellent Jockey Club, and seeing the ladies smacking their lips after a good meal, realised that their nature is feline. Even the best intentioned friends of the Roumanians will tell you that every season there is a general post of husbands and wives. This we could well believe as we watched the expression on the faces of the jealous husbands while their wives danced sinuously with other cavaliers ; and friends at our table could not disguise their mirth at the husbands' discomfiture.

We remembered the story a Frenchman had told us on

the train. He was dining in a Roumanian house, when the conversation turned, as usual apparently, on the frailties of society. Somewhat shocked, he hazarded the remark that surely some women were faithful.

"*Que vous êtes naïf, Monsieur!*" was the reply from the lady at his side. Here is a chance for someone to be original.

Following the excellent dinner, I was rather thirsty in the early hours of the morning, and going to our bathroom tap to get some fresh water, was horrified to find that none came forth. On enquiry I learned that the main waterworks of the town had been destroyed during the German occupation and that they had not been mended since. For a couple of hours in the morning there is running water in the large houses and hotels, but in the poor quarters water has to be bought from the street vendors. The whole thing is quite Roumanian; plenty of colour, plenty of caviare, but no water. It is easy to understand why capital is not flowing to Roumania to help her to exploit her wealth of Nature's treasures.

We visited the oil fields, where most of the wells are in the hands of foreigners; we heard of the gold, silver, and coal mines which should make Roumania one of the richest countries of the world. Yet Roumanian money at the time of our visit had less international value than Bulgarian, though Bulgaria has lost some of her richest land and has had also to pay reparations.

But however unpractical the Roumanians may be, they have qualities which make them charming hosts and entertaining friends. Warm and generous hospitality is never failing among all classes in their own country and abroad, and if they could only forego their Parisian affectation and forget the fable of their descent from Romulus and Remus they would be too perfect. As it is, the striving to live up to these two ideals has left them self-conscious and devoid of any sense of humour—with one notable exception. One charming diplomat told us how he had almost signed a treaty with Hungary. He had come from Budapest for that purpose, when one day in the street two urchins hailed him as a "little

Wallachian ! ” “ How could I,” he said, “ sign a treaty with a country which had so insulted me ? ”

We had been promised an audience with the Queen and asked if it would take place in Bucarest. The answer was that it was unlikely, as Her Majesty only came to Bucarest for formal Court functions. Clever Queen ; her golden presence would quickly tarnish in that theatre of sordid backgrounds. She prefers to make her own background, and she is wise.

## CHAPTER II

## VISITING THE OIL MINES

FROM Bucarest we journeyed due north on our way to Transylvania with Consul-General T——, whom the Roumanian Government had most kindly given us as escort and guide.

A very much-travelled man this Mr. T——, and one whose main occupation, while waiting for an appointment, was taking distinguished guests round his country.

And certain it is that in this capacity he was unsurpassed, for no travellers could have had a more painstaking or obliging guide, nor one better versed in train lore or more adept in devising time-tables combining the maximum of sightseeing with the minimum of fatigue and discomfort. Reserved carriages, motors to meet every train, deputations from municipalities and sumptuous banquets to greet us on arrival—every little attention that tact and forethought could devise. I could never imagine his being at a loss or unable to satisfy any whim or caprice. Did my wife need an extra cushion for resting her head or back? In a minute he would produce one of his well-stocked portmanteaux, and from it extract the daintiest and softest of cushions imaginable. There seemed nothing, in fact, that he could not produce at will. Did we wish to play bridge? Nothing was easier. It is true we were only three, and cut-throat bridge was really not worth playing, as it absolutely spoilt one's calling, but that could be easily remedied—for a friend of his was travelling on the same train and he would go and ask him to make a fourth.

His youth had been fiery, glowing and tempestuous, for

he had lived strenuously and played every form of sport imaginable, doing most things well, and in middle age he showed little symptom of cooling. As in his younger days when he had been one of the pioneers of Rugby football in Paris, he still took pride in his personal strength and refused to recognise that Time, the spoiler, had had any effect upon it. Intensely practical and quick at inventing an argument, he was incapable of listening to any chain of reasoning that differed from his own, while his matter-of-fact mind could conceive of nothing being of any importance save that which possessed practical value.

As a conversationalist, therefore, he at times palled, for he had little liking for literature and art, and was always chafing to leave us whenever we dallied too long in an antique shop or haggled too much for something that, however rare and precious in our estimation, he utterly failed to appreciate.

In physique, moreover, as a certain attaché at the British Legation in Bucarest aptly remarked, he irresistibly recalled the villain of the piece, for he could easily have played the part. Darting brown eyes, iron grey hair, and a manner of walking and talking that evidenced the shrewdest knowledge of the world, you could easily imagine that he had had a past, while his bonhomie and genial breeziness were alike irresistible.

Like many other an inhabitant of the Balkans, however, his manner of dressing differed somewhat from what we are used to consider as smart in England. He wore a rough pepper-and-salt tweed which was lined with mackintosh and reversible. This garment he kept tightly buttoned and belted, while he wore as headdress a navy blue yachting cap.

Of this suit he was very proud. He told us that he was always very particular about his clothes and that he had obtained this tweed direct from London.

“It is the latest thing from your capital,” he remarked, and as we had been away from England some considerable time we contented ourselves by saying that it seemed extremely practicable and that there were obviously great merits in a garment that you could reverse at will according to the weather.

Here it may be said that it has been almost our invariable experience to find that any native of the Balkans who desires to sell something freakish or out of the ordinary inevitably labels it as coming direct from London. Its British origin always accounts for its peculiar characteristics and seems, moreover, to ensure it being sold to the best advantage. But I have already descanted far too lengthily on the merits of our genial and very lovable Consul, and must now return to narrating what I originally set out to describe when beginning this chapter, viz., the day that we spent in the oil mines and the impressions which the visit left us with.

At Ploesti, which is the nearest point to the oil district that can be reached by the main line, we changed trains and, after walking for over half an hour through a very primitive little town past the market-place, which was crowded with peasant farmers in cream homespun trousers and embroidered white linen tunics, reached the single track line that runs to Moreni, one of the principal centres of the oil industry.

This little railway was constructed by the Germans during their occupation of Roumania, but has been allowed to run to rack and ruin and is certainly not a credit to the company that owns it. Not the slightest trace of a station, carriages that are unclean and uncomfortable, and a line that is so badly laid that the man who travels by it is exposed to a considerable amount of jolting and shaking, not to mention the risk of going off the line altogether.

While waiting for the train we were joined by a big oil magnate, Mr. de S——, a tall, yellow-gloved Jewish Roumanian with black curly hair and a very self-conscious manner, from whom I attempted to elicit some information with regard to the oil wells which we were going to visit.

Apparently only one-tenth of the Roumanian oil fields are at present being exploited, a circumstance which is perhaps due as much to the arrears of work and neglect incidental to the War as to high costs of production and other disadvantages. The Germans destroyed the wells when they retreated and it took nearly four years to make good the damage that had been done. Yet, and even allowing for these disadvantages, it is

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surprising how little has really been achieved towards developing an industry that should be one of the most productive of the kingdom.

Outside Roumania, of course, almost more interest is displayed in the Roumanian oil fields than in any other branch of Roumanian industry. This is due, I suppose, to the amount of foreign capital that it has attracted, representing at least 75 per cent of the total. But I found that, apart from Mr. de S——and certain other wealthy Roumanians who had floated a purely Roumanian company, practically every oil well that was being exploited was in foreign hands, and that little had been done to encourage Roumanians to invest their capital in the oil fields.

“The Roumanian oil industry,” Mr. de S—— told me, “has had to struggle in the past against the aggressive rivalry of the American companies and the dilatoriness of our own Government; we need capital, not necessarily foreign capital, since that is always forthcoming, as our oil fields amply repay any capital that has been expended on them, but Roumanian capital. Many of the older wells are approaching exhaustion and we need to tap new sources in the immense oil-bearing area that surrounds us, of which a bare eight per cent has as yet been worked. We know that the oil is there, but boring operations are costly, and we can only afford, therefore, to sink new shafts here and there in the petroliferous fields.”

He told me that the Government was now beginning to restrict the activity of foreign companies, or at least insisting on a certain percentage of their shares being in Roumanian hands, but that what was needed, above all, was a more generous co-operation on the part of the Government than had so far been accorded.

It was with difficulty that I managed to drag this information out of this very taciturn Roumanian, but when during the train journey to Moreni my wife alluded to the Riviera and to the many Roumanians who made France their second fatherland, he became more communicative. He spoke to us of his affection for the French people and of Paris his city of predilection.



"I intend to settle down in France," he said, "probably in the Riviera, Nice or Cannes, and there educate my daughters; it is extremely difficult to bring up one's children as one would like to do it over here."

By this time the train had arrived. T—— went off to a shed some fifty yards away to have our tickets stamped; then we climbed up into a first-class compartment and patiently waited for the departure. Another weary wait; a few officials on their way back to the oil wells jumped into the train; flags were waved and a whistle blown; then, puffing and blowing as if in dire pain, the train set off on its journey, and after negotiating about half the distance that it had set out to accomplish, suddenly came to a standstill.

Looking out of the window I saw that no station was in sight, but that a fairly steep incline was before us, and wondering what had happened, was turning to T—— for an explanation, when suddenly a guard appeared at the window to announce that half the train would be uncoupled and that the engine would make two journeys up the hill.

"What does it all mean?" I asked, and somewhat shamefacedly Mr. de S—— replied that he had been told that we were travelling on that day with one extra coach, which was evidently more than the engine could negotiate.

"They are uncoupling the first part of the train," he said, "and that is going first; so we had better get down on the track *pour dégourdir nos jambes*."

And, following his example, we jumped down from our carriage and beguiled away the time smoking or watching certain peasants, who were conducting a heated argument not very far away, until such time as the engine would return.

A quarter of an hour later we resumed our journey and, climbing up the incline, halted once more at the top of the hill and were recoupled to the first part of the train; then without any further mishap we continued our journey and in due time arrived at Moreni.

Our visit to the oil wells proved, however, well worth the journey that we had taken, and, escorted by a very clever Roumanian engineer who now joined our little party, we visited

various concrete constructions bristling with chimneys and saw petrol spurting skywards like geysers from the wells. The whole district seemed to seethe with smoke, and here and there from the naked flank of the hill slope and in the plain below clouds of thick and foul-smelling vapour kept bursting out intermittently, while the atmosphere around us simply reeked with oil.

Of the general aptitude of the Roumanian oil-worker, moreover, a conversation that I had subsequently with the American manager of one of the largest enterprises in the neighbourhood of Moreni left me no doubt. Indeed, the Roumanian, who learns everything rapidly, is said to be developing into the best driller in the world, so that, if the industry is not developing as it should, the trouble is not here but rather in the fact that the Government is not protecting him sufficiently from foreign competition and, above all, not insisting on foreign capitalists paying more handsomely for the concessions that have been made to them. In short, I left the district greatly impressed with the possibilities of the district and see no reason why the Roumanian oil industry should not in time rival any other in Europe.

## CHAPTER III

## A ROUMANIAN MONASTERY AT SINAIA

RETURNING to Ploesti after seeing the oil wells, we took the train for Sinaia, our last halting-place before reaching Transylvania, and, after a short journey, arrived at our destination just as the sun was setting behind the hills in the west and the twilight was beginning to weave soft shapes in the valley.

It was a beautiful moon-lit night and Sinaia, of which we had heard so much, now appeared, as it nestled on the hill slopes and stretched right up to the great woods behind, almost steeped in a silvery haze.

And after a good night's rest we set out early next morning to see its many beauties, and agreed that they came up to our expectation.

Its houses are built very much like Swiss chalets, and though they get little sun they afford delightful views and are ideal summer residences. For here in the summer months the wealthy inhabitants of Bucarest gather and make merry, finding adequate relaxation from the cares of public life in its beautiful aspects, the lovely walks that it affords and the animation and gaiety of its hotel life.

We first visited one of the royal palaces, the one which the late King Charles had inhabited, and admired the comfort and beauty which its owner had succeeded in imparting to it, its many music rooms and its interesting collection of arms and armour; then returning by way of the forest watched the Royal Guard coming over the hill and admired the swagger of the buglers as they passed us by, and waited for a time to hear the



ROUMANIAN BANAT COSTUME.

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last faint notes of their martial melody as they approached the Pelesch (palace). Then, continuing on our way, we were taken by Consul T—— to the old Greek monastery which I wished to visit, and, after some little delay, succeeded in gaining admittance.

Sinaia Monastery, though it does not possess the antiquity or world-wide renown of such famous monasteries as Rilo or Mount Athos, presents many interesting features.

It is built in two squares ; the outer has a new church in the centre ; on one side is a row of one-storied cottages which are covered with virginia creeper ; opposite are the new buildings which were erected for the Queen to live in while the Pelesch was being built ; the third side consists of a cloister, and the fourth has a most attractive shingled roof with tiny windows. Accompanied by the Archimandrite we were first taken to the Library and shown some beautiful old ikons and vestments, one of which long held our attention. It was embroidered in gold thread and covered with opals and turquoises and had been worked for the monks by Carmen Sylva herself and the ladies of her Court.

Of the late Queen and Queen Marie in fact, the old monk spoke with genuine enthusiasm, it being evident that without their support and patronage the monastery would be in a very poor way.

Proceeding to the second square another monk, a pale young man with large dreamy eyes and flowing beard, now became our guide. He noticed our cameras and asked us in halting French to photograph him. He said he had an invalid sister to whom he had long promised to send his photograph, and so wistful was his pleading and the appeal of his soft brown eyes that laughingly we promised to do as he wished if only he would show us round the monastery. Murmuring indistinct words of gratitude he led us into the second quadrangle, and entering we paused for a moment to admire its quaint archaic character.

In the centre was a small church with a painted tower and a roof that was supported by stone pillars representing Moses and Aaron, and around it innumerable flower-beds with two large

fir trees and a spring of fresh water that evoked a mediæval cloister, with wild ferns and mosses whose presence amid the crumbling masonry bore witness to its antiquity.

Both the ceiling and the seats that surrounded the walls of the chapel were elaborately painted with frescoes, but the baptistery proved more interesting. Here was the quaintest little font imaginable, a semi-circular basin painted to resemble marble and through which water ran perpetually, and beside it handsome chairs for the Royal Family and a painted pulpit.

Passing out again into the open, we visited the kitchen, and after admiring its open painted tower and an enormous cauldron which exhaled a most appetising odour of lentils and broad beans, returned to the centre of the quadrangle, placed our young monk near one of the doors, and photographed him as he had desired.

Fragile-looking and evidently unsuited to a life which, in periods of fasting, makes the most exacting claims on men's vitality, he had just returned from visiting his sister, a concession that had been made him with the view of restoring his health. And, hearing from our Roumanian friend that the conditions under which he lived and the food that he consumed were at any rate far better than those that habitually befell the generality of monks receiving no royal bounty, I decided that the path of sanctity and cleanliness to which the devout orthodox Christian willingly entrusts himself when joining the Order of St. Basileus is one that has few redeeming points, apart from the appeal that it undoubtedly makes to those who love ritual, gorgeous vestments and enervating incense. I told T—— that the fibreless and pale-looking monk who had been our guide should be given an immediate thorough rest from his monkish duties if he were to be kept alive. Then, after promising the monk to pray for his sister's health and to send him a proof of the photograph that we had taken, we left the monastery and returned to make arrangements for our journey to Brasso.

## CHAPTER IV

## IN BRASSO—THE BLACK CHURCH

OF my visit to Brasso I shall always carry pleasant memories, for certain it is that, after the blatantly modern superficiality of Bucarest, the appearance of this old-world city with its happy blending of Saxon and Hungarian characteristics strikes a new and refreshing note.

It is, of course, a typically Transylvanian city, which is the same as saying that it possesses many Hungarian characteristics. Indeed, if it were not for the strong German element that has left its impress on the architecture of many of its houses and churches, and the gradually increasing Roumanian population that is being added to it in the hope of changing its character, it could well be taken for any of the Hungarian towns that one comes across in the Hungarian Plain.

Streets usually well laid out and with equally well-built houses ; picturesque costumes that, if not so vivid as those I met with in the Sicilian districts of Transylvania or at Toroczko, are mostly made of white and grey homespun and often beautifully embroidered, and a life that is not sensibly different from that which is led in the typical Hungarian town of the provinces ; plenty of gypsy music and cafés, and at least one-third of the population that remains Hungarian and consequently tenacious of its culture, tradition and language : such were the dominating impressions that I carried away from my stay in this city.

Of the strong German atmosphere that still lingers in many parts of the city I would, however, say a few words. And a

stroll through some of its streets will soon convince you that this German influence is by no means an unimportant one.

On all sides houses recalling those that you have seen in old-world German cities, in Munich or Nuremberg, for instance. Houses top-heavy, with upper stories that seem on the verge of falling over the lower flights, which they overshadow ; houses with outdoor staircases leading to loggias or disappearing amid rustic greenery ; portals and gates adorned with quaint symbolic carvings revealing baroque tendencies ; a riot of colour and fancifulness evoking the Renaissance.

And, if many buildings reveal a German influence, the stalwart stolidness of many of its citizens point to a manifest German strain, and certain it is that nearly a third of its population have retained to this day the German characteristics of the Saxon colonists who wandered here many years ago to find a resting-place.

For over seven centuries they had lived under Hungarian rule and enjoyed certain special privileges which made them more than tolerant of the Magyar régime ; yet though conscious of the somewhat lower culture to which they were subjected at the end of the War, they came forward of their own accord and threw in their lot with the new order, only to find their city gradually falling to the level of most cities in the Regat : street services that were considerably neglected ; an administration that was as inefficient as it was corrupt, and an officialism whose methods of government savoured more of Turkey than of the West.

That they have good cause, therefore, to regret the régime which is no more a certain conversation which I had with one of their chief leaders afforded me ample proof ; in fact, conditions being as they are, I am still wondering why the Roumanian authorities allowed me to interview him at all, or at least why they permitted him to see me alone, as he so firmly requested. He complained, first of all, of the inefficient administration that had gradually superseded the old order and of the systematic fashion in which the Roumanians had broken every promise that they had made.



“ Under the Magyar rule,” he declared, “ we had our own laws, our own schools and university and even our law courts, yet though the Roumanian Government promised in 1918 to retain all our old privileges, if only we abstained from agitation, we are losing them one by one. We have still, of course, a certain number of schools in which instruction is being conducted in German, but as the hours in which Roumanian is compulsory are being increased every year we have every reason for believing that the Roumanians are trying to Roumanise us, and that our existence as a German-speaking race is at stake.”

An even more burning grievance to which he directed my attention, however, was the agrarian reform. He told me that, much as an agrarian reform had been called for in Old Roumania, there had been little need for one in Transylvania, since the great bulk of the land was already in the hands of the peasantry; yet, with a view of dispossessing the Hungarians and Germans, who practically constituted the entirety of the Transylvanian land-owning class, the Roumanian Government had devised an Agrarian Law that not only gave as maximum of land an area that was not half what was being still allowed in Old Roumania, but also gave as compensation paper money which was not more than one twenty-fifth of its real value!

“ We Saxons of Brasso have been hard hit by this Agrarian Law,” he added, “ for the only large property that we possessed was our famous Black Church, ‘ *Die Schwarze Kirche*.’ I know that, according to one of the provisions of the Land Act, all foundations of the type of schools and churches were to be entirely appropriated in order to provide the land required for the scheme, yet the solemn promises that were made to us in 1919 should not have been so shamelessly disregarded, especially when the manner in which this land became our property is taken into account, and it is realised that it has been accumulated bit by bit, yoke by yoke being entirely given by poor people for the upkeep of the church.”

On my asking how much had been taken away, he replied that out of 1,000 yokes (roughly 1,500 acres) which the church had possessed only 76 were left to them, and that in the case of

another Saxon church—this one the oldest in the town—195 yokes out of a total of 200 yokes had been confiscated by the authorities.

The Herr Doctor stressed the point that the Transylvanian Roumanians were in no manner responsible for the systematic oppression to which the Saxons were being subjected ; in fact, that they also were complaining of the unjust treatment that was being meted out to them. " Like our people," he declared, " they are anxious to obtain autonomy and are bitterly opposed to Bratiano's ministry."

After this very illuminating conversation we were joined by Dr. George Baiulescu, the Prefect of the town, and Mr. T——, and the kindly Prefect asked me if I was satisfied with my conversation. His manner was so free from embarrassment that I began to feel that he, at any rate, did not possibly deserve the censure which I had heard bestowed on the official world of Brasso, a feeling which I am glad to say was amply confirmed by other conversations which I had subsequently with various representatives of the minorities. In fact, I may say that all those men concurred in saying that, whatever other Roumanian officials might be, the present Mayor was an honourable exception, and that if the other officials of Brasso in any way resembled him there would be very little room for complaint.

Recalling what our Saxon friend had told us of the famous Black Church, however, I now asked permission to see it; and on the next morning sallied out on a round of sight-seeing that included it.

We were first shown various schools and institutions in which instruction was said to be given in either Hungarian or German, a fact which we could not, of course, verify ; then, after exploring the hills which surround the town and from which very beautiful views of the city can be enjoyed, returned by way of the church and for some time lingered in its precincts.

Architecturally speaking, of course, it has little to recommend it, apart from its undoubted age, but it contains a collection of Persian rugs that are hung round the apse, sides of the nave and on the balcony, which is probably unique in the world.

They are of every conceivable form and pattern and most of them extremely well preserved, though extremely old and probably dating from the Middle Ages, and though various theories have been advanced with regard to their origin and the manner in which they became the possession of the church, there are really only two that seem in any measure probable.

According to one explanation, they were brought back from the East by merchants of the town who offered them to the church in commemoration of their safe return and in thanksgiving to God; according to the other they were left by merchants passing through the city, which was then, as to-day, the gateway of the East.

That these antique carpets are, many of them, of priceless value I soon gathered from a conversation which I had with the churchwarden who was taking us round; in fact, even in the land of their origin, there are very few carpets that can in any respect be compared with them, and certainly none which excel them, while contrasted with the plain austere surroundings that characterised this church, they afforded the only pleasing note by the vivid splashes of colour which they contributed.

Apart from this old church, however, and the many interesting old-world gabled houses, with strange, fanciful designs and quaintly carved portals, which we visited, there was little to redeem the drab monotony of the town, even the Hungarian population, through its long association with the Saxons, presenting in their costumes far less variety and imagination than is usually found in their race. Picturesque they certainly were, yet, after what we had seen in Old Hungary itself, the black and grey monotony of their costume afforded little contrast to the dinginess of their surroundings, and it was only on the outskirts of Brasso that they afforded us a real insight of the typical costume of the district.

Then, having been promised for that evening some real gypsy music after dinner in one of the cafés of the town, we returned to the hotel and, while waiting for table d'hôte, sat down in the café and listened to Consul T——'s lurid tales of

Hungarian oppression and cruelty, being duly impressed with his endeavours to prove how magnanimous his countrymen had shown themselves to be in the moment of victory. And, as we ate our dinner and listened to the tsigane music, which here, as in most towns in the Balkans, invariably accompanies a meal, we could not help deploring the spirit which is urging the Roumanians to persecute their minorities in the hope of destroying their morale and establishing their own hegemony: a futile and vain endeavour if there ever was one, since it has been proved over and over again that national feeling can never be suppressed by force, but rather that it thrives in persecution and finds in suffering its *raison d'être*. And, thinking this, we marvelled at finding such inability to comprehend our point of view in a race otherwise so charming.

## CHAPTER V

## A VISIT TO THE QUEEN OF ROUMANIA AT THE CASTLE OF BRAN

LEAVING Brasso we motored due south, accompanied by our guide, Mr. T——, and Dr. George Baiulescu, the courteous Prefect of the county of Brasso, and following the high road, turned sharply to the right after crossing the railway, leaving the Transylvanian Alps on our left.

Beyond the mountains lay Sinaia and Old Roumania and, towards us and to the north, the fair lands which Roumania had wrested from the Hungarians as a result of the World War.

A country wild and picturesque, with many mountain peaks and rushing streams, and here and there an equally picturesque village with tiled-roofed houses gleaming in the sun. Occasional carts, drawn by sturdy, pale-fawn oxen staggering along the uneven road, while homespun-clad drivers strode beside them, and near the outskirts of Tohanulnow, the last village that we passed, a camp of gypsies which for a time we lingered to observe.

Half-naked, elf-like children, who ran before us begging for alms, and wrinkled old women, one of whom wore as girdle a strange cord and shell that we were told was the symbol of necromancy. And behind these, a crowd of handsome gypsy men and women with flashing eyes and teeth of pearl, chattering like magpies, who gradually approached the car and started to dance and sing to a wild barbaric melody that entranced us with its restless, savage rhythm.

The wild grace of these young gypsy girls was arresting, and as they danced and swayed to a music that throbbed right

through our hearts we too began to feel something of the passion that it incarnated, and strange, undreamed-of yearnings impelled us to forget our civilisation as we sensed in the dirty ragged beings who evoked them something that we had once felt but forgotten.

Throwing a few ten lei notes among the crowd, we continued on our way, amid loud cries and vociferations, that were apparently meant to convey the impression that our largesse had not been sufficient and that we had been expected to give more.

Another five minutes and we were climbing up a steep hill, on the top of which we saw a mediæval-looking old fortress that towered over the village below. This was Bran, an old castle that had formerly belonged to a Hungarian landowner, but which the town of Brasso had bought and presented to the Queen in testimony of the profound regard and gratitude that they entertained for her royal person.

Hastily jumping down from the car, the Prefect rang the bell and, on a servant opening the door, gave him our cards and his own.

He told us that he had written to the architect who was in charge of the rebuilding operations, and that we were expected.

"The Queen is away," he said. "She is staying at Sinaia with Princess Iliana, but that will not prevent you seeing everything you wish to see in the castle."

The servant now returned to show us that we had been mistaken. He told the Prefect that the Queen was at home and that she would be glad to see us.

What were we to do? We examined our travel-stained costumes and vowed that we were hardly presentable, but when the Prefect pointed out that he was just as unsuitably clad, we hesitated no longer. We followed a servant up a long staircase to a beautifully furnished room overlooking the valley, where we were asked to await Her Majesty.

Looking round, I noticed that the room was almost entirely furnished in the English style and that the bookcase near a pretty escritoire was almost entirely filled with English books; then I suddenly heard a voice behind me greeting us in English.

I turned round and saw approaching, with a gracious smile, the Queen herself.

How shall I best describe her appearance?

Shall I dilate, as so many others have done before me, on the perfection of her profile, the exquisite chiselling of her nose and mouth, the lustre of her golden hair, the noble breadth of her brow, or the regal splendour of her carriage and poise?

All these things I could do if I only sought to portray what is by its essence transient as the rainbow or the bubble, but as I am desirous, above all, of conveying a really faithful impression of the individuality that breathed beneath her mature loveliness, I will content myself with saying that few Roumanians are as fair and none fairer; that, tall and beautifully moulded, Marie of Roumania wins every heart by the beauty and charm that she manages to impart to her very simplest gesture, and that among the royal houses of Europe there is no queen or princess whose beauty makes so profound an appeal to humanity.

Of the charm and magnetism, however, that are mainly responsible for the attraction which she has for so long exercised on her people, and the immaterial beauty of which her very material charms are only a figure, I would speak more fully; for I saw them synchronising before me during the hour's audience that she so graciously granted us on this occasion, and I would say that, laired among this impulsive and warm-hearted Latin race, among whom she came as a very young queen more than thirty years ago, she has gradually acquired an influence and popularity for which only a magnetic and vivid personality can in the main be responsible.

"Of course I love being a queen," she told me. "Who would not? But it is no easy task, believe me, living up to a people's ideal of what a queen should be, for beauty and charm are indispensable complements to a crown."

And certain it is that the saying of Carmen Sylva, that the profession of queen demands the exercise of three qualities, beauty, bounty and fecundity, may well be applied to her.

For while her beauty and grace have always endeared her to her people, her generosity has always been unstinted and

she has enriched the royal crown with a progeny of beautiful children who are among its most beautiful jewels.

Like many other Balkan nations, moreover, Roumania during the Great War drank deep of the cup of humiliation and suffering. Her territory was laid waste and her towns occupied and looted by the enemy, but no Roumanian drank deeper of that cup, or, having drunk from it, remained more unyielding or with faith more undimmed in the ultimate victory of the Allies than Marie.

During all these years of tribulation she was the inspiring soul of resistance, sharing her people's burdens and ever trying to alleviate their lot by her personal service, lavish generosity and gentle sympathy.

Obviously pleased to meet anyone with whom she could talk in English, as she had ever retained the very happiest recollections of the days that she had spent as a girl at Eastwell Park, she received us most graciously.

She made us sit down near her on a settee, declared that she had already been informed of our arrival in Roumania, and said that she had intended granting us an audience on her return to Bucarest if we had not anticipated it by coming over to see her.

Just a suspicion of accent, but a manner of saying even the most simple thing which gave it distinction, combined with a gracious and winning charm, that evoked the queen of ancient days who had many chevaliers beside her own true lord, "all gay with music in their gold and silver and beautiful furs."

A fair and stately queen, intensely human and lovable, who, though born to the purple and delighting in its prerogatives, prefers at all times to sway men by virtue of her womanly charm and beauty rather than by exercising her power as sovereign, Marie possesses the most varied talents. An intelligence and grasp of political conditions that are far above the average, tact, sympathy, and a business instinct which are so sound that I have heard several big business men wishing they could have her in their employ; a keen love of the arts and music, in which she is extremely proficient, and a power of descriptive writing, which has been evidenced in many channels.



She is a woman whom her people adore and worship as a fay, who has the knowledge of simples and who delights in offering her bounty, and the mere sight of whose lovely presence, as she passes the homely cottages of the peasants, usually calls forth the most spontaneous enthusiasm and loyalty. Such, briefly, was the Queen whom we were now visiting.

And in a setting, moreover, that was in every respect in accord with the woman whose beauty it enhanced.

An old mediæval turreted castle evoking ages of conflict, and in whose vaulted rooms was found the happiest blending of East and West; Eastern the many beautiful Roumanian embroideries that covered the backs of armchairs and settees or hung over doorways; Eastern the heavily-chased lamps that hung on chains from above and shed a light on silver-framed ikons; Eastern, too, the beautiful frames and pieces of carved wood that adorned the walls; while the West was evoked by the comfortable table chairs and divans that bade you rest and the many bookcases which I saw filled with modern literature.

"I hope you have been well received in our country," she began by saying, "and that you have been given every facility for seeing it."

I replied that nothing could have surpassed the warmth of our welcome, but that I had really half expected it, as we had so many Roumanian friends, and knew the Roumanians to be the soul of hospitality.

"And our peasants," she continued, "I hope you have been able to see something of them too. You see, they are very primitive, but if only you could get to know them as I do you would soon discover how fine they are, how unspoilt. I am very fond and proud of my peasants, and understand their mentality as well as I think they understand my own."

For a time she talked of the Roumanian national costumes and expressed her conviction that there were no peasants in the world possessing a more instinctive gift for knowing what is beautiful, artistic or becoming than the Roumanians.

"As my people believes that much of the shaping of human life depends on the most trivial and commonplace things, even the most simple embroidery that they have worked comes

to have a special significance in their lives. Look at these blouses, are they not exquisite? Is it not befitting that the people who have conceived and made them should enshrine them in their lives as some of its most essential factors?

“That is why I so much prefer wearing Roumanian national costumes to any other,” she added.

And looking at her we could well believe that it would have been difficult to have evolved a more attractive dress.

A pale-grey swathed turban of lightish material that hung down slightly at the back; a white blouse that was embroidered in red; a red pleated skirt, and round the waist a lovely hand-wrought buckled belt. Over the blouse a three-quarter length embroidered coat, most exquisitely made, with a band of fur at the neck; white shoes and stockings completed the costume.

But the peasant national costumes were not the only subjects that we discussed.

Knowing that politically the Queen exercises tremendous influence in her own country, I accordingly diverted the conversation into the channels of internal policy, and soon realised that Marie combined the most intimate understanding of the problems of the day with the most lively regard and concern for the upbuilding of Roumania and the improvement of her economic life.

She expressed warm sympathy with the minorities and declared that she wished to see them living contentedly under the Roumanian régime.

“I can quite understand the Hungarians feeling chagrined at losing so fair a province as Transylvania,” she said, “but it is a Roumanian land, and it is only fair that it should revert to our rule.”

Monarchy she refused to think as being a moribund institution, but expressed her opinion that, now that monarchs were beginning to realise their new responsibilities, a strong and powerful monarchy was not incompatible with progressive democracy.

“To be a queen nowadays means a lot of work and anxiety and great toiling for very small results, yet I confess that I

enjoy being a queen, and that I would not exchange my lot for any other."

She agreed, however, that in some countries at least it was an occupation that entailed many risks and alluded to the revolution in Greece, which she said might easily have been avoided.

"Greece is a country where free elections are as yet unknown, and I do not believe for a moment that the majority of the people were in favour of the king being deposed.

Of Venizelos she spoke as if he could have avoided the revolution; in fact, she asserted that if he had been willing to interfere King George would to-day be reigning in Greece, while she was unable to refrain from saying that English intervention would also have prevented the abdication.

"I believe that a word from my cousin of England would have prevented the revolutionaries from carrying out their plan, but I know King George is too constitutional a monarch ever to interfere in another country's internal politics."

Queen Marie talked to us of many other matters: of her gardens and the Byzantine crosses that she has had taken from old graves and placed in the park surrounding her palace at Sinaia and of the various improvements that she intends carrying out in Bran. Then, as the hour was approaching for her return to Sinaia, she called the architect and told him to show us round the castle. She promised to grant us a further audience when she would be back in Bucarest, and after wishing us a pleasant journey in Transylvania, dismissed us from her presence.

Under the guidance of this official and accompanied by the Prefect and Mr. T——, we then visited other parts of the castle and found that much still remained to be done to meet the requirements of its royal owner; in fact the architect confessed that the Queen's ideas were often extremely difficult to carry out, and showed me various recesses and odd corners in which he had been instructed to put bathrooms, a task that obviously presented many difficulties.

"As Her Majesty is determined to have these bathrooms, it will be done," he declared, "but I imagine many months will elapse before I shall have completed my work."

All the rooms which were ready, however, were beautifully decorated and furnished. Ikons abounded, and in one sitting-room I noticed a lovely incense-burner as well as many scent-bottles of different countries and periods, our informant telling us that collecting scent-bottles was another of the Queen's hobbies, and that the bulk of the collection, some 8,000 specimens, was at Sinaia.

"If you visit Sinaia," he said, "make a point of seeing this collection, for I don't think another one like it exists in the world."

Coming to the tower, containing the apartments of the young princes, we found an almost austere simplicity, and concluded that the King and Queen did not believe in children being made too comfortable at an age when a comparatively spartan régime is often the best building up for the good health of the future, and, having thanked our courteous guide for his kindness in taking us round, called our chauffeur and were soon speeding back to Brasso.

Once more we passed the gypsy camp that we had come across on our way to Bran, but as we refused this time to stop, but passed through, only slowing up to avoid doing any injury, we were greeted with loud vociferations, angry looks and even menacing gestures that showed how unpleasantly evil-looking even the most picturesque gypsies can appear at times until a few determined words had sent them back cringing to their hovels. On gaining the high road we were then suddenly passed by a fast-moving Rolls-Royce, from which we were charmed to see our gracious hostess waving her hands in greeting.

And turning to our Roumanian friends, after the car had disappeared before us, we thanked them for the experience that they had provided us and vowed that no more charming Queen exists than Marie, and none in whose safe keeping they could more aptly entrust their country's fortunes. And so ended a very pleasant little journey.

## CHAPTER VI

## CLUJ

FROM Brasso we took train for Cluj, and after a somewhat uneventful journey duly arrived at that city.

Alighting from our carriage we found four town officials waiting to greet us, all equally stout and aldermanic with that portliness that one associates with city banquets, and bowing low before us they all came forward as Consul T—— introduced them.

One was the Prefect of Police, a fat, enormous-looking man, very dark and menacing, but with a smile that disarmed; another, the Mayor, was smaller and grey-haired; a third, square built and pale-looking, with somewhat placid features; the fourth was a genial-looking individual in whom good humour oozed from every pore.

Speaking no Roumanian we essayed our French, but as they understood not a word my wife tried German, and discovering that they all spoke it perfectly we were soon happily conversing in that language. Then suddenly a few abrupt words from our Consul stopped the flow of our remarks, and, a little crestfallen, our hosts contented themselves with speaking to us through T——, a state of affairs that did not satisfy the very genial official who was talking to my wife.

“Apparently they are not allowed to talk German to us,” I whispered; “they speak it too well, and only Roumanian is spoken in this city.”

Solemnly we were conducted past platforms and ticket officials into the main street, where two powerful cars were

waiting to convey us to the Hotel Astoria, and jumping into these with our now silent escort, we were quickly conveyed to our destination and informed that we were to attend a banquet at the Hotel New York, at which the Mayor was to preside on that very evening.

Shall I ever forget that repast or the spectacle of my wife, svelte and petite, sitting among a crowd of portly men, the only woman present !

Like most city banquets, it was a gargantuan feast, and joint followed joint, all strongly flavoured with sauces that were reminiscent of Hungary. In fact, there were several Hungarian dishes in the menu, and these I noticed our hosts attacked with evident relish.

Whatever conversation took place was, of course, in Roumanian and French, T—— being kept very busy translating the Mayor's courtly utterances to my wife and her answers to them, but now and then, when the Consul was busy talking with his other neighbour, our genial councillor carried on a surreptitious conversation in German with my wife, this conversation usually coming to an abrupt termination whenever he would feel T——'s eagle eye directed towards him. Then at dessert the Mayor and the Prefect toasted our health in Roumanian wine, and I had perforce to thank our hosts for the dinner that they had offered in our honour.

The restaurant was crowded with people, mostly Hungarians, with a sprinkling of Germans and Roumanians, while a Hungarian tzigane band played czardas or folk music that struck a reminiscent chord in our breasts.

" See how liberal we are," T—— said, turning round towards me with a fat cigar in his mouth whose paper band he had disdained to cut. " When Cluj belonged to Hungary no Roumanian music was ever permitted in restaurants—yet to-day we raise no objection to any kind of music being played, and this band can play as many Hungarian national dances as it chooses."

On the next day we were taken sight-seeing, and visited various libraries and a beautiful collection of national embroideries that we were loth to leave, but the Consul announced

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that a representative of the Hungarian minorities in Cluj would call on me early that afternoon and we were compelled to hurry back to the hotel for an early lunch.

Shortly after two, a very tall, gaunt individual, stammering a little and with a manner that seemed rather uneasy, asked to see me, and in due time was taken up by the lift to my sitting-room.

He introduced himself as Mr. Kiss and, after accepting a cigarette from my case, sat down in a chair to which I waved him, and in fairly good French told me that the Prefect had asked him to see me as he understood I was keenly interested in the question of minorities.

"No man is better qualified to talk on this subject than I am," he declared. "I am a barrister and am attached to the Agrarian court that deals with appeals against the application of the law; I consequently know how it is carried and enforced."

I told him that certainly no one was better qualified to speak with authority on the subject, but that what I wanted to know was whether the Hungarians as a whole were satisfied with the working of the law.

"I have heard many Hungarians complaining that the Agrarian Law not only hits them hard, but that the way in which it is applied leaves them exposed to every form of persecution. Is there any truth in this assertion?"

"Not the slightest," was the answer. "Of course there may be some individual hard cases, but as a rule the law is applied quite fairly and equitably. It hits all men alike irrespective of nationality, and is a measure which all patriotic Roumanians recognise as absolutely essential if all peril is to be averted of the peasantry throwing in their lot with the Communists."

"I am very relieved to hear you talk like that," was my rejoinder. . . . "But have the Hungarians no other grievances," I continued after a pause, during which I sought to overcome my astonishment at hearing a full-blooded Hungarian emitting such opinions.

"I cannot say that," he allowed a little grudgingly, as he

shifted his feet in an uneasy manner, "but in any case they are not any worse treated than the Transylvanians. You must understand that, like a good many other Hungarians in Transylvania—not the majority, I agree, but a considerable minority at any rate—I am in favour of a rapprochement with the Roumanian Government. We are powerless to change what has happened and Roumanian subjects we are irrevocably. So what is the use of agitating for a return of what is dead and buried when by conciliating the authorities we can materially benefit our condition?"

"I quite see the wisdom of your remarks and attitude," I replied, "and am very glad to hear such good accounts of your people. I shall not fail to acquaint all well-wishers of Hungary in England of your good news so that they cease worrying over the condition of her people."

And, feeling that it was useless to ask any further question, I rose from my chair. I thanked the tall Hungarian for his visit and saw him take his leave.

For five minutes I lingered, pondering over what I had heard, not knowing what to make of statements which were entirely at variance with the information that I had received from other sources; then, deciding to think no more of the matter, sallied downstairs to the hall of the hotel to find Mr. T——. I knew his hatred of Hungarians and how he always refused to talk to anyone belonging to that nationality, so concluded that he was still in his room, whither he had departed after luncheon to avoid seeing, as he declared, my Hungarian friend, but having a letter in my pocket which needed posting, I decided to take it myself to the pillar-box just outside.

Imagine my astonishment when, on turning the corner, I saw our Consul and my recent visitor holding animated converse together. For a moment I rubbed my eyes incredulously, feeling that I must be mistaken, but drawing a little nearer (their backs were turned towards me) soon discovered that it was not so, and that apparently Hungarian and Roumanian had agreed to bury the hatchet. Feeling overjoyed at such friendliness arising between inveterate foes, I thought at first of joining their little party, but decided that it would





TRANSYLVANIAN COSTUME.

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be better not to intrude, and so returned discreetly to my hotel after posting my letter.

After this very illuminating incident I had the privilege of meeting several members of the National Transylvanian Party and also certain other representatives of the minorities, among these Mr. Ugron, and soon gathered that Mr. Kiss was by way of being considered as a traitor to his race. I was informed that he was the leader of a very small group (seven) of renegade Hungarian M.P.'s in the Roumanian Parliament who had been bought by the Bratiano ministry and that his advocacy of Roumania had brought him prosperity and wealth, as he was certainly one of the richest men in Cluj. And, recalling the uneasy manner in which he had behaved during our interview, I concluded that prosperity had hardly given him peace of mind, but that he was supremely conscious of the odium and contempt in which he was now held by his compatriots.

Of the shortsightedness, moreover, displayed by my Roumanian friends in so artlessly seeking to delude me I will content myself with saying that, while real patriotism is always mindful of appearing to the best advantage, and patriots should always endeavour to give the best impression of their country, even concealing its deficiencies, it should be remembered that nothing is worse than to be discovered, and that, whereas one can perfectly understand and account for the forcible assimilation of Hungarians within the Roumanian realm that is taking place to-day, any attempt at misleading criticism only reacts against itself. On this occasion, however, the attempt that was made to deceive me was so obvious that I bear no malice. I am only sorry that it was not better conceived or thought out.

We spent some very happy and interesting days in Cluj, and received everywhere the very warmest of welcomes, but what appealed to us perhaps more than anything else was the evening we spent in the Opera House the day before our departure, when we attended a performance of the "Queen of Sheba."

As on several other occasions, we were the guests of the Municipality and the municipal box was placed at our disposal.

Wishing to do honour to the occasion, we expressed our desire to put on evening dress, but soon realised that it was not expected of us.

“ You must not dress,” Consul T—— declared. “ If you do, people will imagine you are the King and Queen.”

Realising how embarrassing this would be, we followed the Consul’s advice and, attended by five perspiring officials, were driven to the Opera House and escorted to our box, where we arrived just as the performance was starting.

This being a Hungarian night and a Hungarian play by Goldmark, the house was crowded with Magyars with a considerable sprinkling of Roumanians, but the company was Roumanian and the *jeune premier* the leading star in the Roumanian operatic world.

Having already seen this opera performed in Budapest, it was particularly interesting to compare the Roumanian with the Hungarian rendering, and, needless to say, there were great divergences in certain respects.

In both instances, of course, the performance reached the highest level of excellence, both as regards staging and singing, but where I noticed an enormous difference was in the treatment and interpretation that were given, not only of each character, but of the lines and action that together make up the play.

In Budapest we had been impressed by the admirable restraint and reticence that had characterised the performance ; the acting was uniformly good and polished, and even the most passionate outbursts of the lovers had been tempered by a most lively regard for classical self-restraint.

In Cluj, on the other hand, there was no such curb visible, and both the lover, a handsome, sensuous-looking young Roumanian, and the queen cast aside all restraint and acted their words with the frenzied realism that we have come to associate with Sicilian actors.

Little sign of reticence here, but a love-making so tensely passionate and realistic that you forgot it was only make-believe and felt from head to foot almost consumed by it. Never in all my life have I ever seen such passion embodied in mere

acting, for, while the lover sang, his mistress made response with sighs so passion-laden that you almost felt a hot wave of passion rising up from the stage. It was typically Roumanian, but, like everything that we associate with the South, it made appeal while it nauseated, because it was life and passion incarnate, because it was full of that strange and subtle influence which inclines the heart of man to passion and the body of man to surrender to its desires. And—contrasted with what we had seen in Budapest—it was as fire is to water.

Thus terminated our stay in Cluj. Accompanied still by our faithful and considerate Consul friend, we journeyed down south and, after staying a few days with some Hungarian friends, the Kendeffys in Hatseg (Southern Transylvania), took train again for Simeria junction and from there made our way back to the capital.

Our stay in Roumania was over, yet though we were going still further west, and there was something magical in the picture that we evoked of the Bulgarian land that we were now going to visit, it was with a genuine feeling of sadness that we bade farewell to Bucarest and its attractive people. Forgotten were the many characteristics and political practices to which I had found exception. I could only remember the warm hospitality that we had received and the charming qualities that we had found in our hosts.

The last few days of our stay in Bucarest we devoted to making purchases of peasant embroideries and earthenware, then, after bidding farewell to our friends, we began the next stage of our journey, and, after a few short hours pleasantly employed in reading of the land which we were approaching, arrived in due time at the Danube river station of Giurgiu, across which lay the fair land of the Bulgars

## CHAPTER VII

A STRONG, SILENT MAN—INTERVIEW WITH THE ROUMANIAN  
PREMIER

TALL and strongly built, even massive, Jean Bratiano, Premier of Roumania and leader of the Liberal Party, impresses from the very first moment that you meet him with his restless and dominating personality. A man quick and far-seeing, to whom inaction is intolerable and opposition only an incentive to further acts.

And in this country of warm-hearted, impulsive Latins he strikes the observer as a man who has risen to his present position by virtue of talent alone—talent and energy, combined with the most ruthless determination to overthrow any obstacles lying in his path.

No Roumanian is more outspoken or frank in his speech, and, if he has few friends, being essentially *un solitaire* who prefers to live alone and to find his happiness independently of others, he is universally respected and looked up to as one of the greatest men that post-war Roumania has produced.

For over an hour we discussed every branch of Roumanian national activity—foreign politics, international policy, treatment of minorities, economic development; and to every question that I made I received frank, outspoken answers that illumined the problem and afforded a contrast to many vague and misleading statements that I had previously elicited from other Roumanians.

We first discussed the general economic conditions of

Roumania, Monsieur Bratiano laying stress on the great resources that were possessed by his country, resources which he declared, when fully developed, would make Roumania one of the richest countries in Europe.

"We have everything in our favour," he declared: "grain lands that equal the Beauce in fertility, gold, silver and iron mines, large forests and oil-wells, most of these still untapped. I foresee, therefore, a period of great prosperity if only our people resolutely set to work to rebuild their economic structure and our Government ensures a more economic exploitation of our untapped resources and State demesnes, such as our recent legislation aims at producing."

"But is this policy to which you allude wise?" I queried. "Isn't your legislation so effectively crippling the foreign capitalist of whom you have most need that he must necessarily in time abandon all hope of contributing to your development since you refuse to make it worth his while?"

"Not at all," was the answer. "I know that our Mining Law has been greatly criticised, and that, like my brother the Minister of Finance, I am accused of trying to eliminate all foreign capital from Roumania, but this is sheer nonsense, believe me.

"Of course we need foreign capital, but does it follow, because we are not any too rich and our finances have only been balanced this year for the first time since the War, that we are to neglect any means by which we can protect our national markets or the future interests of the nation?"

"Accordingly it is the aim of the Mining Law of 1923, while attributing to the State the ownership of sub-soil treasures of every kind excepting quarries for building material and turf, to divert certain energies and available capital let loose by the disappearance of large estates to other fields of activity. We wish to attract Roumanian capital and to make it productive, to see the greater part of our resources being exploited by Roumanian energy rather than allow them, as before the War, to be controlled by German or American capitalists.

"Take our oil fields, for instance. In 1914 we were

furnishing about one per cent of the world's total oil supply, half of which was available for export. Of this total capitalisation of two million pounds, nearly sixty per cent was in German hands, twenty-five in British and the rest in American. Was that satisfactory? "

When Monsieur Bratiano went on to show that there was really nothing very out-of-the-way in the Mining Law that was being now enforced, I pointed out that under its provisions the German oil interests had practically been wiped out and that twenty per cent of the profits—the share that had been allotted to them after expropriation—was hardly an adequate return for the vast capital that had been expended, but the Prime Minister declared that it was more than ample in view of the fact that the State had formally reserved to itself the ownership of the sub-soil when it proceeded to divide the territory among the peasants.

" *Autres temps, autres mœurs,*" he said. "The mining system that was in force before 1923 was characterised by such diversity—more than fifteen special laws, decrees and statutes being enforced in various parts of the territory—that it was high time something was done to unify it. In any case, the sub-soil belonged to the State even before the principle of nationalisation was embodied in the Constitution, and consequently we had a perfect right to do what we liked with our own land so long as the rights acquired under previous legislation were duly respected.

"These rights, I maintain, have been protected in every possible way.

"We have decided that the system of combined exploitation, i.e., of co-operation between the State on the one hand and private initiative on the other in the shape of a society having commercial character in which the State possesses the controlling share and interest which its character of representative of the general interests of the country confer on it, is the only one that can meet with any measure of success. We have accordingly adopted for the exploitation of our mineral deposits a special type of limited company promoted by the State and by Roumanian and foreign private



MONSIEUR BRATIANO, PRIME MINISTER OF ROUMANIA.



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capital, in which a certain proportion \* of shares is reserved to the Roumanian State and Roumanian capital, and the rest is at the disposal of foreign capitalists if required. This same proportion is maintained in the composition of the Boards of Administration and Directors, and is the fairest that can be devised."

I soon gathered that the Roumanian Government was determined to be master in its own house, and, after what I saw of the oil-wells of Ploesti and Prahova I am more than inclined to sympathise with their very legitimate pretensions.

Monsieur Bratiano also pointed out that the provisions of the Mining Law only applied to those companies which exploited State properties and that an immense field of activity consequently remained open to foreign companies working petroleum in Roumania, since the State had agreed to suspend their rights of ownership over lands at present belonging to private enterprise for a period of fifty years.

"You can see for yourself," he declared, "how unjustifiable are the censures which, for want of sufficient information, have been directed against us."

But the President, though optimistic with regard to the economic development of his country, could not refrain from pointing out the disadvantages which his country possessed in having only a *mer fermée*, the Black Sea, as outlet for their commercial activities, but agreed with me that much might be done through the utilisation of the Danube to remedy this state of affairs.

"I do not think people sufficiently realise the enormous possibilities of the Danube and how this river will one day become as important as the Rhine commercially. We are very shortly, I imagine, going to witness the re-awakening of the East, and, when that day comes, our country will be called upon to play a very important rôle.

"We are a window of Europe, so to speak, and, as intermediary between the Slav and the Westerner, are destined to play an important part in the Europe of the future, for not

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\* About 55 per cent.

only do we control both banks of the lower Danube, but, thanks to our geographical position, act as a kind of keystone between Central Europe, Eastern Europe and the Balkans."

Then towards the close of our very interesting conversation, Monsieur Bratiano touched upon the question of minorities, and with the greatest sincerity proceeded to defend the Roumanian point of view in that much debated question.

"I will not," he said, "ask for your opinion concerning the way in which we treat our minorities. That is quite unnecessary as I have a pretty shrewd idea of what it is at present, but I would ask you after leaving to ponder a little over what I shall now proceed to say in defence of our policy.

"No one can deny that the annexation of the new provinces has brought within our frontiers some vigorous and hostile racial minorities whose assimilation presents many difficulties. But what I do deny is that any policy could have been adopted differing materially from that which we are at present adopting.

"For over a thousand years the Magyars subjected our unfortunate people to the most intense form of assimilation and, while according us a few liberties, so systematically set about destroying our national life that in time many of our Transylvanian towns became almost replicas of the Magyar towns over the border.

"It is now our task to undo this work, yet, though we are determined by colonisation and other means to destroy these majorities and convert them into Roumanian, we remain animated with the most sincere liberalism and are affording the Magyar and other racial minorities every facility for preserving their own culture, language and schools.

"This was the principle that animated our policy, and if we have at times departed from it the Hungarians have only themselves to thank for it. Their intransigence, contemptuous attitude and obvious refusal to accept the *fait accompli* left us with no other alternative."

The Roumanian Premier closed the interview by promising me that if I returned to Cluj or Oradea Mare in ten years I would find that the present Hungarian majority would no longer exist; in fact he was confident that the Hungarian

inhabitants of Transylvania would by then have been considerably reduced.

I left Monsieur Bratiano's presence convinced at least of one thing ; and that was that a more sincere, straightforward statesman does not exist than himself, and that the Roumanian case, when presented in the manner in which he had presented it, seems far more acceptable than I had ever imagined possible. If I cannot quite agree with it, I can at least understand its point of view and why it can be defended.

## CHAPTER VIII

## ROUMANIAN FOLK-LORE AND CUSTOMS

ROUMANIA is a land of great contrasts in which luxury alternates with primitive barbarism and Parisian frocks with dainty hand-woven and embroidered national costumes.

It is a land of great primeval forests, deep ravines and foaming torrents, sombre gorges and silent plateaux, austere mountains and cornfields stretching out to infinity. It is a country whose primitive characteristics civilisation has so far left untouched and which is instinct with the glamour of the old world.

How do her people live? Like other Balkan nations, their life is an endless toil and strife, and ever they are fighting, if not the elements that war against them, at least poverty and need that always hang over them like a grim menace.

And like other peasants of the Balkans they find their solace in a folk-lore, which enables them to endure sufferings that Western nations would find intolerable.

Simple-minded and temperate, they read in every act a punishment for a deed of omission or commission or a premonition of something good or bad which is to follow; their lives are spent in toil and their only pleasures those that are associated with the coming into and going out of the world of their neighbours or with the forming of new ties or celebrating anniversaries of old.

Attending church festivals, weddings, baptisms or funerals are their only pleasures, and occasionally dancing the Hora or reciting old legends and stories during winter nights as their women spin.

And their houses are as simple and primitive as themselves. Some are like drawings of our childhood: little square-built, white-washed boxes with quaint designs in colour painted on the walls, a door like a mouth and a tiny window like an unwinking eye on either side, while a heavy thatched roof branches well over the building; others in the Plain are only mud dwellings or houses of beaten earth to ward off the cold and the rain, while in the mountains are found more prosperous-looking wooden structures with tiled roofs glistening in the sun.

The typical Roumanian peasant houses, however, are those which the wealthy peasants inhabit, and they are always interesting and worth visiting.

Some are like primitive strongholds and are called Koula. They have thick walls and an equally massive door, with here and there narrow barred peep-holes. Inside a staircase leads to the top, where close to the roof which overhangs is a loggia painted white supported by pillars where the family takes its siesta in summer time; others have windows even below the gallery and an outer staircase leading to it with sloping shingled roofs.

All Roumanians claim, of course, to be descended from the legionaries of Trajan who overran Dacia about 106 and killed Decebalus, the Dacian leader. And certain it is that where dress, appearance and customs are concerned there is much to justify their claim.

The men's dress closely resembles the men's costumes of the Dacian period. In fact the opincas, or sandals, which they wear are exact replicas of the sandals that are worn by the Dacian prisoners whom we see portrayed on Trajan's Column in Rome.

Cream linen tunics over tight-fitting trousers of cream homespun, which are tucked into handsome fancy socks; high lambs-wool caps, and round the waist wide red sashes which they swathe round and round their bodies.

And if the men's costume is attractive the women's is even more so.

Loose white garments that are blouse and skirt combined, all hand-woven and embroidered by deft fingers, and the most

dainty fancy, especially at the sleeves, round the neck and at the hem of the skirt ; fotas or aprons, one for the front, the other for the back, that are richly embroidered in beautiful tissue shot with gold and silver, and exquisite handkerchiefs which are worn on their heads. In the Banat district I saw fotas that were bands of red plaid material, with silver or gold threads running through them and fringes about ten inches long that hung down just low enough to enable the border of embroidery at the end of the skirt to be seen ; but these fotas were only characteristic of this province, and I found in other districts that they were usually fringeless.

In all these embroideries the chief and predominating colour was red, and the designing and embroidery itself showed distinct signs of a Byzantine influence. They were usually geometrical, and even when portraying women, as in Bukovina, were almost cubist in tendency.

Another characteristic that impressed me was the care that was always taken to make each costume the one that suits the wearer best. Roumanians are as traditional as other peasants, but unlike other peasant artists they always aim at making each costume suitable to its wearer, and accordingly their national costumes are usually most becoming and seductive.

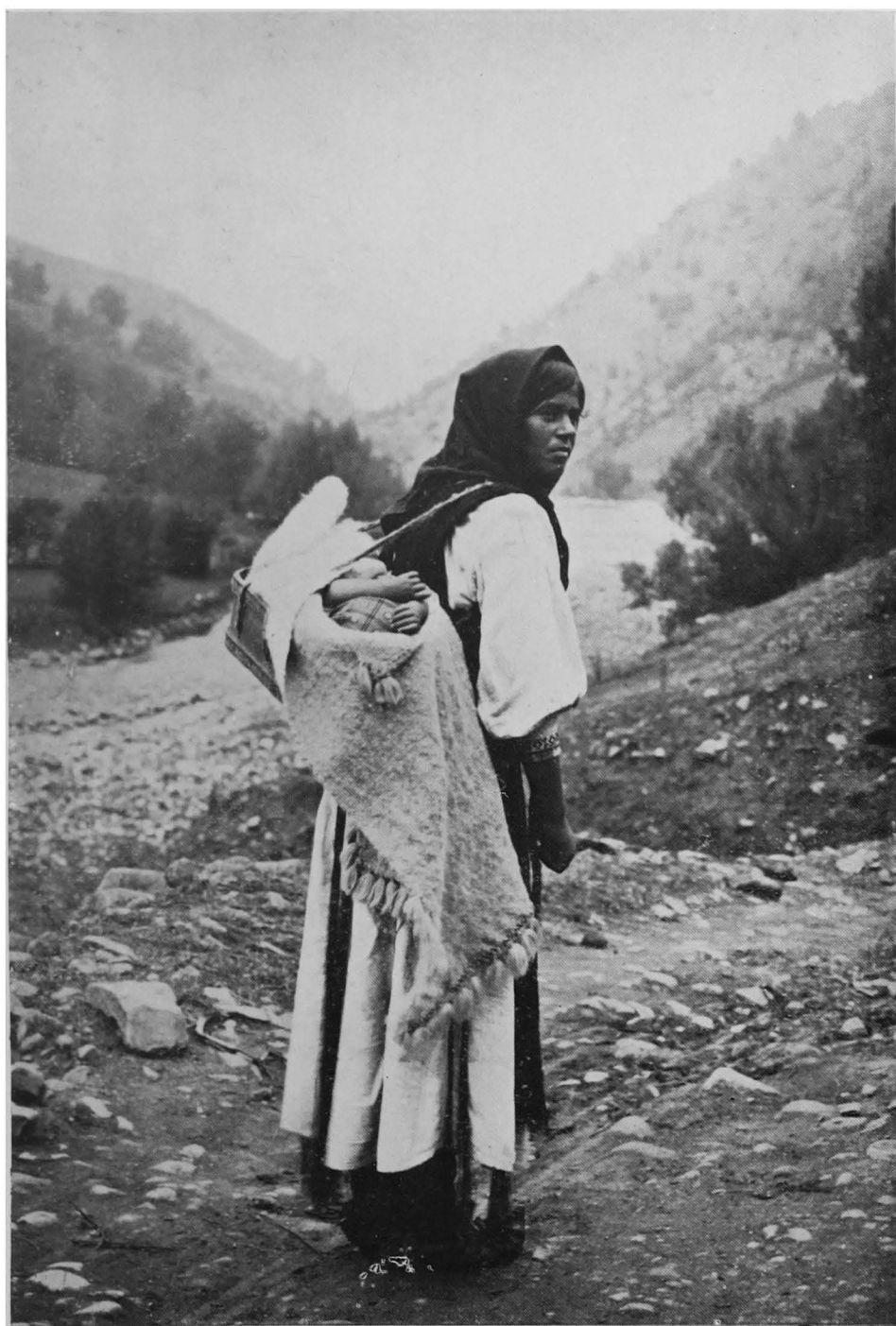
In appearance, too, the Roumanians betray a manifest Latin influence.

The men are dark, lissom and wiry, and closely resemble in some parts of the old Regat the faces that we see on early Roman coins. The women are slender, with dark lustrous hair and equally dark eyes in which sombre fire alternates with the glint of merry humour. They are mostly handsome and possess classical features.

Roumanian folk-lore, like other peasant folk legends, abounds in quaint superstitions and practices that have often a Roman or pagan influence.

There are, first of all, the strange practices that characterise a Roumanian fiançailles, wedding or funeral.

There is a day in the year, usually Easter Day, when the young men choose their brides. The girls, dressed in their



PEASANT OF CORNARERA-BANAT.

prettiest costumes, sit around the village green. The young men saunter round in groups, scanning each face as they pass and making jokes with their companions. Then, when they have decided on the girl whom they would marry, they take her by the hand and dance a measure with her. If they dance twice, it signifies that she has given her consent, if once, the young man must look elsewhere for his bride. Sometimes the parents object, but, whenever this happens, the peasant, as the saying goes, "invariably comes and steals her away."

On all the important occasions of life, in fact, Roumanian peasants never fail to propitiate the good and evil spirits who are believed to be hovering near. One of the first things a newly wed wife attends to after she is married is to go to the well and throw in a coin to propitiate the spirit of the place, while she never forgets to sprinkle a few drops from a pitcher on the ground as an offering to the Water Spirit.

Then there are the dirges which are sung by the Bocitoare (professional women mourners) as they accompany the dead to his last resting-place. In these they not only give the dead all kinds of messages for those who have preceded him, but they give him advice with regard to the road that he should follow after death.

For many are the roads that he can follow, and it is well that he should know which of these is the right one; and consequently they tell him in their song of the lake that lies beyond the Road, and of the huge apple tree and flower that grow on the other side of it. But he must not linger here too long. After drinking of the water he must pursue his way until he has reached the Custom Houses of the Air, for through each of these he must pass unscathed if he would reach Heaven itself. The Bocitoare implore him to look neither to the right nor to the left, for many are the demons who will seek to turn him away from the straight road; but he must persevere to the end, not forgetting to give alms to every beggar whom he meets, as this will give him greater strength to resist temptation and so enable his soul to reach its goal.

Many other curious practices I observed which recalled the classical observances of ancient Rome or paganism;



tiles that were placed on the heart of the dead to prevent them returning to earth in the shape of vampires; silver coins which were laid on their brow or sticks in their hands; while there were certain superstitions according to which any person whose shadow one had measured and drawn with reed or string would die, and, after dying, become a stafie, that is to say, the guardian angel of a building. This was a practice that had undoubtedly sprung from the primeval custom of sacrificing a human being at the foundation of every great building, and there is a famous legend connected with it which I must give to my readers.

Radu Negru, Prince of Wallachia, had bidden the famous architect Manole to build him a monastery which was to surpass all others in beauty, and on this work Manole started working one day, with his nine master masons, only to discover that whatever work he achieved by day was undone at night. Then when he was beginning to lose heart a dream voice told him what to do to avert this evil influence.

"All your efforts will be vain," it declared, "so long as you do not wall up alive the very first woman, either wife or sister, who comes to you in the morning with food."

Knowing that the Prince's will was inexorable and that death awaited him and his workers if the monastery was not built as ordered, he bowed to Fate and bound himself and his fellows by solemn oath to obey his dream voices.

On the next morning he was up early with the first streak of dawn and watched the road anxiously. Afar off he saw a woman making her way towards him, and eagerly he hoped that it was not his own wife but rather the sister or wife of one of his associates.

But as the woman drew nearer he saw that it was his own wife, Anna, and kneeling in the dust implored his God to let loose a storm of rain to turn her back. Immediately his prayer was granted, but still the woman continued on her way, and though he prayed again to God, and other obstacles arose to stay her progress, she hastened to her sorrowing husband, only to find a terrible death within the monastery walls.

Such is the legend which arose in connection with the

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building of the Argesh Monastery, one of the finest Byzantine monuments in Roumania.

In some parts of Wallachia I observed that in every house where a death had taken place every pot and pan in the kitchen had been turned upside down to prevent the soul of the dead hiding there and haunting the family. Such houses were only swept two days after a death, and the broom which was used was after use burnt and buried a good distance away from the house. Widows were expected to abstain from eating meat for forty days and to visit the grave of their husbands every day for the same period, bringing on each occasion a pitcher of water which they laid by the graveside in case the departed suffered from thirst.

Everything unusual, in fact, or that was contrary to the general experience, was interpreted as denoting an evil influence which it was imperative to combat with every possible weapon. Thus men who had little or no moustache were believed to have the evil eye and were always avoided by the women folk, and there were many other equally baneful circumstances.

To obtain the best idea of Roumanian folk-lore, however, it is necessary to hear the Doinas and other popular ballads which have been sung in the country-side for many centuries. They are the real expression of the soul of the people to-day as yesterday, for the Roumanian of this century has changed very little from what his ancestors were two or three hundred years ago, and, like his forefathers, he delights in listening to fairy tales and legends.

These tales are of various kinds, but the more characteristic deal with the planets, and one of the more celebrated with the story of the Sun and Moon.

Once upon a time, so the legend runs, the Sun fell in love with his sister and desired to make her his wife. Jupiter intervened at the altar to prevent so sacrilegious a union, and taking her in his arms bore her away to the sea and cast her in, where she was changed into an eel.

The Sun followed in hot haste and also sank into the sea, in the west, but Jupiter, to avoid their ever meeting, caught up the eel and flung it up among the clouds, where it became

the Moon ; and ever since the Sun has never ceased chasing it.

This charming legend is but one of many equally charming. Through Roumania, in reality, Christianity and paganism go hand-in-hand, and, while the Roumanian is a devout Greek Catholic, he has remained to-day, as of old, so profoundly imbued with the traditional pagan spirit that, like the Irish and Bulgarian, he is ever playing truant from earth and slipping through the gate of fancy into the Garden of Fairy Land, so that even the grass that he treads seems to rustle with lovely spirit things. And for him the nymphs of the pools and lakes, the dryads of the woods, the *mama padurii* who guard little children as they wander through the forest, and the little spirits and elves who frolic at nightfall are realities that render him tolerant of an existence that without them would seem even less enviable than that of many beasts of the field.

Never shall I forget the impression left on me by a certain humble shepherd whom I met one evening at twilight spending his endless vigil with his sheep and dogs among the slopes of the uplands. Standing by a stile near the primitive hut in which on a bed of bracken he takes his rest, he was playing an old peasant tune on a shepherd's flute, a very pipe of Pan, since it closely resembled those which I had seen on Roman sculptures. I knew that his life was arduous, that for food on that day, as every other day, he had probably only had an onion and a little *mamaliga* or maize porridge to eat ; yet in his eyes, as in those of the Hungarian *csiko*, I read a strange content, while an expectant smile hovered on his lips. Perhaps he, too, was at that moment conjuring up a vision of an unseen world that only the simple and primitive can glimpse and which, when one has seen it, becomes an armour that no ill can traverse.

**BOOK III**  
**BULGARIA**

**INTRODUCTION**

**BULGARIA** has an area of 40,000 square miles and a population of about 5,000,000. Of these nearly 4,000,000 are Bulgars and the rest Turks, Gypsies, Greeks, Pomaks, Roumanians and Jews. Over eighty per cent of the people are peasants. They are a hard-headed, hard-working race, "patient and thorough, tenacious and rough, sober and laborious, proud and warlike," whose irredentism is centred upon three regions where they claim that nearly a third of the Bulgarian race is living under foreign rule: the Dobrudja, now under Roumania, Macedonia and Thrace. Dobrudja they covet on account of its waterfront on the Danube and Black Sea. . . . Macedonia because they have always included among their national aspirations the incorporation of that portion of Macedonia which was allotted to them in virtue of the Treaty of San Stephano; Thrace because they need an outlet on the Ægean Sea.

Alone of the enemy nations Bulgaria has loyally abided by the provisions of the peace treaties, and is in fact the only country that is paying us reparations. . . .

Bulgaria possesses coal mines, but the chief occupation is agriculture. Among her other products the chief are the roses of Kazanlik, which yield the greater part of the world's attar, that very penetrating essential oil which is the basis of all perfume.

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Crossing the low, wide Danube by ferry, one hundred and eighty miles south, you reach Roustouk, the first Bulgarian city. Here the East and West are blending. . . . Then, taking the train to Sofia, you pass interminable fields of well-tilled brown earth until the mountain passes of the Balkans are reached, where the most grandiose mountain scenery in Europe can be admired. . . . Soon Sofia is reached, a modern, pleasant little town. Sturdy peasants in short tunics and wide trousers gathered in at the knee are listening to the Royal Guard Band that is playing "Carmen" in the Palace Gardens. The gold dome of the Alexander Nevsky Church, the finest Greek church outside of Russia, looms high against the sky, and in the Palace King Boris and his Cabinet are trying to find a solution of the Macedonian difficulty. . . .

**CHAPTER I****WHERE EAST AND WEST ARE ONE—IN ROUSTOUK**

To Roustouk on the Danube we journeyed by ferry-boat from the Roumanian town of Giurgiu on the opposite banks and, leaving our luggage at the station near the ferry landing, we climbed up the hill slope on which the town is situated.

Unfolding before us was the Danube, flowing swiftly between its banks, its leaden-grey waters blending harmoniously with the sombre greyness typical of Bulgarian landscapes ; and all around quaint little streets, in which big modern buildings, banks and cafés alternated with ramshackle cottages and shops exhibiting fantastic designs.

Here the East and West were blending. Eastern the predominant note in the many stalls that we passed, where turbaned Turks and Bulgars sold fruit or clusters of paprika chillies that glowed like fairy lamps in the darkest corners ; Eastern the brightly-coloured embroideries that recalled Oriental carpets ; Eastern, too, the incessant bargaining that precluded every transaction.

Slowly we came down the main street leading to the station, pausing now and then to admire picturesquely-clad peasant women with their dowries of old Turkish coins spread all over their backs, or stopped to gaze at the gaily-caparisoned mules that stood harnessed to country carts on the wayside. Profusely decorated with harness that was studded with silver and set off by numerous pale blue stones or beads hanging from their necks, these fiery animals made as brave a show as their masters as they struggled up the steep ascents with the agility

of goats, while their masters stood erect in their carts spurring them on to greater rapidity.

Then, our time being short, we entered a small café and asked for tea, hoping that here, at least, we could have the inevitable tea with citron that had so far been obtainable in the various countries that we had visited. Tea! They were ignorant of the beverage. Was it *tilleul* or some similar medicinal herb? Drinking Turkish coffee as a substitute, we passed on to the station, where we found the train that was to convey us to Sofia. No appearance of any platform; only one barrack-like building in which we were informed we could buy our tickets. Then, having fortunately exchanged some Roumanian money into levas, I went to the ticket office and with the help of a courteous Turkish pacha who consented to act as interpreter, was told the price of our two tickets to the Bulgarian capital. I dived forthwith into the recesses of my pocket-book, and after some sorting-out the notes produced two thousand leva ones, which I handed to the official at the little window, only to find him returning them to me with a shake of his head.

"Are not these notes any good?" I asked our Turkish friend. "They are some I obtained from the bank only two hours ago; what does the man mean?"

"He says the notes are folded in four," was the reply. "They have the strictest orders not to accept as legal tender any note that is folded more than twice."

And no amount of persuasion could induce him to take these notes. The alleged order, as I found out afterwards, arose from the fact that the particular brand of Treasury notes of which my two were specimens had proved such an expense to the Bulgarian Treasury that no effort was spared to prolong their existence as long as humanly possible. Hence this order to the banks to refuse any note that was folded more than twice.

Getting into the train then proved our next difficulty; for, on approaching the train, which, as I have stated before, was by a track thick with grass, we found that the steps leading into the carriage were so steep that it was practically impossible



for a woman to climb up unaided. In fact, these particular steps were at least three feet from the ground, and it needed our united efforts to enable my wife to climb up into her carriage. In the meantime, all the local population came down to see the train off, and until its departure we remained at the window realising that we had left Europe far behind. Here was an old man with a jacket of dark stuff flounced in pale blue, tight trousers embroidered at the knees, and with the inevitable round cap that we came to associate with Bulgars; here picturesque little maidens looking like so many little women, with veils over their heads and hair, that hung in small plaits with sequins down their backs, selling oranges or carrying pitchers of clear water. . . . And all around, desolation and ruin; a road bordered with houses, some in the last stage of decay, full of great jagged boulders or cobblestones; and opposite the gloomy, relentless Danube flowing interminably. . . . Then, as the sun disappeared behind the horizon, we heard the sound of a shrill whistle and the train set off on its way to Sofia, while a man sang a wild Eastern song and little impish children, ragged and bare-footed, ran hither and thither, waving dusky brown arms in the sunset. So ended our first day on Bulgarian soil.

## CHAPTER II.

## DANCING THE HORO

RETURNING one afternoon from Boyana, a quaint little village in the Plain in which we had been shown some beautiful old frescoes dating from the 13th Century, we came across some thirty or forty peasants taking hands in long circles and dancing the Horo . . . and for a long time we lingered by the wayside watching what is perhaps the saddest dance in the world.

It was a scene that evoked a past when everything was primitive and picturesque. In the distance was Sofia with its mountains and the big dome of the great Alexander Nevsky Church looming against the sky; behind us, bleak mountain passes with valleys recalling biblical scenes; coming in our direction some sturdy peasants in brown fustian, red sashes, pot-shaped caps of sheepskin and cloth leggings bound with leather thongs, driving a team of black water-buffaloes into town; and around the solemn dancers peasant men and women from the neighbouring village in bright-coloured homespun, watching their evolutions or listening to the very melancholy strains of music that issued from three strange-looking instruments, one of which resembled the bagpipes. . . .

It was a dance that reminded me of other dances that I have seen in other lands; but, unlike these others, it seemed to breathe an atmosphere of sadness and melancholy, as if brooding eternally over all was the consciousness that life even at its best would never bring them their hearts' desire. . . .

And like many other dances that I saw danced in the Balkans, it was danced in circles, each dancer placing his hand



THE CATHEDRAL OF ALEXANDER NEVSKY, SOFIA.

either in that of his neighbour or resting it upon the latter's shoulder.

Then, as we slowly came forward and approached the musicians, who had hitherto contented themselves with playing the same monotonous dirge-like tune, the fiddler suddenly started playing a new melody on one of the three strings of his gadulka that seemed to awaken the dancers to new life and fresh evolutions ; for immediately taking up the tune, which, as I discovered afterwards, proved to be one of their most favourite national songs, every dancer began to sing in accompaniment to the music, while the dance began to assume the form of a serpent which coils and uncoils ; first two steps forward to the right, then one step backwards to the left . . . faster and faster, then slower, yet always without the slightest trace of merriment or abandon . . . while, impassive, the crowd of other peasants looking on joined in the refrain.

Such was my first experience of the Horo, and never have I seen a dance in which were reflected so listless and stolid a temperament and so little *joie de vivre*.

## CHAPTER III

## THE ROOKS OF SOFIA

OVER the trees of the Palace Gardens thousands of rooks are circling and cawing as they hold their evening council. . . . It is an incessant clamour, for every tree is black with birds ; yet the tolerant crowds that we see passing to and fro in the boulevard outside the Palace gates do not even raise their heads to glance at them.

Eagerly we turn to our friend Mr. P——, and express our wonder at the good people of Sofia for being so tolerant of their antics ; and we ask him to tell us something of these strange denizens of the royal gardens.

“ These rooks are the sacred guardians of the Palace,” he answers, “ and even before it was built they have always inhabited these trees and been a feature of our town. We could not do without them. They are like the sacred geese of the Capitol, and if they disappeared we would feel as if something ominous had happened. Nor do their cries really disturb us. In the early morning they awaken us from our sleep and bid us arise ; and when at twilight we hear their clamour growing we know that our day’s work is over and that soon, like them, we will be retiring to rest and sleep. From time to time a few iconoclasts have raised an outcry against them, but as the great majority of our population is opposed to their destruction, they remain inviolate. No one has ever dared to harm them.”

As he spoke these words, symbolical of the truth that nothing really sways primitive men so much as what is traditional or customary, I heard the loud hooting of a motor-horn, and, looking round, saw King Boris passing in his car.

As he crossed the Palace gates and the guard presented arms, I almost fancied that the rooks stilled their clamour. . . .

Then as, a little later, we passed on our way to the hotel, and the clamour had melted into the twilight and mingled with the trees, I recalled an old legend that it is always at twilight that evil enters the heart of man. Turning to P——, I suggested that the ravens of the Palace had perhaps been set there in old times by an enchanter to watch over the future abode of the Bulgarian kings, and that it was perhaps the impenetrable wall of sound produced by their cawing that kept evil out and accounted for the wonderful simplicity of heart which remains so strong a characteristic of the Bulgarian monarch.

“Perhaps you are right,” he answered with a smile; but, like him, I recalled King Boris’ predecessor, and concluded that even the ravens’ malign character had not been strong enough to draw unto themselves all evil influences where he was concerned.

I returned to my hotel, feeling that in Bulgaria, as in Ireland, this world and the next are never very far apart and that to many Bulgarians it was still given to have understanding of imaginative things. . . .

## CHAPTER IV

## THE CHURCH OF ALEXANDER NEVSKY

STANDING before us was the Church of Alexander Nevsky, its massive gold dome bulging high above the green tree-tops and the roofs of the capital. It is a building of which the people of Sofia are justly proud, for it is without its equal in the Balkans ; and, though the cost was double the estimate, the result was magnificent. Yet, though completed in 1913 after more than fifteen years had been spent in building it, it is still awaiting inauguration ; for the Bulgarians feel that it cannot be opened except in the presence of official representatives of the Russian Government and Church, for whom as of yore there always exists a warm feeling of sympathy and gratitude. . . .

Walking through the crowd, I sought the west door and found it locked, but the east porch entrance was unbarred. It opened to the gloom of the vast interior, illumined by the splendour of onyx and marble and wondrously artistic iconography. On all sides precious marble from every clime, marbles from Italy and marbles from Brazil ; onyx from Mexico. . . . Walls and domes covered with paintings, mostly of the Russian school, and among these paintings of the saints by Mitoff and the celebrated " Virgin and Child " of Mirkvicka. . . . Moved to admiration by the gorgeous wonder of decoration, in which I traced an originality of design seldom to be found in Greek Orthodox churches, I suggested to my escort that it was a pity not to throw open to the public a church on which so much loving care and expenditure had been lavished, and pointed out that it was vain to wait for better days in Russia, or to anticipate the moment when representatives of a well-ordered



THE CATHEDRAL OF ALEXANDER NEVSKY, SOFIA.



nation would come in state and amity to open the church which in a sense had been dedicated to their liberating hand. . . .

Ultimately, no doubt, the day would come when Bolshevism would have been shattered under the pressure of realities, but, as this date was so far distant and problematical, it would be wiser to seize some other occasion as a pretext for opening it. Impressed by my arguments, my friend replied that there was a growing movement among the Bulgarian people in favour of an early inauguration, but that there seemed as yet no reason for throwing the church open.

“If only our King would marry, then perhaps we could inaugurate the church,” he replied; “but, as you know, he displays little desire to take a wife, and in any case the times are so bad and our fortunes so low that any national rejoicings on the scale that you talk of would appear a little unseemly.”

I realised the truth of what he said, and glanced again around me as if in search of the great multitude that I felt should be there. Only a few shapes were flitting round the doorway, but, as I looked deeper into the darkness, I saw a woman kneeling before an altar, weeping, and feeling that she, at least, was not waiting for the day of inauguration, but was already finding solace for her sorrows in turning to God, I pointed to her kneeling figure as we quietly withdrew and told my friend that here was the best possible justification of the suggestion that I had made.

## CHAPTER V

## THE VALLEY OF ROSES

IN a sheltered mountain valley that lies between the Balkans and the picturesque Snednagora Hills is a district which, when we visited it in June, was like an enchanted garden.

The air was laden with perfume and in the fields were innumerable damask roses which sturdy Bulgarian girls were collecting for distillation.

Eagerly we approached to see the harvesters at their work, and, passing from lane to lane, saw them collecting every flower that had begun to bloom, even half-opened buds. These they broke off just below the calyx and then flung into a large basket.

"All this district," said P——, "is exclusively devoted to the cultivation of roses, and in no other spot in the world are conditions so suitable. . . . It is a favoured region that is protected from cold winds and exceedingly well irrigated."

Mr. P—— also reminded me of the fact that this valley supplied the whole world with attar of roses, and I was accordingly not surprised to hear that its whole extent, some 18,000 acres, was devoted to rose culture, in fact that the whole population living in this district was engaged in rose farming.

We glanced down the lanes and noticed that each rose plantation, instead of being arranged in isolated plants like vines, formed high parallel hedges sometimes exceeding a hundred yards in extent, with six feet between the rows.

"Another peculiarity," continued P——, "is that this plantation is not laid out like any other. . . . Instead of planting young rose trees in the usual way, entire branches, leaves and

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all, are laid horizontally in a wide ditch, which is then covered very lightly with layers of earth and stable manure. The foreman tells me that it takes about two years before any roses appear, and about five before they can be gathered in any appreciable quantity."

"What is the total production of roses in this district?" I asked.

"Each acre produces about 3,500 lbs. of roses yearly, or something over a million roses," was the answer, "but it takes nearly 200 lbs. of petals to produce a single ounce of rose oil."

We also saw the cisterns of the alembics in which, on the completion of the harvest, the petals are dropped for boiling; 20 lbs. of flowers go to every 16 gallons of water, these petals being submitted to a second distillation after cooling, which very soon causes tiny globules of oil to rise to the surface. When all the water has been dispelled, the distillers pour the remaining contents into a collecting flask, and after a further purification obtain attar of the purest quality.

The production of attar of roses is extremely expensive and owing to the disappearance of the Russian market has fallen off considerably since the War.

The foreman of one of the companies of Kazanlik who trade directly with the peasant growers (for the peasants for the most part do not distil their own roses but sell their produce to the merchants owning the distilleries) told me that twenty years ago the production of attar used to average about four or five thousand kilos yearly, i.e., about five tons, but that since the War it had fallen to about half that quantity, last year only reaching the total of 1,500 kilos. . . .

As attar of roses forms the basis of every good perfume, I find it difficult to account for the fact that, while this country bought over 700 kilos yearly before the War, it only bought 200 kilos last year. Since there is no evidence of less scent being bought by the public to-day than before 1914, I can only surmise that our manufacturers of perfumes are selling perfume of inferior quality.

My wife then asked the price of attar and we were both amazed to hear that it cost only 26s. an ounce if bought on

the spot. Recalling the fact that in London the price per dram had averaged 15s. to 17s., or £12 to £14 an ounce, we concluded that the shippers of this commodity were not exactly losing money, and regretted that we possessed neither the capital nor the business acumen necessary to take advantage of such profitable trading. Then after hearing for what further uses rosewater obtained after the first distillation could be utilised—as, for instance, that it was of use for flavouring chocolates or for after-dinner finger-bowls, or for hookah smoking—and also that the wax substance that is found adhering to the hands of the girls and women gathering the roses can be used for coating metal necklaces, we gave a small tip to the foreman who had taken us round the plantation and, hurrying back to our car, were soon speeding for home.

## CHAPTER VI

## PILGRIMS IN THE NIGHT

A VISIT to Rilo Monastery was now proposed to us, and the War Minister kindly placed a car at our disposal. We were told that the roads were mere tracks, that the car which had been offered to us was so old and worn that we would probably end by being stranded in some wild region in the mountains where villages were sparse and casualty stations non-existent, that robbers had been known to attack the unwary, and that we would be fortunate if we returned with nothing worse than bruised limbs. Nothing, however, could damp our spirits or turn us from our resolve to visit so world-famed a monastery. A telegram was sent to the Archimandrite Anthony, the Prior, to announce our arrival on that same evening ; and after taking an early lunch we duly set out from the hotel with our friend and guide, Mr. P—— T——, a Bulgarian diplomat, armed with wraps, a camera, and a small revolver which our friend thought it prudent to take with us.

Rilo Monastery lies in the Rhodope Mountains, some 120 miles from Sofia, and the road that leads to it is for the first forty miles of even character, the land traversed being typically Bulgarian in appearance : plains so spacious that the sense of loneliness numbs one, dotted here and there by a few terracotta cottages generally concealed in folds of the ground or clefts in the surrounding hills, and almost indistinguishable from the landscape around . . . and in the distance the snow-clad mountains of Rilo lying as a barrier across our path.

We first went through an industrial district—and here the ground sagged, and there were many cinder-heaps among the

rough, uneven grass. This was Pernik, the principal coal-mine in Bulgaria and one that is greatly coveted by the Serbs. . . . Then Dubnitza was passed, a picturesque little town on the hill slopes, slightly reminiscent of Arab villages in the mountains of Kabylia. Here we turned abruptly to the left and circled around the Rilo Plannina massif, leaving it on our left, and followed a track which leads to the Rila River—a track that became as wild as the scenery which it traversed. Here many obstacles encumbered our path—boulders, huge stones, great ditches and holes. The jolting was prodigious, for it seemed as if our chauffeur took a fiendish delight in rushing anything that lay in his way.

The valley now narrowed to a gorge with steep mountain walls looming high above us on each side, while the Rila River below hurried noisily between its rock-bound banks. The scenery was impressive in its silence, the only sign of life that we encountered being occasional waggons drawn by buffaloes, while an eagle overhead sailed majestically on motionless wings. Here was little vegetation—only a few stunted trees and shrubs which the goats who live on the slope had disdained.

On approaching the old Turkish-Bulgarian frontier, the panorama became more diversified in character. The hill slopes were now clothed in green, pine trees running up to their summits, while the transfiguring effect of the sunset began to tinge the mountain-tops with crimson, yellow and mauve; the deep yawning crevices above gleamed coldly as the snow turned from gold to pink. Mr. P—— spoke to us of the old wars between the Turks and Bulgarians; he told us of his boyhood when, with friends of his youth, he had taken part in raiding expeditions over the frontier hills of Rilo Plannina—mad ventures in which passionate youths had sought distinction, or death where no other result could be achieved.

It was good to see his strong idealist features illumined by the glow of recollection, to hear his vivid stories of mad forays in the enemy's country, to feel with him the air around us beating and quivering as to the tramp of soldiers' feet. But suddenly, on plunging down to the water's edge, we were recalled to stern reality by a brusque jolting and pulling up of

the car. Round the bend a peasant's cart lay across the track, and it was only the chauffeur's presence of mind and alertness that saved us from falling over the impending precipice into the river. Then, across a sapling bridge that hung precariously from rock to boulder, we crossed the Rila. The enthusiasm of our departure had now almost evaporated, for the journey seemed interminable and we appeared unable to draw any nearer to our destination if the various peasants' estimates of distance could be depended upon.

Then many-hued night insidiously stealing over us added its eerie note to our adventure, for stumbling over obstacles like a blind thing the car continued on its way, a very Jugger-naut, until we felt as if we were being swept irresistibly towards some dark and unknown destiny. Touched by the mystery of night, everything around us began to assume new shapes, new lines in which the darkness of the massive mountains contrasted with the glare of the headlights. We knew that at any moment we might be swept into the foaming river below, but still we cared not; we felt a strange excitement stealing over us, being as tolerant of danger as if only our spirits mattered, and not our bodies, which it alone could assail. Then, as we bounded along, a few twinkling lights in the distance recalled us to reality.

"This must be Rilo," my wife exclaimed, and relieved at the prospect of the termination of a very tiring journey—it was past eight o'clock—we thought of the welcome awaiting us.

"I hope the telegram arrived in time and that the monks are expecting us," I remarked, but when we had proceeded a little further we found that we had been mistaken, and that the lights that we had seen came from a small hamlet nestling on the mountain slope.

"Never mind, we cannot be far off," said the chauffeur; and, taking the better of the two roads which now appeared before us, we swept on our way until, having passed a solitary cottage, we heard loud shouts and saw vague forms waving desperate arms in the night.

"Bandits!" I cried; but a chance word overheard by the chauffeur sufficed to make him pull up sharply.

What was the matter? Impatiently Mr. P— bent forward to speak to a man who had rushed up from the wayside, and we realised that we had followed the wrong road and that another ten yards would have landed us into the river!

There was a buzz of conversation, indistinct forms gathered around us, and we were told, with many gestures, that the road which we had followed was an unfinished one, and that we would have to retrace our steps some hundred yards or more if we wished to get on to the right road.

The journey was then resumed, we retraced our steps to the village, and, having been put on the right track by an obliging native, followed the mountain path that leads to the valley in which the monastery lies enshrined—a little chastened, perhaps, at the thought that we had courted Death, but more than grateful for the real thrill of danger that such a courting had occasioned.

Another mile and we reached the road leading to the monastery, an avenue bordered by a dark tracery of trees, and soon the grey, phantasmal building was before us—grim and forbidding like a fortress of old. Soon we were knocking at its massive door—knocking repeatedly until a light appeared in a window above us and a small trap window had been opened, when some vague form asked us who we were and what was our business. . . . Mr. P— explained who we were. “Were we not being expected?” Yes, they were expecting us; but they had given us up since it was so late. They would come down and unbolt the doors.

Then after a lapse of a few minutes which seemed interminable, the huge oaken door turned slowly on its hinges and we were admitted. Our journey was over. Courteously one of the monks bade us welcome, and, after directing the monastery guard to take our traps to our respective rooms, we were conducted along a dark corridor by another monk, who carried a lantern of wrought iron before him, to see the Archimandrite, a small, bearded man with black twinkling eyes and a pale face. Each of us bent low over his outstretched hands as if to kiss them. Courteously he greeted us and bade us sit by his side. A servant brought in a tray containing some





INTERIOR OF CATHEDRAL OF ALEXANDER NEVSKY, SOFIA, SHOWING KING'S THRONE ON THE RIGHT.

mountain honey in a large bowl, to which we helped ourselves in the Russian way with a spoon and washed down with a generous draught of cool water, my wife remarking that she could not imagine a more delicious prelude to a good dinner.

"But where is the good dinner?" I queried. Anxiously we turned to question our friend, who was now talking animatedly to the Archimandrite.

"I suppose you are discussing the menu?" my wife asked him.

"Well—I am afraid we will have to put up with the simplest of fare," was the answer. "You see, the monks are fasting till Christmas, and it looks as if we will have to fast too."

"But that is not too bad," I exclaimed. "Speaking for ourselves, we simply love fish and eggs."

"But you won't even get that," was the rejoinder. "All the monks can offer us is honey, lentil soup, and brown bread. I am very sorry, but nothing that I could say would induce the Prior to give us more. We should have brought some food with us."

And so we three hungry travellers sat down to a meal of lentils and honey that was plentiful enough but hardly the kind that we had expected, while Mr. P——, seeing our weary faces, thought to improve matters by remarking that we could have good meals every day, but could only see Rilo once. Being less spartan than he, we could hardly be expected to wax enthusiastic.

## CHAPTER VII

## RILO MONASTERY

THE next morning we were up early, refreshed by a good night's sleep, and anxious to explore still further the great historic monastery that had appeared so grim and menacing when seen in the gloom of night. Hurriedly we took a breakfast consisting of tilleul, brown bread, and honey ; and after paying our respects to the Archimandrite, who, as on the evening before, offered us the traditional honey and water, we sallied down to the great court, in the centre of which we could see a Byzantine church with beautiful alcoves filled with gorgeous frescoes. We were accompanied by one of the monks, the treasurer of the monastery, who was reputed to be a great linguist, but whose French was so halting and imperfect that I found it far more profitable to turn to Mr. P—— for information.

Rilo Monastery is to the Bulgarians what the Mont St. Michel and the Grande Chartreuse were for so long to the French : a centre of religious feeling and national aspiration. It is an enormous rectangular pile, half fortress, half palace, built of massive stone, whose height of sheer wall on the outside is only broken by small barred windows and two arched gateways, one at each end. It comprises a number of galleries opening on to the courtyard and supported by stone arches which rise tier upon tier forming a series of the most picturesque arcades. The painting of the place is peculiar, too, for, while the outside walls have been left in their natural colour, the inside are whitewashed and striped with red. In the centre of the court stands the chapel, and beside it an old dungeon tower.

While the monk disappeared for a few moments to look for

the keys of the church, which had been mislaid, P—— spoke to us awhile of the early days when, perhaps more than any other monastery in Bulgaria, it had fostered and kept alive the national spirit throughout the darkest and most critical periods of Bulgarian history, until we wondered at its own defiant endurance and felt that at every step we were treading on hallowed ground or imagined that we heard the clash of armour and of steel and heard the rattle of musketry. We learned that the monastery dated from the 14th Century, when a certain Boyar Hrel had built a church and tower in honour of Ivan Rilsky, a hermit who had selected this wild spot as the permanent place of his devotions, and who was renowned for the unusual power that he possessed of exorcising demons and evil spirits ; around the original church and tower, part of which was destroyed by fire, the present buildings were gradually erected.

But the monk had returned, and together we visited the monastery library and museum with its wealth of old books of which the monks are inordinately proud.

We were shown lovely embroideries that had been given to the monastery by Alexander II., and a number of old ikons depicting scenes of the Passion, some quaintly beautiful, and all the work of humble peasants ; and lastly an interesting collection of weapons that dated from the 17th and 18th Centuries and which we were told had belonged to the Pandours, a body of fierce soldiery whom the Sultans had provided for the monks' defence. Even up to the last century these fierce warriors were a picturesque feature of the monastery, and could be seen inside the main courtyard, dressed in Albanian costume and armed with most murderous-looking weapons.

To-day the Pandour has been transformed into a general factotum and guide, who helps to carry the visitors' luggage and acts as porter at the main entrance. Our Pandour—for Rilo in these impoverished times can only afford one—was a tall, lean, and wiry individual, all tough sinew and as supple as a panther ; he wore cloth leggings bound with leather thongs and pliant sandals to enable him to grip the rocks as he climbed.

From the museum we passed on to the church, and were

first taken to admire the somewhat crude frescoes that cover its outside walls, quaintly fanciful pictures that represent the after torments of the damned or scenes of the Day of Judgment. Here we saw God the Father with Christ and the Virgin sitting in solemn judgment, with Heaven as the courtyard and the Twelve Apostles standing at the gate, Peter holding the key.

But the inside of the church held our attention far longer, and here we lingered an hour seeing many things to move us to admiration. There was a beautifully carved door which dates from the 14th Century, characterised by very fine open-work; on the centre of it were twelve upright panels adorned with strange figures of animals; and there were also many old ikons, one of these representing the Holy Trinity. The extraordinary feature of this ikon is that as you shift your position when facing it from left to right, it depicts the three Persons of the Holy Trinity in turn, beginning with God the Son and finishing with God the Father.

Mr. P—— also made us admire a beautiful ivory inlaid Throne that had been designed for the Prince Regent. Its ornamentation was in the same delicate style as that found on the door, yet I confess that I found here that same tendency to overload with gold ornamentation which is so characteristic of most Greek churches.

Kneeling in devout prayer before something which looked very like a tomb near the High Altar were two holy monks belonging to the monastery, and when I enquired from P—— if it really was a sarcophagus he informed me that it was St. Ivan's, and that it behoved him, as it behoved all good Orthodox Catholics, to pay the Saint his little tribute of adoration before he left. Silently acquiescing and following in his wake, we too then approached the holy sarcophagus, being just in time to see the monks uncovering the mummy-like figure that represents the founder of Rilo and kissing the very grey and bandaged thing that is evidently one of the arms of the Saint. I saw contentment in their eyes and a spiritual luminosity in their faces, as if their rough uncomeliness had suddenly become purified by some mysterious hidden illuminant.



THE CHURCH OF RILO.

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Strangely stirred by this spectacle we then left the chapel.

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But there are many other things of beauty and of interest in Rilo. There is a wondrous kitchen that is probably unique of its kind, whose ceiling is the very roof of the building, and cauldrons to boil the pilgrims' soup so large that the cook is obliged to stand on a box to stir the boiling beverage, the spoon that he uses being nearly as big as himself; and there are excursions innumerable down in the valley below or among the mountains that surround it on two sides.

In the short time at our disposal we naturally could not see everything that there was to be seen, yet there was one particularly interesting walk that we took one morning which will long continue to haunt my memory.

It was clear and sunny when we started out that afternoon to visit the hermit who lives on a hill slope some four miles away. Mr. P—— and our tall, gaunt Pandour came with us to show us the way.

Very soon we had left the monastery far behind and were walking along the valley by the river side before beginning our climb. Here was peace, perfect peace; silently the Rila flowed by its verdant banks, while on our left we could see a shepherd and his flock slowly moving across the meadow.

Then, turning abruptly to the left, we began our ascent of the very steep hill slope on which the hermit had his dwelling, our mode of progress being so slow that the Pandour suddenly turned round to talk to Mr. P—— and pointed to his watch.

"I suppose the beggar thinks that we ought to hurry a little," I asked our Bulgarian friend.

"Yes," was the answer, "and there is very good reason for it. You see, we must get back to the valley before the sheep return to their pens or else there may be trouble with the sheep-dogs. They are very wild creatures and our friend fears that we may be attacked by them on our way back. I think we ought to hurry." With these words he immediately began to set the pace, and, hardly stopping to admire the view, we gradually climbed higher and higher, scrambling over rough and

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uneven ground until we had reached the foot of the winding, almost vertical path that leads direct to the hermit's chapel and retreat.

Another five minutes and we had reached a ledge in front of his dwelling and grotto, and were being shown round the chapel hewn out of rock and the rustic retreat in which he is content to spend his days. I almost shivered as I realised the utter loneliness of his life.

"How can he stand this monotony?" I asked our friend. "Is it his faith that supports him?"

"The valley is to him the word of God," was his rejoinder, "and he lives to preach it. There can be no real monotony when life is one big desire!"

Silently he pointed to the valley below, now steeped in the full glory of the setting sun; and, lulled to languor by the entrancing beauty of this lotus land, like my friend I almost felt that the hermit had chosen the better path.

Near by a hawk poised, while talking to our Pandour was the hermit, an old, old man dressed in the robes of priesthood, in whose eyes could be traced a wonderful calm.

From the summit I gazed down and wondered at the glory of it all and admired the lovely prospect that opened before me.

The little river that wound in and out through the luxuriant valley; the high mountains opposite with all their wealth and infinite variety of colouring; the purple hue of the ash trees running up the slope; the dark green of the pines and larches through which babbled picturesque mountain streams dashing down tumultuously to the river; and, crowning some of the highest peaks, snow, dazzling in its whiteness or lost in the mauve of the mists that obscured the view. Truly a very kaleidoscope of colour that seemed to change with every hour!

Then suddenly the Pandour, who for a time had been sitting apart watching us with a smile dancing in his brown eyes, arose to warn us that it was time to begin our return journey if we wished to avoid the dogs.—"In half an hour," he declared, "all flocks will be returning to their pens, so we had better leave at once."



Accordingly we paid our respects to the holy man and, after giving him a small donation for the upkeep of his chapel, were taken to the back of the grotto to see the narrow passage which, it is said, only those without mortal sin are able to squeeze through.

"We have just time to try the passage," said P——, and gallantly my wife essayed the feat, which, as she is very slim, she found little difficulty in doing. Our friend then attempted to get through but as I saw that he only just managed to wriggle through with difficulty, I realised that it was useless attempting it myself; for it is a difficult feat and one that should not be attempted by people possessing any tendencies to robustness.

Spurred on by the Pandour, who now showed signs of concern for our safety, we rapidly made our way down towards the valley, not even stopping once to admire the views that were constantly changing in character, when we heard the shepherds whistling for their dogs and realised that we were too late!

"I suppose there is no possibility of avoiding the dogs?" I asked P——.

"Not the slightest," he answered, "so we had better prepare for them," and taking a large pocket-knife out of his pocket he selected a large branch of a tree near by and very quickly had made himself a stout stick, the Pandour and myself following his example. Slowly we approached the meadow where we could see a shepherd leading his flock home while two big dogs kept running to and fro, barking vigorously to keep the sheep on the move.

"There is going to be some excitement," I whispered to my wife, and carefully we moved forward, the Pandour in front and P—— and myself walking one on each side of my wife.

Suddenly the two dogs espied us, and one big hulking brute turning round as if he were asking what our business was, began to growl ominously as he was preparing to rush at us. The shepherd, however, recognising the Pandour as a friend, said something to his dogs to reassure them, and immediately they faced about and continued their interrupted duties as if we had never existed.

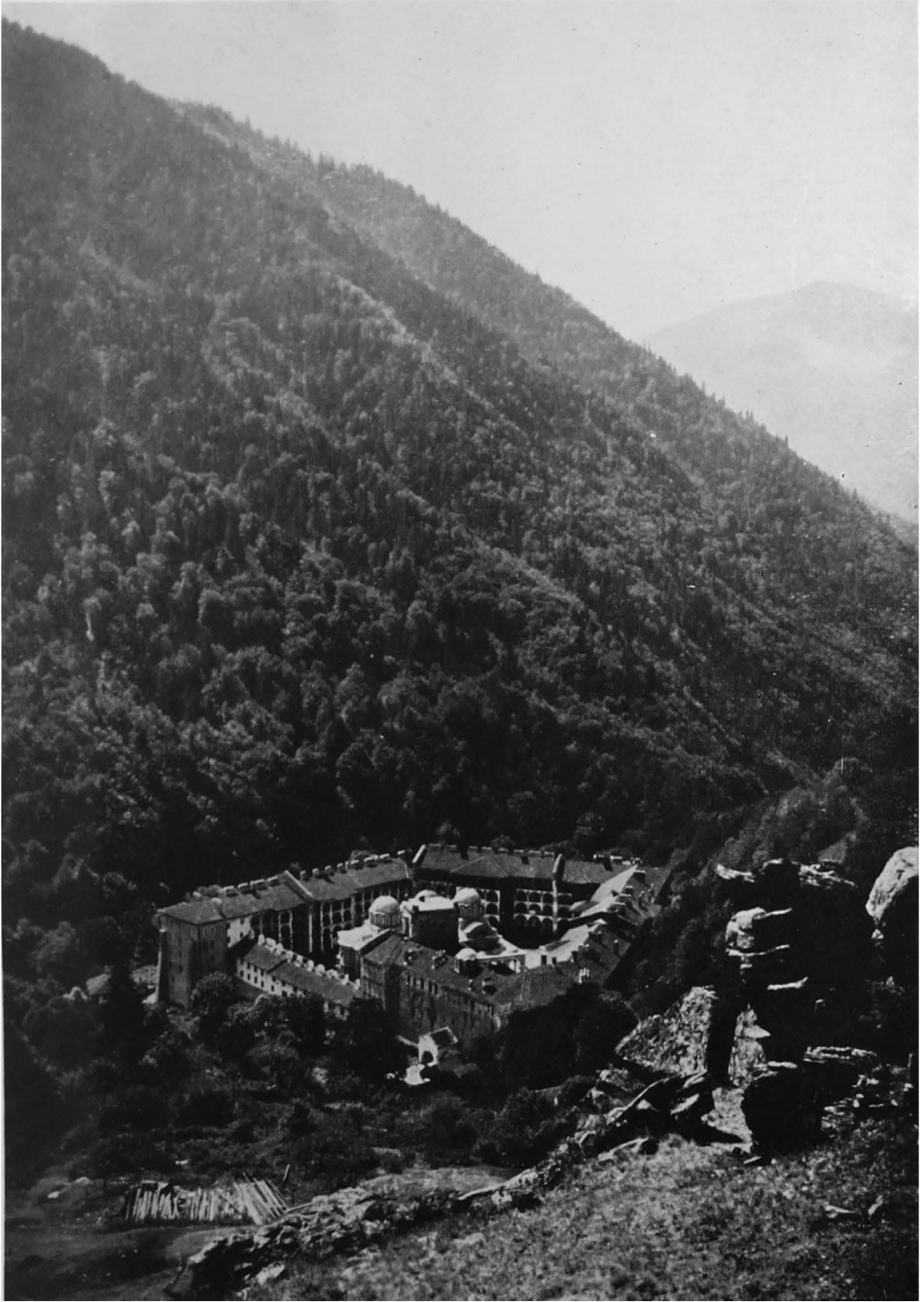
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“ It is obvious that these dogs are not so bad as they are painted,” I exclaimed ; and certain it is that, as we passed the flock, one of the dogs began to wag so friendly a tail that we obtained permission from the shepherd to take a photograph of both himself and the flock and dogs, after which we quietly continued on our way enjoying the greatly varied landscapes which presented themselves before us as we followed the river turning and twisting on its way to the monastery. It was the hour of Pan, and I could almost imagine that I saw him playing his pipes by the river or dancing to a lilting melody.

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Next morning we spent taking photographs of the monastery and of the mountains near by and also visited the huge dormitories and refectory which accommodate the five or six thousand pilgrims who yearly visit Rilo in June. Then, after inscribing our names in the Visitors' Book and giving a small donation to the Archimandrite, we took our leave of the genial Abbot and set forth again on our way back to Sofia after three days that had been replete with the most varied delights.

There had, of course, been several drawbacks, and the accommodation that had been provided for us had, in certain respects, been almost mediæval in its lofty disregard of the most elementary hygiene ; yet we felt that, however great had been these disadvantages, they had been more than compensated by the extraordinary charm and beauty of our surroundings. Like the pilgrims who yearly resort to Rilo to pray at the shrine or to visit the hermit, we too had lived the simple life and partaken of fare that at times had seemed almost distasteful—yet coupled with this feeling was such a sense of gratitude for the glory of what we had seen that, like the simple Bulgarian peasant folk, we almost felt inclined to halt by a roadside shrine and praise the saints for the beauty of the world. In any case, we all determined to revisit the monastery on the next possible occasion.



A VIEW OF RILO FROM THE HILLS.

## CHAPTER VIII

### IMPRESSIONS OF KING BORIS

FEW monarchs have ever ascended the throne under more trying conditions than King Boris. The policy which his father had followed had ended in disaster and there were many who were clamouring for a republic, yet, by the exercise of good judgment, tact and statesmanship, coupled with the most winning of personalities, he gradually won for himself the love and affection of his people and made the monarchy the only stable element in a world that was ever changing.

The Government at the time represented a coalition of the chief parties, Democrat, Radical, Nationalist, Progressive, Liberal, Socialist and Agrarian : but Stambulisky, the leader of the powerful Agrarian Party, though still a fugitive, was rapidly coming to the fore, and an Agrarian Government became inevitable ; yet the King succeeded in steering the royal bark clear of every shoal. He had been born a Prince of Bulgaria and belonged to the Orthodox Church ; he possessed the additional advantage of being known always to have opposed the reactionary policy of his father. He accordingly became extremely popular and, what was more difficult, managed to retain this popularity with the masses right through the very difficult régime of Stambulisky.

This Agrarian leader, though a patriot, was a visionnaire pure and simple, who rapidly became intoxicated with his position and allowed the most fantastic idealism to run riot in his brain. In this manner a Government that had at first been mainly Agrarian soon became inoculated with the Communist virus, and ultimately became not only a positive danger to

Bulgarian aspirations, but a species of despotism, compared with which Ferdinand's autocratic rule was in all respects preferable.

Obviously, then, King Boris' position was a precarious one, for not only had he to placate the Communist leader, but he had continually to soothe an irritated Opposition, and one, too, that, genuinely devoted to his royal person, was ever beseeching him to dismiss Stambulisky. Yet he not only preserved intact the complete devotion of his adherents, but so favourably impressed the Agrarian leader with his moderation, personal charm, and good judgment, that he refused to consider any possibility of substituting a Republican régime for the present one. "If we make a republic," he often told His Majesty, "you will be our first President." And certain it is that it was only during the last few months of the Communist régime that Stambulisky seriously began to disclose his evident intention of driving the King from power and of establishing the first Bulgarian Republic with himself as President.

Later events certainly proved that the King was well advised throughout in refusing to listen to the Opposition and to their counsels of violent intervention; for there was no force organised at the time to take up the reins of government, and it is doubtful whether there was any change, however drastic, that could have brought about amelioration.

In the *coup d'état* of the 9th of June, which brought about Stambulisky's downfall, Boris, of course, took no part. He knew nothing about it until it actually had taken place and always resented anyone thinking that he had encouraged it or been told about it before it happened. As he actually spent the afternoon of the day before the *coup d'état* in Stambulisky's country place, it is obvious that he did not like anyone to believe that he could have been guilty of such treacherous conduct; in fact, I always gathered that he most strongly resented the manner in which the Agrarian leader had met his death.

"Of course the revolution was inevitable," he declared, "but more respect should have been paid to legal form. I know that Stambulisky absolutely lost his head, and that the

exercise of power gradually intoxicated him like strong wine, but he was always passionately devoted to his country, and I cannot forget that it was to his efforts mainly that we owe the reduction of our war indemnity."

That King Boris refused for several hours to sign the proclamation issued by the new Government which the Premier brought to the Palace for his signature is, moreover, further proof of his chagrin at what had taken place and of his determination to do nothing that was unconstitutional.

And it is mainly this essentially democratic attitude and keen desire to do everything that lies in his power to keep abreast of current affairs, and to help in the reconstruction of his country, that have endeared him to his people, and made them and the various ministries that have succeeded one another learn increasingly to value the one element in their political life that remains constant throughout all changes.

Few monarchs know their country so well as King Boris. In fact, it is safe to say that he knows it far more thoroughly than any of his ministers ; for he is continually travelling and visiting various parts of his country and getting into close touch with the peasantry by whom he is beloved.

King Boris is, in fact, just the reverse of his father, for whereas King Ferdinand was an autocrat, who displaced members of his Cabinet at will, the present Bulgarian monarch adheres strictly to constitutional form, being very democratic and beloved in practically every political circle. He does not possess all the diplomatic ability of his father, who was justly reputed before the War to be one of the cleverest diplomats in Europe, but he arrives at even better results by dint of simple straightforwardness and shrewd common sense. He is, at any rate, far more open to new ideas than his predecessor and, as he possesses even greater natural gifts, he is rapidly becoming a most important factor in the political life of his country.

The Court is conducted on fairly modest lines, as the King is almost entirely dependent on his own Civil List, and he is, moreover, not particularly fond of pomp and ceremony. His opinion is that a modern king can really have very little time

for festivities, as he must keep *au courant* of every phase of parliamentary life, and must also assimilate every detail of the administrative and social life of his country, an attitude that has ensured not only that there are very few Court functions, but that the King has systematically refused to wear gala dress except on very rare occasions.

On one occasion, however, he certainly created disappointment by refusing to wear gala dress, and that was at the State opening of Parliament, which I was privileged to witness about a fortnight after my arrival in Sofia.

On this occasion Boris was informed that the people expected him to wear gala dress and it was suggested that ceremony and pageantry were necessary even in so democratic a State as Bulgaria, but though Colonel Baird, our Military Attaché, implored him to drive to Parliament in a State carriage and to make this concession to kingly precedent, in view of the pleasure that such ceremonial would create in the masses of people that were thronging the streets, he refused to depart from his usual practice, and drove up to his Parliament in an open carriage, dressed in ordinary general's uniform. It is certain that there are very few monarchs or more ordinary mortals who would not have succumbed to temptation on such an occasion.

The King has many hobbies, and among these the principal are gardening and reading. In his Palace I saw a large collection of rare plants and flowers to which he is always adding new specimens, while he also possesses an extensive library and, being an accomplished linguist, reads six languages in the original, specialising in military and scientific subjects.

Motoring is his favourite sport, for hardly a day passes in which he does not motor out of Sofia for a two to three hours' spin in the country. There is very little, in fact, that he does not know with regard to motors and motoring, and on more than one occasion he has driven the Orient Express.

Hunting he adores, and he is a remarkably good shot, as the many trophies of his prowess which I have admired in his hunting lodge at Tsarska Bistritza abundantly prove, while he

usually spends the summer months with his sister in his country place at Euxinograde near Varna.

Such is, briefly, the sovereign for whom many close observers predict a very distinguished career, and whose will for work and peace are assets of great value in the general policy of his country.



## CHAPTER IX

## INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL VOLKOFF

NEVER shall I forget the long and interesting conversation that I had one morning at the War Office in Sofia with General Volkoff, Bulgarian Minister of War, and one of the leaders of the League of Officers, who brought about the downfall of Stambulisky.

The General, who is a man of spare build, middle height, and fine soldierly appearance, was, like most prominent Bulgarian officers of the old régime, educated in Petrograd, and studied with distinction at the Military Academy until his return to Sofia in 1909.

During the War he held several important positions at Headquarters, and was for a time Chief of Staff of the 7th and 10th Divisions. At the end of the war he was appointed Director-General of the Geographical Institute of the Army, and there remained until the June revolution.

General Volkoff impressed me from the first moment as a man of fine patriotism, trenchant intelligence and compelling strength of character, and to listen to his narrative of the events that led up to the Officers' revolution was like listening to the reading of one of William Le Queux's novels, for in this narrative the General stood forth not only as the prime mover of the whole movement, but also as the only leader who could have achieved it successfully.

Of the tyranny exercised by Stambulisky during the last year of his tenure of office there can be little doubt, though there are many Englishmen who still cling to the belief that he was well inspired, not only in his foreign, but also in his

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home policy. Ambitious and self-seeking, possessing only a modicum of education, his one redeeming quality was his love for his country.

Acting as his own Foreign Minister, he succeeded by dint of conciliation and perseverance in creating a certain amount of sympathy for Bulgaria abroad. This in a large measure accounted for the substantial reduction in the indemnities imposed on his country which were made about this time; but his home policy was as pernicious as his foreign was well advised.

Originally an Agrarian of the more moderate type, of which party he had been leader even prior to 1919, he became rapidly imbued with Communist ideas and very soon began to attack every institution that stood for good order and efficiency. He told the peasants that there was no authority in the State save their *bon plaisir*, that Government posts were open to all men, whatever their ability, and, by persistently attacking such institutions as Religion and Capital, soon began to undermine the very foundations of the State.

General Volkoff told me that no revolution in history had ever been as necessary as the one by which he and his party had overthrown Stambulisky.

"Stambulisky," he declared, "did everything he could to destroy the existing order. Nothing was sacred in his eyes. Family ties were to disappear, marriage was to lose its sanctity and permanent character, while capitalists were to be shorn of their wealth, priests were to be deprived of all privileges and possessions and for the present Government was to be substituted a Communist State that was to take all its orders from Moscow.

"So long, however, as the troops remained loyal to the Government there was little chance of Stambulisky ever putting his theories into practice; but, when I saw deterioration spreading among all ranks in our little army, and realised that the dictator was attempting to get rid of any officer who was not of his way of thinking, I determined to create in each military unit strong anti-Communist groups which could be depended upon in case of emergency to be on the side of order and good government.

"For months I bided my time, even when Stambulisky

in his turn began to form Orange Guards and to introduce Communist elements among our rank and file, as I knew full well that every additional day was enabling me to perfect my organisation and so increasing my chances of success. . . . You know the rest. Realising the danger that lay in our secret organisation, the Communist leader decided to strike at us before it was too late, and attempted to over-awe my officers by threatening them with death for refusing to sign a declaration in attestation of their adherence to his political tenets. This measure forced me to take action on the 9th of June; I gave orders to all my units to seize the reins of power in every part of the kingdom and to arrest any supporters of Stambulisky, and very soon the revolution had become a *fait accompli*."

The General then stressed the fact that his troops had nowhere met with any real opposition; in fact, that their total losses in the Sofia engagement had amounted to 3 killed and 2 wounded, and in the whole of Bulgaria to not more than 40 killed and 60 wounded.

"It took us approximately half an hour to make ourselves masters of the capital and in every town we had the same easy measure of success. The only place which offered any real resistance to our troops was Slavovitza, Stambulisky's birth-place; and here we had to overcome 600 armed peasant supporters of the dictator."

I alluded to the deplorable circumstances which had characterised Stambulisky's death, and pointed out that it was a great pity that he had been murdered by the troops; but the General replied that Stambulisky had deserved his fate, and that every man who seeks to escape from people who have taken him prisoner knows full well the risks that he is running

"Stambulisky met his death perfectly fairly through seeking to escape from our troops. I am sorry that he was killed in this way, but it was unavoidable."

General Volkoff declared that the *coup d'état* was planned months before it actually took place, and that he took the greatest care in constituting a really national Government before attempting his coup. Mr. Tzankoff, the Premier, knew all about the project long before it was put into execution, and

various representatives of the bourgeois parties were all carefully sounded before anything was really decided upon.

I felt somehow that the deposition of the peasant leader had been a national necessity, and that, faced as it certainly was with tremendous difficulties, most of these the aftermath of defeat—troubles with regard to the Macedonian National Committee who are striving to-day, as yesterday, to keep alive Bulgarian Nationalist feeling in the lost provinces and continually inciting the Bulgarian Government to take more energetic action; troubles with their Greek and Serbian neighbours; but more especially internal troubles that are undoubtedly fomented by Moscow—the present Government had the great majority of the nation behind them and that consequently it deserved all support and sympathy from abroad.

The War Minister also especially stressed the enormous difficulties that he had in keeping the army free of Communists, and declared that the Soviets were actively trying to corrupt the rank and file so as to leave the country powerless in their hands. It is evident that Bulgaria, from some unaccountable reason, is held to be the best stepping-stone into Europe for Russian propagandists, and that, as I have seen from captured Russian documents, it is earmarked as the country which is the most prepared to accept Communism. This would account for the enormous sums of money that are yearly expended by Moscow in trying to keep alive and foment Bolshevist feeling in the countryside; and there is, in addition, a more or less steady infiltration of Communist theories in the Bulgarian Army. That Moscow is tireless and expectant of ultimate success is apparent from other documentary evidence which I have been privileged to see. In Sofia, more especially, Communist agents, chiefly women, are actively doing propaganda for their Russian masters and seeking to lure the peaceful and war-weary peasant class into again rising up against the present régime.

“I do not think many people in the West,” said the Minister, “realise what we are up against and how exposed we are to Russian propaganda. The Russian Bolshevist agents are

doubtless not numerous, but they are always able to disguise their activities under the cloak of the Red Cross and it is consequently very difficult to prevent their landing. Our army is so small, moreover, that even with the best intentions it cannot guard the very long line of frontiers that we still possess. What are 30,000 men, when you have a frontier some 1,000 miles in length and when you can never really be certain that Communists are not working covertly in your midst? Varna is the door through which this infiltration of undesirable elements is constantly being effected, and you can well realise that, though we are conscious of this infiltration, the problem of keeping watch over the many commercial agents who seek to land in our country, alleging the most plausible and natural pretexts, is an exceedingly difficult one."

The Minister spoke with great feeling and it was plain that, like many other prominent Bulgarians, he utterly fails to understand why the Powers continue to object so strongly to the Bulgarian Army being reinforced in order to cope with the Communist danger.

"You are making a great mistake in refusing to grant us permission to increase our army," he said, "for we are fighting your battles as well as our own, and if we let in the Bolshevik wave there is no knowing where it will stop."

Earnest words which conceal a great truth and which our statesmen would do well to ponder; for that the Third Internationale is fomenting a general Communist outbreak in the Balkans there seems every reason for believing, and blind would be the man who failed to realise it. Has not Zinovieff declared in a great speech in Central Europe that troubles in Bulgaria would herald in the great Communist revolution in the Balkans; and are not incriminating documents found every day pointing to the Third Internationale as the instigator of every labour and socialistic trouble which has taken place within the last year? But Moscow is adopting other weapons; it is cajoling the Bulgarian peasant by promising him that the general confiscation which will characterise the New Era will not apply to his little patrimony; it is attempting to stir up trouble in Bessarabia and dangling the most fantastic promises

before the eyes of the deluded minorities, even while establishing depots of arms and munitions on the coast of the Black Sea ; yet though Bulgaria, conscious of the danger threatening her security, continues to implore the Powers to allow her to increase her army and change her method of recruiting, Europe continues to turn a deaf ear to her demands, simply because a few deluded mortals persist in accusing Bulgaria of harbouring designs on her powerful neighbours.

That the Bulgarians are for the most part innocent of such dreams of reconquest I am perfectly convinced, though I met a few journalists and university professors who were evidently preaching a war of revenge. I can, therefore, see no reason why the comparatively small increase in the army that Mr. Tsankoff is asking from the Entente should not be granted, such an increase being obviously insufficient to deal with the mighty phalanxes which their Serbian and Roumanian neighbours would be able to marshal against them.

Eighteen months have elapsed since Stambulisky was driven from office, and since then the present Government has shewn every promise of developing into a really sound and democratic Government. It has begun to pay its Reparation Bill to Great Britain, and has so greatly improved the national finances and general conditions of the country that it is finding extended support among all parties in the Sobranie, there being only a small Opposition of Communists and Extreme Agrarians under Petrini ranged against it.

As the Bulgarian peasant, though stubborn and slow-tongued, is a perfectly honest and law-abiding individual, who is perfectly contented with tilling his little plot of land if only he is left in peace, I can see, therefore, little chance of reaction so long as the present land system which has left every man with a modicum of land still abides ; and, if there are any irredentists who still harbour ambitions of regaining Macedonia and Thrace, they have for the most part realised the futility of striving for the unattainable and are devoting their abilities to trying to induce the Entente to fulfil a certain little clause in the Treaty of Neuilly.

As Stambulisky himself once declared in an interview

with a Press Association representative, the granting of an outlet in the Ægean Sea is a vital necessity to the Bulgarian people and a concession that it should be remembered was solemnly guaranteed to Bulgaria by the Great Powers, as the signature of Mr. Venizelos and that of twenty-eight representatives of other States including Great Britain will attest. There is every reason, consequently, why the Powers should be made to honour their signatures. So long as this has not been carried out, it is evident that the Bulgarian people will be conscious of a great injustice and that they will continue to entertain the ambition of one day reversing the conditions of their Peace Treaties. Certain it is that any other nation similarly situated would nurse the same ambitions.

## CHAPTER X

## INTERVIEW WITH ALEXANDROFF

It was in some wild mountain pass somewhere near the Bulgarian frontier that I first met Alexandroff under circumstances that were full of glamour and romance. . . . Desolation all around, trees dripping rain, and a wild river brawling between high mountain peaks. . . . A motor—ours—just near us, on a path so full of ruts, big holes, and boulders that you marvelled when looking at it that you had achieved so much without breaking your neck . . . and very near us, though concealed from view, a dozen or more Komitajis armed to the teeth, waiting to guard their master during the conversation that we should have together. . . .

After we had waited over half an hour in vain and the sombre revolutionary who had arranged the meeting was scanning the valley with a look of ill-concealed anxiety, we suddenly heard the hoot of a motor and saw, creeping along the valley and moving speedily towards us, a large four-seater in which we could see four men.

"*Les voici!*" said X——, the Macedonian, and, moving towards the copses in which we knew were the Komitajis, he whistled to one of them and quickly gave him some instructions, after which he vanished and the armed men were seen no more. . . .

Another two minutes, and the car was before us, and stepping briskly out of it a tall, bearded Macedonian, whose every movement betokened energy and vital force.



This was Alexandroff, and with him were two other leaders of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, which to-day, as of yore, is still striving for the unattainable. . . .

Soon he was talking to me and in short, snappy sentences telling me of his desire to end the present impasse. . . . He deplored the split which had taken place in his own organisation, but declared that the only men who really counted in it were those who, like him, were fighting for an autonomous Macedonia.

“All those who would compromise with these aims are traitors to our cause and in close touch with the Bolsheviks ; and I must once again make it clear that neither Protogueroff nor myself signed the manifesto published in *La Federation Balkanique* and attributed by that review to our organisation. We have nothing to do with Communism or Bolshevism and only seek one thing : to free our country from the régime that is oppressing it ; and we will continue our armed resistance so long as for that régime has not been substituted one that will really ensure our free political and cultural development.”

Alexandroff also stated that, if only his demands were granted, the Macedonians would lay down their arms and recognise the Serbian Kingdom, subject, of course, to it being reconstructed as a Federal State in which Macedonia would enter on equal rights with the other members of the Yugoslav Federation.

Convinced as I was of the futility of these demands, I pointed out that it might be advisable to compromise still further in view of the fact that there could be no appeal against what had now become a *fait accompli*.

“I know that you also desire to have incorporated into an autonomous Macedonia that part of Macedonian territory which is now under Greek rule ; but is that possible ? Again, while a federation of all nations constituting the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes may in time be substituted for the existing centralism, there is at the moment little prospect of it being achieved, though the present Government of Mr. Davidovitch will, I am certain, do everything that it can to bridge the chasm separating the two ideals of government.

Would it not be better if you temporarily desisted from the armed struggle that you are waging with the Serbs until you have actually seen what Mr. Davidovitch's Government intends to do ? ”

I also alluded to Mr. Marinkovitch's suggested division of the country into regional autonomous districts, and declared that in my opinion it would go far towards bringing a solution to the present impasse ; but Alexandroff replied that, until his fundamental requests had been granted him, his party would not undertake to put away their arms or cease fighting.

“ I have devoted all my life to seeing Macedonia free and prosperous, and nothing will ever deter me from striving by every possible means to attain this end. The duty of Western Europe, in which we still have faith, is to save us from the slow death to which my unfortunate countrymen are being subjected. If this is not done, I cannot see any prospect of a durable peace in the Balkans.”

Alexandroff impressed me as a man with whom nothing counts except what he imagines to be his duty, and as a leader of men who possesses undeniable powers of leadership and is able to extract the last ounce of devoted service from his unruly followers. Regarding human life as of no consequence if only something tangible is effected by its sacrifice, he is unfortunately not always too scrupulous about the means which he adopts to achieve his ends ; he will consequently be exposed, until the end of his life, to the bullet of any of his followers who may be dissatisfied with their own position in the organisation.

In fact, a conversation which I had with another of the revolutionaries showed me that the comparatively unimportant section of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation which has broken away from Alexandroff, and is being subsidised by the Bolshevists, bears him no good will, and that dissatisfaction with the humble rôle that they occupied within the party was probably the chief reason why they broke away. The Komitajis with whom I came in touch in fact displayed great anxiety about their leader, and declared that he was always exposed to

assassination whatever the precaution they took to have him guarded when he moved from place to place. Judging from what I have seen of revolutionary methods in the Balkans, I should fancy that the chances of his dying a peaceful death are by no means rosy.

## CHAPTER XI

## BULGARIAN LIFE AND FOLK-LORE

THERE is something very Eastern and primitive in the life and surroundings of the Bulgarian peasant, and, like other Slavs, he possesses a folk-lore and literature that redeem his life from its squalid tameness, and confer on it a colour and picturesqueness in which our more civilised peasants are entirely lacking.

I doubt if anything more deplorable could be imagined than the conditions under which he is content to live.

Old tumble-down, one-storied cottages, usually of wood or brick, but which are sometimes made of beaten earth, or even mere mud hovels with roofs of wattle or reeds ; a promiscuity that is so pronounced that he is often compelled to share his bed with his pig ; and a life so strenuous that he is almost continually at work.

Yet, though his life is deadly monotonous and he takes his pleasures so sadly that, even when dancing the Horo, his face rarely betrays any expression, save that of melancholy, he finds such solace and content in the dreams that he weaves around his life and the many premonitions that he reads in even the most trivial event of his day that he cannot be said to be unhappy.

Simple, abstemious, traditional, brought up to believe in the old legends and folk-lore of their people, the Bulgarian peasants possess a collection of popular ballads, fairy tales and legends in which, like the Serbs and Irish, they have given rein to a most abundant fancy. These are of various kinds. There are, first of all, those which deal with human affections, and in these we find considerable evidence of tenderness.

Some relate to the Samovilas, mysterious beings who play an important part in the mythology of the Slav race.

These Samovilas are the sisters of heroes, whom they help in time of need. They are beautiful maidens, with fair hair and blue eyes, who wear white silken dresses that are so long that their feet are not visible. They are found living in the mountains or in the forests of the Balkans, from which they only emerge when their assistance is required.

The most celebrated of these lyrical songs deals with the story of Strana and the Samovila.

Strana is depicted as a beautiful young girl who is dressing one Easter morning to go to church. Her mother comes into her room and begs her not to go out before other people because she fears that the priest will make love to her. The young girl refuses to listen to her mother and goes to the garden to sulk. There she meets a Samovila who, to punish her for her unfilial behaviour, proceeds to tear out her beautiful black eyes.

Then there are those which refer to the Haiduks, brigands of the Robin Hood kind, and those in which the principal hero is the Marko of legend. This man, as Slaveikoff has stated, was a national god fashioned by the people in their own image. He lived near Prilep and always rode a blue-grey horse with dark spots which was called Sharko. Like other national heroes of legend, he combined great intellectual and physical powers with occasional frailties and moral lapses.

In Bulgaria, in fact, is found a deep and intimate communion between the soil and the spirit of him who tills it which is only found among those who suffer, struggle or bleed for their land. Like the Serbs and Roumanians, moreover, the Bulgarians believe in the efficacy of spells, charms and philtres : spells to ward off the evil spirit ; charms for a sick man or child or for his cattle ; for harvest or for rain ; philtres for the ailing or for those who are love-stricken.

But mention must be made of the gypsies who provide the wild, sad music for the Horo, and who, after playing the tragic, soul-stirring dirges that are characteristic of Bulgarian peasant funerals, head the procession of wailing women to the graveside.

Like their fellows in other lands, the gypsies of Bulgaria play an important rôle in the life of their fellow countrymen. Crouching over the fire, or stirring mysterious compounds to dispel evil influences, they interpret the future or improvise weird melodies as renderings to the folk-songs of the people. Nor are the instruments which they play of less interest to the student of folk-lore and custom. One is the gaida, which is a kind of bagpipe ; another the gadulka, an onion-shaped violin, strung with horizontal strings ; and the third the kaval or flute, which is made of a hollow piece of wood some fifteen inches long, and consisting of three parts, of which the middle has six holes and the other two one hole each.

To see and hear these attractive nomads playing folk music is always vaguely exciting and arresting, and though Bulgarian gypsy music, unlike other gypsy music, is characterised by less abandon and more melancholy, I shall often recall the lithe, swarthy fellows, brown of skin and hair, whom I heard playing on various occasions in primitive little villages nestling among limes and willows, or their equally attractive mates, with their flashing eyes and figures as lissom as young palms, and long braids of black hair glittering with tinsel and old coins. In my memory I shall often recall them and the impassive, high-cheek-boned Bulgar peasantry to whom they played.

**BOOK IV**  
**TURKEY**

**INTRODUCTION**

THE Turkish Republic in Europe now consists of about 10,000 square miles, with a population of two millions, and an area of 200,000 square miles in Anatolia or Turkey-in-Asia with a population of six to seven millions.

It extends from the Ægean Sea to Georgia and Persia, from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea.

Ever since Abdul Hamid was deposed and deported to Salonika his successors have been mere puppets. The last Sultan was Muhammed VI., who was deposed in 1922, and though the spiritual sovereignty of his office remained in the Caliph, this office, too, has been abolished and the Caliph driven into exile during the course of last year.

The present Government of Turkey is a military dictatorship resting on force. Muhammedanism remains the State religion, but even education is being secularised.

A fighting nation, the Turks have up to now failed in any occupation that was not concerned with fighting or agriculture. Their economic future is problematical, because they have driven away all those foreign elements which alone are capable of improving their economic status. . . . The Turks are characteristically courteous and polite, remarkable hosts, and usually kind to children and animals, but very ferocious when roused and most difficult to pin down to any promise.

They are proverbially lax where their liabilities or international obligations are concerned.



Then eastwards once more and you reach Constantinople, the Golden City of our dreams. Here, over Stamboul and the Golden Horn, there gleam a thousand minarets, their tapering whiteness contrasting with the dark green of the olive trees, little red roofs and grey ruins around them. . . . Four minarets crown the stately pile Aga Sofia, the most famous of early Christian churches, now for many centuries a Turkish mosque, and over the old Serai black cypresses are being silhouetted against the ashy coloured sky.

But if you once cross over to Pera the spell vanishes as soon as you have realised the meaning of modernism and its hideous drabness when, as in Constantinople, it has been implanted in surroundings that are alien to it. Here, in the cosmopolitan quarter, the new spirit spells licence and degradation. Wide and glittering are its many streets and thronged with many people, Levantines and Armenians, Greeks and Turks, Jews and Europeans . . . but below this picturesque surface are found such appalling vice and corruption that Pera is to-day shunned by all good Moslems as a town compared to which even the foulest districts of Paris and New York would appear clean. . . .

## CHAPTER I

## ON THE WAY TO CONSTANTINOPLE

It was the moment for reflection, for even the vessel was quiet and not a breath disturbed the waters. The cargo was on board, the crew resting, and on the bridge, impassive, was the captain, waiting to give the signal for departure. I stood on the deck seeing the last of Bulgaria. In the distance I could see the lights of Varna twinkling in the darkness and on the shore dim, ghostly figures of sailors hurrying to their ships. In those quiet moments I wondered what was my dominant impression of the land that I was leaving.

Was it my first glimpse of Sofia, with its neat little streets and boulevards, and the gold dome of the Alexander Nevsky Church looming high against the sky? A modest, pleasant town where girls in picturesque costumes bargain with merchants for their wares in the open market-place. I stood before the Palace gate and, picking my way past the stalwart guards on duty, saw King Boris getting into his car for a long drive into the country, and heard the loud caws of the ravens as they, too, kept their watch over the royal building. . . .

Or was it the thought of Rilo Monastery, with its wonderful old church tower, its quaint monks and pandours, and the old hermit in his mountain grotto?

In thought, I recrossed once again those interminable fields of well-tilled brown earth which are so characteristic of Bulgarian scenery, and struggling up the steepest ascents took my carriage at a canter over expanses of sodden turf and roads that were mere tracks, and wondered why the bridges that we

passed, primitive structures formed of tree trunks lashed together with cross beams, did not give way.

Or was it the camp of gypsies, brown as berries, and the peasants undulating to and fro as they danced the Horo ?

All these things I visualised ; yet dominating all was the remembrance of our pilgrimage to Rilo, relentless and immortal, representing the soul of Bulgaria ; and I realised why a really vital people never dies. . . .

Then suddenly we steamed slowly out into the darkness. The lights of Varna dwindled, then disappeared. Slowly we moved through the silent sea towards Constantinople. . . .

To sail down the Straits towards Constantinople, after two nights spent in a close, musty cabin is comparable to drinking champagne after sour red wine, and I can imagine nothing to cure one more effectively of any aching or other unpleasantness. Certain it is that after a somewhat uneventful journey from Varna down the Black Sea, which, as is her wont, was not as peaceful as we would have liked, our subsequent progress down the Straits from the moment that we reached the mouth of the Bosphorus afforded us a series of pictures of river scenery that cannot be surpassed in the whole world.

We first passed Buyuk and Therapia, favoured resorts of diplomats ; then, slowly making our way down the Straits, we noticed many quaint little towns clustering at the ferry stages, with picturesque wooden houses and fine mansions with flower-decked gardens stretching to the sea, a very labyrinth of lakes and little bays conveying the illusion that you have penetrated almost into the heart of a new continent, and on the Asiatic side many ridges rising to considerable heights.

After pausing for a few minutes off a quaint, tumble-down village—where we noted a tall minaret almost on the water's edge—to enable the doctor to come on board to see if we had any contagious cases, we slowly came round a bend and had our first view of Stamboul and the Golden Horn. For a moment we held our breath in sheer amaze at the glory of it. Certain it is that the first doubling of the last point before you

come into view of Constantinople is the memory of a lifetime. Loti failed to give it words, and there is really nothing that can adequately express it. Opposite was the Massif of Stamboul rising from the Golden Horn and thick with innumerable buildings, a medley of towers and palaces, with the domed mosques of the Conquerors, Suleymanieh and Selim I., and their minarets dominating the high ground, an amazing dream of cupolas crowning the hills of two continents, and behind us Scutari and the Tower of Leander gleaming white against the slate-blue of the sea. Soon we were accosting land, and, after a few preliminaries, were treading our path, through a crowd of shouting watermen and Kurdish porters and hamals, until we found the dragoman of the hotel, who, we had been told, was awaiting us. . . .

Bowing low before us and assuring us that he would see to our luggage, he hustled us into a carriage and gave the driver a direction which was Turkish to my understanding. We had arrived.

## CHAPTER II

## A TURKISH DOCTOR

ON arriving at our hotel in Pera we were informed that the authorities had decided that every European landing in Constantinople was to be inoculated against the pest, and that any visitor failing to carry out these instructions would be severely dealt with.

Not duly alarmed, but curious and feeling that something would have to be done, I hastened to the British Embassy and made enquiries.

"Yes, it is quite true; there is an edict of this nature," an attaché informed me, "though there is nothing to justify it." As far as he knew, there was no pest in the city; it was only one of the many devices by which the Turkish authorities were trying to get their own back. . . .

"But shall we have to be inoculated?" I asked.

"I am afraid so," was the rejoinder, "unless you can induce the authorities to let you off this formality. And this you must do, for the mere fact of being inoculated by a Turkish doctor would be sufficient to give you the plague . . . I know two Europeans who, after being inoculated, caught a most foul disease!"

Remembering a certain letter of introduction that had already worked magic at the Customs House when we had arrived, I decided to call on Adnan Bey at the Sublime Porte, and, thanking my informant, returned post haste to the hotel.

Half an hour later I was talking to Adnan Bey, the Angoran Commissioner, and asking whether inoculation was really necessary.

"I am afraid that you will have to provide yourself with an inoculation certificate," he replied, "if you wish to avoid any difficulties with the police. But if a note from me is of any use I will gladly give you one." And hardly waiting for me to thank him for his suggestion, he took a sheet of paper and quickly wrote three or four lines on it. He sealed the letter, handed it to me, and advised me to take it to the Inoculation Officer in Pera.

"Give him this note when you see him," he said, "and I am certain he will do what he can to meet you."

Then he turned to his papers and, courteously rising from his seat, asked to be excused, while I made my exit and hurried back to Pera.

The Inoculation Officer's office is in a large gloomy building, which I found crowded with Turks, Greeks, and Levantines of every description and species of squalor. Not only was the waiting-room crammed full with sordid humanity, but even the staircases were reeking with their foul odours. I soon realised that the better class Turks disdain to utilise the offices of the Government Inoculator. Pushing my way past this motley crowd I approached a black-coated Turk who was standing by and, holding out my letter, pointed to the inscription that was written on the envelope.

The Turk nodded his head, and, motioning me to follow, conducted me upstairs to a large room in which were rows of bottles and test-tubes lying in profusion on a table and two shelves on the wall.

Here were half a dozen Turks of the better classes, all evidently provided with such letters as my own, and, like them, I took a seat at the table and waited for the doctor to appear.

Shortly afterwards he entered the room and, approaching each one of us in turn, began to ask us our business, and I noticed that in every case the individual to whom he was speaking produced a letter, which the doctor read with satisfaction and commented on in a fashion that obviously pleased his hearers, for they invariably left the room as if a weight had been lifted off their minds.

Looking more closely around me, I noticed that the

doctor's hands were dirty, and that as he conversed with each patient he waved a hypodermic syringe which he held as if he never put it down. Seeing these things, I thanked Providence, and Adnan Bey, for the letter that I, too, possessed, trusting that it would ensure our being saved from the calamity that was threatening us. Then, like everyone else before me, I produced my letter and handed it to the doctor. Quickly he glanced at its contents and, returning it with a smile in which I could almost detect a wink, informed me in excellent French that he would come to inoculate me at my hotel if I would only name a time. I suggested an hour in the afternoon, which he approved of ; then with a lighter heart made my way back to the hotel.

I was smoking an after-lunch cigarette in the lounge when a page-boy came to announce the doctor's arrival and, hearing that he was accompanied by another doctor and that both carried professional-looking attaché cases, recalled a hint that our dragoman had dropped after lunch when I had informed him of the doctor's visit.

Hastily I selected two Turkish notes from my pocket-book, and, placing them in a side pocket, told the page-boy to show my visitors into a vacant sitting-room and hurried down after him.

I found the two Turks, both immaculately clad and well groomed, waiting for me downstairs ; as I entered and begged them to be seated, the chief doctor, whom I had met that morning, produced two official-looking documents from one of his pockets and without the slightest trace of hesitation declared that these were the two certificates of which I was in need.

" They will cost you four Turkish pounds each," he stated.

Gasping a little at such barefaced methods, which I would have preferred to have been a little less obvious, I handed my fee to the doctor after duly receiving the two precious certificates. Then, bowing profusely, the two worthy representatives of the Turkish medical profession made their departure.



MOSQUE OF THE SULTAN ACHMED, CONSTANTINOPLE.



## CHAPTER III

## HOWLING DERVISHES

So still was the Sea of Marmora that we were almost at Scutari before we realised that we had started. Then, looking through the porthole, we saw a pier-head and found that we had arrived. Quickly we made our way on deck and joined the long queue of Turks in motley garb waiting to go ashore.

Facing us was Scutari, characteristically Eastern with its harem lattices and picturesque little streets thronged with turbaned sellers sitting cross-legged at their open shop-fronts ; behind us Stamboul and the Golden Horn, where gleamed a thousand minarets, their tapering whiteness contrasting with the dark green of the olive trees, little red roofs, and grey ruins around : a wonderful panorama of mosque and tower slightly reminiscent of Oxford, with the added glory of a colour scheme that Oxford lacks. . . . Azure blue was the sky and slate blue the sea.

To the north the Bosphorus stretching away to the Black Sea, the terror of pilots, its banks lined with pleasant summer residences and quaint little villages clustering at the ferry stages ; to the south the Sea of Marmora with the Prinkipo Islands in the foreground . . . and to the east the grey plains of Anatolia.

For a few minutes we remained lost in admiration over this exquisite view ; then, following the crowd that now began to move along a gangway to the shore, we soon were leaving the quays where the steamer had landed us and passing on to our destination. We made our way through a maze of old streets where low shops nestled between lofty houses with closed grilles,

and turbaned salesmen squatted on divans or mats selling clusters of fruit and vegetables. . . . Soon we were climbing a steep and stony incline past houses of grey unpainted wood and tombs enclosed in iron railings, until we had reached the modest wooden building where the Dervishes hold their strange ceremonies.

Preceded by our friend Mr. de K——, the Hungarian Minister in Sofia, we entered the courtyard that leads to the Dervishes Hall, and, after parleying with a turbaned Dervish, were ushered into the main body of the hall and asked to take our seats in a wooden gallery separated from the wide space in the middle by a low balustrade.

Opposite was the Head Dervish, sitting in an alcove containing the Kibla (niche for prayer), a pale and sombre figure with the eyes of a fanatic. On the floor were a number of sheepskin mats. . . . In the middle in a bronze jar there burnt an enervating incense.

Quickly the hall filled with worshippers, men of all classes, artisans, merchants and tradesmen, wearing white skull caps around which narrow dark turbans were rolled. They sat or squatted on the mats, or prostrated themselves in prayer, until it was time for the ceremony to begin, while Mr. de K—— discoursed to us on their organisation, told us that they could not be compared to any Christian association as Islam admits of no ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Then the Dzikr began. In a chanting voice the Head Dervish began droning words from the Koran, his body swaying backwards and forwards in rhythmic swing, while the squatting Dervishes, chanting in unison, raised high their hands and prostrated themselves to the ground in turn. Three times the Dervish cried out, "Allah Akbar" (God is the greatest), and twice, "Ashadu anna la illah ill Allah, Ashadu anna, Muhammed rasulu" (I bear witness that there is only one God, I bear witness that Muhammed is the messenger of God); and, enumerating the perfections of Allah, the Dervishes began to sway their heads and bodies with a quicker rhythm until the litany had been completed. Then, rising to their feet, they stood in a half circle, shoulder to shoulder, and, as they accelerated their

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rhythm, accompanying each bend with deep, indrawn breaths, started to moan and gasp like drunkards as the throbbing words "La ilaha illa 'llah" burst spasmodically from their parched throats. The ecstasy had begun.

Panting and roaring like men possessed, the Dervishes, some foaming at the mouth and with great drops of perspiration rolling down their faces, began to alternate their swaying movements with raucous growls and contortions of their bodies that they jerked to right and left alternately with increasing rapidity. Accompanying these frenzied movements were strange and fearsome noises that recalled the sawing of planks or the snarls and growls of wild animals. Then, when the panting had grown into a loud "Hu" of ecstasy, a youth, springing aside from the wave of moaning men, sang a kind of lament in a haunting minor key, to the accompaniment of the boom of a drum and the gasps of the other Dervishes roaring in monotonous cadence. . . .

It was a clamour that recalled the fierce howling of a desert horde and that continued unchecked till the end of the ceremony, when it had spent itself and many Dervishes lay thoroughly exhausted on the ground. Then as a finale to this curious performance was a scene that reminded me of Algeria when the Head Dervish applied his healing touch to those of the faithful who were afflicted with disease. Leaning on two acolytes, he proceeded to walk over the bodies of three or four children who were lying with their faces downwards on the ground. We were horrified at seeing a small boy, who was certainly not four years old, undergo this treatment and greatly relieved to find when he arose that he was none the worse for his experience. Then, thoroughly impressed by the faith illumining these strange proceedings, we left a small donation for the Dervishes and very quickly made our way to the quay, where we found the steamer on the point of departure.

Soon we were at sea and discussing the weird ceremonies that we had witnessed, Mr. de K—— alone refusing to admit any merit on the part of the Dervishes or that the religious frenzy which was obviously created by these proceedings was capable of performing miracles.

I fancy he was wrong and that, like the fakirs of India and the marabouts of Algiers, the Dervishes become so obsessed with the clamour that they create as to become almost immune from any other form of sensation. Certain it is in my opinion that even Westerners derive unusual fascination in hearing the same sounds reiterated interminably, however much they may rebel at first against them.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE SELAMLIK

FROM Pera we had motored down to the Bridge of Galata and, turning to the left, had taken the road that leads to Therapia, happy summer resort of embassies—away, away past the palace of Dolma Bagtche until we had reached the little promontory where stands the mosque in which the Caliph was to hold his Selamlik.

The environment was perfect. Facing us was Stamboul rising over the Golden Horn, a rich panorama of magnificence and ruin, cupolas and minarets shimmering in the morning sun and the Point of Seraglio evoking tragedy and romance with its now peaceful gardens shaded by the solemn green of cypresses : and to the left the Sea of Marmora, dotted with rocky islands and the Prinkipo group. On the Asiatic side, the white lines of the Fenar lighthouses and the bay just behind, where had stood the Temple of Hera and the Palace of Justinian ; and in the background huge dusky mountains culminating in the Olympus.

We had come to see the Caliph hold his Selamlik, the last little privilege which Nationalist arrogance had deigned to accord him, and though we had heard it often whispered that Angora, not content with clipping his temporal wings, had even decided to clip what was left of his spiritual, were quite content to witness the dying gestures of a moribund monarch, if only to have a record of a ceremony that in the past had always been full of pageantry and the glamour of the East.

It was one of those halcyon days in which merely to live is a boon and privilege, for not only was the scenery that stood

revealed to us of surpassing beauty, but there was a crystal clearness in the atmosphere that was most exhilarating. Forcing our way through a fairly large crowd that had assembled outside the railings of the courtyard leading to the mosque, we presented our credentials to the official at the gate and were immediately admitted within the little court that serves as landing-stage on those rare occasions when the Caliph arrives by sea.

Before the mosque, two detachments of troops were drawn up with arms stacked, and a military band. One was composed of marines, fine, stalwart-looking men with red round their collars and tiny anchors embroidered on them, the other of Household troops, dismounted cavalymen, picturesque in their red-breasted tunics with black fezzes. Near the door of the mosque stood a few officials of the Caliph's Household. Eagerly we approached a gorgeous-looking official, and, having asked him if the Caliph was arriving by sea or by land, were pleased to hear that His Majesty, in view of the calmness of the sea, had decided to arrive in his Kaik.

"You had better take up your positions near the landing-stage," he said, and with these words he conducted us personally to what he considered the best point of vantage, and departed with a courteous bow.

Full of eager expectation, we waited for the hour of his coming, our friend Mr. F—— constantly searching the horizon with his powerful glasses for a sign of the picturesque, old-world craft that was to convey the Defender of the Faithful to his mosque.

Then, very suddenly, our attention having momentarily wandered, we became conscious of a certain animation around us, and, looking in the direction of Stamboul, quickly realised that the Imperial Kaik was in sight; for, approaching with great rapidity, was a long gondola-like craft, manned by white-garbed oarsmen, and fluttering at its bow a black-and-gold pennon in which we gradually began to discern the Crescent of the Faithful.

Very quickly the two detachments had unstacked their arms, and were lining up before the landing-stage, ready to

receive their august master, while a certain stirring near the gates evinced the growing curiosity of the crowd outside.

A few moments later and the great white-and-gold Kaik, sixty feet long, and manned by fourteen picked oarsmen, with the Caliph reclining on a gold and velvet seat at the stern, appeared in full view, and at a few shrill words of command marines and cavalymen stood to attention ; then, as the Kaik slowed down on nearing the landing-steps, the Chamberlain of his Household, a tall, bearded, frock-coated Turk, came running down the carpeted steps to greet his holy master.

The moment had come, and eagerly we prepared our cameras and waited for the best moment to photograph him.

Then, as the soldiers presented arms and the band struck up the Turkish National Anthem, the Caliph and his Chamberlain ascended the steps, the Caliph walking a little in front, and for a fleeting moment we obtained a full view of his person as, a fragile but benign and noble figure, he passed us by. Another moment and he had disappeared within the mosque without a cheer or the slightest symptom of applause on the part of the people over whom his dynasty had reigned for so many centuries.

As we turned aside and took one last look at the beautifully-carved white-and-gold Kaik, that lay before us, and its picturesque oarsmen in their striking white uniforms and red fezzes, we recalled the more than lukewarm manner in which the crowd had greeted their Caliph. We realised that we were seeing the last of a moribund régime, and that, though the moment of the deposition of the House of Osmanli might still be deferred, owing to the irreproachable way in which the Caliph was carrying out his religious duties, Angora was only waiting for a suitable opportunity to abolish his ancient office. Saddened, perhaps, at realising that our premonitions had been right, we returned to our hotel, there mingling with our disappointment a keen and lively satisfaction for having seen what would, perhaps, be the last Selamlık of the age.

## CHAPTER V

## THE LURE OF THE BAZAARS

I SHALL not easily forget the visit that we paid to the bazaars of Constantinople, or the hankering for this world's riches that seized us as we saw temptingly displayed before us the most amazingly varied assortment of Eastern wares. If the bazaars of Constantinople cannot compare with those of Tifis or Damascus, they are at any rate, for those tourists who have neither the time nor the opportunity for going further south, a very good substitute.

Like most Eastern towns, Constantinople possesses two bazaars, the first the Bezestan, and the second the more celebrated roofed-in bazaar.

The Bezestan, or bazaar proper, though it makes less appeal to the European, is in certain respects even more attractive to the student of humanity. Nowhere can such an agglomeration of different races be met with. It is like the tower of Babel, and simply seethes and buzzes with a constant stream of races, to which all Asia and Africa and the Balkans seem to have contributed. Everywhere a riot of colour and picturesqueness; traders of all descriptions, each in his own particular quarter, selling their wares either in booths or in more pretentious shops; here a street of leather workers; here another devoted to the shoe industry, recalling fairyland and containing every sort of shoe imaginable; here wooden booths where workers in brass and copper can be seen busily hammering on metal or listlessly watching the passers by; vendors of fruit and vegetables innumerable, some in their shops and others crouching down on mats, selling succulent



water-melons or dark-skinned pasteques; sellers of flour, tattered and unclean; knife-sharpeners, and fezz specialists moulding strange copper casseroles for starching Turkish head-gear; and thronging this network of crooked streets and narrow intersecting lanes with their old wooden houses and heavy eaves, the most picturesque crowd imaginable: sturdy Armenian porters carrying heavy burdens or trudging behind equally heavily burdened donkeys; fiery Kurds and cunning Armenian Jews; thievish Levantines bent on plunder; merchants, peasants, artisans; and here and there a few half-veiled Musulman women, and sundry European tourists gaping in silent amaze at this picturesque medley of humanity.

Slowly we idled and sauntered through these busy, humming streets, watching the surging crowds, until we had reached the great roofed-in bazaar. Then, leaving the crooked street that leads to it, we quickly made our way past a mosque and a quaint fountain that are just outside it, and in five minutes were treading our path through its long vaulted galleries.

Truly it is an enchanted spot, and one well calculated to make you lay aside all prudence and thoughts of economy. Stalls replete with everything that is beautiful and attractive, and in every one of these salesmen possessing a power of insidious persuasion that no Westerner can equal; everything, in fact, to make you recklessly expend great sums of money. Perfumes evoking the harem or the houris of paradise; satins and silks from Broussa; lovely yashmaks of crepe stitched and worked in gold and silver; alluring silk kimonos in the most fanciful designs; earrings, amulets and necklaces; old amber, jade and crystal ornaments; beautifully inlaid pistols and damascened swords; and Turkish and Persian rugs and carpets of every description.

If you once succumb to the tempting invitation that is made you to come in and inspect for yourself the quality of the goods on sale, your fate is sealed; for such is the persuasion of the Turkish, Armenian, and Jewish salesmen into whose hands you have so trustingly confided yourself, that were you as indomitable as Heaven itself you would invariably succumb.

In the course of the hour that we spent within the bazaar

we systematically explored many attractive stalls, and had various exciting bargaining contests with their occupants, in every one of which, with one exception, we decidedly came off second best. For, though we invariably finished by buying the articles that we were impressed into buying at a price that we fondly calculated was a wonderful bargain, deep down in our secret thoughts always lurked the feeling that the wily seller had really obtained his own price.

Sometimes, too, we remembered with a pang that in certain famous houses in our own metropolis we had bought the very same embroideries that we were so desirous of obtaining on this occasion at a much lower price; but this thought we immediately brushed aside, and in any case we felt that the extra money expended was well worth the glamour that possessed our souls, when we could turn to our friends on our return and point to any particular object as having been bought on the very spot where it had been produced.

On one occasion, however, we succeeded in worsting our foe, and though he expended no end of eloquence, and even treated us to wonderfully good Turkish coffee, succeeded in making our exit unscathed, not through any special adamant merit on our part, but simply because there was really nothing that he offered us that was sufficiently attractive to tempt us into making him an offer.

The salesmen of Constantinople, in fact, afford a most interesting psychological study of what a human being can really do by dint of flattery, cajoling and persistent exaggeration, their aversion to telling the truth being such that they become really offended if you take them at their word.

On one occasion a certain lady, who was staying at our hotel, came back one afternoon from the bazaars with a look of triumph in her eyes.

"I have bought a wonderful bargain," she told us, and, displaying a necklace which she estimated to be real old amber, confessed to us that she had bought it for a song. On examining the necklace, however, we discovered that it was only a clever imitation, which, when she realised it, she immediately decided to return to the merchant who had sold it to her.

On the next day accordingly, and full of suppressed anger, she returned to the bazaar with her purchase and, accosting the Armenian merchant who had sold her the necklace, upbraided him for having sold her an article which was not genuine.

“ You gave me your word that it was real old amber,” she declared in aggrieved tones.

“ And you believed me,” was the equally aggrieved answer. Evidently he, too, felt very sore at her having thought him such a bad salesman.

To annoy a Turkish bazaar merchant is consequently not a very difficult task; for, if you only accept without bargaining any article which he offers you, I fancy he will worry for the next week or ten days at having been such a fool in not asking more for it. That, I am sure, was the state of mind of a certain copper ware merchant from whom I bought an old tray, for it was almost pathetic to see the preoccupied way in which he gazed at me on every successive occasion that I passed by his stall.

## CHAPTER VI

## THE OLD SERAI

RISING high before us was the old Serai, evoking intrigue and romance and a world that is no more ; and almost reverently, for nothing moves us to such reverence as historic old buildings, we entered through the Augustan Gate, on which we could still discern the nails on which the severed heads of luckless mortals had formerly been suspended in accordance with a decree of the Prince of the Faithful. Then through the courtyard, where the Janissaries had had their quarters and guardroom, a large court with a low little doorway called the Gate of Happiness which only those inhabiting the Palace were privileged to cross, we followed our guide through a very labyrinth of inner courts all whispering a tale of a fallen Empire.

Here a narrow passage surrounded by dark, gloomy, cell-like rooms where the eunuchs had had their sleeping quarters, and near by the Old Harem with its large and stately hall, where the Sultan used to sit on a large raised canopied divan among his many wives ; here a big white marbled bathroom, where we noticed a tiny peep-hole through which the Sultan was wont to gaze unseen on the evolutions of his dancing girls and odalisques as they took their baths. Everywhere rooms and corridors and staircases forming the most complicated labyrinths, with little cupolas and quaint little windows looking out on lonely cloisters and solemn green cypresses evoking the gloom of conventual life.

Desolation breeding all around and in a setting that the gods of Parnassus could hardly have bettered.

A decor worthy of the Thousand and One Nights ; beautifully panelled rooms, with gilt carvings in Arabian or rococo style ; frescoes innumerable, depicting mountain, forest and river scenes (but without men or beasts to mar them), and quaint little pavilions all superimposed in the Chinese manner.

A colour scheme in which blue and red were the predominating colours, and which we found not only in the china adorning the walls, but in the cupolas of small rotundas ; mystery lurking in invisible doors concealed in the woodwork that led, one to a subterranean passage, the other to a hidden staircase going to the roof itself, supreme expedient of Sultans to allow of flight in case of revolution.

Then, preceded by our escort, we slowly descended by terraced courts and winding paths until we reached the extreme point of the promontory that juts out between the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn, and were shown the lovely gardens and summer kiosques in which the Sultan used to entertain his many guests. Here a large pit surrounded by a terrace in which wild beasts used to wage their battles for the delectation of His Imperial Person ; there wondrous kiosques and summer-houses, one especially notable for its exquisitely embroidered silks, its blue Chinese porcelain, and its quaint little foot-stools inlaid in mother-of-pearl ; another, the Bagdad Pavilion, at whose blue-stained little windows we remained for a long time, haunted increasingly by the perfection of beauty that was revealing itself to our eyes.

Facing us was Scutari, built in amphitheatre, on the Asiatic coast, and the islands of Prinkipo, and on our left, shimmering in a myriad-hued sunset, Pera and Galata and the Palace of Dolma Bagtche, suffused in a haze of splendour, while at our feet there lapped and rippled the waters of three seas. Lost in thought, and evoking the many haunting tragedies that continue to linger in the now peaceful gardens, like Queen Marie of Roumania we felt as if nothing in the world could surpass the wonder of the place in which we now stood ; and like her, too, it was with difficulty that we could be induced to leave it.

## CHAPTER VII

“ MINARETS ARE STEEPLES IN WHICH THE HUMAN VOICE TAKES  
THE PLACE OF THE BELLS ”

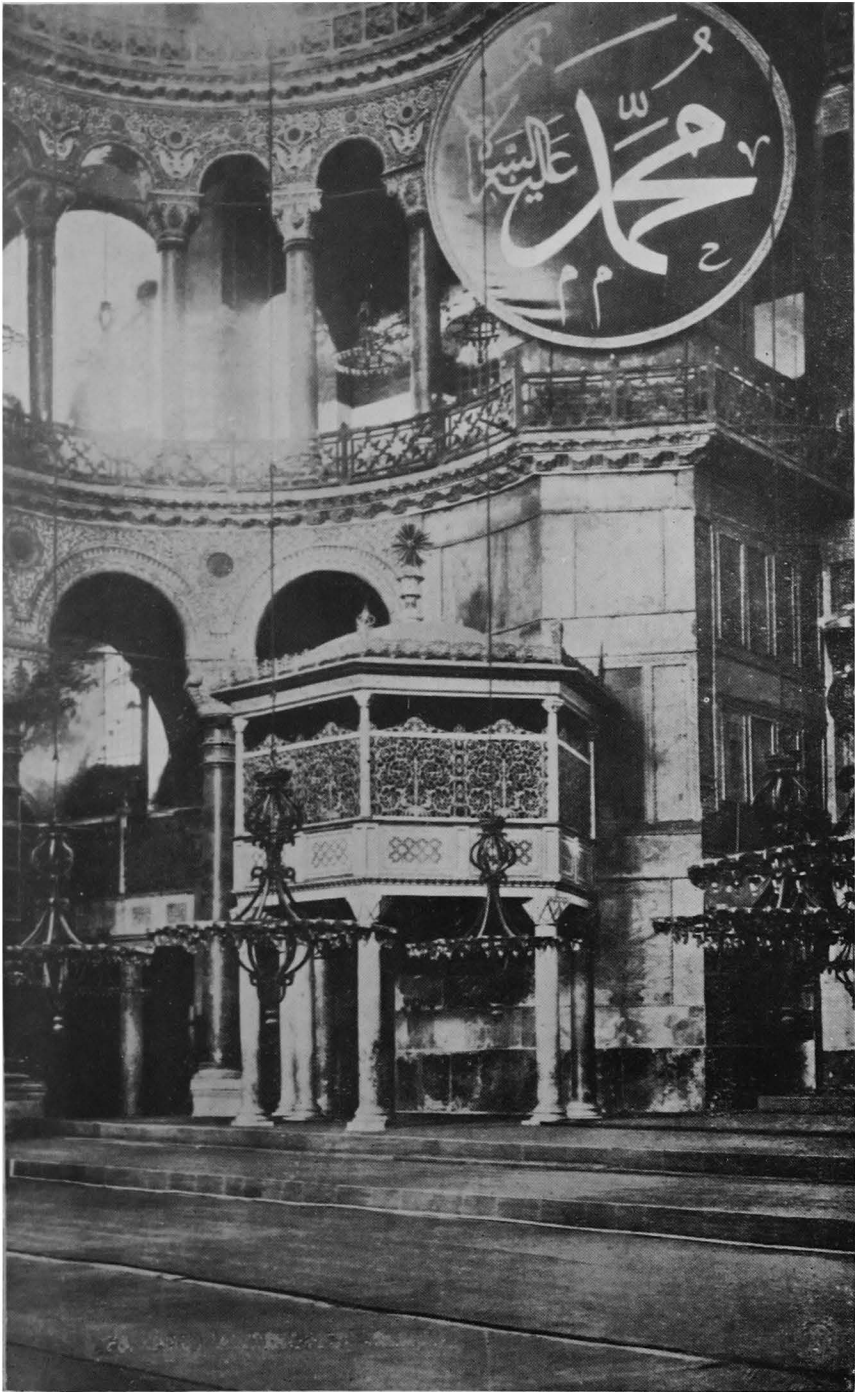
OF our visit to the mosques of Constantinople I shall carry away a remembrance that will ever remain with me, and in my dreams I shall often revisit Suliman the Magnificent, with its gilded domes and four gigantic monolithic columns ; yet oftenest I shall be gazing at that miracle which is called St. Sophia, and which, though thrice threatened with fire and earthquake, has remained to this day invincibly beautiful, mellow with the golden stain of time.

It was raining steadily as we ventured out that morning from our hotel in Pera, and, as we had several purchases to make on our way, an hour had elapsed by the time we had reached the Bridge of Galata and found Mr. de K——, who had arranged to meet us there. Then, taking the electric tram which crosses the bridge and goes to Aga Sofia, we soon reached the old city. We climbed up a steep hill and, leaving the big barrack-like buildings of the Sublime Porte on our right, very soon emerged on the dusty square on which stands the Mosque of Sophia built by Constantine the Great in A.D. 325.

Passing some rickety booths and mean little shops that cluster round its base, we made our way to the entrance, where we were provided with long, loose slippers to put over our boots, and then went in between heavy leather curtains.

Certain it is that Aga Sofia is elemental in its majesty, compelling the allegiance of all.

A dome, which is a marvel, and conveys an impression of huge space and fine balance, lightly poised on rows of arched



ST. SOPHIA, CONSTANTINOPLE.

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pillars of marble and uniting two smaller domes. A wealth of colour that never fails to stagger a Westerner brought up in the school of Gothic architecture and accustomed to its grey severity of stone shaft and the simple tracery of its pillars ; a roof ablaze with mosaics of gold and tempered by the silver-grey and black tints of marble pillars and the crimson red of its massive porphyry.

Row after row of pillars, the mystic 107 in number, supporting the women's gallery ; and around the dome winged angels, whose heads had been replaced by bosses of gold ; and countless shields flaunting the Sultan's monogram in gold lettering . . . the whole lit up by hundreds of tiny lamps not larger than jam-pots, strung up on wire, and conveying an eerie effect. All round we could see devout Moslems droning out their prayers, and swinging forward and backward in a very ecstasy of devotion.

Then, after we had been shown the imprint of a hand alleged to have been that of Mahomet II. the Conqueror, we slowly made our exit, and began to realise why the Turks continue to cling to St. Sophia with such tenacity. We recalled the amazing scenes that had taken place during the Allied occupation of Constantinople, when, before their defeat, the Greeks had attempted to obtain possession of the church. We felt that, like the Turks, we, too, would have strenuously opposed anyone who had dared to lay hands upon it. For this people, it is clear, the Mosque of St. Sophia must ever remain the pearl of surpassing loveliness, for which they are ever prepared to make every sacrifice. . . . Of the many beautiful things that I have seen during my long journey, none has left me with so enduring an impression.



## CHAPTER VIII

## ON THE BRIDGE OF GALATA

FOR a long time we lingered, watching the ceaseless stream of humanity passing by, the workers of three cities returning to their homes after their morning's work.

Officials from the Stamboul ministries returning to their Pera homes for lunch, merchants and clerks, some in a species of black frock coat, very long and waisted, known under the name of stambouline, others in the black costume of gentility; dervishes with fantastic headgear, and imams in white turbans bordered with green; huge negroes and truculent-looking Kurds; sturdy Armenian porters with large red sashes; people of all classes and sexes, from the turbaned peasant, driving his team of buffaloes or his ass struggling under a load that would tax the endurance of a camel, to the pacha, driving past in his car or carriage, and the fine lady, dressed in Parisian costume, with only the flimsiest of veils to betray her Moslem origin.

An unending procession of fezzes, turbans of various shades; high boots or no boots; beggar women in rags and thievish Levantines; American and British tourists; and at each end of the bridge white-robed toll collectors gathering their tribute.

Truly an unique bridge and one withal that, besides providing a most amazing panorama of humanity, contains sundry little cafés (one so low that we had to bend in order to enter) where you may smoke a chibouque and taste some quite passable Turkish coffee.

Slowly having had our fill of the crowd, we turned aside and made our way towards Pera. We stopped for a moment to look in the direction of the sea, and found in the view which

was presented to us almost as fair a prospect as any that we had seen from Stamboul.

Facing us, and to the right, were the black cypresses of the Serai, silhouetted as twilight fell against the ashy-coloured sky. Opposite we could see the Asiatic shore and the faint outline of snow-topped mountains in the distance. Unheeding a little beggar boy, who for a long time pestered us with his queer whining cries, we remained until our friend recalled us to reality. He reminded us of our promise to dine with him at the Russian restaurant, and reluctantly we left the bridge and the toll men, and waited at the carrefour for the tram to take us back to Pera.

## CHAPTER IX

## EUNUCHS

EARLY one morning, during the last week of our stay in Constantinople, Simeon Radeff, the Bulgarian Minister, called to see us at our hotel.

Could we not do him the favour of accompanying him on a house-hunting expedition? And would not my wife give him the benefit of her advice when selecting a house? He knew few women in Constantinople, and none that he fancied would prove more useful than she would, for he wanted a house that would give every satisfaction to his wife when they married, as that would shortly come to pass.

Having nothing better to do, my wife replied that she would be only too charmed to accompany him; in fact, that the prospect of visiting Turkish houses attracted her immensely. Upon which the Minister began to dilate on the beauty of the site in which these houses were situated, and vowed that he would long ago have made his choice if he had had only himself to consider.

Leaving our hotel we hailed a carriage and, following the rue de Pera, made our way through the Pera district until we had reached the Turkish residential district. Here was very little atmosphere of the East, save that which was afforded by the passer-by; houses mostly European in architecture, with large balconies, open washing rooms and tiled roofs, but a view over the Bosphorus which more than compensated for these Western characteristics, and a vegetation that was equally attractive.

Pines with branches which spread like sunshades over the

verdant grass, trees of Judea which tinged the hill slopes with rose ; large plane trees and violet wistarias, palm trees innumerable ; and, in the distance, the grey hills and plains of Anatolia shimmering in the morning sun.

We first visited the house of an important Turkish official from the Sublime Porte, a detached German-looking villa with a most attractive staircase and a very ornate scheme of decoration, in which European furniture alternated with beautiful inlaid Eastern cabinets and divans ; every modern convenience that one could desire, and a quite up-to-date bathroom which its Turkish owner refused, however, to include among its principal advantages.

Complaining bitterly of the English officers who had been billeted in his house during the Allied occupation, he declared that they had most wantonly destroyed his Turkish bath and substituted for it its present hideous English equivalent.

"English people sit in the same water as that in which they wash," he said. "We Turks prefer to have the water flowing continually as we wash, nor do we like sitting down in our baths ; English baths are not only hideous but most unpractical."

Feeling that this remark was a little uncalled-for, but that we had brought it upon ourselves by refusing to disclose our nationality, we realised the compensatory advantages of truth unadorned, and that we would probably never have heard this point of view being expressed if he had been informed of our English nationality, and so wisely continued to hold our tongue in case we heard more home truths. But, suddenly sensing that perhaps he had made a *faux pas*, the Turkish official now became more secretive and confined his conversation to mere generalities.

In the dining-room we found his little daughter preparing her lessons for afternoon school. She was working at a French exercise, and looked as un-Turkish in appearance and dress as if she had come straight from Piccadilly.

Simeon Radeff drew me aside, however, and told me that, attractive as was this residence, there was another to which he would now take us that was even more likely to suit him.

“ It belongs to one of the wives of the late Abdul Hamid, who, now that the Angoran Government has deprived the Caliph’s family of most of their wealth, finds herself in somewhat reduced circumstances. I think the visit should interest you, for the Sultana has some very valuable furniture, and you will also be able to see the last of a type of men that is now dying out in Turkey. In fact, I do not think you will find more than a few score eunuchs in Constantinople, apart from those that you will see to-day. They have outlived their utility and are merely preserved by their old masters and mistresses in the capacity of trusted servants in view of their undoubted fidelity.”

And so, after promising the official to come to an early decision, we hastily took our departure. We followed another street that branched off the main road, and after about five minutes’ brisk walking reached the Sultana’s mansion, a big two-storied house, with a large garden and grille, through which we could see several men-servants at work in the garden.

We rang the bell, not only once, at least three times, if not more ; at last a very languid-looking youth with the smoothest of chins and a high squeaking voice, recalling that of a schoolboy whose voice is just breaking, came to open to us. Our drago-man stated our purpose and recalled the promise that had been made to him that the house could be visited on this particular morning. Hesitating a little, and evidently incapable of coming to any quick decision, he mumbled a few indistinct words, then retired, leaving the gate wide open, to return shortly afterwards with another equally smooth-faced individual, whose more assured manner and better dress pointed, however, to a position of higher responsibility.

“ What did we want ? ” he asked, but very soon jumping to the situation, he motioned us to step inside and, talking in quite passable French, proceeded to show us round the house.

“ A very intelligent-looking man,” my wife exclaimed ; “ evidently not a Turk, but more like an Eurasian in type ” ; and certain it is that it was at first sight extremely difficult to realise that this alert, dark-complexioned man, who now became our guide, belonged to that type of men whom Gibbon

has always depicted as being devoid of energy, intelligence or ambition.

His physique, however, like that of the other eunuchs whom we met, afforded a violent contrast to that of the generality of men. His features were good, and the depth and height of his brow denoted thought and keenness of intellect ; yet, though his manner seemed alert, and his eyes sparkled with intelligence, the impression that he left us with was of something that was incomplete and entirely lacking in any of the buoyant vitality that constitutes human charm. There was a strange pallor, smoothness and hairlessness, moreover, about his sallow countenance that left us in considerable doubt as to his sex, while his attitude was so completely impersonal that I felt the strongest inclination to strike him to see if he really was devoid of feeling.

Under his guidance we visited a good many rooms of his mistress's mansion, his manner being perfect, and his French good enough to enable us to understand the points of everything to which he drew our attention ; yet, now and then, perplexity would steal across his face, as he saw my wife walking so unconcernedly between two men, and he would look across at her as if condemning a freedom that he was certainly unused to seeing in other women.

The Sultana's house, however, did not impress us as much as we had expected, for, while the rooms that we passed through mostly abounded in costly furniture, there was an excess of ornamentation which was displeasing to the Western eye, while very little taste was shown in displaying it to the best advantage.

We admired many exquisite Persian carpets and some equally lovely cushions and shawls from Broussa, but apart from these and some quaintly beautiful stools, inlaid in mother-of-pearl, there was little to move us to envy or admiration.

Coming to the bedrooms, which the eunuch was at first little inclined to show us, we found the greatest untidiness prevailing. Beds that were apparently never made ; clothes that were strewn all over the room. Radeff told my wife that Turks pay little heed to their bedrooms in view of the fact that strangers

are never expected to visit them. Strange philosophy which makes a virtue only of what would appear as such to others.

In one room that we visited an amusing incident occurred which illustrates the old Turkish feeling about women.

Entering a large dining-room, in which beautifully carved panels were to be seen, we were surprised to find a pretty Turkish girl sitting at the table eating some fruit. On seeing Radeff and myself, she arose immediately from her seat in unmistakable confusion, not knowing where to fly to avoid our profane glances, and, while still hesitating, was suddenly seized by our eunuch friend and hastily rushed out of the room, her kindly protector covering her face by clasping her to his bosom and shielding all view of her exit by interposing his body between her own and our view of it.

Then, unconcerned as if such manoeuvres were only part of his day's work, he went on extolling the many advantages that His Excellency, the Bulgarian Minister, would derive from taking the house, until having terminated our survey of it, we had passed into the garden.

Then, having made a hasty examination of some two acres of land which presented no special interest, we thanked the eunuch major-domo for the interesting visit that we had made and returned homewards.

Only one thing marred the pleasure that we had experienced, and that was the fact that the Sultana had not herself been present, but Radeff assured us that so drastic a departure from custom would at all times have been impossible.

As we made our way back through Pera, we discussed the unfortunate creatures that form so essential a part of every Sultana's household, and wondered whether, their needs being less, they were, perhaps, not happier. We recalled the coachmen of Bucarest and certain other Roumanians who, like them, practise the same self-immolation, and came to the conclusion that such practices, while they served their purpose in countries with mediæval morals, constituted as criminal an infraction of a man's individual rights as if he had from birth been deprived of his eyesight or limbs in order to save him from lusting with his eyes or killing with his hands !

Though Radeff maintained that man had such a right, I inclined to the view that it was man's bounden duty to make the most of his powers and faculties, and not to alienate or impair them on any pretext whatsoever. And, discussing this very exhaustive subject, we returned only just in time for table d'hôte.



## CHAPTER X

## THE NEW TURKEY

*(A Political Digression)*

THE modernisation of Turkey, under the impulsion of Mustapha Kemal and the Turkish Nationalists, raises many interesting questions. One of these, and certainly one of the most important, is the absolute incompatibility that exists between the old and the new capitals and the fact that the reformers of Turkey are incurring the gravest risks in omitting whole phases of normal evolution and in breaking so drastically from time-honoured custom and tradition.

During their short tenure of office, the Turkish Nationalists have not only definitely broken with the past and imposed European ideals on their people, which are little calculated to make them retain the archaic charm and mystery inseparable from the East, but they have made away with every practice that we used to associate with the Ottoman Empire.

In the course of a few months the National Assembly has made as drastic an attack on the institutions of Turkey as was made in several years by the French Convention on the institutions of the *Ancien Régime*. They have not only abolished the Caliphate, suppressed all titles and privileges, and expelled every member of the old Imperial Dynasty, but they have secularised the Church and taken away its temporal power. Hitherto, religion had controlled every aspect of national life, and a national sense had only existed in so far as it was religious. Religious were the tribunals and the codes of laws that they enforced, an anomaly that had undoubtedly

accounted for the Capitulations; religious, too, had been the primary (maktab) and secondary (madrassa) schools, in which the main subjects of teaching seem to have consisted of the study and interpretation of the Koran, the Turkish boy, in the maktab, being taught passages of the Holy Book and the elements of religious history, Arab grammar and arithmetic; in the madrassa, being perfected in his religious faith and the rudiments of Moslem tradition, jurisprudence, grammar, literature and rhetoric.

In these two provinces the Government has now made very drastic changes.

They have substituted the Medjellé or secular tribunal to the religious, and modernised its codes, especially in the domain of commercial contracts, marriage and divorce, and have secularised all their schools and placed them under the control of the Ministry of Public Instruction, while aiming at making their system of education more complete and less wasteful of good material.

The Turkish Government's reforms have, moreover, embraced many other phases of national life. Railways, long controlled by the foreigner, are being nationalised; the office of Chezi, or commissioner, has been abolished and a lay President of Religious Affairs substituted in his place whose first official act has been to limit all preaching in the mosques to those priests possessing the necessary permits as preachers. The whole position of woman has been materially affected. Turkish women can now wear the veil, or discard it, as they please, sit in trams or trains with their husbands, and attend theatres or dances, while it is even being contemplated to abolish polygamy and to give them full civic and electoral rights. All these drastic reforms have been accomplished, moreover, without any risk of revolution and with scarcely a dissentient voice.

That many difficulties confront the Ghazi and his party, notwithstanding, no close observer of Turkish affairs can doubt for a moment, and certain it is that vast overshadowing possibilities of reaction obscure the horizon, possibilities that Kemal would be foolish to ignore. Yet, and for the time being, the Nationalist leader has the tide of a rising movement with

him. Behind him are the men who constitute the backbone of the Nationalist movement: earnest patriots, who, in their desire to restore the fortunes of their country, contemplate nothing less than the full restoration of the old glories of the Ottoman Empire, of an empire withal that, thoroughly purged of what was effete and mediæval, will very soon take an honoured place in the councils of the world.

The Nationalist movement, of which this feeling is the expression, is, in a sense, the product of the Young Turk movement, which came into being in the latter half of the 19th Century, and which was fostered and developed by the Committee of Union and Progress. It was born in defeat, but grew and prospered because its objects were identical with those of the committee which it superseded, and it has now become the rallying point for all those patriots who refused to despair or to acknowledge defeat. The touch of its supreme audacity lies in the fact, moreover, that it has deliberately renounced whatever spiritual and political prestige was inherent in the Caliphate, a sweeping away of super-secular authority that has awakened an opposition as formidable as it is subterranean in its activities. In short, the National movement is confronted to-day with an opposition that is daily growing in importance, and which is constituted of the following elements.

There are, in the first place, the religious orders, whose vested interests are being threatened by the new régime. I am alluding to the hedjas, who are naturally furious at the wholesale confiscation that had been decreed of the lands belonging to the mosques and sacred places. Their influence is considerable, especially in Anatolia, where the uneducated peasant is still priest-led and oblivious of any other consideration, and these priests are mostly solid in their opposition to the religious revolution which has robbed them of considerable power and, above all, of enormous wealth. Then, secondly, there are the Young Turks and Intellectuals, and all those numerous officials who, by tradition and interest, were supporters of the Caliph, as well as the Entente Liberale party, which, though formerly opposed to the Young Turk movement, has now rallied to the opposition. And, lastly, the

cosmopolitan population of Constantinople, who see with dismay the day approaching when their city will revert to the rank of a provincial capital.

What do all these reactionary forces involve? Are they strong enough to overpower the Kemalists, or are the arbitrary methods that are to be employed against them likely to bring them to heel? The odds are, of course, at least for the time being, on the Kemalists retaining their power. The army is on their side, and no longer a factor in political life, as the Assembly has decided that in future the Chief of the General Staff will not have a seat in the Cabinet (Assembly of Commissioners). This measure will undoubtedly strengthen the Kemalists, for not only will the army remain in the background, but it will tend more and more to become a docile instrument in the hands of the great party leader.

This being the case, there seems little prospect, for the moment, of a strong counter-reactionary movement breaking out in Turkey, the stringent measures by which the Government is endeavouring to suppress any manifestation of disapproval being more than sufficient to quell any attempt on the part of the discontented to give voice to their grievances. Like all opponents of a despotic government, however, they are biding their time and waiting for the occasion that, sooner or later, will enable them to overthrow the Kemalist régime. They are oblivious of the fact that every day will strengthen the Nationalist forces and weaken the hedjas, whose present influence with the masses is sure to disappear when the latter have been subjected to a more European culture, and they themselves deprived of all economic power by the confiscation of their vast possessions.

The present policy of the Nationalists, however, is not calculated to bring about that prosperity which alone can ensure that the existing régime will remain unchallenged. Its difficulties are many, and of such a nature that a more conciliatory policy would tend to bring it alleviation; yet, so suspicious is their temper, that, instead of winning over foreign opinion to their side, they are gradually alienating it.

There is, above all, the question of national defence, which,

as all Turks are agreed, demands the expenditure of vast sums of money. It is evident that Turkey is confronted on all sides by enemies, and that not only are the Greeks out for revenge, but that Russia is seeking to recover Ardahan. There is also the prospect of Arab States in the south combining against her. The fact, moreover, that King Hussein has been acknowledged as Caliph by the Palestine Arabs in the countries over which he and his sons rule is another circumstance that makes for discord. It is evident therefore, as the Ghazi has pointed out, that the principal consideration is to provide adequate forces to defend the country : This necessitates an expenditure that the present revenue of the Turkish Empire is unable to meet unaided.

Prior to 1914, the revenues of the Turkish Government amounted to over £30,000,000 gold, for a population of 21 millions, there being a debit balance of £3,200,000 annually, while imports exceeded exports by about £7,000,000. To-day, if we take last year's figures, the exports amounted to approximately four million pounds and the imports to some eleven millions ; the population of the Empire having dwindled from twenty-one millions to eight millions, all very impoverished and war-weary, while the revenues of the Angora Government amount to £10,000,000, the budgetary deficit, according to the latest figures available, being somewhere in the neighbourhood of ten millions sterling.

The Turks would be well advised, therefore, if they sought to conciliate the foreigner, instead of irritating him by their arbitrary measures, for they need help badly and can ill afford to do without it. Yet the undoubted victory that they gained at Lausanne, coupled with the sense of humiliation that they still retain from the day when Constantinople was occupied by the Allies, has combined to make the modern Turk the most intolerant and suspicious of mortals, and one withal who is convinced that his armies are strong enough to defeat any attack. Of this temper an incident that I well remember taking place shortly after the departure of the Allied troops from Constantinople is characteristic.

On the night preceding the entry of the Turkish troops into Constantinople, shortly after our withdrawal, a crowd of

Turkish roughs broke into the British Crimean cemetery and imperatively demanded green stuff to decorate the streets of Pera for the return of the Turks. The guardian sought to pacify them, and promised to give them what they required if only they would leave peacefully and without damaging the cemetery, but they threw him aside and, after helping themselves to as much greenery as they could conveniently carry away, proceeded to break a number of the crosses in various parts of the cemetery, and then left the scene of their vandalism singing anti-British and Nationalist songs. The guardian duly reported the incident to our Legation but, though our Commissioner demanded an apology from the Turkish Government and sent them a bill for the repair of the damaged crosses, no notice was taken of his protests, and the matter was dropped because there was not the slightest prospect of ever obtaining satisfaction from the Turks.

Not less significant is another incident that happened about the same time with regard to the bridge tolls. Across the Bridge of Galata a toll has from time immemorial been levied which, during our occupation, was definitely allotted as part of the guarantee of payment of a loan made by the Allies to the Municipality of Constantinople. This toll was collected by the National Bank of Turkey on behalf of the lenders, and was held by them until such times as the lenders would require the money. On two occasions, however, the Turkish authorities seized the bridge tolls. On the first, they restored the money when the demand was made for its return because, the troops of occupation being still in Constantinople, the Allies could have enforced their demands. On the second, nothing that was urged could induce the Turkish Government to make restitution of the money. Ismet Pacha, when approached on the matter, replied much in the following terms :

*" No moral obligation can exist when practical considerations make it necessary to disregard it."*

If the Turks do need loans, therefore, they are not prepared to give adequate guarantees, so that it can hardly be wondered at that the foreigner should fight a little shy of lending them money.

This hatred and distrust of Europeans to which I have alluded is also manifested in many other ways. There has been a marked revival of incivility, sometimes amounting to insult, towards European tourists, especially women, on the part of Turkish civilians and soldiers during the last year. Foreigners are also being bled whenever possible, and the Greeks are made to pay heavily for the privilege of remaining in Constantinople. Against this thrifty population, who follow many useful trades and vocations, for which the Turk has so far shown little predilection, a series of measures has been passed which seeks to make them leave the country. Forced subscriptions are being imposed on them, and their life is being made so obnoxious that the great majority have abandoned their homes and are seeking to return to Greece.

Among the many anti-Greek measures devised by the Assembly was one, moreover, that at first sight seemed to have been dictated by religious considerations, for it was clear that if any country adopted Prohibition it should have been Turkey, with all the moral force of the Koran behind her. Yet the Turkish Government, after making their country dry for six months, have now revoked this measure, for the simple reason that the Dry Bill has succeeded in driving away the Greek merchants who had hitherto monopolised the wine-growing industry on the coasts of the Bosphorus.

Among other equally drastic measures passed against the foreigner is one that, though purporting only to lay down the districts in which foreigners are permitted to take up their abode, is really designed with the view of making it impossible for any considerable foreign element to disturb the country. Thus, Arabs are not allowed to live in the frontier vilayets of Syria or Iraq, Greeks are confined to the Constantinople area, and Georgians are forbidden to settle in the vilayets of Kars, Ardahan or Riza. Non-Turkish elements are, moreover, not permitted to exceed 10 per cent in any district except Constantinople, and are only allowed to visit forbidden zones when in possession of permits.

Of the commercial stagnation and general impoverishment of the country, that are evidently the result of such short-

sighted policy, there can be little doubt, for, though these measures undoubtedly cleared the country of any undesirable elements, they also drove away considerable numbers of foreign merchants, mostly Greeks and Armenians, whom the country can ill afford to do without. There has, in the first place, not only been a very serious fall in the value of house property, of which the Turkish middle class have not been rich enough to take advantage, but such a dearth of labour through the general unfitness of the Turk to do the work which he had hitherto been content to leave to the foreigner that the economic future of the country has become gravely imperilled. Shipping is at a standstill, and the Piræus is rapidly supplanting Constantinople as the most important port in the Levant, while little is being done to rebuild Smyrna and enable it to recover some of its former prosperity.

Among the many questions that the Turkish Government attempted to settle, moreover, was one which they fondly hoped to solve successfully. I am alluding to the exchange of populations scheme which the National Assembly devised at the beginning of this year, and which entailed the transporting of over 400,000 Musulmans from Europe to Asia Minor or Turkey.

The greater part of this population consisted of small agricultural farmers who were, at a given notice, to leave their ancestral holdings, collect their belongings, and make tracks for a homeland which the War had, in many districts, left deserted and bare of all necessities. The new settlers were to leave in two contingents; the first half, hailing from Eastern Macedonia, Thessaly, Crete, and the Islands, were to leave their homes in the spring, the second half, coming from Central Macedonia, were to follow in the summer. It was arranged that 150,000 Greeks should take their places in the lands that they would vacate. Every immigrant was allowed to take away his household effects, and was to receive before his departure a document stating the exact amount of real property that he was leaving behind. Neither the Greeks of Constantinople nor the Turks of Western Thrace were included in this transfer of population.



Now, though the National Assembly selected certain zones where, as it was hoped, the immigrants would find the best available facilities for carrying on their respective avocations (the Turks hailing from Mitylene, specialists in olive growing, were to be transferred to Aivalik, the tobacco growers of Drama and Cavala were to be sent to Samsoun, and the Turks from Salonika were to proceed to Smyrna), the transfers of population that have so far been effected have, for the most part, been a very qualified success. Of the 200,000 colonists, including 75,000 peasants, 25,000 urban workers, 50,000 tobacco growers, and about 50,000 fishermen, gardeners, etc., who have so far been settled in the districts most appropriate to their respective calling, only a comparatively small percentage have made good. It is evident that the treatment accorded to the new settlers has not been all that could be desired.

But there is another, even graver, problem which the Turks have to tackle, and one that will nullify all their efforts at reconstruction if left unsolved. It is the question of the future of the country, a future that is being imperilled every day by the hideous scourge that is draining the life-blood of the nation. In 1800 the population of Anatolia exceeded fifteen millions; to-day it stands at five millions, a result that is largely due to the frightful inroads made in the national physique by venereal diseases. Over 93 per cent of the total population is affected, the application of conscription in 1880 having done much to spread the contagion throughout the country. How is the situation to be saved? It is evident that, if the most energetic measures are not immediately taken, the Turkish nation will ultimately disappear. The question is a difficult one, for the root of the matter is connected with morality, and no Government measure, however stringent, can achieve a permanent result so long as the moral standard of the nation is not radically improved, or more modern methods of curing the disease adopted.

Like its predecessors, the Angora Government has sought to find remedies for this vitally important evil. They have passed ordinances enforcing compulsory marriages, and have even provided for the application of penalties if couples produced

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no children within a certain period after their marriage but, up to the present, they have achieved nothing. The question will remain unsolved until some statesman, more provident than his fellows, will provide a more efficient remedy by linking up the devitalised Turks of to-day with their more vital brothers who live beyond the Caucasus.

Of the earnest desire of the present Turkish Government to reform *à tout prix*, however, there can be little doubt. Corruption continues to remain a feature of Governmental methods, yet there is hope that, even in this respect, the Kemalists will carry out reforms which will bring their administration more up to date. On May 1st their judicial reforms came into force and a Commission was appointed to revise the lists of the existing 2,500 judges, an attempt being made to establish a younger judiciary. Equally significant were such measures as the introduction of the Latin alphabet by Hussein Djahed Bey.

Turkey, however, has still to travel a long way before she can hope to attain the indispensable complement to her political freedom, and it is essential that her statesmen should invite the co-operation of the West if they wish to solve the many problems demanding an instant settlement. As political principles devised in the ardour of a nascent nationalism are apt to remain mere ideas revolving in a void, real statesmanship consists in bringing to such ideas the corrective of reality and making them conform to facts. Let the Angora Government bear these considerations in mind and be content for the time being with reorganising their administration, and so developing their resources that their value in the economic structure of Europe may become more apparent and lasting. The day of radical experimenting is over. Turkey must now prune and tone down her demands, and realise that success can only be achieved by moderating one's demands on life and in compromising with it.

## CHAPTER XI

## THE WOMEN OF TURKEY

IF Mustapha Kemal is going to modernise Turkish women at the same speed as he has been modernising his other institutions we may expect very shortly to see Turkish women with shingled heads, playing mah-jong, or bringing a team of stalwart footballers to this country to compete with our women's teams.

As a matter of fact this modernisation has been going on steadily for some years, the Turkish woman of to-day being as different from her pre-War sister as the Parisienne is from a native of Honolulu. She has gone so far even as to wear Paris and London dresses in the home and at the theatre.

The War, of course, revolutionised everything ; it created a sense of new values, and made Turkish women abandon the seclusion of their homes, causing some to go out as nurses to the front, while others, like Halide Hanoum, the accomplished wife of Adnan Bey, the Angoran representative at Constantinople, fought in the army.

Yet, up to the departure of the troops of occupation, women of the upper classes had rarely left their homes, while those women of the lower classes who had to go out shopping or on business had continued using the veil and sitting in that part of the tramcar that was curtained for their use.

Such a practice was, however, usually confined to the women of the towns and had never really been accepted in the country, the Turkish women of Anatolia only wearing veils on those rare occasions when they travelled to town.

The veil had not, therefore, as is commonly believed, a religious origin. It was not enjoined by the Koran for women,

and had originally been an importation from Persia that was adopted by Turkish pachas as a means of protecting their honour or, at least, of giving envious friends no possible chance of luring their wives away from the path of virtue. The pachas evidently ignored the fact that the sight of a veiled woman often suggests far more beauty and promise than she really possesses, and that the venturesome European who, entranced by a roving eye, has made approaches of love to a semi-veiled woman, would in all probability never have made any if he had seen the whole of her face, lovely eyes being often the only becoming feature that a Turkish woman possesses.

The harem also has vanished and polygamy with it, though this privilege had rarely been taken advantage of, since it had always been an expensive affair and one that few men could afford, while the increasing cost of living and the tumbling exchanges made husbands realise the inestimable advantage of possessing only one wife, and finding in that one the companionship which a dozen vain women of the old order could never have provided.

And, side by side with the disappearance of harems and eunuchs, the latter reverting in most cases to positions in the household, there has been a gradual change in the mentality of Turkish women, the women of the present day, if remaining a little old-fashioned, being, at any rate where culture is concerned, on as high a level as their sisters in the West.

Talking to these accomplished women is a continual reminder of the mutability of things. Thus, one very accomplished lady, whom I had the privilege of meeting at a small dinner party, could, without difficulty, have been taken for a grande dame of Paris or London. She not only spoke five languages, but discoursed with authority on any philosophical or artistic topic, and this without displaying any sign of pride or affectation.

It is consequently interesting to watch developments, and to study the attitude that Turkish women, generally, are adopting towards Kemal and his latest proposals to abolish polygamy and to confer all civil and electoral rights on their sex. If exception is made of a certain number of women of the old generation, it is certain that the proposed reform in the Code

with regard to marriage and divorce is meeting with the warm approbation of the great majority of Turkish women.

A few months ago the grey curtains that partitioned off women from men in the trams were abolished, the excuse being that it was unhygienic. Husbands and wives are now allowed to sit together, "provided they do nothing to shock the public morals."

Women returning from the market also sit where they like, roll cigarettes and smoke them, seemingly unconscious of the fact that they are exposing themselves to the rude gaze of members of the opposite sex, while veils are gradually disappearing, those that are being worn being of such a fine texture that they lend a greater charm to the wearer.

The Turkish woman is, in fact, emancipating herself with a zest that shows how Loti was wrong in assuming that women who had left harems and lived as Westerners often regretted the seclusion of their past lives. A stroll through any street in Pera will soon convince the observer that this is not the case, for, not only do women enjoy the greater liberty that they have won, but they are daily encroaching more and more on the privileges of the other sex.

It is vain to prophesy where the East is concerned, yet, momentous as had been the Nationalist revolution, I fancy that any opposition that Mustapha Kemal may encounter during the modernisation process to which he is submitting his countrymen will not come from the women of Turkey. They, at any rate, are more than satisfied with the changes that have taken place in their status and for the greater scope that is now offered to them for living their own lives and expanding their own individuality.

**BOOK V**  
**THE KINGDOM OF THE SERBS, CROATS**  
**AND SLOVENES**

### INTRODUCTION

SERBIA has emerged from the war as a great State, almost comparable with her old mediæval Empire. Her original 34,500 square miles and population of 5,000,000 have been extended to include Croatia, Slavonia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, parts of the Banat and Carniola, the Dalmatian coast, and certain districts taken from Bulgaria. Her present area is nearly 100,000 square miles, and her population nearly 13,000,000, divided as follows: 5,800,000 Serbs, 3,700,000 Croats, 1,600,000 Slovenes, 200,000 Roumanians, 500,000 Magyars, 250,000 Germans, 300,000 Albanians and Turks, and 600,000 Serbo-Bulgarians.

The Serbs are the predominant race by virtue of the military organisation and splendid courage which were the chief contributory causes of their forming so compact and powerful a State. Despite their tardiness in setting their house in order, and an administration that is undoubtedly in great need of re-organisation, the Serbs are making good. They not only possess considerable economic strength, but, by the geographical configuration of their frontier and the strong and hardy temper of their people, are destined to become a military power of the first order. Though suffering, perhaps, more than any other nation in the War, the Serbs of to-day are still fired with military ardour. Like Roumania and Czecho-Slovakia, Serbia has inaugurated a series of drastic land reforms, according to which no landowner is allowed to possess more than 750 acres of land. Some of this expropriated land, which mostly belonged to Hungarian landlords, is being leased to ex-soldiers at a rent calculated on six times the pre-War value.

Yugo-Slavia is almost essentially an agricultural country, and the greater part of her exports consists of grain, fruit and cattle. She has also many forests and some world-famous copper mines.

Westward, only 200 miles from Sofia, and over 500 miles from Constantinople, and you are in Belgrade, the capital of Yugo-Slavia. Here is colour and picturesqueness combined, the East mingling with the West. White houses are glistening in the sunshine, and in the streets picturesque peasants in quaintly-beautiful national costumes are selling fruit or water and contributing notes of vivid colour.



CHAPTER I

BELGRADE—AT THE COURT BALL

SHORTLY after ten o'clock, an hour before the Court Ball was due to begin, we drove off from the hotel after a prolonged argument with our cabman, in which, needless to say, we were worsted. Belgrade jehus, like their fellows in every part of the world, are past masters in the way they utilise every opportunity presented them for profiteering, and the stout furred individual whom we engaged, knowing full well that we could not afford to refuse his services, refused to abate a penny from his original demand, and finally made such a pretence of leaving us in the lurch that we were ignominiously compelled to surrender.

Driving down Therapia Street, we found little signs of traffic until we passed the National Theatre and the City restaurant. It was evident that most of the guests who had received the Royal Command to attend the ball lived in another district of the town, but, when we reached the bend of the street that leads to King Milan Street, we found ourselves suddenly wedged in between two apparently endless queues of vehicles, one made up of cars, the other of carriages of all descriptions and sizes. A few police rushed to and fro apparently seeking to direct the traffic, but we occupied nearly an hour in traversing the two hundred yards that separated us from the Palace gates. Then, turning abruptly to the left, we drove at a snail's pace into the wide gates of the Palace, and, as our carriage slowed up and finally came to a standstill before some carpeted stairs, a blue and gold official came rushing down the steps and opened the door. Behind him were other lacqueys and officials, and

behind our carriage other cars and carriages waiting for their turn.

Soon we were walking up the carpeted steps towards a door at which stood various officials who, as each guest came by, scanned his invitation card and then waved him through. Like those before us, we produced our cards, and, on being admitted into a large inner hall, were immediately directed to a middle-sized room in which over two thousand guests were evidently expected to find room for their belongings.

Surrounding us were men and women in evening dress, Court officials, diplomats in Court dress, officers in dress uniform, surging forward and backward in two waves—one wave seeking to find a way into the cloakroom, the other as energetically trying to find its way out. It reminded me of a football scrimmage.

For a moment we stood still waiting until the tangle had disengaged itself, then, seeing a momentary clearance, we hastily forced our way into the room, and, after further pushing and elbowing, eventually reached an attendant into whose safe keeping we deposited our cloaks and other appurtenances.

Then, provided with the usual ticket to enable us to recover our possessions when we should leave the Palace, we returned to the entrance hall. Directly facing us was a group of officers in full dress uniform, and a gorgeously apparelled official whose main task, evidently, was to see that every woman guest was duly escorted by an officer into the ballroom.

Seeing a tall and handsome youth in red and blue approaching my wife to perform this duty, I bowed to the inevitable, and, after seeing her go off with her cavalier, duly followed the stream of lonely men also proceeding in the same direction.

Entering the ballroom, a fine, large hall beautifully upholstered in rose-coloured brocade, I saw two long rows of guests facing me; on one side the men, mostly clad in the drab colour of evening dress, with here and there a Court uniform to enliven the monotonous black and white with which men seek to delude others into the belief that they are enjoying themselves; on the other, and opposite the men, at a distance of about fifteen feet, hundreds of women of all ages and

types of beauty and ugliness; some with spangled head-dresses and tiaras, others with side curls that were obviously false, women with jewels scintillating on neck and hands, women with nothing but their beauty to set off their dresses; frocks of all hues and styles, mostly home-made and commonplace, with here and there a gown evidently hailing from some Parisian costumier.

Soon the hall was packed with guests, all talking in subdued tones, while overhead, in a high gallery over the smaller hall intended for the Royal Party, a military band began to make active preparations for the dance.

Glancing round me I saw many faces that I recognised: representatives of the Corps Diplomatique, ministers and officials of State, professors of the University, Government officials, mostly with their wives and daughters, army officers innumerable—prominent among these, Marshal Stepan Stepanovic, a fine soldierly figure.

I spoke to Mr. Gavrilovic, the Rector of the University, and, ignoring procedure, took him over to the women's side and introduced him to my wife. He seemed most anxious to hear what we thought of his country, and if we were pleased with the reception that we had received. I was able to assure him that nowhere had we been greeted with greater warmth or with more whole-hearted hospitality.

Then Mr. G——, a diplomat of distinction, who had been attached to the Serbian Legation in London during the War, introduced me to his wife, and for some time we discoursed on life in Serbia, and how different it was to life in the West, until a certain animation in the gallery above and among certain officials near us recalled me to reality and made me very quickly return to my former place in the line of men opposite.

A few minutes later, and to the martial strains of the Serbian National Anthem, the Royal Party appeared just below the gallery, and the vast assemblage stood silent and motionless in deference to their Sovereigns and their guests.

In front, and directly facing us, is the King, debonair and handsome, wearing the uniform of a General of the Serbian army, and by his side the Queen, with a rose-coloured frock

that suits her shapely figure. A becoming Russian-shaped tiara crowns her auburn hair ; her lovely mouth is set in a smile that dazzles. Around the royal pair, the delegates of the Little Entente and the ministers of Mr. Pacic's Cabinet.

Here Dr. Edouard Benes, shrewd and determined looking, and Mr. Duca, with his customary expression of tolerance and good humour ; here Mr. Ninchitch and the other members of the Cabinet. Behind, a few officers of the Royal Household conveying a vivid note of red and blue.

Then, as the last strains of the National Anthem die away, the Royal group breaks up and, as the band strikes up a new tune, advances into the ballroom to open the ball.

It is the Kolo, the Serbian national dance, and leading the dancers is the King with the wife of Mr. Duca, and next to her Dr. Benes and the Queen, followed by the other members of the Royal party, all holding hands and undulating to and fro.

Like the Horo of Bulgaria, or the dances of the Roumanian peasants, the Kolo bears a strong family likeness to the farandole of Provence, and the dancers form at times a straight line or a serpent-like series of curves.

And noting the verve and zest with which His Majesty is leading the dance, we, too, would fain join in the merry movements and, like him, undulate in a mad gallop across the hall, until we realise that this dance is not for us, and that very soon the Royal party will retire to the smaller room and leave us in undisputed possession of the exquisite dancing floor, on which our feet are simply aching to dance.

And so we possess our souls in patience until the last strains of the Kolo have died away and the King and his guests have returned to the inner hall from which they will only emerge to converse with those with whom they are personally acquainted.

I found the Serbs good dancers ; not so good as the Hungarians or Roumanians, perhaps, but quite up to the average standard ; and, as in London, strong preference was shown for the two-step or fox-trot. There were a few quadrilles and lancers and, needless to say, several Kolos, in which we, too,

essayed our skill and, like the Serbs, sought to vary our steps so as to give greater variety to this interesting dance.

About one o'clock the Royal party retired to their supper room, and the other guests made their way upstairs, where in a long gallery just wide enough to allow for one row of tables and for people to pass on either side we found supper laid.

Food in abundance and varied ; wines of every description and vintage, especially some very good champagne ; everything plentiful except elbow-room, and this more than insufficient for so vast a crowd ; yet, after some waiting, we succeeded in finding two empty chairs. Then, when I was seeking to get some refreshment, I came across two attachés of the Foreign Office, who were courtesy personified, and a certain professor, Mr. X——, the Director of the Ethnographical Museum, who not only insisted on refilling our glasses every time they were half empty, but on hearing that we were looking out for an old Pirot carpet and a guslah, promised to find us what we wanted, if only we came and visited his museum on the following day.

“ Is that a bargain ? ” my wife asked.

“ Yes, madame, if you only promise to come and see me to-morrow at four, your carpet and the guslah will be awaiting you.”

And such was the disarming power of good wine that the kindly professor would have promised us the moon if we had asked him for it.

Seeing a lady who looked very tired and miserable, my wife offered her chair. Gratefully she accepted it, and declared that she was waiting for her husband, who was trying to get her some food, but when she stood up for a moment to see if her husband was coming, a huge, dark-bearded man rushed forward and, seizing her chair, rushed off with it before any of us could prevent him.

“ What did he say ? Did he give any excuse,” I exclaimed, “ to account for his strange behaviour ? ”

“ Oh yes ! ” was the answer. “ He said that I was younger than he was, and that I could consequently do without a chair.”

Evidently this Serb, like many other men in the Balkans,

only valued woman for what he could get out of her. Courtesy to her sex is not a primitive trait and, in the estimation of many men in these countries, woman in some circles is hardly better than a paid servant.

But the party was breaking up, and many guests were already departing. Looking at my watch, I saw that our carriage was due to take us home in about half an hour, and estimated that it would take quite that time to find our belongings in the cloak-room, which I imagined would be even more crowded than on our arrival. Hastily bidding good-bye to the friends who had been entertaining us, we hurriedly made our way downstairs and, after endless difficulty, succeeded in finding our cloaks.

In the drive outside dawn had broken and the air was frosty and fresh, and for a long time we stood near the steps waiting for our carriage, while many others drove off before us. Then, when we were looking out for another vehicle, one last call for our number elicited a reply, and a carriage answering to our call drew up to take us home.

As it was useless protesting, we crawled into the carriage and, passing out into the street behind a stream of other cars and vehicles, turned to the right and very soon were alighting before our hotel.

And, as we stood waiting before the door until the porter should rouse himself from his slumbers, we saw several short-skirted peasant women hurrying past us, carrying heavy loads of vegetables strapped on their backs, while in the distance a man suddenly broke into a wild, passionate song, quavering, almost sad.

“ One day at Vidin they did dance the Kolo.”  
“ Oh! let me, mother, go and see! ”  
“ There is thy darling, go with him! ”  
“ Oh, come, my sweetheart, come with me!  
I'll dance the Kolo there with thee! ” . . . .

Then the door opened and we entered.

## CHAPTER II

### A VISIT TO THE ETHNOGRAPHICAL MUSEUM

NEXT afternoon, recalling a promise that the Director of the Ethnographical Museum had made us at the ball, we decided to take him at his word and, hailing a cabman, directed him to take us to the Museum.

Going down King Milan Street the carriage turned abruptly to the right after passing the Foreign Office, and following Prince Milos Street, stopped before a small one-storied building standing a little back from the street, and directly facing the grounds of the Military Academy.

It was about four, and immediately, on giving our names, the attendant asked us to follow him. He ushered us into a small study.

“Will you kindly wait here a moment? The Director will soon be down.”

Glancing round I noticed on the back of a settee a beautiful Pirot carpet and a guslah; then, as I was turning to my wife with the remark that evidently the Director had not forgotten his promise, I heard a sound and, looking round, found the Director advancing towards us.

Courteously he made us sit down, and, after asking if we were thoroughly rested after our last evening's dissipation, suddenly began to look more constrained, as if he regretted a promise lightly made.

Then, pointing to the carpet and musical instrument, he blurted out that we were welcome to them if we wished.

“Surely you can't mean this!” exclaimed my wife impulsively, believing that the Director was making us a gift of these, while I, too, protested that we could not really accept.

The Director soon showed, however, that if this had been his original intention, it was certainly not his present one. He went over to the settee, and, caressing the carpet with one hand, began to dilate on its old age and many beauties.

"This carpet is very old," he said, "probably more than a hundred years. It is entirely hand woven and only vegetable dyes were used in making it. . . . I wanted to buy it for the Museum, but as the Government has not sanctioned the purchase, in spite of the price that is asked being absurdly cheap, I was just contemplating returning it to its owner, when you mentioned last night that you were on the look-out for one. . . . I would strongly advise you to buy it."

Still speaking constrainedly, until our manner had shown him that we bore him no resentment, he added that the owner was asking a mere thousand dinars for it ; that it was impossible nowadays to get a hand-woven carpet of that quality under fifteen pounds, and that even a new factory-made Pirot of the same size would cost above five. And examining it we found it was not only in excellent condition, but very original in design.

"All right, we will buy it," I exclaimed, "and many thanks for giving us a chance of bringing off such a good bargain !"

"Is that guslah also for sale ?" I then asked, taking up the strange, pumpkin-made, one-stringed instrument that lay on the settee.

"Yes," he replied. "A peasant up from the country came to see me a few days ago to ask if I happened to know anyone who would care to buy his instrument, and I told him that I would see what I could do. It is the genuine article ; his name is on the back. He is only asking a hundred and twenty dinars for it."

Finding the price extremely reasonable, I told him that I was ready to purchase it at that price, after which I duly paid him the money that was owing for carpet and guslah, while he, on his side, promised to have them sent over to our hotel.

These transactions having been satisfactorily settled, the





SERBIAN MUSICIANS.

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## The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes 213

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Director suggested taking us round his Museum, and, as we naturally intimated our ardent wish to examine his collection, he escorted us round the various rooms.

Of the half dozen rooms set apart for the historical collections, two were devoted to prehistoric objects, chiefly of the Stone Age, but the most attractive department here, as in Sarajevo, was the ethnographical. Here, distributed over several rooms, were various life-size figures, illustrating the different styles of dresses worn in the country, all in their most appropriate settings; here, two couples in wedding garments preparing to go to the church; here, a few peasants engaged in household work. The walls and ceilings were also made to represent the ornamentation characteristic of Yugo-Slav peasant dwellings.

I noticed that every village had its own particular costume, and every age and station its characteristic emblem. In Uskub peasant girls wore red feathers to show that they were candidates for marriage, but what was even more striking was the costume worn by the girls hailing from Monastir, and especially the curious black webbing which they wind round their waists with probably one or two cushions under it.

The Director, whom I asked for the origin of this curious practice, told me that it dated from Turkish times. "The Turks," he said, "made a practice of taking flying kicks at any girl or woman whom they thought was enceinte . . . and our peasants discovered that the only way in which they could save their women from being seriously hurt was by winding yards and yards—thirty yards, I believe—of black elastic webbing over one or two pillows round their waists. . . . Even the unmarried girls took to this precaution as safeguard."

Then before taking our leave of the Professor, we were shown various articles of furniture and personal ornaments, many quaintly beautiful weapons from Old Serbia, and a collection of ancient Roman and Greek coins in which the Director took justifiable pride.

Feeling very pleased with our purchases, we returned to our hotel.

## CHAPTER III

## IN BELGRADE, THE WHITE CITY—STREET SCENES

BEFORE the New Palace of the King a crowd is standing watching the changing of the guard, big, resolute-looking fellows in fur-lined coats and plumed hats, marching with superb swing, the élite of a country of fighting men. And, like the rest of the onlookers, we too stand enthralled and realise that here is some of the finest fighting material in Europe. We recall the critical periods of the War, and the superb heroism displayed by the Serbian troops in the face of the heaviest odds, and feel that, in spite of the most appalling disasters and casualties that in our Western countries would have made pacifists of the most warlike, the Serb remains, to-day as yesterday, in love with fighting for fighting's sake, and, after five years' inaction, simply aching for another scrap.

For a good ten minutes we remain watching the various evolutions that in most countries constitute this attractive ceremonial, and note the smile of grim satisfaction with which our friend Major S—— alludes to the superb physique of the guards, or asks me with charming spontaneity if I have ever seen finer or more soldier-like men.

Around us is the customary Belgrade crowd that one can see any morning when strolling down King Milan Street or any of those many streets that lie about the Palace, townspeople dressed in the drab black costume of gentility, and peasants who have come up to town for the market. Here is colour and picturesqueness combined, for, though the prevailing colour in Belgrade is white, in field, house and peasant's costume, so that the name given to the city is not a misnomer, this hue is often relieved by splashes of brown, red and other colours.

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## The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes 215

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Passing by us are tall peasants hailing from the Belgrade district, in brown homespun, and breeches bagging enormously at the seat, driving their pigs or oxen past the Palace . . . and interspersed among the crowd a few Serbians from the south-east wearing white homespun with black braided seams, turbans and coloured sashes, and a tall sturdy Bosnian from Sarajevo endeavouring to sell salep and other sweetmeats to the crowd : a picturesque medley of men and women of varied races and costumes in which I can trace even in the squalor a certain grace, while whirling down the street and giving it a touch of modernity are brand new electric tramcars obtained from Germany in lieu of reparations and one or two sumptuous motor-cars belonging to the Embassies.

Then as the crowd broke up and we continued on our way towards Prince Milos Street to call on some friends, I remembered the somewhat heated argument that I had had prior to my departure from England with a prominent official of the League of Nations, who had maintained that Serbia was the only country in which I would find no symptoms of war-weariness nor genuine desire to see the League functioning. I confessed that, while I could not subscribe to the latter part of his statement since I know Serbian statesmen to be desirous of achieving peace by every possible method, the first portion of it was at any rate correct. No country is less war-weary than Yugo-Slavia or more prepared to take up arms, if necessary, to defend her interests and legitimate pretensions, and in this spirit lies her chief strength. As, moreover, I remain convinced that no better way exists for ensuring peace than to be prepared for war, I can only commend the Serbian Government for maintaining so efficient a war establishment.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE VIEW FROM THE KALMEGDAN (PUBLIC GARDENS)

FACING us and just on the opposite side of the road was the Kalmegdan, from which we had been told a magnificent view could be obtained over miles of surrounding country, and in the background the old Citadel with its lichen-covered bastions maroon with age; and many times we had glanced at it from the window of our room at the Serbski Kraal vowing that we would visit it at the earliest possible opportunity.

Then, towards the end of our long stay in the Serbian capital, when we found a little more time on our hands and were able to stroll more leisurely in the streets, we found ourselves one evening making our way to the Public Gardens and to the parapet at the further end of it, so that the view that all concur in calling unrivalled met our eyes for a brief half hour of glorious sunshine.

Away in the distance was the dark indented peak of Mt. Avala, the haunt of fairy people and romance, immortalised by saga and poets, and below us the Danube in flood looking like a great fiord studded with islands of every size and description; but what entranced us even more was to see the sun slowly sinking over the great Hungarian plains lying beyond the great river, for rarely have we seen it setting more glowing or golden, and in a background more calculated to move one to admiration. . . .

Here was no loud landscape but one whose main charm lay in the infinite variety of colouring that characterised it, and the wonderful atmospheric effects that gave it distinction; a landscape, in fact, that was ever changing according to the season of the year and the hour.

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## The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes 217

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And, charmed with the view that lay before us, we lingered for a time, listening to the harrowing tales that our friend Mr. G—— poured into our ears concerning the days when the Standard of the Crescent had floated over the city walls, and were shown the very place on which many a Serbian patriot had been impaled by the Turks and left to linger in agony “*pour effrayer les autres.*” Then, when the sun dipped below the horizon, we suddenly remembered that a friend was calling for us that evening to take us to the Russian restaurant, and, after taking a last fleeting look at the view that we had come to see, quickly made our way back to our hotel after promising ourselves that we would return to the Kalmegdan, if only to see another sunset.

## CHAPTER V

## AT THE RUSSIAN RESTAURANT

SOMEWHERE behind the National Theatre it stood, in a small by-street, a plain, whitewashed building, very like its fellows, with only an inscription in Serbian to denote its character. And, preceded by our friend Mr. Marcovitch, we entered and selected a table not far from where the Russian band was playing.

A large, whitewashed room, plainly decorated with small tables at which, smoking, eating or drinking, sat a motley crowd of Serbs ; here a few students in large felt hats, smoking their pipes and drinking beer ; here some officers with their wives ; here a few Russian emigrés, in whose buoyant laughter it was vain to look for any indication of tragedy. Darting to and fro, a few waiters, carrying perilously poised dishes and glasses of wine or beer ; and, at the end of the room, fifteen to twenty Cossacks in Russian blouses of cream-coloured linen, black leather belts, riding breeches and leggings, mostly with mandolins or balalikas, with perhaps one double bass in the last row.

An atmosphere reeking with tobacco smoke, in which the loud laughter of the students alternated with the clinking of glass and dishes and loud calls for the waiters ; food of mediocre quality and not over-clean napery and service. Disdaining such material comforts, we hastily ordered the simplest fare and, making such pretence as we could of appreciating its greasiness, waited in patience until the music should begin.

Then, very suddenly, we heard the band tuning their instruments, and people moving their chairs so as better to hear

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## The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes 219

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the music ; and, like the rest of the guests, we too, subdued our conversation and waited expectantly for what was to follow.

A tap with a wand on a music-stand, and with faces that were tense with the ecstasy of their dreams, the Cossacks broke out into a song that evoked the endlessness of the Russian Steppes and the melancholy of their loneliness. It was one of those songs which the boatmen sing as they glide down the Volga, and, as I listened to its haunting strains, I felt almost as if my consciousness had become merged into the music and that alone this last was articulate.

Watching the musicians as they sang or played was like seeing the revelation of their souls, for in all these young faces was the strained, if wistful, look of men who have seen tragedy face to face, but in whom hope lingers eternally.

And listening to this music which now and then varied its theme and mood, sometimes even taking to itself the slow rhythm of a waltz, we lingered for two hours conversing between whiles with Mr. Marcovitch, who as good host kept on refilling our glasses.

During an interlude, when, as is customary in restaurants of this kind, a musician came round with a plate for collection, I beckoned to our waiter and gave him a note for the conductor in which I expressed the hope that he would come and drink some wine with us. In a short time the answer came back that the conductor would be delighted to come during the next interval if that was convenient, and I let him know that it was.

He proved to be a most intelligent young man who had held commissioned rank in the old Imperial Army, and, like the rest of the band, had served with Wrangel. Tall and well built, he belonged to the soldier type, yet was removed from its set form. His face mobile, his eyes eager and alert ; emotion and tragedy had lined and pale coloured his complexion. But, above all, he had the air of the man whose only solace is in detachment from everything that is real.

He spoke to us of his country, and of the days that are no more ; and his narrative was but a succession of hair-breadth escapes and perils that he and his friends had encountered until they had found a refuge in Serbia.



"We are not professional musicians," he declared, "but few musicians can love music as we love it. For us Russians, it is the highest form of self-expression, and it has proved in exile our only consolation. When we play and sing our folk songs we forget our misfortunes, and feel as if we were again back in our beloved country."

He informed me that the restaurant not only paid them a small salary for their playing, but provided them with dinner, and also allowed them to make collections four or five times every evening.

"Yes, the Serbs have been wonderfully good to us and we will never forget their kindness. Of course it is a hard life; some of us were very well off, once . . . but we cannot grumble . . . and in any case the day will come when we will return. . . . Bolshevism is like an evil dream; it will pass!"

Solemnly we drank confusion to the Soviets and to the restoration of saner conditions in Russia. I felt that, like the emigrés of the French Revolution, these exiles were refusing to lose heart or to acknowledge that a return to old conditions was, for the present at least, improbable. Then he thanked us for our courtesy and good wishes and, after asking us to select a tune that we would like him to play, returned to take his place among the musicians.

A slight pause, a smart tap with the wand to warn his musicians, and again we heard the Volga Boat Song that I had asked to be played again. We saw the young earnest Russian faces illumine with emotion as the haunting strains of this melody again transported them to the land of their fathers, and memory stirred and opened, while very near to us another Russian, an old man of military appearance, with a strange uniform and a tunic like a blouse, sat erect and tense, his lips tightly pressed together, his sensitive face hardly able to bear the emotion that threatened to overwhelm him. I remembered an emotional eddy that I had witnessed in Budapest after the playing of the Kossuth hymn, when a whole room had seemed in the thrall of some inspirational ecstasy, and felt that, though this was not comparable to it, because Russian music, even at its best, lacks that strange fire and glowing passion that

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## The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes 221

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are so essentially characteristics of Hungarian folk music, like it, it was capable of weaving spells over men and expressing things that they have always known, yet never been able to express.

Then, seeing it was long past midnight, we hurried out quietly and returned to our hotel, haunted unceasingly by the pleading accents of the music that had rapt us to silence and asking no companionship but the wings of our souls.

## CHAPTER VI

## SARAJEVO

IN a small valley on the north side of Mount Trebevic, an offshoot from the plain of Ilidze, lies the town of Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, a place that, often called Islam's Second City in Europe, certainly fully deserves its appellation.

It is a town that is steeped in the atmosphere of the East. Eastern are the costumes that greet you as you wander in its many crooked streets; Eastern its many mosques where devout Moslem Bosnians daily recite their prayers to Allah or prostrate themselves to the East in silent adoration of the one and only God and His Prophet; Eastern the markets where, squatting on mats and placidly smoking their pipes, native merchants sell their wares. It is a town where one would like eternally to linger, endlessly remote from our civilisation and as yet uncontaminated by the tourist. And here we spent two delightful days, seeing much to marvel at, and constantly moved to admiration by the novelty of our surroundings.

We had come ready to appreciate everything that we saw, and this happy disposition of mind not even the tiring journey that preceded our arrival into the Bosnian capital could dissipate. For certain it is that the journey from Belgrade to Sarajevo is both unpleasantly long and tedious. At Bosnia Brod junction we were obliged to change trains, and this at the early hour of two in the morning, being then ushered into an enormous waiting-room, where, in the company of a crowd of picturesque peasants, merchants and other travellers, we beguiled a very wearisome wait by consuming some excellent beer and sandwiches. Then in an old-fashioned train that

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## The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes 223

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traverses Bosnia on a single line track, we settled down for such repose as the circumstances permitted. There were no wagon-lits to tempt us into sleep, but each carriage was provided with four movable fauteuils which could be so manipulated as to make quite passable couches.

At first we were unable to make the necessary adjustments, though we had been told how to effect them, but, with the assistance of a kindly Serbian officer, we eventually succeeded in doing this and were able to settle down for the rest of the night.

The following morning afforded us our first glimpses of Bosnian scenery: wild ravines and defiles where railway, road and river became compressed within the narrowest dimensions, the railway line following closely the many windings of the river Bosna without even a single tunnel to shorten the tortuous way; here a mill poised insecurely on rough rafters over a rapid; here straggling little villages piled up on precipitous rocks or clinging to them like birds' nests; here imposing views of old castles and foaming cascades; then, as we emerged from the valley of the Bosna and to the north of Mt. Trebevic, the city of Sarajevo, at which we arrived after a journey of nearly twenty hours.

After lunching at our hotel, the Hotel Europa, the best hotel in the town, and accompanied by Mr. Bugarski, a professor of the local college, and the genial Prefect of Police, who very kindly placed his car at our disposal, we sallied forth to see the bazaars, for here, as we were told, we would find the East in all its glamour, and as much local colour in the way of picturesque costumes and native products as we could desire. And, taking the first turning on our right on leaving the hotel, we arrived in a few minutes at the bazaar proper, "Bezestan," which, originally built for the exclusive use of Mohammedans, is now largely occupied by Spanish Jews. Here we lingered for a while admiring the highly-coloured silks and embroideries that constitute their stock-in-trade. Then proceeding a little farther, we reached the Carsija, the true business quarter of the Mōslem world of Sarajevo, consisting of a great labyrinth of dark, narrow alleys running at right angles to each other.

In small wooden booths were busy artisans carrying on their trade in open view, sitting cross-legged on the floor and holding up their wares to attract our gaze, or inviting our closer scrutiny of their many merits. In some streets these booths had two stories, each being so low that the owner, even when squatting cross-legged on his mat, almost touched the roof. In one we saw a wood-carver at work in the higher storey, and a tailor in the lower.

We soon noticed that each trade had its own particular quarter. One street was devoted to the iron industry; another to the coppersmiths—this one especially attractive, as the copper work of Sarajevo is world famous, and for a time we lingered, watching the coppersmiths busily hammering on metal as they crouched, cross-legged, on the ground, with their trays of burning charcoal, tweezers, rolls of wire and curious little boxes of copper globules which they soldered with their nimble fingers. But we found even greater delight in watching the very picturesque costumes of the country people. More than half the population of Sarajevo belongs to the Mohammedan persuasion, and, like the Jews, another important element of the population, and the Christian Slav and Bosnian, they still live, move and have their being in the traditional world of their forefathers.

We saw, therefore, a most varied and almost bewildering array of picturesque costumes, men wearing fez or turban with tight jackets, loose knickerbockers and pointed slippers; women with divided skirts, Turkish fashion, and silken veils; some, the Moslems, completely veiled in black from head to foot; Christian women in national dress with boleros of tanned skin embroidered with gold and silver and wearing small round caps adorned with coins; and street vendors innumerable: here a lemonade seller clanging his cymbals and inviting us to drink; here a picturesque vendor of salep, the favourite Serbian beverage, standing near a huge kettle, and a pan containing red hot embers to keep it at the requisite heat.

“What is he selling?” my wife enquired.

“Oh, that is salep, one of our national beverages. Would you care to try it?”

Spurred on by my wife, I consented to make an experiment

and found it a not unpalatable drink—a little sweet, perhaps, and slightly flavoured with a very peppery substance, but obviously made up of medicinal herbs and consequently harmless.

Strolling leisurely through the principal street we passed the celebrated Begoya Dzamia Mosque, and decided to pay it a visit, our guide leading the way through a courtyard in which we admired a venerable sycamore tree and, sheltered beneath it, a handsome fountain destined for the ablutions of the faithful. The mosque stands just opposite to this fountain and is the largest and finest mosque in Europe after those of Constantinople and Selim's mosque in Adrianople. It was founded by Usret Beg himself, who on the same occasion planted a sycamore tree before its doors.

On entering we first put on the sandals that were presented to us and, hearing the muezzin intoning forth his summons to prayer from the summit of the minaret outside, realised that, if we only possessed our souls in patience a little, we would be privileged in attending the Selamlik. And so for a time we waited patiently near the door while gradually the church filled to overflowing with worshippers, who preluded their devotions by prostrating themselves on the floor. Then the service began and, spell-bound, we heard the Imam reciting the prayers at the far end of the mosque, and felt as if we were being transported into Constantinople once more, as we heard the faithful droning out their responses, and invoking Allah in a very ecstasy of devotion. Everything combined to make the scene impressive: the solemn voices intoning their prayer, the sombre light reflected by numerous hanging lamps, and the impression of space and fine balance that detached itself from the great dome. Then, almost reluctantly, we left the mosque and returned to our hotel.

Early on our second day Mr. B—— arrived with an extensive programme for the day, which included a walk to the citadel on the other side of the river and visits to the Museum and Government School of Industrial Work, where, we were informed, the finest specimens of Bosnian chiselled metal work could be bought, and hurriedly we took our breakfast at one of the

café tables and set out on our round of sight-seeing attended by our two faithful companions.

We first visited the museum, and after glancing at various geological and botanical collections, which I confess did not particularly thrill us, devoted some time to the ethnographical department, where we found distributed over six or seven rooms groups of life-size costume figures showing the style of dress and house decoration prevalent in various parts of the country, all presented in their most appropriate surroundings. Here two lovers in the most beautifully embroidered wedding costumes imaginable, surrounded by other peasants also wearing their finest costumes; here a peasant milieu, a humble cottage in which humble peasants were shown sitting at their modest hearth knitting or embroidering, or preparing their evening meal, the whole forming a wonderfully realistic and pleasing representation of the customs and dress prevalent among the Bosnian and Herzegovinian peasantry. In addition to these figures and rooms, all constructed so as to illustrate the characteristic features and woodwork of a peasant's dwelling, we saw numerous isolated articles of furniture, quaint household utensils, silver-handled swords and some native jewellery that was a joy to the eye, as well as representations of model villages and homesteads in which the kindly curator evinced pardonable pride.

Certain it is that the various collections, illustrating the many phases of civilisation through which the country had passed down to the present day, were exceedingly well arranged and a credit to the museum authorities.

Leaving the museum we then made our way along the river banks to the thoroughfare where the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated prior to the Great War. We were shown the corner where his car had halted, and the exact spot from which the two revolutionaries had thrown their first bombs at the carriage as he was proceeding on his way to the Town Hall, and finally that other place from which Prinsepp had fired the fatal shot on the Archduke's return from the same building. Mr. B——, who was at Sarajevo about this time, declared that the crime had not been approved of by the

majority of the population, in spite of their undoubted Separatist leanings, and that, on the evening after the crime, many well-known Serbian residents were stoned for an act in which they had taken no part.

It also appears that the Archduke, on arriving at Sarajevo on this historic occasion, received due warning as to what was going to take place and that he not only disregarded this warning, but, in the speech that he made on arriving at the Town Hall after the first attempt on his life, signified his intention of driving back through the same thoroughfare; in fact, that he treated the matter very lightly and contented himself with mildly reproaching the townspeople for thus ill-treating one who had so consistently proved himself their friend. "No amount of persuasion," Mr. B—— added, "could induce the Archduke to change his mind and to drive back by another route."

Crossing the river by a handsome bridge, we made our way to the gorge of the Miljacka by a road that winds round the base of a precipitous cliff, and, climbing up by a side road that we found on the left to the front of the citadel, very suddenly came across a panorama of extraordinary grandeur.

Below us was the town bathed in sunshine, her minarets and church spires gleaming white in the sun, and her many pleasant villas and gardens, some nestling in secluded hollows, others clinging to the hill slopes; and, separating the city into two nearly equal portions, the river Miljacka, with its many bridges. All around us, hills stretching almost interminably, except to the west in the direction of Ilidze, and extending almost as far as the outlying ridges of the Dinaric Alps.

Here for an hour or more we sat and idled, listening to our guides as they pointed out to us various important buildings of the city, until, the sun having disappeared, the sky began suddenly to assume a very dull grey colour.

"This looks like a snowstorm," exclaimed Mr. B——. "I think we had better return to the town," and following a foot-path on the right we accordingly descended the grassy slope that lay between us and the city, further ominous symptoms of the approaching snowstorm, such as black ravens which began to



appear and circle around us, hastening us on our way. Then, threading our way through the streets, now thronged with people returning to their homes after their morning work, we soon reached the Government School of Industry, and spent a very profitable hour inspecting and buying various specimens of Bosnian chiselled metal-work, or, what was even more interesting, seeing the finished product in all its various stages of preparation, until it was time to return to our hotel.

Later on in the afternoon, and during a lull in the snow-storm, which had now intervened and covered everything with a mantle of dazzling whiteness, we sallied out once more, as the time at our disposal was so short that we could ill afford to leave any time unoccupied. We had heard so much concerning the many cemeteries that are a prominent feature of Sarajevo, that we asked Mr. B—— to show us some of the more characteristic, and accordingly he took us by a small side street to an old mosque, adjacent to which was a long, low, white building containing seven windows in a row, behind which, so he declared, seven well-known Dervishes lay buried.

“Can we visit these tombs?” I asked.

“I think so,” was the reply. Approaching an old Moslem who was evidently the custodian of the shrine, we first obtained his permission to enter the sacred precincts and, on entering, found one pointed coffin behind each window and, projecting at its head, an equally fantastic head-like stone, around which a turban had been wrapped.

“What is the origin of these heads?” I asked, pointing to them. “Do they represent the heads of the Dervishes?” and our friend, nodding his head, gravely then told us the following story.

“Many years ago,” he said, “seven famous Dervishes, good men and holy, were unjustly condemned to death by a wicked Sultan, and in due time were beheaded by the public executioner after they had solemnly protested their innocence and made their prayers to Allah. Thereupon each Dervish rose, picked up his head and turban and marched off to his tomb, on which, as you will have seen, he placed his turban before lying down to eterna-

rest. In this manner was their innocence proclaimed to the judge and to the whole world."

Feeling as if we had been listening to one of the Arabian Nights entertainments, we left the old mosque enchanted with Sarajevo, and vowing that we would not fail to return to it when on our way back from Dalmatia. In the meantime, we suddenly remembered the kind invitation that we had received from the British Consul, Mr. G——, for that afternoon, and somewhat hastily we hurried back to the hotel so as to make preparations for our visit.

Half an hour later we were taking tea with the Consul and his charming wife, and deploring with them the profound ignorance in which our countrymen are apparently content to remain with regard to this favoured locality, for, strange as it may seem, Englishmen continue to regard this country as beyond the pale, a prejudice that the Press does little to dissipate. He showed me an article in one of our most celebrated dailies, in which it was stated that travelling in Bosnia was unsafe, and that in all parts of the Balkans, in fact, travellers had been known to be robbed and murdered, and declared that in view of the steady reconstruction that was now taking place in all parts of Yugo-Slavia, such misleading statements were unfortunate and hardly likely to attract our commerce.

"We are losing markets," he maintained, "that better informed commercial rivals are bound to snap up, and it is a great misfortune, for this country has resources which, when developed, will constitute an excellent investment for British capital.

I also questioned him with regard to the Croatian problem, and, knowing that Radic has almost as many supporters in Bosnia as in his native Croatia, asked him whether he had found that he was gaining or losing adherents.

"I cannot say that he is gaining adherents to-day," was the answer. "In fact, it is my opinion that the people are beginning to question the reliability of some of his statements. In any case, many of the intelligentsia are breaking away from his party." Since these lines were written events have amply confirmed this view.

## CHAPTER VII

## MOSTAR, THE MOSLEM CITY

FEW railway journeys have ever afforded me such intense pleasure as the journey from Sarajevo to Mostar, and none has moved me to greater admiration.

It is a journey which takes you through some of the most picturesque country that it has ever been my privilege to traverse, a land that is not only extremely fertile and varied in scenery, but that presents such enormous difficulties to the engineer that the construction of the present railway connecting the two towns can safely be acclaimed as a very stupendous engineering feat.

Certain it is that no railway line was ever laid across so tortuous and difficult a piece of country.

We left Sarajevo some time after eleven o'clock, and after traversing the plain of Ilidze entered the outliers of the Dinaric Alps by the bed of a hill stream, our route taking us through wide and fertile valleys rich in arable, pasture and fruit lands. Then, on reaching the foot of the Ivan Sattel, we began our ascent of the Ivan Plannina—the engine forcing the pace—a succession of tunnels, deep cuttings and wide chasms that were spanned by bridges whose arches turned downwards. At one moment the track we followed was so tortuous that I could see from my carriage window, across a yawning precipice, the rear van of our train as it wound round a corner ; at another, towering cliffs seemed to hang over and all around us, mighty cliffs which had been blasted away to afford us a passage ; and this continued until we had reached the saddle of the Ivan Plannina some 3,000 feet above sea-level,

when we began once more to descend into the plain of the Narenta Valley.

We passed Konjica and Jablanica, this last town charmingly situated in a rocky basin amid pleasant orchards and vineyards, with mighty mountain peaks resplendent in their mantles of perpetual snow forming a surrounding amphitheatre. And, crossing the Narenta River by a splendid iron bridge, we entered the famous Narenta Gorge, some twelve miles in length, separating mountains that rose on each side to the height of some 7,000 or 8,000 feet, the railway line crossing and recrossing the river or running parallel to its banks to its termination at Metkovic. Few defiles in the world are more grandiose or attractive in character, with its many rapids and cataracts, its tunnels hewn out of rock and its romantic solitude; but the unwary traveller in some places is exposed to a danger that he would do well to avoid.

Before entering the gorge, the conductor looked into the compartments and asked us to close the windows, the alleged reason being that there was a risk of stones or boulders detaching themselves from the slopes of the overhanging hills around and falling down on to the unwary passenger. We duly carried out his instructions, as it was evident that the train in this particular portion of the line was really exposed to some unpleasantness, and saw on both sides of the line mountain slopes grey and arid that towered over us, titanic rocks and boulders that seemed to threaten us at every turn with sudden destruction. And the sequel showed that though there was no real probability of the larger rocks falling down upon us, there was, at least, a possibility of the smaller stones tumbling down the hill slopes.

Feeling my limbs needed stretching, I suddenly left my seat near the window and was walking to the other side of the compartment when a loud crash was heard, and the whole pane of glass of the window next to my seat shivered into atoms as a small stone the size of my fist came hurtling down on the floor of the carriage. It is evident that if I had been less restive or more intent on watching our progress through the gorge I would have

been exposed to the possibility of some of the broken glass cutting my face or blinding me.

This was, however, the only really exciting episode of the journey, and in due time, and after admiring several beautiful springs and cascades like the celebrated Kōmmadine Quelle, we emerged out of the defile into the plain and arrived in Mostar Station, to find one solitary policeman awaiting us on the platform. Immediately he stepped forward, and having bowed low to greet us, murmured something unintelligible in Serbian, seized our handbags and marched us out of the station, smiling broadly and repeating the word *hotel* two or three times.

We felt there was some mistake, and that evidently the Burgomaster had not received the wire which the Prefect of Police of Sarajevo had despatched on that very morning, but, realising our impotence, followed him like lambs to the hotel to find that a room had apparently been reserved for us and that we were expected to utilise his services as guide.

Hurriedly we took a wash in our room while the policeman waited patiently downstairs in the hall, and, realising that we had no time to lose if we wished to see the town, since we were due to leave for Ragusa late next afternoon, managed by dint of many gestures and various words of German to acquaint him with our desire to see as much of the town as possible before darkness set in. Nodding his head once or twice, he motioned us to follow him and, leading the way, took us through a long thoroughfare on the left bank of the river in the direction of the old quarter of the town.

Here for half an hour we wandered, looking at the usual multifarious objects exposed in the open booths until we had reached the bridge which was the chief aim of our walk.

There are few towns in the world in which I have found a stronger Eastern atmosphere than in Mostar, while even Dubrovnic with its mighty walls and battlements does not proclaim with a more convincing voice that it was born and bred in war. And her history is as rugged and as scarred as are her turrets and bastions, or the rocky bed of her river scurrying, as if in constant warfare, under the historic old bridge.

Its situation is, of course, an ideal one. It has as background grey and hoary mountains, dry and barren, without vegetation, and, hurrying madly through it, the river Narenta, a relentless stream in which very good trout is obtainable, and on whose banks it is mostly built. Picturesque houses abound with a sprinkling of old turrets and bastions that abut on the river bed, and everywhere tall white minarets conspicuous against the dull grey background of the Karst Mountains behind the city.

But Mostar's chief glory is its bridge, and to leave Herzegovina and Mostar without seeing it is like leaving Paris without seeing Notre Dame or the Louvre.

Some say that it dates from Roman times, and that the two towers still standing one at each end were constructed for its defence, but it is more than likely that it dates from the Turkish era, since the only inscription as yet discovered in the edifice is a Turkish one. Whatever its origin, one thing is at any rate certain, and that is that the symmetry of its single arch is without equal, and that it is alike remarkable for its slender grace, beauty of line and lightness and durability.

For quite ten minutes we did what all good Mostarites do at every conceivable opportunity, that is, gazed from the top of the bridge at the foaming waters below or watched the constant stream of picturesquely garbed peasants or townspeople crossing the bridge on their way home, none impressing us as much as the Moslem women who passed us.

Closely veiled like all Bosnian and Herzegovinan Moslem women, these unfortunate women wear a dress that would easily terrify a nervous child. They are clad in black from head to foot, and, in addition to the traditional black veil that conceals their features, wear a long peaked hood that gives them the appearance of old-world Inquisitors or adherents of Ku Klux Klan. Accompanied mostly by small children who wore European dress, mysterious-looking but perfectly self-possessed, they submitted us to as unblushing a scrutiny as that to which we were submitting them, and it was accordingly a very easy task to photograph them.

On the next morning our policeman guide conducted us to

the Town Hall, where we were received by the Burgomaster, Smailaga Cemalovic, who, apologising profusely for the erroneous message that he had received concerning our arrival, was courtesy personified. He offered us the traditional Turkish coffee and some extraordinarily good cigarettes grown in the district, of which he insisted that my wife should accept a box, and finally arranged an excursion for the afternoon to the sources of the Buna River, which he declared were one of the wonders of Yugo-Slavia.

The sequel proved that he was not far wrong, for we were exceedingly impressed by the beauty of the site to which he conveyed us after luncheon.

Passing through the main street of Mostar, we soon reached the open country, and, leaving behind us the old Turkish barracks, stopped for a while in front of some vineyards, where we were made to taste some excellent, if rather heady, white wine, which is greatly appreciated in Belgrade, and then, leaving our carriage at Blagaj, we proceeded on foot towards the lofty mountain peak from under which the Buna emerges. Facing us was a lofty precipice leaning over us in gloom, cloven into all sorts of fantastic forms and buttresses, and crowned by the majestic ruins of Stjepangrad, a famous old castle built many centuries ago out of the very stone that was found on the spot. Grimly menacing big blocks projected from the solid rock, and hanging down from crack and cleft we saw slender thread-like stalactites, while overhead a couple of eagles planed and circled as if on guard.

To see the sources of the Buna, however, it is necessary to enter an enormous cavern which opens on to the wall of rock, and which is in part blocked by a white mosque that, originally built by Ali Pasha Rizvanbegovic, was ultimately shattered by falling masses of rock. And, following our guide, we climbed up to a wooden balcony that overlooks the cavern and saw a beautifully clear pool of azure water glimmering below us, while overhead were many other stalactites, and numbers of wild pigeons pursuing each other in a maze of curves. Here we remained awhile, gazing into the motionless water in which only a few surface lines revealed the presence of the subterranean

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## The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes 235

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eddies of the stream below. We admired the silvery sheen of the red and silver trout which we could plainly see turning over from side to side, as if they wanted us to admire the variegated hues of their glistening scales, while even more strikingly beautiful were the rocks as reflected in the pool below, appearing as if clothed in the azure green of the water.

But it was time to return. Reluctantly we left the cavern, and, in company of the mayor, walked back to Blagaj, where we found the municipal carriage waiting for us. Next morning we were entraining for Ragusa and the Dalmatian coast.



## CHAPTER VIII

## WHERE THE SUN SHINES—A VISIT TO DUBROVNIC (RAGUSA)

ARRIVING on the Dalmatian coast in early winter, straight from Mostar and Sarajevo, is very similar to arriving in Biskra from Constantine. You leave a region that is clothed in snow, bleak and swept by wind, to find yourself suddenly, and, as if by magic, transported into a fairy region where reigns a perpetual summer. The journey, too, is most interesting, for the train on approaching Dubrovnic affords the most pleasing perspectives as it swings along the edge of the hills, giving distant views over the valleys to the mist-wreathed hills beyond, then climbs higher and higher until it finally descends on the other slope.

Dotted here and there were simple mountain dwellings and primitive huts that reflected the austerity of the countryside; and occasional tiny hamlets, collections of rude dwellings grouped together against the severities of mountain life; then abruptly, as the train came down on the other side of the hills, we found ourselves in Fairyland—great aloe plants that grew to enormous proportions, cypresses, and wonderful palms that raised their branches in a sky of lapis lazuli. It was soon evident that we had left winter far behind us.

Like Constantinople the Golden, Dubrovnic is a city of our dreams. Picture to yourself the old walls of Carcassone, transport them to the sea, and you will have some idea of the glory of this city.

The town lies on a shelving plateau at the base of Monte Sergio, which protects it from the north winds. It faces the Adriatic, and viewed from the sea it resembles Monte Carlo, with

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## The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes 237

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its background of rugged grey hills and its numerous white villas and tropical vegetation ; or, better still, Gibraltar, if we colour it with aloes, lofty palms, cacti and oleanders, and people its streets with the most picturesque types imaginable.

It is only twenty-four hours from Trieste, yet in the whole town there is not a single English visitor, so that you marvel at the innate conservatism of your countrymen and realise that, with all its undoubted advantages, conservatism possesses as many disadvantages, since it debars many from visiting one of the fairest cities in the whole world.

And it is no exaggeration to say this. For, from whatever direction you view the city, it offers the most enchanting views, and appears as if surrounded by a chain of frowning towers and mighty walls.

On arriving we put up at the Hotel Imperial, a very comfortable first-class inn within easy reach of the town and one that we were informed was the best hostelry in the whole of Dalmatia. Certain it is that the sequel showed that our informants were right. Good cuisine and service, and every comfort that an English traveller can reasonably demand when travelling abroad.

There are few cities, however, that are so deeply imbued with a sense of their own importance as the Pearl of Dalmatia, and to hear the natives dilating on the beauties of their town and the blueness of blood of their patrician families is a treat that should not be missed. No Castilian *hidalgo* or grandee that I have met has been so acutely conscious of his own lineage as the professor who came to see us on our arrival and who very obligingly placed his services at our disposal. Courteous and affable, an *erudit* in every sense of the word, he possessed a fund of knowledge and interesting stories concerning his city that made him the most competent and entertaining of guides. There was, however, one thing that detracted considerably from his charm, and that was his apparent inability to avoid interspersing, among many architectural, historical, and other details that he kept on pouring into our expectant ears, reminders of the venerability of his and other families such as the Gjorgjic, among whose

descendants had been various Princes of the Republic—an aristocracy compared with which English, French, and other noble houses were very small fry indeed.

Now to take pride in one's city and family tree is a most estimable quality and one, moreover, that is perfectly justifiable, but to have it thrust upon one's attention continually is apt at times to be as boring as objectionable, and we would certainly have felt disinclined to put up with it any further if it had not proceeded from such unsophisticated lips. As it was, it was not only amusing but exceedingly interesting, in view of the fact that it more than confirmed a view that had gradually been shaping itself in our minds from the moment that we set our feet on Balkan soil.

Common to all races living in this part of the world is a trait that we shall call an exceedingly naïve simplicity and which the more civilised and sophisticated nations of the West have probably lost for many generations. We are, every one of us, snobs, and as profoundly imbued with a sense of our own value and importance as the Balkan man or woman—'tis indispensable if we wish to get on in the world—but whereas the latter have still retained, undimmed by time, the faculty of speaking out their minds and of freely discussing their own attitude with the most disarming simplicity, we—and this applies perhaps more especially to men of our own race—always hate discussing our own mentality and are so chary of lauding ourselves that we only resort to such boostings of our own merits when impelled by the compelling hand of necessity or the desire to improve our material prospects.

Professor D—— was, in fact, only doing what we are too self-conscious to do ourselves, and we confess that, though we could not endure such frankness for any great length of time, it was, for the brief time that it lasted, a refreshing and entertaining experience that reminded us of a most charming and lovable Slovak, Mr. B——, who, during a former stay in Czecho-Slovakia, had acted as our cicerone and guide. How often have we not laughed on recalling the naïve way in which this absolutely unspoilt youth answered any question concerning his attainments and the amazement that we experienced when he

told us how varied and practically unlimited they really were!

Did he play the piano? Of course he did. Could we for a minute have imagined that he would be incapable of such a facile accomplishment. He certainly played it, and *à la perfection*, and when we went on to commend his undoubted knowledge and command of the English language, that he spoke with little trace of accent, he raised his eyebrows and in the most convincing air replied in the tone of the man who would be incapable of doing anything wrong, "Je le parle parfaitement," and there was in his accent that finality which admits of no further comment. Yet and because there was always some element of truth in such *profession de foi*—and he was really an unusually accomplished young man—it was difficult to regard him as one of those blatantly conceited youths whom it is one's obvious duty to wither with a few words. In any case it would most probably have been a task that would have presented many a difficulty if we had essayed it.

Professor D——, as I pointed out before, proved a very competent guide, and certain it is that it was mainly owing to his untiring help that we made such profitable use of the limited time that we spent in Dubrovnic.

Few towns possess the historic charm of this old-world city and none that reflects a more vivid picture of the mediæval times during which it flourished. For Dubrovnic has had a history compared with which the records of many of our Western cities seem very tame and commonplace.

Founded by Roman refugees, it flourished under Byzantine rule and became strong enough to withstand a fourteen months' siege by the Saracens in the 9th Century. During the 14th Century the Black Death killed off 11,000 of its citizens, an event of which an interesting relic survives to this day in the church of San Biago in the shape of an old crucifix, this church having been built after the plague as a memorial of their terrible scourge and visitation.

Then came a time of great prosperity for the city, which by the 16th Century had extended its commerce to all parts of the world, followed, however, by further tribulations—an earthquake

and plague in 1526, and then another earthquake during the next century. Yet it remained independent until the days of Napoleon, after rivalling for a long time the Republic of Venice in obtaining mastery of the Adriatic.

Ragusa\* was evidently laid out in imitation of Venice, though it possesses many distinctive charms and characteristic features of its own. There are many noble Venetian palazzi with exquisitely carved balconies and enormous door-knockers of fantastic design ; spacious piazzas where good bands play every evening ; picturesquely-flagged little alleys and streets recalling those that you find behind the canals of Venice ; pigeons innumerable, and squares in which every window is dignified by an antique coat-of-arms. Yet the chief objects of interest are concentrated round and about the Stradone or High Street, a street that, originally an old sea canal separating the two districts of the city, now comprises most interesting shops and cloisters, and monumental walls on which are carved mediæval grotesques. We first visited Mala Braca, the old Franciscan church and convent, and admired its beautiful cloisters and courtyard of tender green, and the fine old Venetian fountain, whose limpid water comes direct from the hills behind the city ; the Rector's palace with its noble portico, massive columns and capitals carved with the most fanciful designs ; and the beautiful Porta della Carita flanked by long arcaded benches of marble. I confess, however, that I derived even greater pleasure from wandering about the main street, admiring the costumes of the country people, or steeping myself in an atmosphere that was distinctly refreshing and mediæval.

As this town is in the heart of Dalmatia, you realise that you are on the very soil where Dacian mothers bore those herculean giants who fought as gladiators in the arenas of Rome, and, looking around, you confess that the type of present-day Dacians has by no means degenerated, for nowhere can you remember meeting such fine-looking men and women. Men with features cut into clear lines, flesh smooth and firm, and the gleam of red blood under tints of brown. Women mostly

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\* Dubrovnic is the present name given to the city of Ragusa.

dark and handsome with heads erect and the poise of goddesses. Men of various races, Albanians, Bosnians, and Herzegovinians, these last wearing bright red fezzes and long white veils with flowers behind their ears; and here and there fisherwomen of Dubrovnic attired most picturesquely. Dresses ornamented with gold and silver, multicoloured aprons, bodices and skirts, and, hanging down from quaintly embroidered veils, the sweetest little red caps imaginable.

The day after our arrival, the weather being even more summer-like than on the preceding day, the Professor suggested our visiting the island of Lacroma, which faces the town across a sea of dazzling blue. There is a monastery there which was founded by Richard Cœur de Lion, in commemoration of his escape from shipwreck; and truly it is a fairy island with the most luxuriant vegetation and with views on the screen of islands that surround it which are memorable.

Ten minutes by boat and we were climbing by a lovely mountain peak strewn with gorse and rosemary to the Monastery court with its arresting old-world gardens full of oleanders, orange and olive groves, and its numerous pergolas, and were taken by successive terraces; full of the most gigantic aloe, peach and almond trees, and cypresses, down towards the sea now beating on the shingle fifty feet below: a ribbon of emerald with a border of white lace flapping along the edge of every cove.

This view was memorable, for with it came a breath of enchantment, but after we had taken our fill of it, the Professor conducted us once more inland where we were able to admire the wealth of wild flowers that is the great glory of the island—and certain it is that I have never seen them in such profusion—while the air around us seemed to quiver with the scent of pine, locust and orange blossom. Here we sat for a time listening to our guide, and to his glowing accounts of great deeds of Ragusans in the past, being so delighted with our sylvan surroundings that we easily tolerated his discursiveness until it was time to return to the mainland.

Before leaving the island we noticed a quaint set of regulations that had been put up at the landing-stage by the monks,

the present owners of the island, in which it was stated that no one was allowed to land before sunrise or to stay in the island after sunset, while both eating and smoking were strictly prohibited. It is evident that it is by such restrictions that the island has retained its attractive characteristics.

On the next day we motored to Ragusa Vecchia to see a mausoleum in which we found some very striking work of Mestrovic the sculptor. No artist in my opinion is so typical of the unconquerable Slav temperament as Mestrovic, for, though his inspiration has undoubtedly been gleaned direct from the folk-lore of his people, the *leit motif* that is distinctly traceable in all his work is that of the Death and Resurrection of the Slavonic race. He takes delight in portraying tragic massive figures of wives mourning their husbands, or of national heroes in whose sacrifice in the cause of freedom he reads the surest indication of the ultimate regeneration of his country. And were I so minded I would, like Mr. Pacic, in whose mausoleum I admired three remarkable life-size portraits of members of his family, symbolise my ultimate regeneration in having myself immortalised by some great artist whose master idea was similar to that which dominates Mestrovic's art. Certain it is that Mr. Pacic, like Chateaubriand in his Breton tomb, was well inspired in choosing as his last resting-place surroundings as ideally striking as those to be found in Ragusa Vecchia.

Before leaving this interesting old-world village, however, we were taken to see a collection of paintings by another famous Serbian artist, Bukovac ; the curator of the collection, Dr. Bratic, entertaining us for a time with stories concerning the many visitors that visit Ragusa Vecchia to admire his work and that of Mestrovic. Of Queen Marie of Roumania he told us an amusing story. It seems as if this charming queen never travels without exacting souvenirs of every place that she visits. It matters little whether the *objets d'art* that she fancies are local heirlooms or treasures that are almost of national importance. If she wants to enrich her Roumanian home with anything deemed desirable she begins by commending it with the most fullsome praise, and so frames the ardent wish that possesses her of becoming its owner that it is

almost impossible to deny it to her. In this manner during her recent journey to Dalmatia on the occasion of the birth of a grandchild she obtained possession of many valuable *objets d'art*, there being only one instance in which she was discomfited in her quest.

When visiting the church of Ragusa Vecchia she expressed such admiration for a famous old font that stands near the main entrance of the church that one of the town representatives who was escorting the royal party made her an offer of it, and arrangements were made to have the font despatched to Belgrade before the Queen should leave the country. This information having reached the ears of Mr. Murat, the famous Dalmatian painter, he immediately, as Curator of the Works of Art in the town, wrote a strong letter of protest to King Alexander, pointing out that as the font was national property it could not possibly be given away even to so charming a royal guest as Marie of Roumania. As I saw the font in its old place of honour in the church it is evident that Mr. Murat won the day.

Before leaving Dubrovnic to return to Belgrade, we made several interesting motor excursions in the neighbouring villages, and on one occasion came across some strikingly beautiful peasant women tilling their fields some three or four miles out of the city. On enquiring from the Professor as to who they were, we were informed that they hailed from a certain valley lying between Ragusa and Ragusa Vecchia, and that around their unusual beauty the following legend has always obtained credence in the countryside:

It seems as if no crime was less tolerated in mediæval Ragusa than that of illegitimacy, and that though instances of illegitimacy were not uncommon there was a taint in being illegitimate that nothing could destroy. This, so the Professor assured us, accounted for the practice that arose in the 16th Century of always surreptitiously getting rid of one's illegitimate progeny at night by letting them down by a rope ladder from the city walls and entrusting them to peasants from the valley. In course of time most of the inhabitants of this district were either illegitimate or descended from persons who had been illegitimate. In any case, most of these love



children were beautiful and very often descended from the noblest patrician houses of Ragusa. Certain it is that I have never come across more strikingly handsome men and women, even in a country like Dalmatia, where, as in Naples, two out of three women and men are undoubtedly good-looking.

## CHAPTER IX

### INTERVIEW WITH KING ALEXANDER

As I drove into the wide gates of the New Palace to have a private audience of His Majesty, sentries saluted and the line of blue and gold servants at the entrance bent low. . . . Quickly I entered a large inner hall in which was a wide horse-shoe staircase, which I ascended.

At the head of the stairs was a young man in bright blue uniform, one of the King's equerries. With the usual etiquette he told me his name. . . . I told him mine. Courteously he asked me to follow and, leading the way, conducted me to a large spacious apartment in which I was to await His Majesty.

It was a room that was literally ablaze with gold; gilt was the beautiful furniture all in Empire style and showing up against the crushed strawberry carpet; here and there were a few divans, several fine modern paintings, and a profusion of handsome copper ware from Sarajevo.

Then, while I was admiring a beautiful landscape picture, His Majesty came in and very cordially greeted me and made me at my ease. He bade me sit down and, when I had made myself comfortable on a divan, passed me a box of Serbian cigarettes. Then when I had lit my cigarette and expressed my appreciation of its wonderful aroma, the King drew a small packet of strong Maryland cigarettes from his pocket and remarked that he personally preferred French cigarettes. It was a habit he had contracted during the War and which he had never given up.

Soon we were discussing the War and his face was lighting

up as he spoke of his soldiers and of their endurance and patient courage.

He spoke to me of the battle near Sabac in August 1914, and how, after twelve terrible days' fighting, the Austrians were dislodged from their positions and flung across to the northern bank of the Save.

"We had such scanty equipment in those days that this victory was a perfect God-send," he said, "for among the spoils were no less than 60 cannon and nearly 25,000 rifles." He told me that in those early days only five out of every eight soldiers in each regiment possessed a rifle, and that in every engagement the armed soldiers would go into action while the unarmed waited in reserve, springing forward as their comrades fell and taking up their weapons to go on with the battle.

I alluded to his brother Prince George's reckless bravery.

"Ah yes, he was perfectly reckless in those days, and none took such delight in fighting as he did," he replied; "and as a leader of guerillas he was exemplary, especially when he was leading a forlorn hope.

"On one occasion my brother was approached by one of his corporals, who told him that his soldiers had no more ammunition.

"'Haven't they got their knives?' my brother asked. The corporal nodded.

"'Then let us go on,' and they did go on, right through the encircling enemy. . . ."

Of his own doings he was strangely reticent. I alluded to his proclamations and to the wonderfully inspiring force that they had proved, almost as inspiring, I remarked, as had been his own personal example and courageous leadership; but he modestly waived aside any such claim to excellence and, remarking that he had only done his duty, declared that the principal element of victory had consisted in the indomitable character of the soldiers themselves.

"Without this element," he said, "no proclamation in the world, even if written by Napoleon, would have availed."

But in the long conversation that we had together, we discussed many other topics.

For some time he talked of England and of his visit to our country, and declared that he had a great liking for Englishmen, though, of course, he did not know them as well as the French.

“ You see, most Serbs are educated in France, and we have many ties with that country.

“ What I particularly like about Englishmen is their remarkable capacity for friendship. There are no friends like the English, and if they once adopt any particular country—usually one of the smaller nations—there is nothing that that country will do that will make them falter in their allegiance ; I almost despaired of meeting Buxton. I shall never forget the one and a half hour’s conversation that I had with him on one occasion during my last visit to your country. We disagreed on every subject, yet, though I realised that a Bulgarophil he was and would remain to his dying day and that no arguments that I could put forward would ever alter his belief in Bulgarian integrity or good faith, I could not help admiring his staunchness and loyalty to the country whose battles he is ever fighting and wishing we Serbians had equally reliable friends.”

The King also alluded to his meetings with Lord Curzon, and declared that here was a statesman of whom any country could be proud, a man who, in addition to possessing the most intimate and varied knowledge of European politics, is one of the best exponents of diplomacy of *la vieille école*, and who, therefore, is bitterly opposed to the clumsier methods of what modernists call the New Diplomacy. He spoke of the Turco-Greek War and stated that Curzon had for more than an hour sought to make him accept the British proposals that Yugo-Slavia should fight Turkey after the Greek debacle . . . and hinted that, Lloyd George having led Greece to her ruin, it was hardly Serbia’s business to save her from its consequences.

Concerning the present European outlook, King Alexander felt decidedly hopeful, and stressed the point that balance of power was to-day, as of old, the best way to ensure peace. He alluded to the alliance that his country had just definitely signed with the French Government, and incidentally told me something concerning its genesis which is interesting to those who like to know how such treaties are signed

It appears that the French Government was seriously concerned at hearing, during the Little Entente conference held in Belgrade in January 1923, that a treaty had just been signed between Yugo-Slavia and Italy, and that they consequently instructed Monsieur Simon, their Minister in the Serbian capital, to approach the King and Monsieur Pacic to find out if Yugo-Slavia would sign a further treaty of alliance, this time with the French Government.

Monsieur Simon, on receiving an urgent message from Paris late at night, hurried off at once to the Palace, where a Court Ball was being given in honour of the Little Entente visitors, and approaching His Majesty solicited the honour of an immediate audience on the most urgent business.

"As you doubtless remember," the King remarked, "it was soon after dancing the Kolo that I was called away, my departure no doubt exercising many minds as to what could be the reason of my leaving the Palace on an evening when I would naturally have preferred to be entertaining my guests. I saw Monsieur Simon, and soon realised that he was very anxious to know more concerning our treaty with Italy. Was any military alliance contemplated? Would my Government be disposed to sign a treaty with France similar to that which she had just signed with the Government of the Czecho-Slovak republic? . . . Monsieur Simon also informed me that Monsieur Poincaré had wired him an urgent cable to sound me and my Government on the matter as soon as possible.

"Have you discussed the matter with the Prime Minister?" I asked him.

"'Yes, Your Majesty,' he replied, 'but he would not commit himself beyond saying that England might object to such a treaty and look upon it as an unfriendly act,' to which I naturally replied that I personally could see no reason why England should raise any objections, that the more alliances were signed the better would be our prospects of keeping Europe at peace.

"If England should raise objections to such a treaty I would ask her to come and be a party to it. . . . Any alliance with England and France as allies is so strong as practically to



KING ALEXANDER OF YUGO-SLAVIA.

ensure no other country ever daring to threaten the world with war."

Discussing the internal condition of his own country the King declared that, now that the Croatian problem was being settled satisfactorily, there would be nothing to retard the consolidation of Yugo-Slavia.

"I think a happy compromise between the idea of federation and unification will be found by the Government of Mr. Davidovitch, and one withal that will give satisfaction to the followers of Mr. Radic . . . and when that is done we will be able to devote all our energies towards exploiting our resources and improving our methods of transport.

"I am confident that, given peace abroad and a continued amelioration of our relations with our neighbours, we will be able to look forward to a period of great prosperity."

Of King Alexander's earnest devotion to his country and his equally sincere desire to exercise a beneficial influence in the councils of his nation there can be no doubt. No more hard-working monarch exists in Europe to-day, and, like Napoleon, of whose campaigns the King is a keen student, Alexander insists on being informed of everything that is taking place either in the council chamber of his Cabinet or in the administrative world. His day is so divided as to ensure his daily assimilation of every piece of information likely to assist him in his rôle as democratic king. Alexander is, moreover, an insatiable reader and student of politics and literature, who keeps *au courant* of every event and change taking place in the world, and who joins to a keen intelligence a simple charm that has gone far to endear him to the people over whom he rules.

Alluding to his hobbies, I soon ascertained that His Majesty was a great musician, who not only played on the piano, but took delight in hearing a musical play and then on returning to the Palace repeating the whole score by heart on the piano.

But this is not the only distraction that the King allows himself. He is a great bridge player and student of Dalton, and rarely a day passes that he does not play one or two rubbers after dinner. He is also an extremely good shot who, when

shooting in the Slovenian mountains, has brought down many chamois ; and a good horseman trained in the French school.

Of his democratic attitude the King's conversation afforded me many instances. He discussed his people and advised me to try to know them better if I would appreciate their many sterling qualities, their profound honesty and good sense, and, above all, their patriotism, which, as he proudly stated, had never wavered in the face of defeat and hostile occupation ; he displayed an intimate knowledge of their life and habits that showed how often he had shared their life. He alluded to hunting parties in which he had shot chamois in the company of old rugged mountaineers ; and told me that he never refused to grant an audience to any old soldier or N.C.O. whom he had met in the War. Then just before I took my leave and had expressed my gratitude at having been received with such cordiality, he spoke of certain old veterans of the War whom he had invited on that very evening to dine with him at the Palace.

And, as I left his presence, I recalled one other scene at the Court Ball which I had attended, when he had come to greet several fine-looking old peasants in national costume, who had come as his guests, and I marvelled at the new spirit that is so often found in the monarch of to-day, realising that it was by this democratic attitude that the modern king had been able to give a new lease of office to an otherwise antiquated institution.



## CHAPTER X

### THE CROATIAN PROBLEM

#### *(A Political Digression)*

FOR several years Radic, the Croatian leader, has been the stormy petrel of Serbian politics, and has not only consistently refused to attend the meetings of the Skupshtina but has exasperated his best friends among the Serbs by his strange inability to adhere to any one view for any length of time.

That he was an autonomist everyone knew, but whenever members of the Opposition attempted to make him define his views he usually displayed such a will-o'-the-wisp capacity for evading the questions that he was asked, or gave such contradictory expression of what they really were, that he invariably left people with the impression that he was a man who did not know his own mind.

At one moment he would talk with fervour and tears in his eyes of his desire to see a strong, united Southern Slav State if only a federal union were substituted for the present centralism; at another he would declare that he stood for a republic and that nothing short of this could possibly satisfy his party. In short, so great was his inconsistency and apparent inability to give a programme that was in any sense definite, that it is no wonder if he very soon obtained the reputation of being a mere fire-brand who could never be depended upon to carry out any promise or undertaking.

Of his ascendancy over the peasants of Croatia there could, however, be no two opinions, and certain it is that the influence that he exercised over the simple peasants of his native province

was at any rate deserved, if only for the whole-hearted way in which he identified his interests with their own and sought by every means in his power to improve their social and economic status.

During the time that he was imprisoned, however—a penalty that was in the main due to his intemperance of language—and the period that he spent subsequently in Vienna prior to his visit to Russia, his tendency to allow words to run away with him became even more marked, and on each occasion on which I met him I invariably found myself wondering at the fascination that resides in language, since it enables men as gifted and comparatively level-headed as Radic to contradict themselves no less than half a dozen times in as many minutes.

In a few sentences he would traverse the whole gamut of human thought, and words passionately expressed and with a natural eloquence that was undeniable would rush from his lips in a torrent, so that it was easy to realise how, truly as it has been said, his faithful, simple peasantry had come to look upon him as one inspired.

Many Croats, moreover, hailed from America, and there had imbibed the idea of a republic as a panacea for all evils, so that, when once this idea was promulgated as the programme that the Croatian peasantry should embrace as their own, there was no stopping the intemperance that began to run riot. . . .

To many it became identified with a millennium, and one withal that only Radic could give. When visiting the countryside round Zagreb I once heard a young shepherd at a political meeting crying out for the republic.

“We want a republic!” he shouted. “We will have nothing but a republic!”

But when I asked him to tell me what a republic was, he replied :

“A republic is when men are subject to no emperor or governor and are perfectly free to do anything that they like ; there will be no military service, no taxation, no tithes nor grazing taxes.”

This being the case, it is evident that Radic's leadership

of the Croatian party has not been as beneficial as might have been expected, and that, uncompromising as was undoubtedly Mr. Pacic's Government, it was extremely difficult not to be exasperated by a programme so loosely constructed and one that so often threatened to become a pretext for anti-Serb agitation.

Then, shortly after the signing of the treaty of alliance between Italy and Yugo-Slavia, Radic began seriously to question the wisdom of his abstention from politics and, being greatly concerned with the accession of strength that he saw accruing to the ministry of Mr. Pacic through the happy termination of a dispute that had promised to inveigle the new kingdom into many difficulties, hastily convened a meeting of his party in which it was decided to enter into negotiations with the other parties of the Opposition and to take immediate steps to attend the next session of Parliament.

Such was the position of affairs when Radic left Vienna on a visit to the Soviets; and for many months matters remained at a deadlock, it being evident that, while Mr. Pacic could not govern the country with a minority government, the parties in opposition were still so disunited that it was impossible to suggest one party to take his place. The Skupshtina was then adjourned until October, King Alexander being compelled to ask Mr. Pacic to continue in office for the time being, but so great was the agitation in the country, and so insistent the demands that either elections should be held to terminate the impasse or another government substituted for the Radical administration, that Radic's supporters acting on his behalf—as he was still an exile and therefore unable to attend in person—not only obtained the passing of their mandates, but agreed to support Mr. Davidovitch's candidature to the premiership.

Then on Radic's return to Vienna, and when Mr. Davidovitch had come to an agreement with all parties of the Opposition, including the Croatian, and so obtained a working majority, Mr. Pacic offered his resignation and the new coalition accepted office, one of the first steps taken by the new Premier being to amnesty the Croat leader, who was thus able to return home after a long absence.

There seems, therefore, every reason for believing that a happy compromise, and one that should give satisfaction to the Croats, will be found between the idea of federation as represented by Radic and the modified centralism that must continue to be the fundamental aim of Mr. Davidovitch's administration.

That the peasant leader has learned wisdom in the face of adversity, and especially after his Russian visit, the last conversation that I had with Radic has amply proved. And though he will doubtless continue to cherish the view that federalism, or at any rate a measure of self-government comparable to that which is enjoyed by any British dominion, is the ideal that every self-respecting nation should put before them, he has realised the necessity of compromise and that the projected reforms that are being contemplated by the new Premier will go far to remove any grievances from which his countrymen may still be suffering.

Of Mr. Davidovitch's earnest desire to conciliate the Croats there seems little doubt. For not only have *pourparlers* been undertaken with a view to offering members of their party posts in the Cabinet, but the various public declarations that have issued from the Premier's lips have all breathed the same spirit. I understand that Mr. Davidovitch intends to carry through the regional autonomy programme that was originally devised some years ago by his able Foreign Minister, Mr. Marinkovitch. Mr. Marinkovitch does not, I believe, think federation practicable, at least in his country, because, as he once told me, there are too many Ulsters in the Irelands of Yugo-Slavia to make it feasible. He accordingly proposes to divide the country into regional autonomous districts of no more than 800,000 inhabitants each, with wide powers of self-government—a measure which he declares will not only give satisfaction to the Croats and other minorities, but will so weld the new State together that there will never be any further talk of disunion.

I fancy he is right, and that if only the two branches of the South Slav nation are allowed to develop on their own lines, and so enabled to come gradually and not violently together,

the moment will invariably arrive when the Croats will cling to the Serbs, not merely because they are both members of the same race but because they are happy to be together and conscious of the mutual benefits that are inseparable from their association.

Whether the new Government will hold power long enough to witness this absorption of the two races remains to be seen. In the meantime Mr. Davidovitch is being backed by a coalition consisting of Democrats, Moslem Bosnians, Slovene Clericals, and Croats, so that he is assured of a working majority,\* while there is little doubt that he will fully utilise the time now given him in making certain drastic reforms that are absolutely indispensable to his country's welfare.

There is, in the first place, a certain administrative disorder that prevails in certain areas which, as the Croats point out, compares most unfavourably with the conditions to which they were accustomed under the Hapsburgs; and there is, secondly, a system of transport and lines of communication that are absolutely inadequate if the country really desires to improve her economic status and utilise her vast natural resources. It is evident that where the first reform is concerned some time must elapse before good officials can be created to make good the wastage that was no doubt due to the War; but given time, and above all a resolve to put an end once for all to a system of patronage which rarely made merit the chief claim to preferment, there seems no reason why this state of affairs should not be considerably ameliorated. The second reform, on the other hand, is so obviously necessary that it is almost preposterous to imagine for a moment that it will not immediately be undertaken; in fact it has been projected and is well under way.

I can, therefore, see no reason why the Kingdom of the

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\* POSITION OF PARTIES IN THE SERBIAN PARLIAMENT:

Ministerial Group :	Democratic section led by Mr. Davidovitch	36
	Moslem Bosnians .. .. .	18
	Clerical Slovenes .. .. .	22
	Croat Peasant Party .. .. .	64
Opposition :	Radicals .. .. .	108
	Prebicevic's Democrats .. .. .	16
	Serbian Peasant Party .. .. .	9

Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes should not very soon triumphantly complete her reconstruction and become a factor of great weight in the councils of Europe.

NOTE.—There have been many developments in Yugo-Slav internal politics since this chapter was written, and Mr. Radic, by his criminal folly and irresponsibility, has once again plunged his country in turmoil.

He first created difficulties between the parties of the Opposition and then proceeded to alienate the Serbian followers of Mr. Davidovitch by slandering his colleagues and attacking the King. Mr. Davidovitch was obliged to resign and, *en desespoir de cause*, the King, after trying every other political combination that he could devise, was compelled to turn once more to Mr. Pacic and entrust him with a mandate for a new election.

What the issue of the election will be remains as yet uncertain, but in the meantime Radic and the leaders of the Croatian Peasant Party have been arrested and prosecuted on account of their connection with Bolshevism. The Court of Zagreb decided that the documents that had been put forward by the prosecution were insufficient and let the leaders go, but Radic was detained in prison on a minor charge of *lèse-majesté*.

The matter has been referred to the Higher Court and fresh documents have been produced by the Government, but so far no decision has been taken and public opinion in Serbia is much exercised in the matter.

If the new documents that have been produced are sufficiently incriminating the candidates on Mr. Radic's list will not be allowed to stand, and in view of this possibility the Peasant Party is trying to arrange with the Opposition Bloc that, if their own candidates cannot stand, other representatives of the Opposition will be substituted in their place, but it remains to be seen whether this tactical move will meet with any success. The Opposition is, of course, opposed to the trying of Radic, and maintains that the evidence is not strong enough for prosecution, but, though it is anxious not to lose the votes of the Croatian Party, it has fully realised the uselessness of dealing

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## The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes 257

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with so hare-brained and irresponsible a leader as Radic, and he can consequently never hope to be offered any post of value if, as might happen, Mr. Davidovitch returns to office and the appeal against the first court's decision is successful.

Many people are of opinion that the arrest of the Croats is only an electoral manoeuvre and that Mr. Privicvitch is at the back of the prosecution, but, while this may well be the case, it is obvious to every well-wisher of Yugo-Slavia that Radic's irresponsible acts are a serious danger to the State, and that he must be put in a position where he can do no mischief. If only this is accomplished and the Croats appoint as leader another of their party there will be some hope of finding a solution for the problem that has so long been retarding the reconstruction of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, but until this takes place I see no end to the political impasse in which Yugo-Slavia is still floundering.

## CHAPTER XI

## THE PROBLEM OF ALBANIA

AFTER all that I have heard and seen of Albania I stand in amaze when I hear the new Albanian Government turning to the League of Nations for assistance, and solemnly asserting that if only they have time to introduce certain necessary reforms, and above all the money necessary to carry them out, a period of stability is at last in sight.

No more extravagantly optimistic assertion has ever been made, and though I do not question the sincere patriotism and undoubted ability of the present Albanian Prime Minister who gave utterance to it, I certainly question the possibility or advisability of the League ever acceding to his wishes.

Before any such assistance can be forthcoming, in fact, there is so much to be done and such enormous strides to be taken by the Albanian people, that it is idle and strangely premature even to consider it.

What, after all, are the conditions governing this country, except those that regulated our ancestors years before they even conceived the possibility of forming a strong unified State and country? One foreign observer compared their social life to that which prevailed in Gaul at the time of Julius Cæsar, and while this is no doubt exaggerated there is a considerable substratum of truth in the statement.

The Albanians, in fact, are barbarians who have not evolved beyond the tribal stage and who have consequently no conception of any higher unity; a race of men whose principal pursuits consist of fighting and raiding other people's lands and conducting blood feuds on certain punctilious lines.



That the present Albanian Government will, as Archbishop Fan Noli declares, be able to suppress the methods of blood vengeance that have prevailed for so many decades in the country is as likely to happen as if the German Junkers were suddenly to develop into earnest pacifists and adherents of the League of Nations. The great majority of the population has, in fact, been armed for many generations, and it will probably continue to be so armed for many years to come, so that the whole structure of the country will have to be rebuilt before any such radical changes can ever be effected.

In short, the civil war which terminated some months ago with the victory of the revolutionaries is but another illustration of the fact that party vengeance continues to be the dominating factor in Albanian politics, for it is certain that, like certain revolutions that preceded it, it was, in the main, inspired by motives of party vengeance.

This being the case, it is evident that the task which the Albanian Government is tackling to-day is enormously difficult, and that even the land reform, which Fan Noli is contemplating, will meet with considerable opposition on the part of the great landlords whose land it is intended to split up among the peasant population. Hitherto these Beys had imposed taxes at will and generally sought to terrorise their neighbours when not engaged in fighting to hold their own possessions. These rivalries of feudal lords and their clans were a welcome feature of country life, and provided much of the excitement and danger that were indispensable to every self-respecting Albanian. . . .

How will these feudal chieftains and their henchmen welcome these reforms? I fancy that many, especially those who, as adherents of the late Government, will be the chief sufferers, will not only oppose them with all their might and main, but will, in many cases, temporarily unite with others of their kind to face the common danger.

With regard to the question of national culture and the amenities that we are wont to associate with civilisation, moreover, the Albanians are so many centuries behind the age that it will take a considerable number of years before they can

even be induced into giving up certain superstitious little practices to which they are addicted, much less be provided with such elementary sanitary, drainage, and water appliances as can in any sense be deemed adequate.

The country is, in fact, almost entirely bereft of carriageable roads, and possesses neither railway nor transport facilities, no banks worth mentioning, and docks and harbours that are in every respect negligible.

While, therefore, the unfitness of the State to which independence was granted in 1913, and its intrinsically mediæval character, have never been more apparent than at the present time, there seems every reason for advocating that the League of Nations, while refusing to find a loan for a nation whose territorial and other stability can in no wise be guaranteed, should seek to entrust the destinies of its people to a more competent rule. Italy, no doubt, would be ready to accept this mandate, for it is certain that it was Italian money that enabled the revolutionaries to defeat the late Government. But it is equally certain that, while many Albanians, especially those who are benefiting financially by their support of Italy, are in favour of an Italian protectorate, a far greater number advocate some form of union or entente with the Serbs.

The solution of the Albanian problem does not, therefore, lie in handing the country over to Italy; the present régime merely indicates that a pro-Italian minority has temporarily seized the reins of power. Albanians are perhaps the most difficult people in the world to handle, but if any country can succeed in exercising control over them it is Serbia, for the Albanians have always been open to Serbian penetration, and are disposed to consider the Serbs as their brothers, the undisputedly large numbers of Albanians who, for peace and security, have fled from their country and settled in Yugoslavia, providing ample proof of such preference. In such a solution, or any other that, while guaranteeing Albania her independence, will create more stable conditions, and so encourage the investment of foreign capital, lies the only chance of creating a State approaching that which the friends of Albania would like her to occupy.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF THE SERBS, CROATS AND SLOVENES

PARLOUS as was the general financial condition of most countries in Europe after the Great War, there is every reason to believe that, as a result of internal reconstruction, increased taxation, and rigid curtailing of national expenditure, the world is slowly regaining its financial stability.

Like all other succession States, Yugo-Slavia was faced with enormous difficulties for the first few years after the signing of the peace treaties. She had emerged from the War triumphant, but after an ordeal that had considerably depleted her population, thoroughly disorganised her administrative machinery, and left her public finances in a deplorable plight. Yet, instead of adopting the policy that could have brought alleviation to her very stricken condition, she had recourse to measures that were only calculated to aggravate the evils that they sought to rectify.

The evils to which we are now alluding were, of course, alarming, but they were inevitable after so long a war, and they were at any rate not any worse than those existing in the other States that had come into being after the disintegration of the old Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

Serbia had, however, been subjected to an even more devastating occupation than France or Belgium, while famine, disease, and war had wrought terrible ravages in man, beast, and field. The farmers, to a great extent, lacked animals, tools, and fertilisers, so that crops were much below normal times. Most industries were on short coal rations and without the necessary raw materials. The exchanges were low, and the purchasing

power consequently so diminished that it was impossible to secure a favourable trade balance, while transport conditions were inadequate—the roads having been completely ruined during the long hostilities, and the bridges and other constructions destroyed by the enemy during the retreat. All railways, moreover, together with their equipment, stations, workshops, and bridges, had been demolished, while all telegraphic and telephonic installations had been left unusable or totally wrecked.

Yet that none of these difficulties was insurmountable the sequel has proved, for the very steps that the Serbian Government is taking to-day to restore its financial stability would have proved equally efficient if applied on the morrow of the Great War. The reason why these measures were not sooner adopted was because the Serbians, like the Czechs, entertained such suspicions of their neighbours that they tried to become self-sufficing and began to impose various artificial restrictions on exports and imports and to fix equally false rates of exchange, the result of such a policy being that instead of achieving a useful end they gradually killed production and sapped the whole mechanism of credit and exchange.

It was Dr. Benes, the eminent Czecho-Slovak Foreign Minister, who, first sensing the danger of such a policy, advocated a return to the open door, and, in a speech that he delivered before the Czech Parliamentary Commission in September 1920, declared that, as a result of the terrible complication of government control of customs and exchanges, the economic difficulties of their States had merely increased and were still increasing. It was clear that neither individuals, nor especially nations, could live any longer in such a state of mind, and that this situation would end by provoking moral dissolution and the ruin of the entire body politic, both social and economic. This declaration was followed by a drastic modification of economic policy on the part of the Czecho-Slovak and Yugo-Slav Governments, and by the forming of the Little Entente federation, an alliance that, if aimed principally against Hungary, sought to substitute the idea of mutually beneficial trade for that of economic self-sufficiency.

From this moment the economic regeneration of the southern Slav state was really assured, for though the new formula that was adopted indicated a measure of government control that seemed to deny the individual any private rights against the general well-being, there was every evidence, at any rate, of its suitability to the new age, and of it answering the needs created by the War, while it was equally evident that the intellectual atmosphere had never throbbled with bolder initiatives or more really constructive efforts at reconstruction.

In the case of Serbia, more particularly, enormous progress has been made within the last two years with a view to strengthening and consolidating national life, so that there is every reason to believe that the new kingdom will very shortly enter on a path of economic prosperity that will allow its undoubted resources to be exploited to the full.

Yugo-Slavia is, of course, almost exclusively an agricultural country, over ninety per cent of its export consisting of cattle, fruit, timber, and grain. In spite of primitive methods she exported in 1923-4 over 350,000 tons of corn and 150,000 tons of wheat, 180,000 head of cattle, 120,000 pigs, 50,000 horses, and 2,000,000 head of poultry. Her industries are, at present, undeveloped, but she possesses forests whose area is considerably larger than Holland, and some important mineral deposits. There is, in the first place, a sufficiency of coal. Near the pre-War frontiers of Styria and Carniola are three great mining centres—Trbovlje, Tsrstovo, and Hrastnik—which in 1913 produced no fewer than 1,167,687 tons, the output of last year being quite up to pre-War standard. The Bor and Majdanpek copper mines, again, developed by French and Belgian capital, are world-famous; while there are iron deposits in the Sana district in Bosnia, and marble and mercury deposits in Dalmatia and Slovenia.

The utilisation of these important resources depends, however, to a large extent, on the improvement of transport facilities, and here much remains to be done, the War having left the country almost denuded of railway and other forms of transport.

Everything had to be rebuilt, as the enemy had demolished

everything on which he could lay hands, and there were additional disadvantages that for a long time proved a serious handicap to the prompt re-establishment of the means of communication. There was, for instance, little capital available, and a dearth of skilled mechanics, *matériel*, and even ordinary *main d'œuvre*.

In January, 1919, however, a determined effort was made to remedy these difficulties, and a new Ministry of Communications was set up which, in addition to repairing the bridges, tracks, and buildings which were indispensable for the working of communications, set about working out a new system of railways that would meet all requirements, the existing network being entirely inadequate. The old Austro-Hungarian monarchy had constructed its railways according to its economic, political, and strategic needs. The lines converged and the traffic gravitated towards Vienna and Budapest, its political and commercial centres, and also towards the ports of Trieste and Fiume. Now this system was hardly suited to meet the economic needs of the new kingdom, for the southern half of the country was entirely dependent on a single line running to the Greek port of Salonika, while Dalmatia, with its ports of Spalato and Sebenico, was completely cut off from its hinterland. Many parts, in fact, had no railway communications with neighbouring districts and there was not one transverse line to link up the lines going mainly northwards.

Such being the case, it is interesting to note the new building programme which the Serbian Government is contemplating with a view to improving their transport facilities.

In February, 1920, the Constructional Department worked out a plan for the building, over a number of years, of 9,500 kilometres of new lines, of which 7,000 would be normal gauge, and 2,500 narrow track of 76 centimetres. They contemplate linking up the present narrow gauge system with the Bosnian—which would bring the whole of western Serbia into direct communication with the Adriatic Sea—the opening of a double track line from Belgrade to the Dalmatian coast, and various extensions of the existing system including the opening up of a line connecting Fiume and Spalato. All these new lines will,

it is hoped, be opened in the course of the next few years. A hundred million dinars have been allotted for the survey and construction of the new lines in the 1924-5 Budget, but, on account of an insufficiency of funds and the fact that the Blair loan of \$100,000,000 which was to have been contracted in America did not materialise, only the shorter lines have so far been completed and opened to traffic, while the construction of the projected Belgrade Adriatic line has been deferred until sufficient money is available for the purpose. This line, it should be noted, is to be 600 kilometres in length, and as a result of the rise in the price of material and labour will cost about 1,200,000,000 dinars, hardly a sum that the present Serbian Government is capable of expending to-day.

That the financial and economic condition of Yugo-Slavia is, however, daily improving, a glance at the projected Budget for the coming year provides ample proof, for there is no doubt that the Serbian Government for the first time since the War has equilibrated its Budget and secured a favourable trade balance.

Taking the statistics given in the Serbian Skupshtina by Dr. Milan Stoyadinovitch on the occasion of the debate on the proposed Budget for the current year, we find that, in spite of a considerable increase in expenditure when compared with former years—due, let it be said, almost entirely to the increased salaries that were voted for the Civil and other services and to the ample provisions that were made for the improving of transport facilities—the Government has succeeded in presenting a real and serious Budget with an assured balance. “This we were able to do,” Dr. Stoyadinovitch declared, “by introducing supplementary taxes of 500 per cent on land and 30 per cent on direct taxes, and by increasing monopoly taxes: this last a very ample source of revenue.”

But the figures given by the Finance Minister of Yugo-Slavia reveal other encouraging tendencies, for we find that for the first time since 1913 imports are smaller than exports, this being largely due to the lowering of export duties and other measures designed by the Government, such as the introduction of greater economic liberty, and the considerable improvements effected with regard to transport facilities. As

a further illustration of the undoubted amelioration in Yugo-Slav finances, it should also be noted that the Serbian rate of exchange has in comparison with gold improved about 20 per cent in value. At the beginning of 1923 the dinar was quoted at Zürich at 5.35 Swiss francs for 100 dinars. To-day its quotation is about 6.50, and there is every reason for believing that this improvement is not momentary.

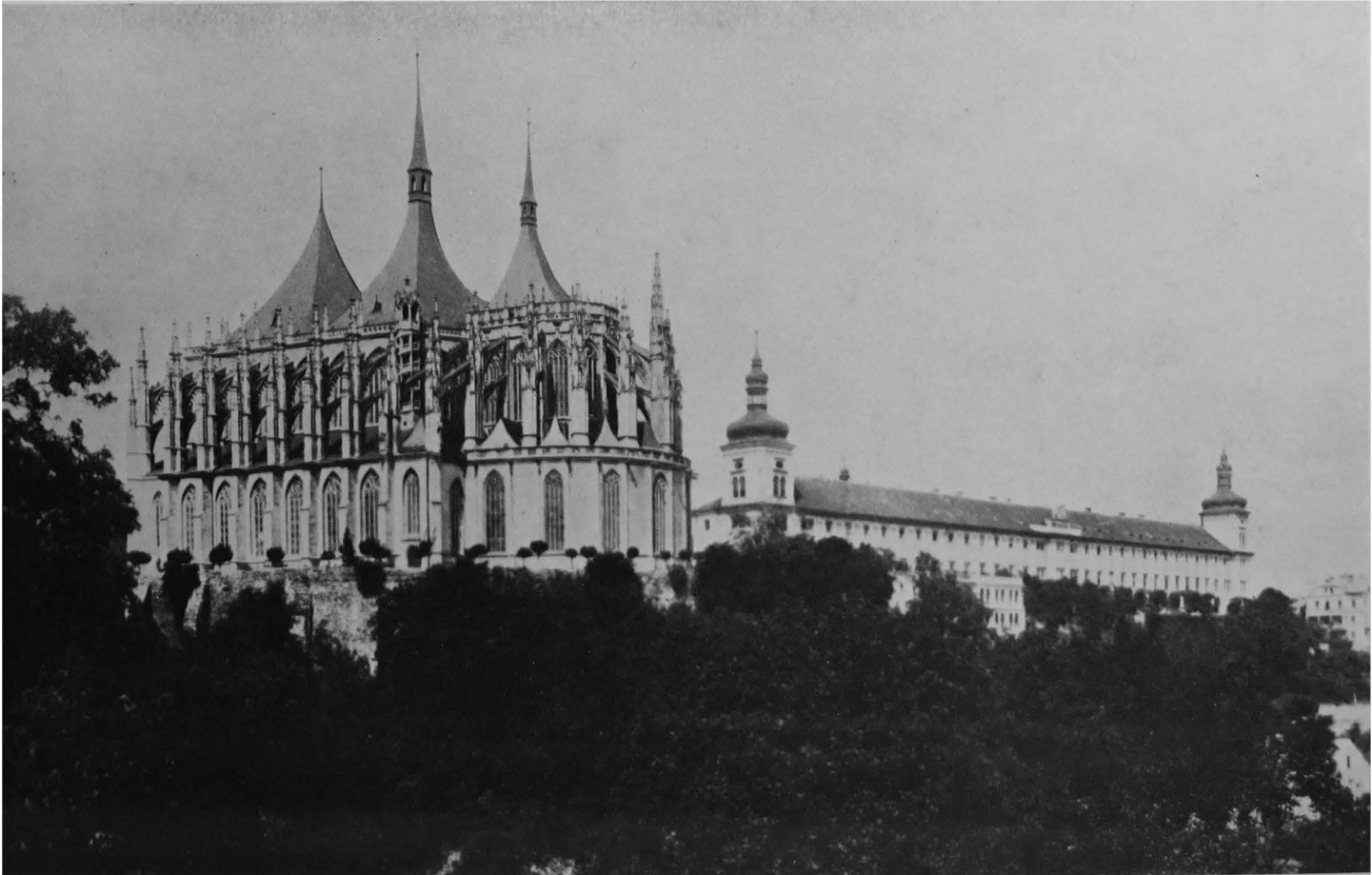
Given these circumstances and the certainty of realisation of such monopoly revenues as tobacco, salt, and petrol that served in the past as guarantees for the payment of the interest of many foreign loans and the liquidating of many outstanding problems such as the question of Fiume and the Salonika free zone—all matters ensuring greater stability—there seems no reason why British capital should not also support Yugo-Slav industrial enterprise and continue the good work that has so far been accomplished by Serbian legislators and financiers towards placing Yugo-Slavia on a firm basis.

The principal reason of our reluctance to come forward at this stage, however, is probably due to the fact that British capitalists remain even to this day in profound ignorance of the state of Serbian industry. As the majority of Yugo-Slav industrial undertakings are of a purely local character, or at best only national in importance, the foreign capitalist has hitherto refrained from entering into direct touch with Serbian industry, his profound ignorance of Serbian banking concerns having induced him to apply to Vienna for the intermediary and guarantor that he needed before making a loan.

That this method of placing loans possesses great inconveniences both for the English lender and for the Serbian borrower there can be no doubt, and it is, therefore, extremely desirable that the intervention of the Viennese banks should be removed, if only the reluctance on the part of our financiers can be overcome and their eyes opened to the enormous possibilities that lie in the new State. That is the most pertinent part of the problem, for it is plain that the Yugo-Slavs possess not only considerable economic strength but untapped resources that will amply repay any foreign capital that is invested in their country.



**BOOK VI**  
**CZECHO-SLOVAKIA**



CATHEDRAL OF SAN BARBARA, PRAGUE.

**INTRODUCTION**

THE Czecho-Slovak republic comprises the former Austrian provinces of Bohemia, Moravia, part of Silesia, and two former Hungarian provinces—Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia. Bohemia, its westernmost province, is not only the most densely populated, but it is the seat of the capital, Prague, and the country's most vital part. Bohemia and its adjoining province of Moravia (except on the borders of Slovakia) are inhabited by Czechs and Germans and constitute a real geographical unity; Slovakia and Ruthenia are inhabited by Slovaks, a race that, though ethnically akin to the Czechs, is in most respects very dissimilar.

Within these frontiers dwell five different races, divided, according to the latest statistics, roughly as follows: Czechs 8,000,000; Slovaks 1,700,000; Magyars 1,084,000; Germans 2,860,000; Ruthenians 400,000. Among these, the Czechs are the dominant race, by virtue of the peace treaties and their superiority in numbers and organisation; a supremacy that is being constantly threatened by the very active minorities that are found in their midst.

The Czechs are practical and law-abiding. They affect a certain contempt for religion and are culturally more advanced than the Slovaks. These last are temperamental and impulsive, culturally inefficient and retrograde. They cling to their language and customs and in certain respects are more temperamentally related to the Magyars, to whom they were formerly united. Whether this new State will last is an open question. It may be that the differences at present existing between these two races will in time be smoothed over by

education, but the greater probability is that the Slovaks, having lost more than they have gained through their severance from Hungary, will in course of time return to some form of union with the Magyars.

Czecho-Slovakia has inherited over 60 per cent of the industries of the former Austrian Empire. It has prosperous coalfields and vast natural resources that only await development. It occupies the foremost place in Europe in sugar manufacture, and is third in the production of industrial alcohol. Its glass industry is world-famous; it has forests innumerable, and intensive agriculture that should be sufficient to feed its entire population.

Evidently a magnificent heritage.

Leaving Belgrade at night brings one in twenty-four hours to Prague, the capital of Czecho-Slovakia, a beautifully built city full of quaint mediæval towers, crowned by an acropolis which gives the impression of a magnificent Gothic castle. . . .

## CHAPTER I

## PRAGUE THE IMMORTAL

THERE is a spell over Prague that, even to-day, when time has somewhat dimmed the recollections of my journey, still hovers over me whenever I conjure a vision of the last visit which I paid to it at the end of my tour—fitting climax to a journey that had ever set my pulse quickening with wonder at the glory of the world.

Like Budapest and Constantinople, it stands the undying symbol of a race whose vicissitudes are so plainly writ in stone and mortar that it provides a very good object-lesson of what persistent striving after national expression can ultimately achieve in the face of great odds and difficulties. It is a silent reminder of an age when Bohemia was a great kingdom and the centre of the Holy Roman Empire, and, like truly national cities, the unceasing warfare, which it has waged against those who would have turned it into a mere depository of foreign culture, is manifest on all sides.

Picturesquely situated on both banks of the river Moldau (Vltava), among some equally picturesque hills, it is perhaps the most interesting city in Europe, architecturally; and, where beauty of site is concerned, it has only Budapest to rival it.

For many days I lingered and steeped myself in its atmosphere, seeking to realise the nature of the warring forces that had contributed to make it immortal, and bowing before the spirit that alone enabled it to maintain its individuality inviolate.

Looking at it with that detachment which is indispensable if one would convey a faithful picture of what one has seen, I would compare it to a colossal monument in which every nation and every race has contributed its quota, enshrined its ideal, and essayed to give expression to its soul.

Italians of the Renaissance, Spanish counter reformers, Frenchmen imbued with the Gothic spirit, and Hussites—all the learning and culture of the South and West, the fire and passion of the Italians, the ascetic sensuousness of the Spaniards, the languid sweetness, rebellion, and worship of the body of the Renaissance—all these forces went to the making of this great city, so that even more than other towns it felt the goad of many impulses.

And the centre of the monumental city, the part of it which represents perhaps more than any other the school of architecture which has left the most profound impression on its life and being, is the Cathedral of St. Vitus, the finest monument of Gothic art in Bohemia, and the group of buildings constituting the royal castle which together convey the appearance of a wonderful Gothic castle.

Poised upon one of the Seven Hills which overlook the city, the Cathedral stands inviolate and immortal, eternal reminder of an opulent and renowned past. If you are in love with the Gothic style at its best, the cultured soul of Charles IV. will meet you at every turn, whether in the dome which he had built from the plans of Matthew d'Arras about 1344, or in the façade of the south transept and chapel of St. Venceslaus, where you can admire mosaic pictures and frescoes that he had executed to represent the Last Judgment and the Passion and Resurrection of Our Lord.

To build a wonderful Gothic castle and a city that would remind him eternally of the France that he loved had been his dream, but the Cathedral only remained a grandiose fragment and it was left to others to complete it.

To me, however, the castle, defaced though it has occasionally been by fire and bombardment, is even more interesting, not perhaps, architecturally, but as a witness to the artistic energy of Charles and his successors.

And, as I wandered through the Hall of Homage and the even more stately and majestic Spanish Hall—this last one of the largest rooms in Europe—I felt that here was indeed one of the finest national palaces that I had ever seen, one, withal, which commanded as fair and beautiful a prospect as any which I had ever admired.

Standing on the balustrade which stretches between the new stairs leading to the castle and the statues of St. Philip of Neri and St. Venceslaus, I remained for a long time admiring the view which stretched below me—a view that for sheer beauty rivalled even that which is afforded by the view of Pest as seen from the royal palace of Buda—until the sun had set behind the hills and the half light had deepened from misty gold and purple into the great gloom of night.

But there are many other almost as beautiful examples of Gothic architecture which can be admired to-day in Prague.

And, without wandering too far away from the castle, one can see for oneself something of the ideal which Charles had traced for himself.

For here in the Mala Strana, or Minor Town, and grouped around the castle on the hill slopes which lead to the river and the bridge bearing Charles' name, are countless public and private buildings—churches, towers, palaces, and private houses whose construction has evidently been inspired by Gothic art.

There are, of course, the arcs in the bridge itself, which are Gothic. Then there are the two Bridge Towers, one at each end of the bridge, with their clustered ornamentation and fantastic intertwining of natural and architectonic motifs—the churches of Our Lady in Chains, and St. Roch in the Monastery of Strahof—and numerous buildings in which the same yearning for repose and harmonious existence that possessed our forefathers at the end of the Civil Wars of the 16th Century stands revealed in the flamboyant Gothic characteristics that permeate their architecture. In many buildings, doubtless, there was a strange lack of constructive ideas, which showed that no transcendental genius had been at work; but the highly decorative baldachins, statues, tail pieces and



balconies, which I noticed, were all covered with the dainty foliage of Gothic pointed ornamentation ; and this tendency I saw revealed in other districts of the town.

In the old town, in fact, there are almost as many buildings belonging to this school as in the new. There are the Famous Powder Gate and the Church of the Assumption and Charlemagne—this last boasting a star-shaped cupola which is almost unique in the world—but what is to me even more interesting and notable : there are also the Town Hall and Corner Tower which are situated in a square that after the Vysehrad and Hradcany is, perhaps, the most interesting spot in the city.

It is the centre not only of Prague but of Bohemia, for it is here that the fate of the country has often been decided.

The west side of the square is occupied by the vast buildings of the Town Hall, which, in addition to a Corner Tower possessing a very curious astronomical clock, is reputed to possess the finest Gothic portal in the country. To me it is haunted by the twenty-seven Bohemian noblemen who were beheaded there after their defeat at the fatal battle of the White Mountain ; those ardent and tortured souls who sought a traitor's death rather than change their creed at a sovereign's behest. And, though the square had been changed somewhat by modern improvements, it has preserved much of its unique antique character.

And around this background of Gothic art many other schools of architecture have left an impress : the Renaissance, that impassioned age when men invested every object that Art touched with a religious aspect and which, though begun in the 15th Century, is ever with us, since much that it set out to do still remains to be accomplished ; the Romanesque and Louis XV., those aftermaths of the Renaissance in which one can trace much of that insidious and languid sweetness which, coupled with a love of the ornate and a worship of physical beauty, is characteristic of every refined decadence ; Empire art inspired from France ; Czech revivals of Gothic art ; and, permeating all and proclaiming a new love of reality, the Baroque, of which I noticed countless examples in the city.

If one can bear this last style, one will find it in the most



SPANISH HALL IN THE CASTLE OF PRAGUE.

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unexpected corners, in buildings that are otherwise Romanesque, Renaissance, or even Gothic, so that it may be said to have left almost as profound an impress as the others. And its characteristics are just those which one might have expected from the great Churchmen who brought it into vogue.

Introduced into Bohemia on the crest of the wave which swept over the country after the Battle of the White Mountain, the Baroque style embodied the programme which the church had traced out for itself when seeking to purge Europe of its protestant heresy.

Man was to be wooed back to the fold by an appeal which not only sought to enlist his soul and mind but also tried to subjugate his senses.

And accordingly, while doctrine never wavered but proclaimed, as insistently as before, the truth of the tenets which Luther had assailed, emphasis was laid on the external energy of man triumphing over the elements and even swaying God by virtue of heroism and good deeds, while sculptors began to transform churches into sanctuaries that so immersed the soul of man in sense, by sinking his intellectual and spiritual ideas in sensuous form, that the practice of religion began to assume something of the turbid fever and intoxication of the life of the senses.

Statues of saints in churches, public squares, or on bridges, in which tense nervous strength flaunting its might, and material, vital beauty alternated with fierce unrest and ascetic enjoyment of suffering—all these as stupendous as the moral perfections of these which they portrayed; statues of holy women whose voluptuous charm and beauty made the most profound appeal to man's senses. And, coupled with these characteristics, the most lavish ornamentation that I have ever seen: caryatides, bearing the weight of elaborately carved balconies and portals; capitals, profusely decorated with exotic plants and flowers; frescoes innumerable which were enlivened by the most vivid and rich colouring; gilded cornices and an accumulation of motifs, which, if they pleased the fancy of the people of the Baroque Age, did certainly not altogether please mine.

Of all the Baroque buildings which I visited, two stand out

perhaps as best illustrating the two chief tendencies of this school.

One is the celebrated Church of Loretto, and the other Charles Bridge, which, though built in the Gothic style, contains many statues in the Baroque style.

The first breathes an atmosphere of celestial eroticism which culminates in an imposing assembly of saints and martyrs who are grouped around the Virgin's shrine and have given a very material semblance of tone and colour to the litany of Loretto.

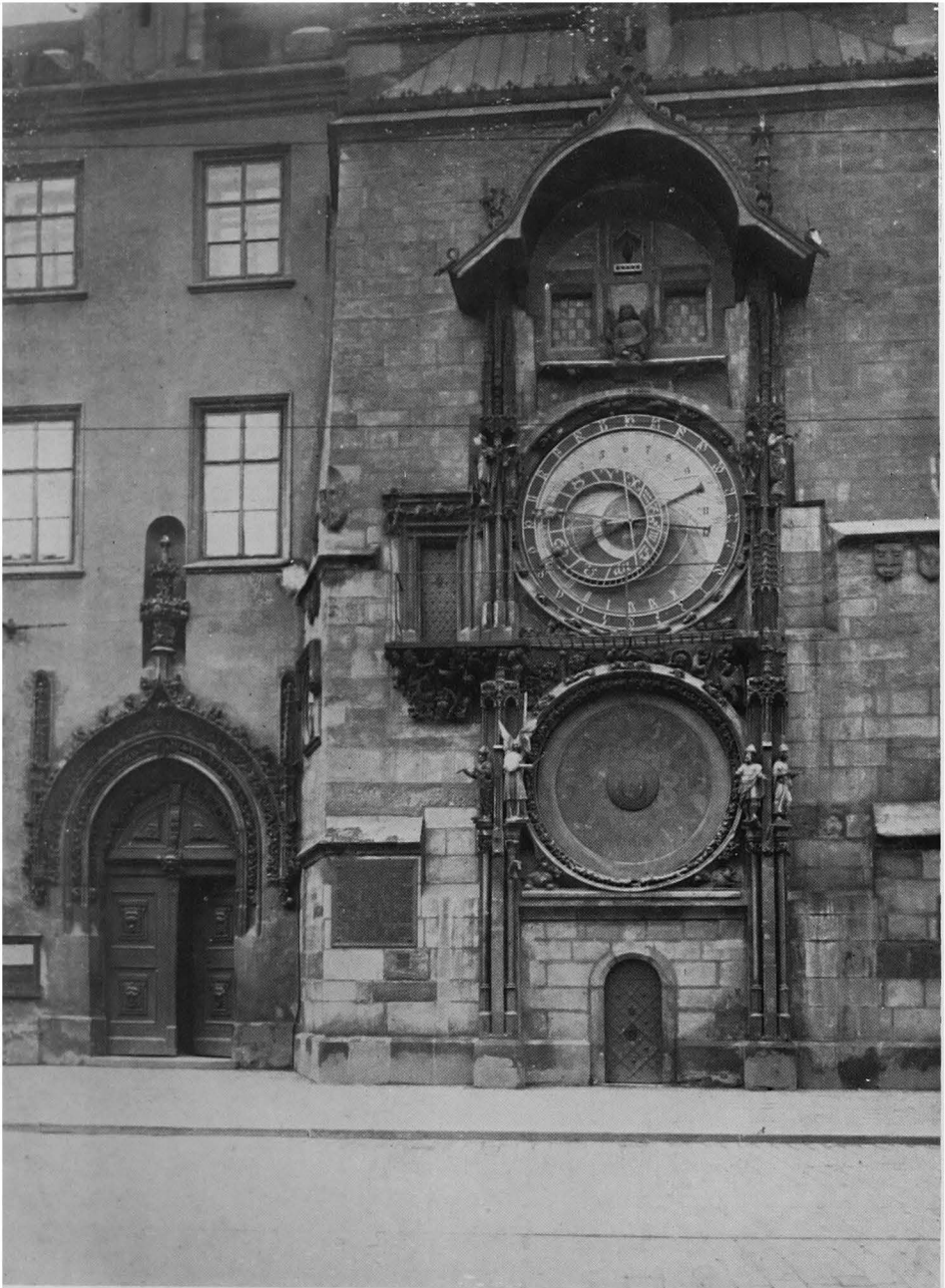
The Virgin herself is portrayed in stone and painting in a series of stations adorning the ceiling and walls of her temple, which are treated in so homely and human a fashion that they cannot but make appeal to those simple mortals who prefer as God a being closely akin to themselves, while the saints who surround her belong to the erotic type, which was immortalised by St. Teresa. On one side is St. Agatha, her bosoms beautifully moulded peeping over her robe, while, directly facing her, is St. Appolina, a most coquettish expression lighting up her dainty young lips.

In a side chapel a half-naked Magdalen, writhing in an agony of remorse, or shall I say voluptuous abandonment?—I hardly know which; in another St. Vilgefortis wearing a very becoming dress but with a manly beard, which left me in some doubt as to her sex.

Very little here of the cold light of austere adoration, but a consuming fire in which the sensuous and spiritual were so subtly and insidiously blended that the beauty of the saint and the curves of her lips or perfection of her features were not only a hymn of the spirit to the divine but a song of love expressing all the yearnings of passionate manhood.

The statues adorning the bridge of Charles, on the other hand, left me with a very different impression. They represent the other dominating tendency of the school, and accordingly lay stress on strength and will power as being necessary above all things for salvation.

Here I saw no weaklings but strong passionate beings, whose path to virtue and a martyr's crown had evidently been



CLOCK OF THE OLD TOWN HALL, PRAGUE.

beset with temptation and struggle. Theirs was not the serene repose, "Heiterkeit," which characterised Hellenic architecture, but rather the tension which one associates with the culminating moment when man's actions rise to the super-human.

Here was Elizabeth, urging mankind to follow the path of charity and good deeds, and St. Anne, proclaiming the virtue of family love; here Judas Tadeas, advocating the beauty of friendship, and Vincent Ferrer, bidding men to send out missions to the heathen; and here St. John de Matha, inveighing against slavery. But surpassing all others in artistic beauty were St. Litgardis preaching the love of God, and St. John of Nepocumene himself with a cross marking the exact spot from which, according to legend, he had been cast into the river.

And the more I crossed the bridge the more I began to realise what the pilgrims of old had felt as they had set out to cross it. I sensed that the architects who had designed these striking statues, the Brauns and Brokoffs, who were the great masters of the Baroque style, had really tried to make a Triumphant Way by which pilgrims might linger as they went up the slopes of Hradcany to worship at St. John of Nepocumene's shrine, if only to fortify their souls by seeking the intercession of the great saints whom they had portrayed.

I must confess, however, that, striking as are many of the statues and bas-reliefs that characterise the Baroque style, I would gladly sacrifice their ornate magnificence for the more delicate classicism of our Western schools of architecture; in fact, I am strongly of opinion that many beautiful buildings in the city, including the Cathedral of St. Vitus, have been greatly marred by the excessive Baroque ornamentation which has been lavished in embellishing their exterior.

Prague, as a whole, however, impressed me greatly as a city, compared to which every other town in Central and the Near East seems very new and modern. I admired its many stately imposing buildings and bridges, its quaint old-world streets and houses often dating back many centuries, its old-world atmosphere and the beautiful panoramas that it afforded when viewed from the Mala Strana quarter of the town, but, if there

was something that displeased me, it was the general unattractiveness of its population.

Never have I met a people whose general appearance was less in keeping with the romantic surroundings in which they lived ; little or no feeling for what had been traditional or would contribute by its picturesqueness to make them forget the sordidness of their surroundings, but, rather, an almost general drabness and uncomeliness among both men and women alike that made me wonder if the Spirit of Beauty had not, after all, decided that the town itself was so romantic and comely that it would be ill-fitting to give any further comeliness to a nation which was already so well favoured.

Thus terminated a journey which had afforded me continual joy and delight, and of which no end could be more fitting than my visit to Prague. For, here in this old-world city, I began to feel the pulse of the new world to which I was returning, so that the transition from the world which I was leaving to the prosaic one that was bidding me return became a comparatively easy one. Like many other travellers, however, I returned with the conviction that civilisation is not an unmixed good ; in fact, that, where happiness is concerned, the primitive man of the Balkans has nothing to learn from his more civilised brother in the West.



PALACE OF THE ARCHBISHOP OF PRAGUE.



## CHAPTER II

## A SLOVAK MUSICIAN—IN BRATISLAVA

OF the afternoon which we spent during the last week of our stay in Bratislava in the company of Dr. Alois Kolysek, priest and musician, I shall long treasure the pleasantest memories, for few Slovaks possess a finer collection of Slovak embroideries, paintings, and *objets d'art*, and none who takes a greater delight in showing you his treasures.

During my roamings in the countryside around Bratislava, and further north in the district of Ruzomberok, I had, doubtless, learned something of the characteristic features of Slovak peasants' national costumes and was beginning to differentiate between the dresses of different localities, but my visit to this very courteous and hospitable priest afforded me a view of many embroideries which date from long before the War, besides giving me the pleasure of listening to some quaintly beautiful Slovak melodies.

Even more characteristic and emblematical of a nation's soul than national costumes are the folk-songs and melodies of a people, and those of Slovakia certainly give expression to that soul and its yearnings better than any other medium.

Some will, perhaps, urge that folk-songs and music possess only ethnographic interest ; that the undoubted vogue which they obtained during the last century was almost entirely the result of the romantic and impressionist movements which marked the beginning and close of this epoch ; that, tired of what was classical and self-restrained, men turned to what was exotic and produced by strange musical instruments of

primitive peasants, and that these peasant melodies, though satisfying Jean Jacques Rousseau's ideal of an unspoiled, pure and beautiful art sprung from the people itself, could never be taken to be real music—they were purely a form of that exotic romanticism which was passing and would shortly pass away, while classical music returned to its own.

It is, of course, true that the greatest musicians of our time, including the great Slovak composers themselves, have achieved fame by creating more enduring cultural values than those commonly attributed to folk music, but to deny the influence which the wonderfully rhythmical melodies and harmonies of Slovakia exercised on such musicians as Smetana is as absurd as if you refused to admit that Shakespeare's greatness was in a large measure the product of his age and people. And while it is the function of genius to transpose what is local and particular into something general and universal, the important rôle played by atmosphere and the sub-conscious mind of the people of whom every genius is but the mouthpiece must not be overlooked.

And listening to Dr. Kolysek's singing of old Slovak melodies, which he accompanied on an equally old Slovak instrument, the cymbal—something like the harpsichord in appearance, but played with a couple of drum-sticks—I began to realise something of the feeling which animates every Slovak heart when it listens to those haunting folk-songs and melodies in which every Slovak finds something of his own soul. More, perhaps, than any other national music, Slovak peasant melodies are joyous with a wealth of inner happiness, which so effectively makes the Slovak forget his troubles, that his mind springs free from its bonds of poverty and walks in beauty and lovely raiment through that Faery Kingdom where everything seems possible.

I believe that there are secrets in the heart of Nature, mysteries in the heart of every copse and valley, in every wave of water or knoll of earth, but it is not always that they can be found, or when discovered unravelled, for it is in an infinitely subdued whisper that they are uttered in one's ear, and, if one is listening to one's own heart or worrying over one's



CATHEDRAL OF ST. GUY, PRAGUE.

troubles, one cannot hear the whisper. But Slovaks have the understanding and the faith of little children and find in Nature's mysteries something far beyond the vain, inarticulate voices that the generality of men are content to hear. What wonder, then, that their folk-lore and music should weave such a spell over the simple folk who hear it that, unconscious of the stern realities of life, they fashion themselves and the world anew as they move in spirit around their songs.

And, like all peasant folk-lore, the songs inspired by musicians were all once sung for the first time at a wedding or feast day, this being the peasant way of expressing their feeling with regard to any local event.

Of all these songs to which we listened, however, none pleased us more than one which dealt with the adventures of Janosik, a famous robber chief or Robin Hood, and another that suggested a Liebeslied.

There are many peasant ballads that deal with Janosik, but all these, like every robber ballad of the Balkans, irrespective of nationality, tend to represent one and the same type, the product of almost similar circumstances. Thus we find that where oppression is the sole authority and people's lives and homes are insecure, there is always a bold spirit who gathers a few followers around him and takes to the mountains to enforce his own law. In some Balkan countries he is called the Haiduk, but, whatever his name, he invariably seems to possess the same characteristics: courage to the verge of recklessness, love of Nature and of roaming, savage cruelty with many occasional lapses of generosity, and, above all, a determination to fleece the rich to advantage the poor. And Janosik is no exception to the rule, for, like other famous heroes of the highway, he takes to the mountains to avenge his father whom a cruel lord has killed for disobedience.

And the quaint ballad to which we listened accounts for his taking to brigand life one day as he wanders disconsolate through the woods recalling his father:

"My father was good, yet I must be a brigand," he says.  
"I must take to the mountains because of the wrong that has been done. Injustice is the portion of lords; truth the portion of brigands."

The other, as I remember it, is full of a deep haunting sweetness and is something to this effect :

Listen, what is that sweet music ?—  
Is it bells under the earth, or is it a tree opening its buds ?  
It is not the bells, it is not the tree opening itself—  
But it is the leave-taking of two lovers.

And for over an hour we listened spellbound to these and other lyrics in which we could trace the same archaic beauty coupled with the severest conceptions regarding the intercourse between the sexes. For in Slovakia, as indeed in all Balkan lands, Turkish conceptions with regard to women are still traceable in many ways. Young men can but rarely meet young girls by themselves except at festivals or during those hours of twilight when they steal away from home to draw water from the village fountain. And so even a mere hand-clasp makes for happiness, lips draw together and stolen kisses are given so exquisitely sweet that, as a Roumanian song expresses it, even the stars cannot help noticing them.

And so a very pleasant afternoon passed by while our kindly host, after singing and playing to us, brought out his loveliest embroideries and showed us two or three paintings by Upraka, depicting peasant scenes, in which he took a very justifiable pride.

Then, as we were taking our leave, I alluded to politics and to the split which had taken place in the Slovak Peasant Party of Hlinka, knowing that the doctor was a fervent admirer of this leader.

“ Do you know Tuka ? ” I asked.

“ Know Tuka ? No greater fiend has ever existed than Tuka,” he replied, his placid face now lighting up with indignation and fury. “ That man is ruining our party,” he added. “ He is in the pay of Hungary and is acting hand in glove with the great Magyar landowners of Slovakia.”

Then, suddenly realising the futility of an outburst that could only leave me with the impression that Tuka was rapidly displacing Hlinka as leader of the Slovak Peasant Party, he began to calm himself and to apologise for his vehemence.



REFECTORY, STRAHOF MONASTERY, PRAGUE.

"Forgive this outburst," he said, "for I have really nothing against Tuka personally, and I believe he is a good man in private life. It is his politics which I abominate, for I know him to be one of the worst enemies that the Slovak people can have."

And, pondering over these matters, we now signed our names in Dr. Kolysek's visitors' book and, after promising to return to see him if we ever revisited his city, were soon making our way back to the Hotel Savoy.

And, as we arrived at the hotel café, now lit up and crowded with a motley throng of Hungarians, Jews, and Germans, with a sprinkling of Slovak and Czech officials, I felt even more forcibly than before how insoluble was the problem that the Great Powers had set out to solve when they had tried to remodel Europe on ethnographic lines. I realised that in every country which I had visited every man had seemed fervently and ineradicably convinced of his own country's essential rightness. I recalled the hands that had trembled and the eyes that had flashed as men had given me the most lurid accounts of the injury and persecution that they had suffered or witnessed in others, and, feeling bewildered by so many contradictory reports, decided that the real trouble with Europe was that most men were as ready to cry out against the shortcomings of others as they were prone to be tolerant of their own.

## CHAPTER III

## A NOBLE PRESIDENT—INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT MASARYK

“It was Plato’s desire to see philosophers on a throne.”

THREE days after my arrival in Prague, I was informed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that President Masaryk would receive me on that afternoon and that our friend Mr. B—— would call at the hotel to take me to the Hradcany Palace. About an hour after luncheon, Mr. B—— arrived in a Praha car which the authorities had placed at our disposal, and drove me to the Palace, where we were ushered into a beautifully appointed ante-chamber and asked to wait for the President.

As I stood at the window entranced with the beauty of the view before me, someone tapped me on the shoulder and I was informed that His Excellency was waiting to see me, and in less time than it takes to write it down I was seated in a blue upholstered empire chair facing his writing-table and listening to the many questions that he plied me with.

What were my impressions of his country? Was I pleased with what I had seen? I replied that my impressions were good, but that I was far more interested in hearing his own views, seeing that I realised, like everyone else, that he had been the chief artisan of Czecho-Slovak unity, and that Czecho-Slovakia was like a child whose fond parent he undoubtedly had been.

President Masaryk impressed me greatly. Thin and austere-looking, there is some compelling charm in the expression that illumines his face when he talks of something that he has to heart, and, though he is no orator, talking to him is like taking



a draught of strong wine. One leaves his presence with the conviction that the man who made Czecho-Slovakia is a strong power for good, and that the policy of his country cannot really be misguided so long as he continues at the helm.

First he talked to me of the early days when Czecho-Slovak reunion was but a myth, an idle dream; and the soul on fire behind its veil shone through the worn and wrinkled face; he described the days of vicissitude and trial when the ideal that Palacky had formed, and which he himself had sought to express, had seemed so impossible of fulfilment that only an idealist would have continued to persevere.

He alluded to the Polna trial in 1899, when suspicion fell upon a Jew named Hilsner who was charged with the crime of having used the blood of a Christian girl for purposes of ritual.

"You cannot imagine how public opinion was incensed against me for trying to shield a Jew. Why, even my own pupils" (he was Professor of the Czech language at the time) "arranged a demonstration against me for what they were pleased to call my Semeticism."

"What did you do?" I asked.

"Well, I knew the root of the trouble, that the real cause of the strong anti-Semetic feeling then prevalent was the fact that in most cases Jews are harder workers than Christians, and so, when at one of my lectures a section of the students began to bang their desks and refused to give me a hearing, I quietly went over to the blackboard, took a piece of chalk and wrote the following words:

"Don't drink, don't gamble—only work, and you will have no cause to be jealous of Jewish competition.'"

Masaryk stressed the fact that he had for many years sought by constitutional means to obtain justice for his countrymen.

"I am not a partisan of violence," he said, "but when I realised the significance of the Austrian annexation of Bosnia in 1908, during the administration of Count Aehrenthal, I decided that the time had arrived when the national will to live should be defended when necessary at the edge of the sword.

"I am a great admirer of Tolstoi," he added, "but I cannot agree with his principle of non-resistance not evil. I hold on

the contrary that evil must be combated with every weapon at our disposal.

“From this moment I consecrated my life to resisting Austrian rule and to organising the nascent Czech revolutionary agitation.

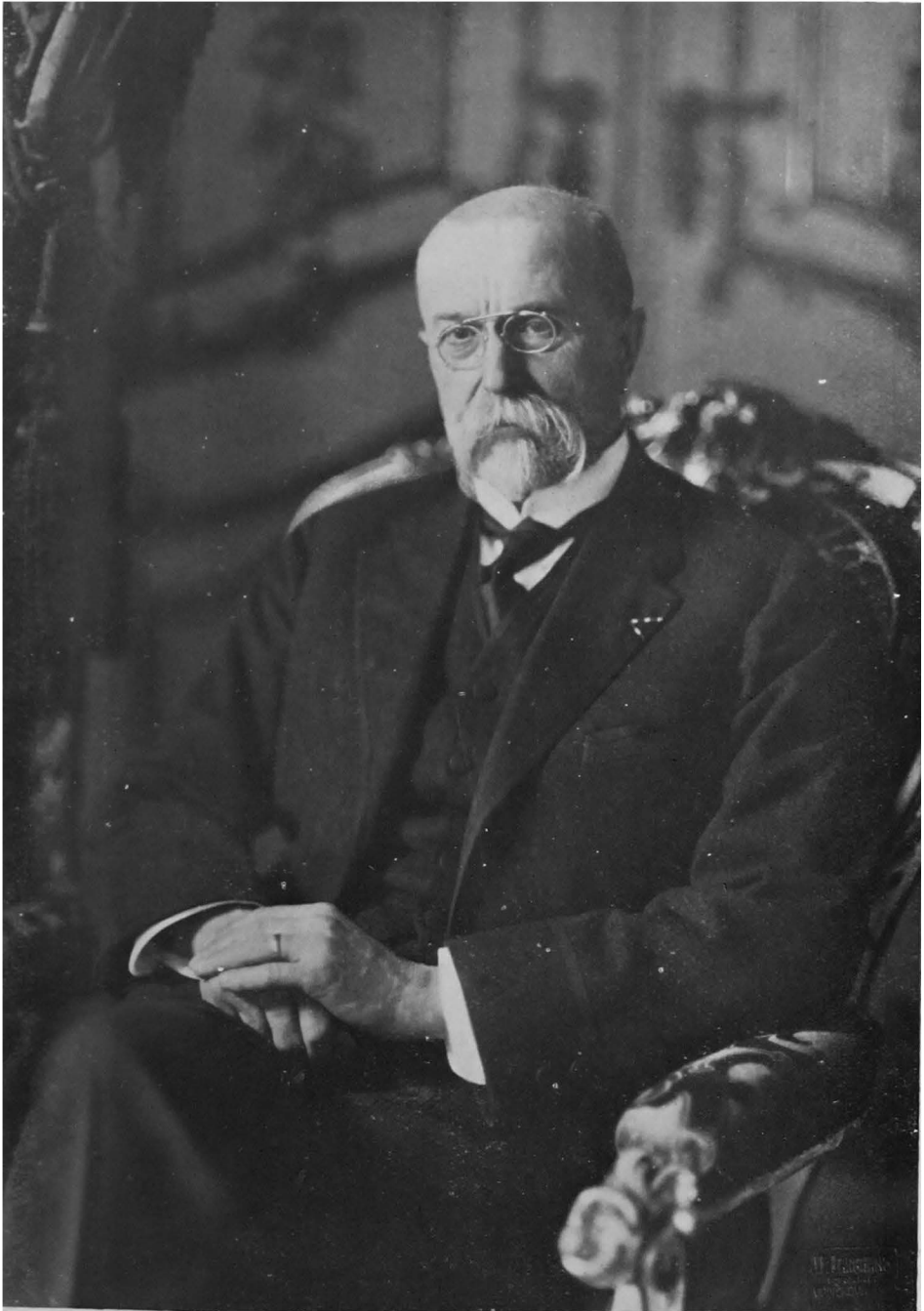
“Like Palacky, I have always held that nothing can be achieved save by strength of spirit and idea, but I did not forget the possibility of utilising any future opportunity for obtaining our independence. You know the rest—when the War arose I fled the country and began a vast campaign in France, the United States of America, and England, with a view to enlightening public opinion with regard to the aims of our patriotic organisations. Four years of patient effort and exile which only terminated when I saw the crowning of my life’s endeavour and the Czecho-Slovak nation a reality.”

There was no denying the President’s sincerity. His words rang with conviction—and in his eyes I saw the same pure flame as his comrades must have seen in his younger days when he had passionately exhorted them to soar to the sun and to spurn material egotism.

“You, at any rate, Monsieur le Président, have not outlived your great ideas. That is the worst and most common penalty of old age . . . and yet you have escaped it,” a remark that brought the quick rejoinder that, if his devotion to his ideals had never been shaken, it had at any rate been severely tested.

Of the present he spoke with an evident feeling of optimism. He declared that the treatment of minorities in Czecho-Slovakia was equitable, and that neither Hungarians nor Germans had any real ground for the accusations of injustice and persecution that they had levelled against the Czech Government. He also refused to regard the Slovak problem as insurmountable, and maintained that any economic disadvantages which the Slovaks may have incurred through their severance from Hungary were being more than counter-balanced by the greater cultural and other facilities that they had gained through their association with the Czechs.

The mention of Prasek, chairman of the Senate, whom the enemies of Czecho-Slovakia are always citing as typical of



PRESIDENT MASARYK.

Czech parliamentarians, evoked a vehement assertion that he was not typical of his countrymen, and that at any rate everything had been done to discourage any further imitators of his methods.

“Prasek,” he said, “used the surplus profits of a company which had important Government contracts and of which he was also chairman to gain political supporters. This was an undoubted case of indirect corruption. As Parliament tried to hush up the matter, I was compelled to take action myself. I refused to include Mr. Prasek among the guests that were invited to the customary New Year’s reception at the Palace, and by this little gesture made him send in his resignation.”

But many are the occasions upon which Masaryk has displayed equal decision. In December, 1920, the Communists made a last attempt to effect a *coup d'état*, and the most energetic measures had to be devised to suppress the movement. On the insurrection being stamped out, the Communist leaders were compelled to approach the President in order to negotiate a peace. On this occasion Masaryk showed commendable promptness in dealing with the situation, for when the Communists expressed a desire to come to terms he replied, “There are two ways, gentlemen, of settling a dispute. One is by arguments, the other by rifles. You have expressed a desire to use arguments. Very well, we are quite willing, but please understand that you must first lay down your arms, for so long as you keep them it will be impossible to talk.” And these words had the desired effect.

The President is a great reader ; in fact, he can read faster than most men, and, what is more, his memory is as retentive as Macaulay’s, while, if he once takes up the work of any author, he will not rest content until he has read every one of his works.

He told me that he had read Henry James in six weeks—a performance which I think few men are capable of rivalling ; but, whereas he was in his younger days a great student of philosophy, most of his earlier work having been concerned with the treatment of such philosophical questions as the Ratio of Probability, the Scepticism of Hume, or the Teaching of Pascal.

he has of late years shown a decided preference for works of fiction. In fact, on my alluding to the many philosophical treatises that have come from his pen, he confessed to a greater liking for a good novel.

"When I was young," he said, "I found in the works of philosophers a guide to life, and in their study the only method of developing accurate thinking. I realise to-day that there is far more real philosophy and far greater understanding of life in a good novel than in any philosophical treatise."

Then, when I asked the President to tell me who were his favourite novelists, he pointed to a volume of Meredith that lay on a table near at hand and replied :

"Meredith and Hardy, are, perhaps, the English novelists that I prefer, but one of my favourite books is May Sinclair's 'Divine Fire.' That is a book that contains all my philosophy of life."

With these words I rose to take my leave, and, after thanking Masaryk for having so graciously received me, left his presence illumined within and without with a reflected glory of his great and noble personality, conscious that of the many notable men whom I have met there has been none who has surpassed or even equalled his pure idealism or loftiness of soul. President Masaryk is undoubtedly one of the noblest figures of his age and country, and it will be a sad day for Europe when he is no more. It is certain that, where his influence has succeeded in penetrating, the administration of his country has remained on a level with most of our Western administrations ; and that, if there have been many cases of persecution and injustice where the treatment of minorities is concerned, the reason has been that even the purest idealism is powerless to affect the thoroughly corrupt, and that the President, even if he had known of them, would have been unable to prevent them. Perhaps one day the many corruptible ones who wield power in the Czecho-Slovak Republic will come to realise the very deep truth that lies in one of Masaryk's dicta :

"Justice is not only noble, it is also prudent and expedient." So far, however, they prefer to ignore it.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE PROBLEM OF SLOVAKIA

*(A Political Digression)*

THE fact that in every election that has taken place in Slovakia since the forming of the new Czecho-Slovak Republic the Autonomists have considerably added to their voting strength, and are to-day easily the strongest party in the country, speaks for itself, and though the Government still retains a majority—thanks to an electoral regulation that enables the prefects of every department to nominate no less than one third of the total number of their own departmental councils—it is impossible to deny that Slovakia threatens very shortly to present a problem not unlike that of the relations between Great Britain and Ireland.

What do the Autonomists want? Do they regret their connection with Hungary, a connection that dates from the 10th Century, or are their Separatist tendencies merely symptomatic of the truth that inexperienced electorates are liable to change their minds on the slightest provocation?

That the Slovaks have little or no political experience is obvious to any student of history, as also that the party of which Hlinka is the leader can hardly be assumed to possess *per se* Magyar sympathies; but the fact that the Separatist Party is considerably larger than a few years ago seems to indicate that the union with Bohemia and Moravia has not proved the godsend that was anticipated; in fact, that economically, at least, the Magyar connection was in many respects preferable to the present one.

The Czechs and Slovaks are, of course, related both in race and language, but, whereas the Czechs possess a high standard both of education and efficiency, the Slovaks are of a comparatively lower standard, though this is not the only difference existing between the two races. The Czechs are a practical, honest, and hard-working race, affecting Socialist views and a certain *mépris* towards religion ; they are liberal, law-abiding, cautious, and provident. The Slovaks are impetuous and warm-hearted, temperamental and more mercurial, with a philosophy of life that is almost Oriental, devout clericals for the most part and strongly influenced by their priests. But the chief factors separating the two races are geographical and economic, and it cannot be denied that in this respect the Slovaks have lost more than they have gained through their severance from Hungary, even if we assume for argument's sake that their present lot is preferable where opportunities for education, race culture, and land ownership are concerned.

Hungary, as constituted before the War, formed what geographers considered a perfect natural unity. Every river flowed inwards. The rich fertile plains were inhabited by Magyars who exchanged their food produce for the timber and minerals of the Slovak mountaineers when every summer they came down to help with the harvest.

To-day all this commerce has been done away with through the closing of the frontiers, so that the Slovak mountaineers must feel that, geographically at least, they are not so happily situated as of old, for, do as they will, the Czech Government cannot modify the bend of the rivers or cause the valleys to turn westward. This is one of the greatest problems that the home Government has to solve : how best to compensate for these economic disadvantages by developing communications around and over the hill-tops by building further railways to connect Slovakia with Moravia and Bohemia.

The present disaffection, however, and the undoubted increase in voting strength obtained by the party of Hlinka at the polls are, perhaps, more directly traceable to several other causes which I shall now mention and which are the inevitable consequences of the past history of the Slovak race.

Before the War the Slovaks had lost much of their national individuality, the sole ambition of most Slovaks who did not belong to the peasant class being directed in purely materialistic channels since they were content with becoming either officials or small landed proprietors. There was no real democracy of work and no national feeling as such, the only traces of national consciousness being such as were kept alive by a few thousand idealists, disciples of Hlinka or Strobar : Neo Slavs, who sought to revive an almost extinct national consciousness and looked to a future Slav Empire to redress their wrongs. The great majority of Slovaks, in fact, were quite contented with being under Hungarian rule, for, though neglectful of their cultural interests and providing few schools in which they could develop a literature of their own, the Magyars had allowed the Slovaks to maintain their tongue and character intact. The result was that, when the Czecho-Slovak Republic was formed, the greater part of Slovak officialdom fled the country because they preferred Magyar culture to one that was only nascent, or because they saw little prospect of obtaining preferment under the new régime—and consequently the Government of Prague had no alternative but to fill most of the new administrative posts with their own countrymen, a measure that was destined to become one of the principal grievances of the Hlinka Party.

This party's chief contention is, moreover, that, though this measure was at this time inevitable, there is at present no reason for continuing it. They accuse the Czechs of deliberately ignoring the many educated Slovaks, who could quite reasonably be entrusted with administrative work in Slovakia, in order that they may preserve the régime that is giving them the preponderating influence in the country.

In the opinion of this party the programme devised by the Czech Government has only proved a delusion and a snare, and even the Land Reform Act which the Government devised to conciliate the Slovak peasantry has not been applied with scrupulous fairness ; in fact the Czechs have been the only people who have benefited by it.

This being the case, it is interesting to notice that not only



is the Hlinka party out for autonomy but that the section of the party (*i.e.*, 150,000 electors out of a total of 452,000 cast for Hlinka at the last elections) which is led by Tuka, a leader who is rapidly coming to the front, is advocating, if not a complete return to pre-War conditions, at least some form of union with Hungary.

In short, the situation, as I found it during my two last visits to Czecho-Slovakia, is one that is rapidly developing into a positive danger to Czecho-Slovak unity if the Czechs do not rapidly amend their ways and, instead of cultivating a policy of rigid centralism, show a little more elasticity in their dealings with the Slovaks, and greater toleration with regard to their religious tenets.

Certain it is that, if another policy is not immediately substituted for the present one, the day is not far distant when the whole of Hlinka's party (32 per cent of the whole electorate of Slovakia) will adhere to Tuka's programme, and not only co-operate politically with the Hungarian parties (Christian Socialists under Yablonitzki and Hungarian Agricultural Party, 27 per cent of the whole electorate), as they are doing at present, but will subscribe entirely to their programme. That Tuka is daily gaining adherents I am more than convinced; in fact I can see no other way of accounting for the very virulent way in which I heard him being attacked during my stay in Bratislava by the Czech and Slovak supporters of the present régime.



LIBRARY OF THE MONASTERY OF STRAHOF, PRAGUE.

## CHAPTER V

## THE LAND FOR THE PEOPLE

*(Another Political Digression)*

A SALIENT feature of Europe since the War has been the rise of peasant democracies, the enhanced prestige attached to working on the land, and the gradual realisation by the peasants themselves that with the disorganisation of industry and exchanges they have become the only indispensable class.

But what aggravated the problem in Eastern Europe, furthermore, was the fact that the time had long arrived when any break in the established order was bound to lead to revolution. It being the case that the peasant class, though freed from serfdom, lived in clustered villages and that their holdings consisted merely of a number of patches of land scattered in the open field without any capacity for expansion, it was inevitable that, when social authority broke down through the War or Bolshevism, they should not only insistently demand more elbow room but should also obtain such political power that there was little that they could not do or undo.

The peasant, in fact, has won the day. He could make or unmake governments, and every party, whether it was the intelligentsia of the town or of the factory, the *petite noblesse* or bourgeoisie, was compelled to woo his good graces, with the result that the governments of the Eastern nations were more or less compelled to inaugurate a series of drastic agrarian reforms.

Allowing, then, for these factors, and also for the fact that agrarian reform as such is as inevitable to-day as land nationalisation to-morrow, we must acknowledge that of all the countries

that are essaying it to-day the Czecho-Slovak Republic is the one that is showing the most wisdom and moderation.

The policy that was followed by the Czecho-Slovak Government was governed by the following considerations :

It realised that the most unequal land distribution was to be found in the new republic, that 3,600 persons possessed nearly two-fifths of the whole territory of the republic—*i.e.*, 5,040,330 hectares out of a total of 13,000,000 hectares—that such large estates depopulated countries in that they prevented further access to the land and so compelled the surplus rural population to overcrowd the cities or to emigrate to distant lands—there having been no less than 80,000 Czecho-Slovak emigrants on an average every year in the last decade before the War—and so concluded that it was high time to remedy such a state of affairs if only to assure the future of a race that needed every potential man and woman.

Unlike Roumania, however, a country more directly exposed to the Bolshevik virus, it proceeded leisurely and with system, realising that such expropriation as could be carried out should be extended over a number of years, and that due consideration should be taken of what was really profitable and necessary.

The outcome was the Land Restriction Act of 1919, an Act which, while it did not deprive the owner of his right of possession, limited him in his right of dealing with it after a certain maximum had been reached—150 hectares of arable land or 250 hectares of any kind including forests—and reserved to itself the right of taking over restricted property and distributing it to persons who needed land.

We see that so far the Governmental Land Offices have acted with commendable prudence and moderation, and that, whereas the Rumanian Government had expropriated no less than 2,000,000 hectares, they have so far been content with a mere 200,000, this land being mostly sold or rented to disabled ex-soldiers and small-holders, over 100,000 of the latter having further holdings given them of from one to two hectares. Yet while conscious of the merits of this Agrarian Act where the Czechs are concerned—in that this timely reform has done much to avert any possibility of a Communist outbreak ever



VILLAGE OF SLOVAKIA.

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arising in Bohemia—I cannot blind myself to the shortsightedness that the Prague Government is continuing to display when dealing with the minorities on this question.

The Czechs, of course, allege that the reason why the quasi totality of the expropriated land belongs to German or Magyar nobility lies in the fact that the quasi totality of expropriable land belonged to landowners of these nationalities, the Manados, Esterhazy, Liechtenstein, Waldstein, etc., and consequently not in the fact that distinction was being made with regard to nationalities; but it is quite possible to interpret this sweet reasonableness in another way, and while I recognise that the Czechs have so far used sparingly of their right to appropriate the lands of their former enemies, I cannot but ascribe a political aim to such appropriation when I realise that the only people who have so far benefited from the scheme have been Czechs.

That any practical utility resides, moreover, in so consistently refusing to confer these land benefits on those considerable Hungarian elements who inhabit the south of Slovakia (where they are, in fact, a distinct majority) I fail to see, and certain it is that the Czechs can hardly expect an alien race to accept their rule when such distinctions continue to be a feature of Czech Governmental methods.

In fact, though the principle underlying the application of this law has been that every precaution should be taken to give an adequate and fair indemnity to the dispossessed landowner, the compensation that has been awarded has been grossly unfair, since it was based on the pre-War value of the land in crowns, while even this trifling indemnity, not one hundredth of its real value, was not even paid in cash but in bonds that were non-redeemable.

It is only, therefore, if we assume that national wisdom consists in furthering the interests of the race predominating in that country that the Czecho-Slovak Land Reform Act can be said to justify the high praise that has been bestowed upon it. If this consideration is held to outweigh all others, no better land reform can be devised than the one at present existing in the Czecho-Slovak Republic, for not only has this Act benefited

many humble Czech peasants who have thereby been able to increase the very small holdings that they possessed, but it has afforded them every opportunity for training their young men in the use of modern agricultural plants and appliances.

## CHAPTER VI

## SLOVAK PEASANT ARTISTS

CERTAIN it is that in no country have I ever seen such innate artistic talent and such striving after beauty as I found in Slovakia.

Culturally speaking, the Slovaks are, perhaps, one of the most backward nations in Europe, and few countries possess so high a percentage of illiterates. But, though the great majority of the people are unable to read or write, they seem to possess a sense of colour and form so unerring that they usually succeed in conveying an original and pleasing effect.

Accordingly the journey which I undertook in the country districts at the end of my tour proved a revelation of what uneducated peasants can accomplish, unaided, and how technique can be acquired by simply obeying one's inspiration and faithfully seeking to give expression to it.

Leaving Prague we journeyed south until we reached Hradiste, a little town in Moravian Slovakia, which is one of the chief centres of peasant embroidery, and called on Professor Kretz, for whom we had letters of introduction.

The Professor, who is one of the acknowledged authorities on Slovak peasant art, was kindness personified. He showed us his collection of embroideries and arranged for a friend of his, who spoke English, to escort us to various villages in the vicinity, so that we might see the peasants in their own homes and surroundings.

The artistic productions of Slovakia, so far as peasant workers are concerned, all aim at embellishing the home and in making life, even for the poorest folk, beautiful. They do



not aim at Art for Art's sake, but their motives are time, place, age, and opportunity, and accordingly they only flourish where deeply rooted. And their main outstanding characteristic is colour, whether we look for it in the peasant national costumes or in the ceramic art which enables them to decorate their cottages and make them often a dream of beauty.

Taking first the embroideries, which form so essential a part of the Slovak peasant national costume, we found first of all a similarity, which was not always the result of a uniform sense of beauty. It was dictated by moral pressure which did not allow any personal note, but required a similarity in all details from every person belonging to the same sex, standing, and village; every colour and arrangement of colour, every ribbon or length or number of ribbons, indicated the particular village to which the wearer belonged.

And every part of these costumes was home made. From the shearing of the sheep to the weaving of the linen, the dyeing and embroidering, everything was the product of one family and only the designing was entrusted to other hands. This was usually confided to a woman in the village who possessed a peculiar inherited or instinctive aptitude for designing costumes that were in keeping with what was traditional and suitable for the persons who were to wear them.

And if the most painstaking labour was devoted to making the ordinary peasant costumes attractive, it was nothing when compared to the unsparing and minute attention which was lavished on the bridal dresses. Each dress was an heirloom to which each successive generation had contributed its quota, added its little embellishment, or modified whatever was unsuited to the new status of the bride, the family that she was entering, or the village of which she was becoming a member.

Escorted by our farmer friend, who talked to us with pride of "the seven pieces of cattle" which he owned and of the up-to-date agricultural machinery that he intended installing in his farm, we set out from Hradiste on a Sunday morning and soon reached Kunovice, a quaint little village where, we were informed, national costumes were preserved unaltered

and you could distinguish between wives, widows, and betrothed, between swains and husbands.

“Can you not take us to the church during Mass?” I asked our farmer friend. “That would give us ample time to study the national costumes of your peasantry.”

“Far better to wait until Mass is over,” he replied. “I am no church-goer and do not particularly care to be seen in a church. You will see the people quite as well if you wait for them as they leave church after Mass.”

The farmer was, apparently, a very lax Catholic, who, as we very soon gathered from his conversation, had returned from America with a profound contempt for the religious practices of his countrymen. He obviously thought that his presence in a church would lower the prestige that he enjoyed of being a progressive man who had outlived the somewhat antiquated ideals of his simple countrymen.

“Religion is the enemy of all progress,” he stated rather pompously; “and there can be no real improvement so long as we are priest-ridden.” Idle words that proved his unfitness to adapt new ideals to those that he had imbibed in his childhood.

Having already fallen in love with his countrymen and the old-world conditions under which they lived, I did not see why we should lose the opportunity which was being presented of seeing the Slovak peasantry in the setting the best calculated to bring out their national characteristics. I consequently pointed out that we would be grateful if he, for once, departed from his usual practice.

“No one can accuse you of inconsistency simply because you courteously escort some foreigners to a church which they have expressed a desire to see. We can sit in the back and you need not take any part in the service.”

He hesitated at first; then, seeing the justice of my remarks, consented to take us to the church and, having led us into it, sat down rather sheepishly near us in a pew at the back.

We found the church a feast of colour in which the only dull and prosaic note was that which was conveyed by the uncomely modern garments which were worn by the farmer and myself.

Inside the homely chapel were collected a number of peasant women of all ages, all wearing the most picturesque national costumes imaginable.

Short skirts, very narrowly pleated, and with so many petticoats that they recalled Anna Pavlova; brightly-coloured aprons that covered even part of the back. The skirts drooped at the top and formed a kind of arc which was adorned in every case with bands of the most exquisite embroidery; shining top-boots, embroidered waistcoats, and enormous starched blouses with bands of embroidery at the neck, the top of the shoulders, and elbows, and very puffy sleeves, completed the costume. The predominating colours were red and yellow, and on their heads the younger unmarried women wore brightly-coloured handkerchiefs, and the married tight-starched linen caps, into which were woven gold thread and even strands of brightly-coloured silks.

There were few men present; and of these some wore little hats like Charlie Chaplin, embroidered shirts half covered by short embroidered waistcoats, and butcher-blue aprons over woolly trousers.

But the far greater number had discarded their old traditional costumes, their only claim to picturesqueness being the aprons that concealed their trousers and the shining top-boots which they wore like their womenfolk.

Never have I seen such fervent piety or devoutness as that which I saw displayed by the women of the congregation. For while the men sat back in comfortable pews at the back of the church, many evincing indifferent interest in the Low Mass that was being said at the altar, the women knelt or stood erect during the whole of the service rapt in prayer or meditation.

When the Mass terminated, we left the church before the congregation and obtained a front view of some of the costumes, which we had already noticed in the church.

We noticed one woman whose outer apron was made of beautiful old flowered ribbons hanging from the waist, and another who, in addition to an equally beautiful flowered apron, boasted a cream cloth waistcoat and a most attractive linen

cap with intricate designs, which were punched into little dents on the linen. The most remarkable thing, however, was the fact that there seemed to be no mistake in the blending of the colours or in the regularity of the pattern, for I noticed here, as in every embroidery which I examined, that the embroiderers, though using no guide whatever, and really evolving the pattern as they proceeded with their work, usually reproduced with exact faithfulness on one side of a garment any pattern which they had begun on the other.

Travelling further south, we reached Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia, and from there made several interesting excursions into the countryside.

At Cataj, a small village some twenty miles from the capital, we made our first acquaintance with Slovak domestic decoration, and found much to move us to admiration and surprise.

Every old Slovak cottage is brightly decorated with patterns both within and without. The roof is covered with patterns in coloured tiles, and the exterior walls have usually a frieze or frescoes that recall stencil work.

We first visited the house of Andorova X——, a wealthy peasant woman, and greatly admired the way in which she had decorated the wall at the back of her kitchen stove.

The background of the stove was yellow with a slight space between the background and the pattern. The pattern was picked out in green, red, and blue, and the predominating colours of the design, as I looked at it from the door, recalled a violent sunset of yellow and red.

Looking at it somewhat nearer, I then noticed that the main source of ornamentation was the flower garden, and that, like the Hungarians, the Slovaks, when they require no frieze ornamentation, utilise the simplest designs imaginable.

There were flowers united into vividly-coloured bunches, the same as the flowers of the garden, and fastened together without leaves; birds and butterflies, cocks and hens, hearts holding flowers, and stags. The whole effect was strikingly beautiful and effective.

Looking around me I saw that the walls were covered with

hand-painted crockery, mostly plates, in which the predominating colours, as elsewhere, were green, yellow, and red, and I noticed that the Slovaks carried out the same decorative scheme upon their pottery as in their embroidery, this pottery being in no sense a special production, but simply the ordinary ware that was in daily use. Certain it is that in no country, except perhaps Roumania, have I come across peasant pottery of higher quality.

Like every other branch of Slovak industry, moreover, peasant pottery developed naturally out of cottage industry, and dates from the time when men and women made everything that they needed at home, there being no other opening for any different form of industry. The women in those days did the weaving, spinning, sewing, embroidering; the men were tailors, masons, carpenters, basket-makers, joiners, wheelwrights, and smiths.

In the Slovak provinces many people began to make pottery long before it had begun to develop as an independent branch of industry. Then in the 15th Century potters' guilds began to be established, and in the 17th the production of majolica reached a high level.

It is evident that this majolica industry was introduced from Italy, and that very soon its Renaissance character was supplemented and transformed by the Slovaks themselves until it had become one which was in keeping with the national taste and character. This is how there developed a Slovak faience and majolica which, as I found in Slovakia generally, and in Modra, where I visited the local factory, are essentially different from any other faience—if we except the Hungarian—both in the forms of the vessels and in the decoration and colouring that are used. The colours are usually yellow, green, blue, and brown, and the vessels may be divided into several groups according to their ornamentation. Thus one group includes the vessels which were made before the Renaissance, the others include the Italian, the Slovak, and the Rococo.

The chief forms of decorative drawing are the regular circular rose, the blue rose, the many-leaved rose, the red rose, and the light blue type of ornament.

As can be imagined, therefore, the walls of even the humblest cottage, adorned as they invariably are with the ware which is in ordinary use, are a joy to the eye, while I noticed particularly that in most cases the jugs were hung upside down on stands that reminded me irresistibly of old-fashioned ring stands. These stands were placed in prominent positions near the porch so that even the passer-by could enjoy seeing the delicately-blended colours that abounded in them.

Passing through Vajnory we visited the house of a rich peasant woman, Maria Stanhebel, who possessed an exceedingly rare and beautiful trousseau, and for over an hour we were shown costumes that were strikingly beautiful both in design and execution.

Dresses for feast days made of the finest net and embroidered in pure gold thread, which was untarnished by years ; household linen, which was entirely hand-woven and dyed with classical designs in red ; head-dresses of the finest linen in which were innumerable strands of coloured silks—so many masterpieces of human industry in which everything was happily blended.

I expressed the desire to buy some little memento of our visit. Could we not buy some little cap or blouse, which would remind us eternally of her beautiful country. Smiling broadly, but obdurate to the end, she replied that everything we had seen was an heirloom and that no money in the world would suffice to induce her to part with any of it.

Expressing our envy of her good fortune in having so many beautiful things, we then took our leave and returned to Bratislava.

## CHAPTER VII

## A COMPARISON OF VARIOUS FORMS OF PEASANT ART

I CONFESS that the last impressions of peasant art that I culled towards the end of my long journey were the most vivid, not necessarily because they were those that made the most profound appeal to my mind and imagination, but rather because it is inevitable that one's susceptibility to impression both in depth and variety should increase with every new experience to which one has subjected it.

And this being the case, it follows that I am conscious of a preference for Slovak peasant art which I can only account for by stating that my mind, by the time that I came in contact with it, had become so susceptible to impression that it was perhaps then the most appreciative of Beauty.

Compared to other forms of peasant art, Slovak art, perhaps more closely resembles Hungarian than any other. Both are severely traditional and represent the souls of races whose vivid imagination has always fused and transformed everything with which they have come into contact—a circumstance which I partially ascribe to the fact that Slovak and Magyar lived very much the same life and under the same conditions and culture for nearly a thousand years. In many parts of the Slovak territories adjoining the Palocz districts I found great difficulty in differentiating between the women's costumes from the Hungarian and Slovak points of view, but while the fur coats, dolmans, and high boots worn in Slovakia were very similar to those that were worn in Hungary, I found more restraint and less imagery of colour among the Slovaks than among the Hungarians. There is nothing in Slovakia so wild and barbaric, for instance, as the costumes which I saw in Debreczen and Mazakovesd.

Roumanian art, on the other hand, expresses an entirely different individuality; it is certainly more classical, the silhouette is bolder and, as befits a race which is full of that subtle and sensuous sweetness characteristic of all pleasure-loving nations, more concern is shown for effect and bold colouring, Roumanian costumes being usually far more seductive and instinct with grace. Nevertheless, I prefer the Slovak, where sheer quaintness of outline and beauty in the details of the embroidery are concerned.

Slovak art, moreover, compares more than favourably with the peasant art of the other Slav races which I visited, for though the designs and the detail of the embroidery that the latter weave are often quaintly beautiful, their art is characterised by a far less vivid colouring and imagination and a more conventional outline. Only in Dalmatia have I seen any peasant embroideries that could in any respect be compared with it.

Peasant art, generally speaking, stands, therefore, all by itself, and reaches a level of excellence that is surprisingly high. It is full of that strange, incommunicable faculty that draws its own strength, colour, and character from the hills and streams, plains and valleys, in which it thrives and develops, and, being consequently the most perfect medium of expression which primitive man can find in life, is the best way to approach any nation of which one seeks to obtain understanding. It is full of child-like qualities as befit child-like nations among which mythologies and folk-lore have their rise. The winds that blow down the mountain valley, the snow that covers the land like a mantle, the birds that are the gossip of heaven, all the elemental spirits of Nature pass in a thousand quaintly beautiful and picturesque transmigrations through the fanciful forms of their imagery.

Peasant art, in short, embodies the innate and passionate desire for self-expression and beauty that lies deep down in the heart of man and which alone the primitive and untutored know how to conjure into life. It is a gift that enables even the poorest and humblest peasant to forget his troubles and to believe in God—for no peasant artist can be an unbeliever.



**BOOK VII**  
**GENERAL**

## CHAPTER I

## WOMEN OF THE BALKANS

*(A Digression . . . and Comparison)*

WOMEN in the Balkans and Central Europe are, as a rule, content with the conditions that have governed the relations between the sexes for the last two or three hundred years.

Politics they look upon as purely man's concern, and they prefer to influence men by virtue of their beauty and sex rather than by the ballot. In fact, with the exception of Czecho-Slovakia, any electoral rights that they possess are sparingly exercised, and they devote their lives to making their homes comfortable and in looking after their husbands and children, while allowing the men to defend their interests in the political arena.

Among these women of very varied races, the Czech women are perhaps the most prominent where solid attainments and culture are concerned, and certainly the most advanced with regard to electoral rights. Like their English sisters, they take an active interest in politics, possess no fewer than eleven members of Parliament, and are always to the fore whenever any social legislation of questions concerning the welfare of children is being proposed.

Czech women make good wives and mothers, but can hardly be said to possess great womanly charm, as they are as a rule of a somewhat heavy and stolid disposition. Like the German women, they are fond of good living, and even in the upper classes are often to be found in their own kitchens, directing the cooking or actively engaged in preparing the dinner,

Hungarian women are of an entirely different mentality, possessing great charm and individuality, they are constant in their affections, passionately devoted to their country, and make ideal wives.

The type of woman that is found among the aristocracy is very similar to its English prototype, and women who possess country estates live much the same lives as our own. The Hungarian aristocrat is a keen sportswoman, a good rider, and a very fair shot.

Tall, handsome, and clear complexioned, she wears her clothes with distinction, and is, perhaps, at her best in country clothes. She knows several languages, is very fond of England and things English, and speaks our language with little trace of accent.

Roumanian women are noted for their vivacious charm, their warm temperament, and the fickleness of their fancy. Nursing few illusions with regard to man's fidelity or their own, they nevertheless devote much time in subjugating his will, and, from the time they marry, become adepts in all those arts by which woman, through wooing man, can improve her material prosperity and make the world her slave.

The result is that marriage, being so usually a means to an end—that end being either material betterment or greater freedom for satisfying one's passions—there are few countries in the world in which more licence exists than in Roumania.

The successive marriages of a woman whom I met in Bucharest had all been inspired by material considerations. She married first the secretary of an important official, then the official himself, and, lastly, the head of the department. To-day she is contemplating a further marriage, this time with a large landowner. This is not an isolated instance.

Roumanian husbands are as tolerant of their wives' peccadilloes as they expect their wives to be tolerant of their own. In fact, men and women who divorce their partners usually remain on the best of terms with each other.

One evening, when dining at a fashionable restaurant in Bucharest, my host pointed out a handsome woman at a table near our own,

“Do you see that beautiful woman at that table?” he whispered. “Isn’t she charming? She was my wife three months ago.”

This remark bears out the statement made to me by another Roumanian, who assured me that every season there was a general post of husbands and wives.

The Roumanian woman is, however, the most charming of hostesses, an entertaining friend, and a patron of the arts, while warm hospitality is general in all classes.

The Greek woman is voluptuous, temperamental, and inordinately fond of luxury, content to lounge all day in *déshabille*, smoking, or eating sweetmeats, until the time has arrived for her to entertain her friends or to be entertained by them. Then she makes the most elaborate toilette and sallies down to meet them after usually keeping them waiting for nearly an hour.

She is essentially a man-hunter who possesses great natural intuition and understanding of man. She does not seek to attract him by her powers of conversation but rather by being a beautiful and ready listener and sympathiser.

The man who seeks her company as a relief for his cares is apt to find that she has gradually and insidiously learned all his little ways and secrets.

Serbian women are in great majority honest, simple, unaffected, and extremely domesticated. They take an active part in household work and, even when possessing wealth, usually superintend the cooking of every meal. They make good and faithful wives and are content to let their husbands rule the house.

In Serbia’s capital, Belgrade, however, a new kind of woman is coming to the front, a product of the War, belonging to the parvenu, or new-rich, class.

She has thrown aside all restraint and any modesty that she may have inherited from her peasant ancestors; she wears clothes that are as low cut as possible; paints her face as crudely as any fifth-rate chorus girl, and altogether manages to give herself the appearance of a well-to-do cocotte.

Every man receives her smile, but her more serious

attentions are reserved for the young and brilliantly-uniformed officers who are the pride of the Court of Belgrade.

The Bulgarian at first sight makes little impression on the observer. She stands somewhere between the old and the new, but has learned to choose more wisely from the new than some of her sister Serbs. Simple-minded and sincere, without conceit or make-up, she wins hearts slowly, but surely, by her frankness of disposition and entire absence of pose.

The Turkish woman is at a highly critical period of her history. She has tasted of liberty and cannot have enough of this new gift. The veil has gone, or at least is being replaced by a substitute that only adds greater charm to the wearer; and the Turkish woman is daily clamouring for greater liberty and welcoming the proposed abolition of polygamy.

Extremely clever and well read, the modern Turkish girl astonishes by her insight into present-day politics and the intelligent interest that she displays in every question.

Of the lower classes little can be said except that the various types which I have dealt with, if once their racial characteristics have been noted, are all extremely similar.

In all the countries that I have studied, woman in the peasant class is very little better than a slave. She works as hard, if not harder, than her menfolk, and is to be seen daily in the streets, carrying heavy weights, while her lord and master walks serenely behind, smoking a big pipe.

Peasant women have, however, never known better conditions. They are brought up to look upon man as their natural lord and master and are most exemplary wives. The men are, again, mostly faithful to their marriage ties, and treat their wives with kindness, if only they prove amenable and docile.



SLOVAK COSTUMES AT WEDYS.

## CHAPTER II

## FORMS OF BACKSHICH IN MANY LANDS

I.—*In a Certain Balkan Country*

"A GENTLEMAN to see you, sir."

"Show him in." Having said these words, the Minister opened one of the drawers of his writing-desk and, taking out an enormous cigarette-case, placed it well in evidence on a round table that stood near at hand.

"Another applicant for a post, I suppose. I wonder what he is worth. . . . After all, I won't be Minister for ever."

Ah! he remembered the face. This was the individual whose curious lack of comprehension had so irritated him last week, a man who nursed the strange delusion that a Minister had nothing better to do than talk unprofitably to a stranger.

"What can I do for you, sir?" With a strangely expectant smile, he waved him to a seat.

"I have a son, Excellency, for whom I want a post. He is a very able boy. Has passed all his examinations at the university. Can Your Excellency help him to get one?"

"Perhaps I can, if you give me all details about his qualifications and education. We will see what can be done. But you must excuse me for a few moments, I have a most urgent call on the telephone that I must first attend to. In the meantime, make yourself at home and have one of these cigarettes."

The visitor opened the case. It was empty. "I understand," he said to himself with a grim smile. "What a fool I was the other day. No wonder the Minister refused to help me when I told him I never smoked. I shall be a smoker on this occasion, however."

He took out a well-filled pocket-book from an inner pocket of his coat, took out of it a bundle of notes which he immediately transferred to the cigarette-case, and replaced the whole on the table.

A few minutes afterwards and the door opened once more as, smiling and debonair, the Minister returned to his writing-table and sat down facing his visitor.

"You have smoked, I hope," he said.

"I have, Excellency."

"Good."

The Minister rose from his seat, and, taking the cigarette-case from the table, went over to the bookcase near the door behind the chair where sat his visitor.

"How many notes this time? I hope the boor has remembered this is his second visit." He opened the case and began counting the notes. Five, fifteen . . . Hm! . . . That was hardly enough considering the great inconvenience to which he had been subjected. No. He would have to pay more. . . . Deliberately he placed the notes in his own pocket-book, and, closing the cigarette-case, returned it to his visitor.

"Have another cigarette," he said.

## II.—*Somewhere in Roumania*

"If you want to win your case, you will have to make it worth his while—there is no other alternative," said J— as he lit his cigarette and puffed reflectively into the air.

"But it is scandalous," said the other. "They not only confiscate your lands, when they have no right to, but make you pay heavily for the privilege of even receiving the most elementary justice. . . . And yet you told me he was the best of the whole Bench."

"That is so. . . . No man in Roumania enjoys a higher reputation for honesty and straight dealing than P—. But he is like his colleagues. He cannot afford to be scrupulously honest and upright. These officials, even the highest of them, are paid very low salaries . . . just enough to keep the wolf





THE OLD TOWN HALL, PRAGUE.

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from the door, and they have no pensions. . . . That is why there is a saying in this country that Ministers receive no pensions when they retire because they are expected to make sufficient during their tenure of office to keep them in affluence and comfort for the rest of their lives."

The Hungarian landowner hesitated. He had already expended considerable sums of money in bribing the two judges before whose courts his case had already been taken, and, as he had won in both instances, did not see why he should have to pay still further in the Supreme Court at Bucarest.

There at least there will be justice, he thought.

Then, realising that it was, perhaps, wiser to take no risk, he decided to follow his friend's suggestion.

"I suppose you are right," he murmured. "But what shall I do? I understand that this incorruptible Robespierre does not even want to see me lest his integrity and good name should be even questioned."

"Oh, that is quite a simple matter! . . . I have had a conversation with our Roumanian friend. He has given me every instruction."

"All right, let us hear the worst."

"Well, you are to pass to-morrow morning by the judge's house. It is in the Calea M——, No. 7, and you are not to be later than eleven—not a minute before, not a minute later. He will be standing near the first window that you will come across after you have passed his front door, his back turned towards you. He will keep his hands clasped behind his back and, as the window is a very low one, you should have no difficulty in getting rid of the little peace-offering that you will have ready for him. I trust this is quite clear."

"I understand," replied the other with a grim smile.

. . . . .

Next morning as the clock of the Orthodox Church in the Calea M—— was striking eleven, a tall, well-dressed Hungarian was seen passing the house of Judge P——, and, as he passed by one of the windows of the house, he leaned over and appeared

to be dropping something into the room. Then he passed on and was seen no more.

Next morning, in the first edition of the *A*—, Countess X— looked in the Law Intelligence reports of the paper and read the following paragraph with regard to her husband.

“ Among the many land cases that were down for hearing yesterday was that of Count X—, the prominent Transylvanian landowner, whose claim to the three hundred acres of land that he is making under the provision of the Land Act has now definitely been established by the Supreme Court of Appeal. . . . ”

### III.—*Somewhere in Turkey*

Urbane and with a benign smile, the Minister offered a seat to his caller on the other side of his writing-table and directly facing it.

“ What can I do for you, sir ? ” he asked.

“ I want your help, Excellency, as a great wrong has been done me . . . and because I am a Greek even the lease that I have signed is considered as so much waste paper. . . . They want to drive me out and yet I have always paid my rent regularly.”

The speaker was a short, clean-shaven, sallow man whose dominant expression was startled, hunted.

“ Compose yourself, my dear sir,” the Minister replied.

“ Of course justice will be done to you. Have you brought your papers with you ? ”

“ Yes, Excellency.” Feverishly he produced a small handbag and took out some papers from a pocket-book which he handed to the Minister.

“ Ah ! I see you are a banker,” he remarked with a smile. “ You are a man of means . . . evidently.” (This to himself aside).

“ Not too rich, Excellency, but I am quite well off ; I have made my way.”



CASTLE OF HLUBOKA, CZECHO-SLOVAKIA.

"Yes, these papers seem all right," said the other, after a pause. "Had any trouble with the police?"

"Of course not, Monsieur le Ministre. I am a peaceful man and do not dabble in politics." Again he was losing his control and spoke with evident agitation.

"Well, I will see what I can do." He was now fumbling with his writing-desk and with one of the drawers and apparently pushing something with his hand.

"Yes . . . I will see what I can do," he kept on repeating almost mechanically, as if his mind was elsewhere. "We Nationalists are against any form of tyranny. If only you are proven to be a good citizen you will certainly obtain your deserts."

Something then pressed against the Greek's body as he sat facing the Minister. He looked down and saw a drawer half opened, as if inviting his confidence.

What was he to do?

"Yes—I see that you have been a resident of Constantinople for over twenty-five years. That is certainly in your favour," the Minister continued, with a half-expectant smile hovering on his countenance.

Then, light breaking in upon his perplexed mind, the Greek quickly transferred a fat bundle of notes into the drawer and, leaning forward, pushed it back into its normal position.

"Yes, Excellency, I have rarely left Constantinople, and all my family is settled here."

Had he given enough? Anxiously he scanned the other's face to see if he was satisfied.

"Ah! let me see . . ." At this moment the Turkish official looked down at something that was apparently attracting his attention on his lap; then, after certain quick movements of his hands which rapidly conveyed something to his coat pocket, from below the table, he looked up again, returned the papers to the Greek and, taking a sheet of paper, scribbled something on it that made the other cry out with relief and joy.

"Ah! how good you are, Excellency," he exclaimed. "How can I sufficiently thank you?"

“That is all right,” replied the Minister, “I only do my duty.” And, assuring him that he could now rest in peace, he dismissed him with a smile and half bow.

“Good-day, sir. Remember, if you are ever again in need of help, to come to see me. Good-day !”

**THE END**

## INDEX

- ABDUL HAMID, 184  
     Visit to one of his wives, 184-187  
 Adnan Bey, 162-164  
 Adrianople, 225  
 Adriatic, the, 47  
 Ægean Sea, the, 109, 146, 157  
 Aehranthal, 287  
 Aivalik, 196  
 Albania, 258-260  
     Anarchy in, 259  
     Primitive conditions of, 260  
 Alexander II., 129  
 Alexander, King of Serbia, 207  
     208, 245-250  
     Interview with, 245-250  
     Memories of Great War, 246  
     Tastes of, 249, 250  
     Views on British statesmen, 247  
 Alexander Nevsky Church, 110,  
     118, 119, 159  
 Alexandroff, interview with, 147-150  
 Algiers, 168  
 Anatolia, 157, 165, 190, 198  
 Andrassy, Count, 26  
 Anglo-French Alliance, 248, 249  
 Angora, 169, 171  
 Arabian horses, 43  
 Arabs, 192  
 Arad, 53  
 Ardahan, 192, 194  
 Arpad, 53  
 Assumption and Charlemagne  
     Church, 276  
 Athos, Mount, 71  
 Attar of Roses, 109, 120-122  
 Augustan Gate, 176  
 Avasfelfofalu, 53  
 Awakening Magyars, 34, 36  
  
 BACKSHICH, Forms of, 162-164, 315  
     *et seq.*  
 Bagdad Pavilion, 177  
 Baird, Lieut.-Colonel, 138  
 Baiulescu, Dr. George, 76, 79, 80, 85  
 Balaton Foldvar, 48  
 Balaton Furad, 48  
 Balaton Lake, 47-49  
 Balkan people, characteristics of,  
     238, 239  
 Balkans, the, characteristics of, 7  
     Beauty and colour in, 8, 9  
 Banat, the, 57, 192, 203  
 Baroque style, 276-279  
 Basaltic cones, 48  
 Beauce, 95  
 Begoya Dzamia Mosque, 225  
 Bela Khun, 50, 52, 53  
 Belgrade, 205-221  
 Benes, Dr. Edouard, 208, 262  
 Besserabia, 57  
 Bethlen, Count, conversations with,  
     40, 50-52, 54  
 Bezestan, 172  
 Bibles, Hungarian, 42  
 Black Church, the, 75-77  
 Black Death, the, 239  
 Black Sea, the, 109, 157, 165  
 Blagaj, 234, 235  
 Bocitoare, the, 103  
 Bohemia, 8, 269  
 Bolshevism, 50-54, 141-144, 148, 149  
     What Bolshevism cost Hungary,  
     50-54  
 Boris, King of Bulgaria, 110, 117,  
     135-139, 159  
 Bosna River, 223  
 Bosnia, 8, 205, 222, 287  
 Bosnia Brod, junction, 222  
 Bosnian scenery, 223  
 Bosphorus, the, 177, 182  
 Boyana, 114  
 Bran, Castle of, 80-86  
 Brasso, 73-78, 80  
 Bratiano, Monsieur Jean, interview  
     with, 94-99  
 Bratic, Dr., 242  
 Bratislava, 52, 281-285  
 Braun, 279  
 Bridge of Charles, the, 275, 278  
 Bridge tolls, 193

- British ignorance with regard to the  
 Balkans, 229, 266  
 Brokoff, 279  
 Broussa, 185  
 Bucarest, 59-63, 85  
 Budapest, 23, 30, 31  
 Bukovac, 242  
 Bukovina, 57, 102  
 Bulgaria, 109-157, 203  
 Bulgarian Army, the, 140-146  
 Churches, 118, 119  
 Costumes, 113, 307  
 Customs, 111, 152, 153  
 Dances, 114, 115, 153  
 Folk-lore, 151-153  
 Funerals, 111, 152  
 Gypsies, 160  
 Instruments, 114, 115, 153  
 Monasteries, 123-134  
 Notes, 112  
 Reparations, 109  
 Rooks, 116, 117  
 Rose plantations, 109, 120-122  
 Scenery, 123, 159  
 Women, 314  
 Buna, 234, 235  
 Buxton, Noel, interview with King  
 of Serbia, 247  
 Buyuk, 160  
 Byzantine crosses, 85
- CAFE LIFE, HUNGARIAN, 42  
 Calea Victoriei, 58, 60, 61  
 Caliph, the, 157, 169-171  
 And the Nationalists, 169, 171  
 His bodyguard, 170  
 His kaik, 171  
 His selamlik, 170, 171  
 Calvinists, Hungarian, 40  
 Capitulations, 189  
 Carcassonne, 236  
 Carmen Sylva, her views on mon-  
 archy, 81  
 Carniola, 203  
 Carpathian Mountains, 57  
 Carsija, 223  
 Cataj, 303  
 Cavala, 196  
 Chaplin, Charlie, 302  
 Charles, Emperor, 48, 49  
 Chateaubriand, 242  
 Chezi, 189  
 Chikos, Hungarian, 43, 44  
 Cluj, 45, 87-93, 98  
 Visit to, 87-93  
 University of, 45  
 Coachmen of Bucarest, 59, 60, 186  
 Constantine the Great, 178
- Constantinople, 158, 160-187  
 Approach to, 160, 161  
 Charm of, 172  
 Conventions of Bucarest, 60, 61  
 Corner Tower, Prague, 276  
 Cossacks, 218-220  
 Court ball at Belgrade, 205-210  
 Dancing the Horo, 208, 209  
 How Serbians dance, 208, 209  
 Court life in Bulgaria, 137, 138  
 Croatia, 8, 21, 203, 229  
 Croatian peasant party, *see* Croatian  
 problem.  
 Croatian problem, 229, 230, 249,  
 251 *et seq.*  
 Csaki, Count, 26  
 Csardas, Hungarian, 88  
 Curzon, Marquess, 247  
 His offer to King of Serbia, 247  
 Customs Houses of the air, 103  
 Czech character, 269  
 Contempt of religion, 292  
 Land Reform, 294-298  
 Treatment of Slovaks, 291-294  
 Women, 311  
 Czecho Slovakia, 8, 21, 269-307
- DACIA, 101  
 Dalmatia, 8, 203  
 Damascus, 172  
 Danube, 30, 31, 47, 57, 93, 109, 110  
 Davidovic, Monsieur, 148, 249, 253-  
 255  
 Deak, Francis, 28  
 Debreczen, 40-46, 306  
 Breeding establishment of, 42, 43  
 Market place of, 42  
 Medical school at, 45, 46  
 Municipal stables, 42  
 University of, 42  
 Decebalus, 101  
 Dervishes, howling, 165-168  
 Dervishes of Sarajevo, 228, 229  
 Dinaric Alps, 227, 230  
 Dniester, 57  
 Dobroudja, 109  
 Doinas, 105  
 Dolma Bagtche Palace, 169, 177  
 Dombovitz, 57, 61  
 Drama, 196  
 Dubnitz, 124  
 Dubrovnic, 236-244  
 A rival to Venice, 240  
 Aristocracy of, 237, 238  
 Beauty of, 236, 237, 240, 241  
 Costumes of, 241  
 History of, 239, 240  
 Illegitimate children of, 243, 244



- Dubrovnic.—*Continued.*  
 Monastery Court of, 241, 242  
 Vegetation of, 241  
 Duca, Monsieur, 208
- EASTWELL PARK, Queen of Roumania at, 82  
 Embroideries of Bulgaria, 307  
 Czecho Slovakia, 299-305  
 Hungary, 35, 306 *et seq.*  
 Roumania, 83, 84, 307  
 Yugo Slavia, 307  
 Esterhazy, 297  
 Ethnographical Museum, Belgrade, 211-213  
 Eunuchs, 16, 182-187  
 Characteristics of, 185  
 Utility of, 184  
 Visit to, 182-187  
 Euxinograde, 139  
 Exchange of populations, Turks and Greeks, 195, 196
- FAN NOLI, 259  
 Federalism, 148, 254  
 Federation Balkanique, 148  
 Fenar lighthouse, 169  
 Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria, 226, 227  
 Assassination of, 227  
 Feeling of townspeople with regard to murder of, 227  
 Place where murdered, 226, 227  
 Visit to Sarajevo, 226, 227  
 Warning given to, 227  
 Ferdinand, King of Bulgaria, 137  
 Ferrer, Vincent, 279  
 Fiume, 21, 264  
 France and the Little Entente, 68
- GADULKA, 153  
 Gaida, 153  
 Galata, Bridge of, 169, 177, 178, 180, 181, 193  
 Gate of Happiness, 176  
 Gavrilovic, Monsieur, 207  
 Gellert, Mount, 23  
 George, King of England, 85  
 George, Prince of Serbia, 246  
 Georgia, 157  
 German minorities in Brasso, 74-76  
 Gibbon, his view on eunuchs, 184, 185  
 Gibraltar, 237  
 Gjorgjic, 237, 238  
 Gjorgjiu, 93  
 Golden Horn, 160, 161, 165, 169, 177  
 Goldmark, 92  
 Performance of one of his operas at Cluj, 92, 93
- Gothic architecture, 29, 274-276  
 Greek women, 313  
 Gypsies, 27, 61
- HAIIDUKS, 152, 283  
 Halide Hanoum, 198  
 Hardy, 290  
 Harems, disappearance of, 199  
 Hatseg, visit to, 98.  
 Hedjas, 190  
 Hera, Temple of, 169  
 Herzegovina, 8, 203  
 Hilsner, 287  
 Hlinka, 284, 285, 291  
 Honolulu, 198  
 Hood, Robin, 152  
 Horthy, Admiral, 22  
 Hortogaby, Plain of, 32, 42  
 Houses of Parliament, Hungarian, 28, 31  
 Howling Dervishes, 165-168  
 Hradcany, 276, 279  
 Hradiste, 299  
 Hrastnik, 263  
 Hungarian acting compared with Roumanian, 92, 93  
 Beds, 41  
 Cafés, 42  
 Coachmen 32, 41  
 Costumes 32-34, 37, 41, 306 *et seq.*  
 Dancing, 38  
 Embroideries, 35  
 Food, 26, 27, 34  
 Horse herds, 43, 44, 106  
 Horses, 43, 44  
 Instruments, 38  
 Landowners in Transylvania, 316 *et seq.*  
 Loan, the, 21  
 Minorities, 52, 57, 78, 84, 98, 99, 288, 316 *et seq.*  
 Music, 27, 37, 220, 221  
 National character, 31  
 Parliament, 28, 29  
 Peasants, 35, 36, 306  
 Plain, the, 30, 32, 39, 43  
 Protestants, 40  
 Reparations, 50  
 Restaurants, 26, 27  
 Weddings, 32-39  
 Women, 31, 312  
 Hungary, 8, 21-57  
 Hussein Djahed Bey, 197  
 Hussein, King, 192
- ILIANA, PRINCESS, 80  
 Ilidze, Plain of, 222, 227, 239  
 Inkey, Baron, 27

- Inoculation Officer, Turkish, 163, 164  
 Iraq, 194  
 Ismet Pacha, 193  
 Italian party in Albania, 260  
 Italian treaty with Yugo Slavia, 248  
 Ivan Plannina, 230  
 Ivan Rilsky, 129, 130  
 Ivan Sattel, 230
- JABLANICA, 231  
 James, Henry, 289  
 Janissaries, 176  
 Janosik, 283  
 Joseph, Archduke, 49  
 Judas Tedeas, 279  
 Justinian, Palace of, 169
- KALMEGDAN, view from, 216  
 Karolyi, Count, 50, 52, 53  
 Karolyi, the family, 26  
 Kars, 194  
 Kaval, 153  
 Kazanlik, visit to rose gardens of, 109, 121  
 Kemal, Mustapha 188, 189, 199, 200  
   His difficulties, 189-191  
   Supported by army, 191  
 Kendeffy, Count, visit to, 93  
 Kibla, 166  
 Kiss, Monsieur de, 89-91  
   His opinion on treatment of Hungarians, 89, 90  
   His pact with Roumanian Government, 91  
   His visit, 89-91  
 Kolysek, Dr., visit to, 281 *et seq.*  
 Kommadine quelle, 232  
 Konjica, 231  
 Koran, 166, 198  
 Korosvolgy, 53, 54  
 Kossuth Hymn, 220  
 Kovacs restaurant, 26, 27  
 Kretz, Professor, 299 *et seq.*  
 Ku Klux Klan, 233  
 Kunovice, 300 *et seq.*  
 Kurds, 180
- LACROMA ISLAND, 241, 242  
 Land Reform, Roumania, 75, 76  
   Czecho Slovakia, 294 *et seq.*  
 Latin alphabet in Turkey, 197  
 Lausanne, Treaty of, 192  
 League of Nations, 21, 215, 258  
 Leander, Tower of, 161  
 Liechtenstein, 297  
 Lipovan sect, 59, 60  
 Little Entente, 52, 262  
 Loretto, Church of, 278  
 Loti, Pierre, 161, 200
- Love-making in Roumania, 102, 103  
 Luther, 277
- MACAULAY, 289  
 Macedonia, 109, 145, 148  
 Macedonian comitadji, 148  
 Macedonian revolutionary organisation, 149, 150  
 Madrassa, 189  
 Mahomet, II., 179  
 Maktab, 189  
 Mala Braca, 240  
 Manados, 197  
 Manole, legend concerning, 104, 105  
 Marabouts, 168  
 Marcovic, Monsieur, 218, 219  
 Margaret Island, 30  
 Marie, Queen of Roumania, 63, 71, 86, 177, 242, 243  
   Her accomplishments, 82, 83  
   Her beauty and charm, 81-83,  
   Her collections and hobbies, 83, 85, 86  
   Her opinion of King George, 85  
   Her opinion of Venizelos, 85  
   Her popularity, 83  
   Her share in the War, 82  
   Visit to her castle, 79 *et seq.*  
 Marinkovic, Monsieur, 149  
   Federal system of, 255  
 Marko, 152  
 Marmara, Sea of, 165, 169  
 Marriages, Hungarian, 32-39  
 Masaryk, President, interview with, 286 *et seq.*  
   His attitude towards communism, 289  
   His greatness of character, 286-289  
   His preferences, 289 *et seq.*  
 Medjellé, 189  
 Meredith, 290  
 Mestrovic, 242  
 Metkovic, 231  
 Mezohegyes, 43  
 Mezokovesd, Hungarian weddings at, 32-39, 306  
 Miljacka, 227  
 Minarets, 178  
 Mirkvicka, 118  
 Mitylene, 196  
 Modra, 304  
 Moldau, 273  
 Moldavia, 273  
 Monarchical feeling in Hungary, 22  
 Monarchy, new spirit of, 250  
 Monks, Roumanian, 71, 72  
   Bulgarian, 123-134  
   Rigid fasting of, 72, 127

- Monte Carlo, 236  
 Moravia, 8  
 Moreni, oil wells at, 67  
 Moscow, intrigues of, 144  
 Mostar, 230-235  
   Bridge of, 233  
   Costumes of, 233  
   Eastern character of, 232  
   Excursion to sources of Buna, 234, 235  
 Muhammed VI., 157  
 Munich, 74  
 Murat, Monsieur, 243  
 Music, Bulgarian, 114, 115  
   Hungarian, 27  
   Russian, 218-221  
   Slovak, 281-284  
 Musical instruments, Bulgarian, 115, 153  
   Hungarian, 38  
   Roumanian, 106  
   Serbian, 212  
   Slovak, 282  
 Musulman women, 198-200
- NAGYSITKE, LADISLAUS KISS DE.**  
   Abbot of Mezokovesd, 34  
   His hospitality, 34, 35  
 Napoleon, 246  
 Narenta Valley, 231  
 Necromancy, symbol of, 79  
 Negru, Radu, 104, 105  
   Legend concerning, 104, 105  
 Neuilly, Treaty of, 145  
 New diplomacy, 247  
 Newton, Lord, on Hungary, 54  
 Ninchitch, Monsieur, 208  
 Nuremberg, 74
- OIL WELLS OF ROUMANIA, 64-69, 94**  
 Old Harem, 176  
 Olympus, 169  
 Opera House, performance at Cluj, 91-93  
 Oradea Mare, 53, 98  
 Orient express, King Boris and the, 138  
 Osmanli, House of, 171  
 Our Lady in Chains Church, 275
- PACIC, MONSIEUR, 208, 242, 253**  
 Palacky, 288  
 Palocz, 306  
 Pandours, 129  
 Paprikas, 27, 34  
 Parkany, 52  
 Paris, 60, 61, 158  
 Pavlova, Anna, 302
- Peasant artists of Bulgaria, 307  
   Hungary, 306 *et seq.*  
   Roumania, 307  
   Slovakia, 299-305  
   Yugo Slavia, 307  
 Pera, 158, 162, 163, 177, 180-182, 186  
 Pernik, 124  
 Persia, 157  
 Pest in Constantinople, 162  
 Petrini, 145  
 Pirot, 209  
 Plato, 286  
 Ploesti, 66, 96  
   Visit to oil wells at, 66  
 Poincaré, Monsieur, and King Alexander, 248  
 Polna trial, 287  
 Polygamy, abolition of, 189, 199  
 Powder Gate, Prague, 276  
 Prague, 30, 273-280  
   Architecture of, 274-279  
   Baroque tendencies in, 276-279  
   Charm of, 273, 279  
   Gothic style of, 274-276  
   Prahova, oil wells at, 96  
   Prasek, Monsieur, and Masaryk, 288, 289  
   Press association interview with, 146  
 Prilep, 152  
 Prinkipo Islands, 165, 169, 177  
 Prinsepp, 226, 227  
   Murder of Archduke, 227  
 Privicvic, Monsieur, 257  
 Prohibition in Turkey, 194  
 Protogueroff, 148
- QUEEN OF SERBIA, 207, 208**  
 Queen of Sheba, performance of, 91, 92  
 Queen's rôle, 81-84
- RADEFF, SIMEON, 182-187**  
   House hunting in Constantinople with, 182-187  
 Radic, 229, 251  
   Arrest and trial of, 256, 257  
   Ascendency of, 251, 252  
   Attacks king, 256  
   Incoherence of, 251  
   Shortsighted policy of, 256  
   Visit to Russia, 252  
 Ragusa, *see* Dubrovnic  
 Regat, 22  
 Regional autonomy scheme, 149  
 Remus, 62  
 Renaissance art in Prague, 276, 277  
 Republicans of Croatia, 252  
 Rhodope Mountains, 123  
 Rila River, 124

- Rilo Monastery, 71, 123-134, 159  
 Church of, 128, 129  
 Dangerous journey to, 123 *et seq.*  
 Ikons of, 131  
 Kitchen of, 131  
 Pandour of, 129, 134  
 Pilgrims of, 131  
 Sheep dogs at, 133, 134  
 Visit to Hermit, 131-134
- Rilo Plannina, 124
- Riza, 194
- Rizvanbegovic, Ali Pasha, 234
- Romulus, *see* Remus
- Roumania, 8, 21, 52, 57-106
- Roumanian acting, 92, 93  
 Corruption, 74, 76, 316 *et seq.*  
 Costumes, 61, 79, 84, 101, 102, 307  
 Dancing, 77, 79, 80, 86  
 Diversity of Laws, 96  
 Embroideries, 66, 83, 84, 307  
 Folk-lore and customs, 83, 100-106, 284  
 Frontiers, 57  
 Funeral customs, 103  
 Grain lands, 95  
 Hospitality and charm, 62  
 Legends, 103, 105, 106  
 Love of France, 67, 68  
 Military strength, 57  
 Mining Law, 95-97  
 Monsieur Bratiano on the law, 95-97  
 Monasteries, 70-72  
 Morality, 59-62  
 Officers, 58, 60  
 Habit of taking rouge, 60  
 Oil, 57, 64, 69, 95, 96  
 Oil workers, 69  
 Peasant artists, 83, 84  
 Peasant houses, 101  
 Physique, 102  
 Resources, 57, 95, 97  
 Restaurants, 62, 88  
 Sense of humour, 62, 63  
 Superstitions, 103, 104, 106  
 Trains, 66, 68  
 Treatment of Minorities, 78, 84, 88-90, 98, 99, 316 *et seq.*  
 Weddings, 102, 103  
 Women, 59-61, 312 *et seq.*
- Rousseau, Jean Jacques, 282
- Roustouk, 110-113
- Russian emigrés, 218-220  
 Music, 218-221  
 Restaurants, 218-221
- Ruzomberok, 281
- SABAC, BATTLE OF, 246
- St. Agatha, 278
- St. Anna, 279
- St. Appolina, 278
- St. Elisabeth, 279
- St. John de Mathis, 279
- St. John of Nepocumene, 279
- St. Litgardis, 279
- St. Philip of Neri, 275
- St. Roch, 275
- St. Stephen Church, 23, 28, 29
- St. Teresa, 275, 278
- St. Venceslaus, 274, 275
- St. Vilgefortis, 278
- St. Vitus, 274
- Salep, taste of, 224, 225
- Salonika, 157, 196, 264
- Samovilas, 152
- Samsoun, 196
- San Biago, 239
- San Stefano, Treaty of, 109
- Sarajevo, 213, 215, 222-229  
 Bazaars of, 223  
 Costumes of, 224, 226  
 Dervishes of, 228, 229  
 Eastern atmosphere of, 223-225, 228  
 Markets of, 224  
 Metal work of, 226  
 Moslems of, 224  
 Mosques of, 225  
 Museum of, 225, 226  
 Selamluk at, 225
- Satu Mare, 53
- Saxons, Transylvanian, 74-77.
- Scutari, 161, 165, 177
- Sebenico, 264
- Selamluk, 169-171, 225
- Seraglio, point of, 169
- Serai, Old, visit to, 176, 177
- Serbia, 8, 203-269  
 British ignorance with regard to, 229  
 Splendid market for British, 229
- Serbian agricultural wealth, 263  
 Attitude towards women, 209, 210  
 Carpets, 209, 211, 212  
 Costumes, 213, 241, 307  
 Land Reform, 203  
 Musical instruments, 212  
 Scenery, 230, 232  
 Soldiers, 214, 215, 246  
 Trains, 222
- Serbs, Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, 203-266
- Sergio, Mount, 236
- Shakespeare, 282
- Sicilian actors, 91
- Simeria, junction, 93
- Simon, Monsieur, and King Alexander, 248, 249

- Sinaia, visit to, 70-72, 79  
 Sinclair, May, 290  
 Sindbad the sailor, 49  
 Slaveikoff, 152  
 Slavovitza, 142  
 Slovak Art compared with other  
   peasant arts, 306, 307,  
   Character, 269, 292  
   Domestic art, 300 *et seq.*  
   Embroideries, 284, 300, 302, 303  
   Folk music, 281-284  
   Instruments, 282  
   Land Reform, 295-298  
   Love-making, 284  
   National costumes, 301 *et seq.*  
   Paintings, 284  
   Peasant artists, 299-305  
   Peasant party, 284, 285, 291  
   Pottery, 304, 305  
   Songs, 282-284  
   Wedding costumes, 305  
 Slovakia, 8, 21, 22, 26, 52, 269  
   Feeling for the Czechs, 269, 270,  
     291-294  
   Land Reform in, 295-298  
   Preference for Hungary, 269, 294  
 Smailaga, Cemalovic, Mayor of  
   Mostar, 234  
 Smetana, 282  
 Smyrna, 195, 196  
 Snednagora Hills, 120  
 Sofia, 110, 116-119, 159  
   Opening of Parliament at, 138  
   Royal Palace at, 138  
 Sofia, Aga, 158, 178  
 Soviets, 143, 144, 220  
 Spalato, 264  
 Stamboul, 158, 160, 161, 165, 169,  
   181  
 Stambuliski, 135, 136, 140-143  
   And the King of Bulgaria, 136  
 Stanhebel, Maria, 305  
 Stepanovic, Stepan, 207  
 Stjapangrad, 234  
 Stoyadinovic, Monsieur, Budget of,  
   265  
 Strahof, 275  
 Strobar, 293  
 Sublime Porte, 162, 178, 182  
 Suliman the Magnificent, 178  
 Sun and Moon, Legend concerning,  
   105, 106  
 Sylvester, Pope, 28  
 Syria, 194  
 Szecheniji family, 26  
 Szegenylegnyek robbers, 47  
  
 TATRA MOUNTAINS, 53  
 Temesvar, 53  
  
 Tihon, 47-49  
   The church, 49  
   The echo, 49  
   The monastery, 47  
   The old abbot, 48, 49  
   The royal apartments, 48, 49  
 Tohanulnow, gypsies at, 79, 80, 86  
 Tokay, wine, 35  
 Tolstoi, President Masaryk on, 287  
 Toroczko, 73  
 Town Hall, Prague, 276  
 Trajan, Emperor, 101  
 Transylvania, 8, 21, 22, 28, 54, 57,  
   84  
 Transylvanian Alps, 79  
   Costumes, 73, 79  
   Party, 91  
 Travelling in Serbia, 230-232  
 Trbovlie, 263  
 Trebevic Mount, 222, 223  
 Trianon, Treaty of, 21  
 Tsankoff, Monsieur, and the revolution  
   against Stambulisky,  
     142, 143  
 Tsarska Bistritza, 138  
   Visit to King Boris' hunting  
     lodge, 138, 139  
 Tsrstevo, 263  
 Tuka, Monsieur, 284, 294  
 Turco Greek War, 245  
 Turkey, 157-200  
 Turkish Baths, 183  
   Bazaars, 172-175  
   Cafés, 180  
   Character, 157, 174, 175  
   Corruption, 162-164, 193, 318  
     *et seq.*  
   Cruelty to Serbian women, 213  
   Doctors, 162-164  
   Exchange of populations, 195  
     196  
   Finances, 192  
   Hatred of foreigners, 192-195  
   Houses, 182-185  
   Mosques, 178, 179  
   Nationalists, 188  
   Reforms, 188, 189, 197  
   Religious orders, 189, 190  
   Roughs and British cemeteries,  
     193  
   Venereal diseases, 196, 197  
   Women, 198-200, 314  
  
 UGRON, 91  
 Upraka, 284  
 Usref Beg, 225  
  
 VARNA, 159, 160  
 Vaynory, 305

Veil, disappearance of, 189, 198, 199  
 Venizelos, 85, 146  
 Versecz, 53  
 Verzer, Professor, 45  
     And the regeneration of Hungary,  
     46  
 Veszprem, 47  
 Vofely, best man, 36, 39  
     Importance of, 36  
 Volga boat song, 210, 220  
 Volkoff, General, conversations with  
     140-146  
 His part in revolution of June,  
     141-143  
 Vysehrad, 276

WALDSTEIN, 297  
 Wallachia, 105  
 Weddings, Hungarian, 33, 34  
 White Mountain, Battle of, 276  
 Women of Bulgaria, 314  
     Czecho Slovakia, 311  
     Greece, 313

Women—*Continued.*

Hungary, 31, 312  
 Roumania, 59-61, 312 *et seq.*  
 Turkey, 198-200, 314  
 Yugo Slavia, 206, 207, 240, 241,  
     313 *et seq.*

YABLONITZKI, MONSIEUR, 294  
 Young Turk movement, 190  
 Yugo Slavia, 203-269. (*See also*  
     "Serbia.")  
     Army of, 214, 215, 246  
     Beverages of, 224, 225  
     Costumes of, 213, 224, 226  
     Economic condition of, 261-266  
     Financial condition of, 262-265, 266  
     Industries of, 263, 264,  
     Parties in, 255  
     Railway system of, 263-265  
     Trains in, 222, 230-232  
     Women of, 206, 207, 240, 241, 313

ZAGREB, 252

# *Itinerary of Journey*

