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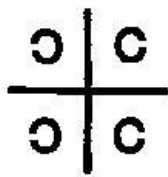
Karageorges—Liberator of Serbia

SERBIA: A SKETCH

BY

HELEN LEAH REED

AUTHOR OF "NAPOLEON'S YOUNG NEIGHBOR" "MISS THEODORA," ETC.



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*Serbia, valiant daughter of the Ages,
Happiness and light should be thy portion!
Yet thy day is dimmed, thine heart is heavy;
Long hast thou endured—a little longer
Bear thy burden, for a fair tomorrow
Soon will gleam upon thy flower-spread valleys,
Soon will brighten all thy shadowy mountains;
Soon will sparkle on thy foaming torrents
Rushing toward the world beyond thy rivers.
Bulgar, Turk and Magyar long assailed thee.*

*Now the Teuton's cruel hand is on thee.
Though he break thy heart and rack thy body,
'Tis not his to crush thy lofty spirit.
Serbia cannot die. She lives immortal,
Serbia—all thy loyal men bring comfort
Fighting, fighting, and thy far-flung banner
Blazons to the world thy high endeavor,
—This thy strife for brotherhood and freedom—
Like an air-free bird unknowing bondage,
Soaring far from carnage, smoke and tumult,
Serbia—thy soul shall live forever!
Serbia, undaunted, is immortal!*

Among comparatively recent books in English accessible to the general reader are:

SERBIA AND THE SERBIANS

Mijatovich—L. C. Page Co.

THE SERBIAN PEOPLE

Lazarovich-Hrebelianovich, 2 vols.—Scribners

SERBIA BY THE SERBIANS

Alfred Stead—Heinemann

THE SLAV NATIONS

Tucic—Hodder and Stoughton

SERBIA, HER PEOPLE, HISTORY AND ASPIRATIONS

Petrovitch—Stokes

THE STORY OF SERBIA

Church—Kelly

HERO-TALES AND LEGENDS OF THE SERBIANS

Petrovitch—Harrap and Co.

WITH SERBIA INTO EXILE

Fortier Jones—The Century Company

The spelling of names follows "Serbia by the Servians," except "Serb."

The author is indebted to some of these books for facts embodied in this little sketch—as well as to several persons familiar with Serbia.

She gives warm thanks to Madame Slavko Grouitch, wife of the Serbian Secretary for Foreign affairs, who first interested her in Serbia.

SERBIA: A SKETCH

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I. SERBIA: STARTING



erbia, younger sister of the Nations, has indeed had a younger sister's portion. In her early years she grew up with little guidance from older and wiser members of the family. She did not have the advice that she needed. Perhaps she would not have followed it, though on occasion she has shown more docility than many of the family.

It took her a long time to find herself; she had troubles in her household, and it was her first endeavor to get the factions to unite and let her be the acknowledged head of the house. She believed it was her ultimate destiny to govern them all—that this was for their good.

When she had made herself mistress of her own house, she tried to stand alone—to be independent of her neighbors. She had no wish to dominate them. She did not try to aggrandize herself at their expense, nor did she take up weapons against them. But she wished them to acknowledge her head of her own household, just as those within her house had done. She even was willing to be called a Princess—providing she governed her household well. But almost hidden from the rest of Europe by her mountains, kept by barriers from easy access to the rest of the world, the other Nations paid little attention to her. She grew up almost unnoticed by the world—proud and strong, simple in her tastes, pious in her own way (for her church was not the church of most of her neighbors), and thoughtful, if ill educated.

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She was not bookish in those early days; she was too indifferent, perhaps, to letters. Had she kept a journal, we could now embroider her story with more brilliant threads. Her lack of education was perhaps rather her misfortune than her fault. Those who knew her realized her many fine qualities, yet she made few friends beyond her own borders,—and because she was independent and poor, her richer neighbors were suspicious of her and jealous. This one and that one set upon her. They were jealous when she first put on regal robes. They were afraid that she wished to enlarge her possessions at their expense, and one of them, who had assumed complete lordship over Serbia and all her sisters, was constantly threatening her, pretending at times that if she could help him against the foe from Asia who was threatening them both, she should be acknowledged of royal rank. This did not wholly satisfy her. Her ambitions had grown. She herself was reaching out for the Imperial purple. She felt that if she wore it, she might better defend herself and her relatives beyond the mountains from the Asiatic hordes.

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Then came the great test—and from then almost until to-day Kossovo has been a day of mourning!

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When the fair, gray-eyed ancestors of the modern Serb came south from their home in Galicia, moving westward from the shores of the Black Sea, along the left bank of the Danube, they crossed the river and occupied the northwest corner of the Balkan Peninsula. How long they had lived in Galicia we need not ask, but they bore with them traditions of a catastrophe in India that was probably the cause of their remote fathers' leaving that country.

Pliny and Ptolemy mention the Serbs, and we know that for one hundred years at least previous to 625 A.D. they were at war with the Empire. The Roman Empire was then slowly disintegrating, and in the Balkans there was no power to protect the Romanized Illyria from the northern invaders who in prehistoric times had driven away the aboriginal inhabitants.

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It matters little whether the Emperor Heraclius invited the Serbs to settle down in the northwest Byzantine provinces lately devastated by barbarians, on condition that they would defend the Empire against the Tartar Avars, or whether he merely accepted the fact that they had entered these provinces and must stay there. He made an agreement of peace with the Serbs—and this marks the beginning of their known history. He desired a buffer State, as the neighbors of the Serbs so often have desired in later times. The lands the newcomers then occupied are the Serb lands of to-day—Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Old Serbia, Macedonia, Dalmatia, the Banat, and to an extent Croatia and Western Bulgaria—practically the ideal Pan-Serbia, but in this little sketch, so far as it is possible, by "Serbia" is meant the Kingdom of Serbia, at the north of the Balkan Peninsula.

The Kingdom of Serbia is bounded by Bosnia, Old Serbia, Bulgaria, Roumania, the Banat, and Slavonia. The boundary rivers are the Danube, on the north separating it from Hungary and on the northeast from Roumania; the Drina, on the northwest from Bosnia; the Save, on the northwest from Croatia and Slavonia; the Timok, on the northeast from Bulgaria. Various mountain ranges on the west separate it from Bosnia, on the south and southwest from Turkey, and on the south and southeast from Bulgaria.

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Until the tenth century, except Pliny and Ptolemy, the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenites is the only historian to speak of the Serbs, and he but briefly; yet their history in those three centuries after their arrival was an epitome of their history in later years in the Balkan Peninsula. The general movement was the same. First, a constant struggle on the one side to establish a union of the jupnias and on the other side a constant resistance to such centralization. A jupania may be roughly defined as a county within whose limits lived clans more or less related to one another. The ruler was a Jupan, and it was not strange that the more powerful Jupans should tend to absorb their weaker neighbors. The successful man took the title of Grand Jupan. Jealousy of the Grand Jupan would lead to assassination, dethronement, and decentralization—and then would come a repetition of the violent and bloody story.

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Another element of disorder in Serbia was the ancient Slavonic rule that a Jupan might be succeeded, not by his son but by the oldest member of his family. It was hardly to be counted against a strong Jupan that he should try to arrange for his son to succeed him—yet this added to the troubles of the Serbs.

A third and later cause of Serb trouble was the Church. The Greek Emperor and the Greek Church on the one side, and the Roman Catholic Church represented by Venice and Hungary on the other, were continually warring, not only for territory but for influence in the Serb provinces. Yet in spite of apparent wavering, the Serbs from the time they adopted Christianity have been constant to the Church of their early choice.

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Finally, the founding in the seventh century of the Bulgarian kingdom, on the eastern and southeastern frontiers of Serbia, added to the dangers of this tempestuous little nation. After the Frank and Bulgarian Emperors in the first quarter of the ninth century had for some time wrangled over the Serbian tribes, the Bulgarians at last succeeded in placing a garrison in Belgrade. The Bulgarians ruled Rascia for seven years, but it was like ruling an uninhabited land, as the larger part of the Serbians had run away to Croatia.

Almost two hundred years after the agreement with Heraclius the Serbs had a strong Jupan who carried out the principles of concentration. This Visheslav was probably a descendant of that Visheslav who had signed the agreement with the Greek Emperor. His descendants, of whom the

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greatest was Vlastimir, for three generations contributed to the unity of Serbia by defending it against Bulgar and Frank, who were constantly menacing even when not directly attacking. Towards the end of the ninth century, in 871, under Basil the Macedonian, the Serbs acknowledged again the suzerainty of the Greek Empire and accepted Christianity. This was in the reign of Mertimir, but after his death almost all of the Greek Serb provinces were lost to Tsar Simeon of Bulgaria.

Though Serbia recovered part of her lost provinces, she could not hold them. The political center of the Serbs had moved to Zeta (Montenegro) and the mystic Prince Jovan Vladimir in the latter part of the tenth century, sometimes called King of Zeta, tried in vain to stop the triumphal march of Tsar Samuel of Bulgaria through the Serb provinces. He himself was taken a prisoner to Samuel's court, where he married the Tsar's daughter, Kossara. He returned to Zeta as reigning Prince under the suzerainty of Bulgaria, but in 1015 he was murdered by Samuel's heir, and he now is venerated as a saint in Serbia. The first Serb novel, "Vladimir and Kossara," published in the thirteenth century, is founded on the life of this Prince.

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Zeta was too far from the racial center of Serbia to be a good political center and soon the disintegration of the first Serb kingdom began. Although Serbia recovered the provinces Bulgaria had taken, she was unable to stand alone, and grudgingly accepted Greek suzerainty until Prince Voislav—cousin of Vladimir of Zeta—started a successful revolt against the Greeks and united under his own rule Zeta, Trebinje, and Zahumle. His son, Michel Voislavich, annexed the Jupanias of Rascia. In 1072 he proclaimed himself King and received the crown from Gregory VII. This was an effort to free Serbia from the Greek overlordship, as expressed in the Greek Church. In the next reign Serbia became better known to the world when she welcomed the Crusaders under Raymond of Toulouse, passing through on their way to the Holy Land. Then came brighter days for Serbia. Stephen Nemanya, Grand Jupan of Rascia, who lived near Novi Bazar (1122-1199), planned the union of all the jupanias in one kingdom under one king. This he practically accomplished, for though unable to include Bosnia, within ten years of his accession he had almost doubled his territory.

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Later, when Stephen's ambition grew, he received Frederick Barbarossa, passing through with his Crusaders, and gave him every honor due the Empire when he visited Nish in 1188, and treated him so liberally that Barbarossa—at least this is something more than rumor—was considering a marriage between his son and Stephen's daughter when death put an end to the alliance. In the next reign the Emperor Henry VI planned, with the help of the Serbs, to conquer the Byzantine Empire. But again death took the Emperor before the plans were completed.

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Another notable act of Stephen's was his attack on the Greek provinces as an ally of the King of Hungary. Stephen Nemanya assumed the double-eagle as the insignia of his dignity, but though he founded the first real Kingdom of Serbia, and was called King, he was never crowned.

Toward the close of his distinguished career, in 1196, weary of the world, he withdrew to the Monastery Helinder on Mt. Athos, where years before his youngest son Rastko had retired. Stephen died after three years of monastic life. The historic records of Serbia begin with his reign.

Rastko, known in the Church as Sava and afterwards canonized, was a man of active temperament—a statesman as well as a churchman. He used his wisdom and his learning to benefit his country.

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Stephen, son of Nemanya, was the first crowned King of Serbia. He kept off foreign enemies, and Serbia, no longer dreading attacks, began to develop some of her mineral resources. She made a beginning, too, of educating her people. In the next two or three generations of rulers there were quarrels among members of the ruling family. Outside, too, the Magyars began to press upon the little kingdom. But on the whole Serbia was united,—mindful, perhaps, of St. Sava's motto: "Only Union is Serbia's Salvation."

Stephen the Sixth, or "The Great," won victories over the Greek Emperors, the Tartars, and the Bulgarians. He helped the Greek Emperor against the Turks, now becoming formidable, and as part of his reward had the Emperor's daughter given him in marriage. But this led to domestic unhappiness in his later years and some loss of territory. For his wife tried to keep his son Stephen from his inheritance. In turn, Stephen's party set upon the King and choked him to death. Though Stephen Dushan may have had no hand in it, this murder clouds his reputation. Stephen Dushan is a contradictory character—by some regarded as the murderer of his father, by others an idealist to be compared with King Arthur or with Roland. Stephen Dushan (Detchanski), great-grandson of Stephen Nemanya, came to the throne in 1331 and in ten years had gained Albania and Epirus and finally all Macedonia except Salonika. He was practically suzerain of Bulgaria. He freed the Church, which long since had drifted from Rome back to Byzance. Now he made it independent of the Greek Emperor, constituting the Archbishop of Petch, Archbishop, or rather Patriarch, of Serbia.

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Noted both as a soldier and a statesman, Stephen had wider plans than Vlastimir or Nemanya. The Turks were now looming dangerously in the East. The Greek Empire was tottering. With it, the rest of Eastern Europe might fall, including little Serbia—one of the smallest of all the little principalities. But Serbia, if small, was brave, and Dushan hoped to proclaim a Serbo-Greek Empire to head off the Asiatic hordes. To accomplish this he took certain territory from the Greek Empire and, proclaiming himself Emperor of the Serbs and Greeks, was solemnly crowned at Uksub at Easter, 1346. Nine years later he tried to unite Bulgars and Serbs and Greeks against

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the Turks. With a large army of about one hundred thousand trained soldiers he was almost at the gates of Constantinople when a sudden illness overtook him and he died.

Under Dushan Serbia had very nearly reached her highest ambition—complete dominion over the Balkan Peninsula. Dushan ruled also a large part of the former Byzantine lands in Europe. [Pg 16]

Of farther-reaching good for Serbia than his territorial conquests was the Zakonik or Code of Laws, completed in 1354 under Dushan's direction. It contained not only the best of the old, but many new, laws resulting from Dushan's knowledge of his country's needs. It ranks high among medieval codes of law. After his death, his empire separated itself into its elements—a number of small states whose rulers were fighting one another while the Turks were subduing Thrace.

With the death of Dushan in 1355 the greatness of Serbia also passed away. His son, Urosh, could not hold what his father had gained, and little by little parts of his Empire fell off from the center, until but a small fragment remained. Yet there were still many stout-hearted Serbs—many who wished to do their utmost to throw off the Turks now pressing upon them. When Urosh died childless, the direct Nemanya dynasty came to an end, but in 1371 Lazar Grebelyanovitch of the Nemanya family was elected ruler of the Serbs. Though called Tsar, he would not formally take the title. Devoted to his country, he threw all his energy into forming a Christian League against the Turks. [Pg 17]

But the wily Oriental circumvented him by attacking the members of the League one by one. For nearly twenty years after that there were many encounters between Turks and Serbians. At the first attack on Nish, Serbia so humbled herself as to agree to pay tribute in gold and in soldiers for the Sultan's armies on condition the Turks would leave her alone.

Later Lazar did his utmost to save poor Serbia from further disgrace. He united with the Ban of Bosnia, also a descendant of Stephen Nemanya, and together they gained many small victories. After once defeating the invading Turks under Murat I the Serbs had to stand a second time opposed to Murat and a well-trained force of Turkish soldiers. Against the Turks were drawn up the full strength of Serbia, Albania, and Bosnia. [Pg 18]

There on the field of Kossovo, the "field of blackbirds," June 15, 1389, was fought one of the decisive battles of history. It was a bitter defeat for Serbia, though as many Turks as Serbs perished on the field. On the eve of the battle Murat I had been assassinated. The brave Lazar with the flower of the Serb nation lay dead—Lazar first made prisoner, then beheaded. Of all Serbian rulers, the memory of Lazar was held the dearest. "A pious and generous prince, a brave but unsuccessful general."

There was no longer any question as to supremacy in the Balkan Peninsula. The independence of Serbia and the liberties of all the smaller states were now the property of the unspeakable Turk.

Lazar, it is said, was warned of his fate by a letter from Heaven even before the battle, but he still went forward to fight for his country. Bowring's translation of the heroic pesma (Battle of Kossovo) gives an idea of this event. Before the battle Lazar receives the mysterious letter: [Pg 19]

"Tzar Lasar! thou tzar of noble lineage!
Tell me now, what kingdom hast thou chosen?
Wilt thou have heaven's kingdom for thy portion,
Or an earthly kingdom? If an earthly,
Saddle thy good steed—and gird him tightly;
Let thy heroes buckle on their sabres,
Smite the Turkish legions like a tempest,
And these legions all will fly before thee.
But if thou wilt have heaven's kingdom rather,
Speedily erect upon Kossova,
Speedily erect a church of marble;
Not of marble, but of silk and scarlet;
That the army, to its vespers going,
May from sin be purged—for death be ready;
For thy warriors all are dooméd to stumble;
Thou, too, prince, wilt perish with thy army!"

When the Tzar Lasar had read the writing,
Many were his thoughts and long his musings.
"Lord, my God! what—which shall be my portion,
Which my choice of these two proffer'd kingdoms?
Shall I choose heaven's kingdom? shall I rather
Choose an earthly one? for what is earthly
Is as fleeting, vain, and unsubstantial;
Heavenly things are lasting, firm, eternal."

So the Tzar preferr'd a heavenly kingdom
Rather than an earthly. On Kossova
Straight he built a church, but not of marble;
Not of marble, but of silk and scarlet.
Then he calls the patriarch of Servia,
Calls around him all the twelve archbishops,

Bids them make the holy supper ready,
Purify the warriors from their errors,
And for death's last conflict make them ready.

So the warriors were prepared for battle,
And the Turkish hosts approach Kossova.
Bogdan leads his valiant heroes forward,
With his sons—nine sons—the Jugocichi,
Sharp and keen—nine gray and noble falcons.
Each led on nine thousand Servian warriors;
And the aged Jug led twenty thousand.

With the Turks began the bloody battle.
Seven pashas were overcome and scatter'd,
But the eighth pasha came onward boldly,
And the aged Jug Bogdan has fallen.

....*....*....*....*

Then Lasar, the noble lord of Servia,
Seeks Kossova with his mighty army;
Seven and seventy thousand Servian warriors.
How the infidels retire before him,
Dare not look upon his awful visage!
Now indeed begins the glorious battle.
He had triumph'd then, had triumph'd proudly,
But that Vuk—the curse of God be on him!
He betrays his father at Kossova.

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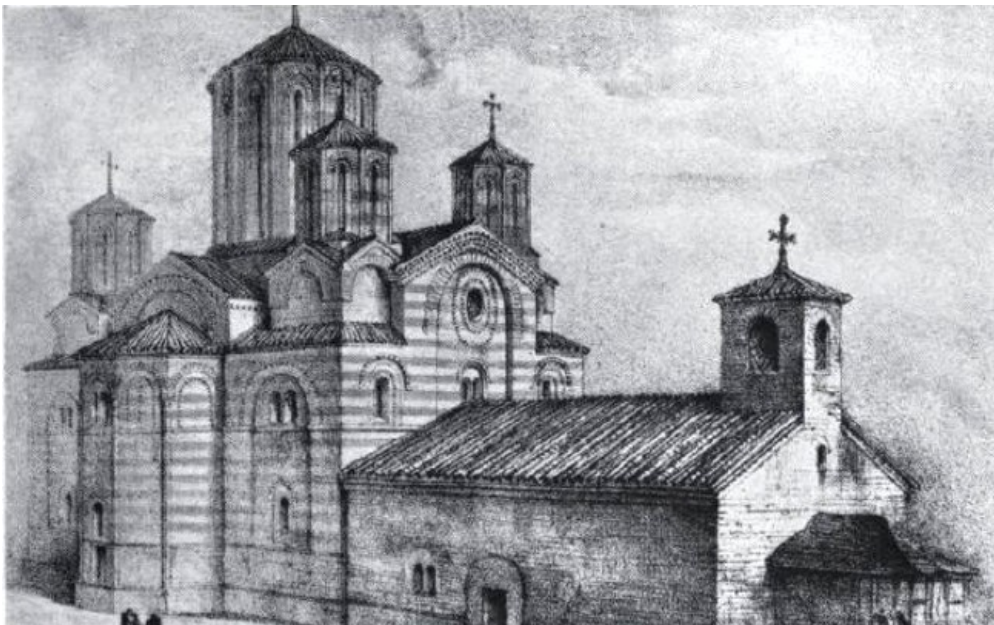
So the Turks the Servian monarch vanquish'd,
So Lasar fell—the Tzar of Servia—
With Lasar fell all the Servian army.
But they have been honor'd, and are holy,
In the keeping of the God of heaven.

All that the Nemanyas, all that the Serbian people had done toward national unity was destroyed at Kossovo. Throughout Serb lands, the anniversary of Kossovo is still kept as a memorial day for all Serbian heroes, both for those who fell then and those who have since fallen in defense of their country.

For seventy years after Kossovo, Serbia, though nominally ruled by despots, was really subsidiary to the Sultan. George Brankovitch, one of the despots, worked for an alliance between Serbia and Hungary to overthrow the Turks. The Turks were defeated at Kunovista, and lands previously taken were restored to him. This brave man died at the age of ninety of wounds received in a duel with a Hungarian nobleman. But in spite of the efforts of Brankovitch, the days of Serbia were numbered. In 1459 she became a Pashilik under the direct government of the Porte—and this was her condition for nearly three hundred and fifty years.

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If in her darkest hour some strong nation had sympathized with Serbia, her future might have been different. The nations of Europe were now having a revival of life—a renaissance—but they had no thought of Serbia, their young sister. She was hidden among her mountains and she made no outcry. She had tried to do what she could for herself. She had had her moments of power and happiness. Now came a long, long night.



Church at Ravinitza—where Lazar was buried

In the darker days many Serbs fled to the mountains, sometimes to carry on their occupation of farmer so far as they could, unmolested by the Turk; sometimes to become Haiduks—the Robin Hoods of the mountains and forests—to steal from the Moslem when it was possible, to give to the poor Serb; always to keep up an unceasing guerrilla warfare.

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Serbians were sold as slaves by the ten thousands to Constantinople and to Egypt. Whenever they could, they fled their country to Venice, to Dalmatia, to Hungary. Those who stayed in Serbia were not meek and so far as they could they resisted their oppressor. The Church was the mainstay of the nation; indeed, even to-day, the Serbian Church is a national rather than a religious organization. Before the end of Serb power came, southern Hungary had begun to receive many Serbian immigrants; by the middle of the sixteenth century they were numerous along the borders of Croatia and Slavonia. Although to a large extent farm laborers, they were soldiers as well, and fought in many battles for Austria. In the latter part of the fifteenth and the early part of the sixteenth century, the Serbs in the Hungarian army formed the famous "Black Legion" and won great fame. In the latter part of the seventeenth century thirty-seven thousand Serbians went in a body to South Hungary, and fifty years later one hundred thousand, migrating to Russia, formed a colony by themselves. In 1690 the Emperor Leopold had granted a fair amount of liberty, civil as well as religious, to the large organized body of Serbs who had settled in South Hungary. Their privileges were from time to time confirmed, especially when the Emperor needed help from the Serbs against some one of his numerous enemies. At other times the Serbs in Hungary had no flowery path. Austria was always playing fast and loose with them, and at last, toward the end of the eighteenth century, though Austria was treating them well, they saw they had little cause to hope that she would free them from the Turkish yoke. The ancient ill will of Hungary against Serbia persisted, and sometimes laws passed in her favor by Austria were in the end suppressed or nullified by Hungarian efforts.

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II. SERBIA: SINGING

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erbia, in the hands of a cruel conqueror, stripped of most of her possessions, bereft of happiness, forgotten by her sister nations, had little left but hope. She still clung to her ideals of brotherhood and freedom, and she held close her great treasure, a gift inherited from her remote northern ancestors—her gift of song. Her songs—virile, yet somewhat softened by contact with her southern neighbors—cheered and strengthened her. She sang and sang, in a minor key, and her mountains reëchoed with the deeds of her happier days, with the stories of her heroes, now seeming more splendid because she herself had become so poor and unhappy. For centuries she was like one stunned; she had never been aggressive—now she could not fight against the aggressor who had all the weapons in his own hands.

A younger sister—and poor at that!—a younger sister, who had set out to be perfectly independent—what could she expect? She must work out her own salvation. Besides, she lived so far away from the centers of culture she was almost a barbarian. Yet she was not wholly uncouth. She had been courteous to the Crusaders traversing Europe to crush their common enemy—the Turk; and now the Turk had captured her! Of course it was a pity! It was a busy time in Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; the nations had enough to do to keep their own houses in order,—and when they had leisure they must keep in touch with new life, with the renaissance of Art and Learning. They were enchanted with the discovery that they were not mere parvenus like distant Serbia, but descendants of that grand old house that had once conquered the world. The beauty of Paganism—ah, that was something worth contemplating! But Serbia—well, the Crusades were over, and the Turk was no longer threatening Western Europe; besides, Serbia had not even belonged to their Church—so what matter if the Turk crushed her?

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But Serbia was not crushed. Had the nations listened, they could have heard her singing. There was little else she could do, except wait and hope—wait like her Marko for the signal to rise.

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Through five centuries of subjection to the Turks, the guslars, singing the heroic pesmas, were hardly second in influence to the priests in fortifying the spirits of the suffering Serbs. The intense patriotism of the Serb was kept alive, indeed was often kindled, by the folk songs he had heard even in his cradle. Through all his troubles he has cherished the divine fire of Nationality, even as the Vestals conserved the sacred flame.

The Serb, belonging to the most poetical of nations, has the most melodious of all Slav tongues—identical with that of the Croats and yet used as the language of literature a comparatively short time. Even little more than a hundred years ago people were still arguing whether ancient Slavonic or the Serbian vernacular should be the language of literature. But for Dossitie Obradovitch this result might have been reached less quickly. He, "the great sower," a notable educator, applied the language of the people to literature, publishing an autobiography, besides poems and treatises, in the common tongue. Before his death, in 1811, the "Write as you speak" party had won, and literature became the property of the masses. Yet a further improvement in the language was undertaken by Vuk Karadgitch, a self-taught cripple, whose grammar, published in 1814, was epochal. He it was who devised the alphabet of thirty letters, each one representing a complete sound, and he published a dictionary and a collection of the pesmas

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which he took down from the mouths of the guslars who sang them. Then, when various translations appeared, Europe remembered vaguely that diplomats and travelers generations before had brought back accounts of Serbian poetry heard almost as often in those days in foreign countries as in Serbia itself.

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Goethe was one of the first to translate them and call attention to those pesmas. He praised their humor and philosophy, their high heroism mingled with certain spiritual qualities. Soon Sir John Bowring, a skilled linguist, made a translation into English verse which is nearer the original in spirit and letter than any that has been made since.

There have also been many fine prose translations of the Kossovo cycle and of other pesmas, and all readers agree that in them is, as one critic says, "a clear and inborn poetry, such as can scarcely be found in any other modern people."

"Serbian song," wrote Schafferik, "resembles the tone of the violin; old Slavonian, that of the organ; Polish, that of the guitar. The old Slavonian in the Psalms sounds like the loud rush of the mountain stream; the Polish like the sparkling and bubbling of a fountain; and the Serbian like the quiet murmuring of a streamlet in a valley."

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The Serb loves to sing; every young countryman carries his gusle, and is ready to use it—a one-stringed violin, shaped something like a mandolin, played on the knee with a bow, like a violoncello. Men and women—peasants and townsmen—all sing. When two or more sing together, it is unison and not part-singing. The national Serb music is rich in melodies. The traveler to-day hears the Serb singing a ballad of the days of Stephen Dushan of Kossovo, of the Bulgar War, of Karageorges (the William Tell of the mountains). The gusle wails monotonously, with an occasional trill on one or two minor notes. Some find its music plaintive, others call it tiresome, and travelers as long ago as the beginning of the eighteenth century have written of seeing numbers of people in a crowd silently weeping as they listened to an old blind man chanting the national songs.

There are two great epic cycles—one centering around Tsar Lazar, the other around Marko—and both have to do with the Battle of Kossovo. Fragments of other cycles show that Dushan, Milos Obilich, and other heroes have been each a chief figure in them.

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No matter how unlearned, from one point of view, a Serb may be, he can always talk about Stephen Nemanya, or St. Sava, or Marko, and the other great men of his race. Moreover, he is continually creating new songs, new folk lore. In the great mills of this country he lightens his work with his simple melodies. Sometimes the words of his song form a clear narration of the events that brought him to America, even of happenings since his arrival. His own sorrows, his own joys, are woven in his epic. After their recent war with Bulgaria, everywhere at village festivals, the Serbs began to sing of their victories, and to-day they are undoubtedly singing of the sorrows of the past two years.

Mr. Miatovich says that when as Cabinet Minister he had been defeated, forty years ago, the next day he heard the people singing this event in the streets.

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Whatever the subject—whether it deals with ancient times or with the present; whether it is an epic or one of the so-called women's songs—the Serbian pesma is anonymous. No single writer or composer claims it. It is the work of the people, all of whom have had a chance to modify it as it has passed through the ages.

Among all the heroes of the guslars the favorite has always been Prince Marko. Although much of the career of the Marko of the pesmas was fabulous, this prince had a real existence in the latter part of the fourteenth century—the son of Vukashin, who tried to usurp the throne of young Urosh after the death of Stephen Dushan, and Queen Helen, unless one prefers to account for Marko's glittering qualities by making him the offspring of a dragon and a fairy queen. The real Marko was not a great man, as the world counts greatness. He ruled a small territory in Macedonia, and Prilip was his capital. He is said to have been friendly with the Turks and to have died fighting for the Sultan. This was after Kossovo, when Serbia was sleeping. Yet he must have had qualities that made him rise above this in popular estimation, for his local reputation grew with time and became national. Certainly for five centuries he has been a living personality, not only in Serbian but in Croatian, Bulgarian, and Roumanian tradition.

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It is worth considering—this theory that in Prince Marko the Serbian nation projects itself; that his sufferings and successes are the sufferings and successes of the whole nation; that it beholds its own virtues and weaknesses in his; its own individuality in his popular personality; its own doom in his tragic fate.

Athletic, keen-minded, quickly reading the designs of his foes, he, as an individual, was what Serbia would like to have been as a political entity. Even as he triumphed over Magyar, Venetian or Turk, so would the Serb have triumphed. When Serbia was sunk in poverty the guslar brought before his hearers visions of splendid things they could never hope to see, but whose beauties satisfied their imagination.

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Marko is the knight without fear, without reproach—the lover of justice, the hater of all oppression. He is kind and dutiful, the protector of the poor and abused. His pity extends even to animals, who in turn often helped him. "He feared no one but God." Courteous to all women, tender and dutiful to his mother, Marko could be savage and cruel beyond belief toward the Turks.

Human weapons never harmed him, and he wielded a war club weighing one hundred pounds, composed of sixty pounds of steel, thirty pounds of silver, and ten pounds of gold. One touch of this mace beheaded a foe, as one stroke of his saber ripped him open.

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Marko's horse, Sharaz, his constant companion and helper, was the strongest and swiftest horse ever known. He knew just when to kneel down and save his master from the adversary's lance. He knew how to rear and strike the enemy's charger with his forefeet. When roused he would spring up three lance lengths forward. Glittering sparks flashed from beneath his hoof, blue flame from his nostrils. He has been known to bite off the ears of the enemy's horse; sometimes he trampled Turkish soldiers to death. Marko fed him bread and wine from his own dishes. Sharaz kept guard over Marko while he slept. He always shared the glory of victory.

Yet, whether or not Marko personifies Serbia, in the life of Marko the current of Serbian medieval life is reflected as in a mirror.

In these poems Turks are always unreliable and cruel; Venetians are crafty; the faithless wife is usually lured away by a Turk. In one vivid tale, Marko's own bride, as he is taking her home from Bulgaria, is stolen by a Doge of Venice, who, with three hundred attendants, had been invited by her father to be part of her bridal procession. His designs do not succeed, and when Marko comprehends this treachery he does not hesitate. "He cleft the Doge's head in twain," and he struck another traitor with his saber "so neatly" that he fell to earth in two pieces.

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The touch of exaggeration in all the stories is not one merely of incident but of detail—the kind of exaggeration a child loves. For example, when Marko was brought from the cell where the Sultan had imprisoned him for three years, his nails were so long that he could plow with them. The Serbs of those days, having few splendid things in their own surroundings, loved to endow Marko with grandeur. On his tent, for instance, was fixed a golden apple. "In the apple are fixed two large diamonds which shed a light so far and wide that the neighboring tents need no candle at night." In another instance a magnificent ring is described, "so richly studded with precious stones that the whole room was lighted up."

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The ransom demanded by Marko and his friend Milosh from the Magyar General Voutchka was more than magnificent. He was to give three tovars of gold for each (a tovar was as much as a horse could carry on his back), and, among other things, a gilded coach harnessed with twelve Arabian coursers used by General Voutchka when visiting the Empress at Vienna. Voutchka's wife not only agrees to this, but adds one thousand ducats for each of the two. Even in a poem, it delighted the Serbs to have a Magyar in their power.

Sometimes Marko's adversary is a Moor—for example, the Moor who wishes to marry the Sultan's daughter and the other Moor who demanded a wedding tax from the maidens of Kossovo. He cut off the head of this Moor with one touch of his mace. At another time he is imprisoned by a Sultan whose daughter releases him. He has promised to marry her. But when they have started on their elopement, and she lifts her veil, he is horrified to see how black she is. There seemed nothing for him to do but to run away. Yet he knows that he has committed a sin in breaking his promise—and he confesses this sin to his mother:

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"Then I sprang upon the back of Sharaz,
And I heard the maiden's lips address me—
'Thou in God my brother—thou—oh, Marko!
Leave me not! thus wretched do not leave me!'

Therefore, mother! wretched do I lowly penance:
Thus, my mother! have I gold o'erflowing,
Therefore seek I righteous deeds unceasing."

In these pesmas one has glimpses not only of all the neighbors who warred upon the Serbians, but of Christian malcontents going over to the Church of Rome or sowing dissensions at home. A careful reader can get an almost complete picture of the Serbian life after the Conquest, painted, to be sure, in high colors.

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In most of the Serbian heroic pesmas there is little of that superstitious element that marks the ordinary life of the Serb to-day, except in the almost constant presence of the Vila. Marko's Vila never loses an opportunity to help him, to warn him, and even to scold him.

The Serbian Vila, so conspicuous in Serbian song and story, may be roughly defined as a guardian angel. She is a vaguely beautiful maiden born of the dew and nurtured in a mysterious mountain and seems to combine qualities of both classic and northern mythologies. She has qualities which are even essentially Christian, for sometimes she expresses her belief in God and St. John, and always she has a deadly hatred for the Turk. No higher compliment can be paid a lady than to say, "as fair as the mountain Vila," and a steed "swift as a Vila" means one of great value. Occasionally Marko reproves his Vila Rayviola and once when she has shot an arrow through the throat and another through the head of his friend Milosh, he pursues her among the clouds on his horse Sharaz and brings her to earth with his club, ungallantly adding: "Thou hadst better give him healing herbs lest thou shalt not carry longer thy head upon thy shoulders." But generally Marko's attitude is more affectionate: "Where art thou now, my sister-in-God, thou Vila?"

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There are in existence about thirty-eight poems and twice as many prose legends detailing the

thrilling exploits of Marko. In spite of certain accounts of his death, it is generally thought that he never died, but withdrew to a cave near the castle of Prilip and is still asleep there. At times he awakes and looks to see if a sword has come out of a rock where he thrust it to the hilt. When it is out of the rock, he will know that the time has come for him to appear among the Serbians once more to reestablish the Empire destroyed at Kossovo. Even now, on occasions, he may appear to help his disheartened country-men. An interesting story of the War of 1912-13 is told that bears directly on this belief. The Serbian forces were storming the fort at Prilip when their general ordered a delay. In spite of this, they pushed on and ran straight to the castle of the royal prince, Marko. The general trembled, believing that without the help of his artillery, for which he was waiting, these men of the infantry would be wholly destroyed. But even while dreading this, he saw the Serbian national colors flying from the donjon of Marko's castle. His Serbs had driven the Turks away and were victorious, as it proved, with little loss of life. When he reproved them for risking so much: "But we were ordered by Prince Marko, did you not see him on his Sharaz? Prince Marko commanded us all the time—'Forward! forward!'" They really believed that they had seen their hero.

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Two passages from the heroic pesmas may serve to show Marko under different aspects. In the first he has been invited by the Grand Vizier to go hunting, in company with twelve Turks. He has obeyed the Vizier's command and has loosed his falcon.

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Then the princely Marko loosed his falcon;
To the clouds of heaven aloft he mounted;
Then he sprung upon the gold-wing'd swimmer—
Seized him—rose, and down they fell together.
When the bird of Amurath sees the struggle,
He becomes indignant with vexation:
'Twas of old his custom to play falsely—
For himself alone to gripe his booty:
So he pounces down on Marko's falcon,
To deprive him of his well-earn'd trophy.
But the bird was valiant as his master;
Marko's falcon has the mind of Marko:
And his gold-wing'd prey he will not yield him.
Sharply turns he round on Amurath's falcon,
And he tears away his proudest feathers.

Soon as the Visir observes the contest,
He is fill'd with sorrow and with anger;
Rushes on the falcon of Prince Marko,
Flings him fiercely 'gainst a verdant fir-tree,
And he breaks the falcon's dexter pinion.
Marko's noble falcon groans in suffering,
As the serpent hisses from the cavern.
Marko flies to help his favourite falcon,
Binds with tenderness the wounded pinion,
And with stifled rage the bird addresses:
"Woe for thee, and woe for me, my falcon!
I have left my Servians—I have hunted
With the Turks—and all these wrongs have suffer'd."

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But Marko did not content himself with words and the Grand Vizier had hardly time to warn his companions when Marko cleft his head asunder and proceeded to cut each of his twelve companions in two. After deliberation he went to the Sultan and told what he had done. The Sultan laughed, for he was afraid of the light in Marko's eyes and chose to dissemble: "If thou hadst not behaved thus I would no longer have called thee my son. Any Turk may become Grand Vizier, but there is no hero to equal Marko," and he dismissed Marko with presents.

In the second, "The Death of Marko," he has been warned by the Vila that his death is near, and he obeys her commands.

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Marko did as counsell'd by the Vila.
When he came upon the mountain summit,
To the right and left he look'd around him;
Then he saw two tall and slender fir-trees;
Fir-trees towering high above the forest,
Covered all with verdant leaves and branches.
Then he rein'd his faithful Sharaz backwards,
Then dismounted—tied him to the fir-tree;
Bent him down, and looked into the fountain,
Saw his face upon the water mirror'd,
Saw his death-day written on the water.

Tears rush'd down the visage of the hero:
"O thou faithless world!—thou lovely flow'ret!
Thou wert lovely—a short pilgrim's journey—
Short—though I have seen three centuries over—

And 'tis time that I should end my journey!"

Then he drew his sharp and shining sabre,
Drew it forth—and loosed the sabre-girdle;
And he hasten'd to his faithful Sharaz:
With one stroke he cleft his head asunder,
That he never should by Turk be mounted,
Never be disgraced in Turkish service,
Water draw, or drag a Moslem's Jugum.
Soon as he had cleaved his head asunder,
Graced a grave he for his faithful Sharaz,
Nobler grave than that which held his brother.
Then he broke in four his trusty sabre,
That it might not be a Moslem's portion,
That it might not be a Moslem's triumph,
That it might not be a wreck of Marko,
Which the curse of Christendom should follow.
Soon as he in four had broke his sabre,
Next he broke his trusty lance in seven;
Threw the fragments to the fir-trees' branches.
Then he took his club, so terror-striking,
In his strong right hand, and swiftly flung it,
Flung it from the mountain of Urvina,
Far into the azure, gloomy ocean.
To his club thus spake the hero Marko:
"When my club returneth from the ocean,
Shall a hero come to equal Marko."

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When he thus had scatter'd all his weapons,
From his breast he drew a golden tablet;
From his pocket drew unwritten paper,
And the princely Marko thus inscribed it:
"He who visits the Urvina mountain,
He who seeks the fountain 'neath the fir-trees,
And there finds the hero Marko's body,
Let him know that Marko is departed.
When he died, he had three well-fill'd purses:

How well fill'd? Well fill'd with golden ducats.
One shall be his portion, and my blessing,
Who shall dig a grave for Marko's body:
Let the second be the church's portion;
Let the third be given to blind and maim'd ones,
That the blind through earth in peace may wander,
And with hymns laud Marko's deeds of glory."

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And when Marko had inscribed the letter,
Lo! he stuck it on the fir-tree's branches,
That it might be seen by passing travellers.
In the front he threw his golden tablets,
Doff'd his vest of green, and spread it calmly
On the grass, beneath a sheltering fir-tree;
Cross'd him, and lay down upon his garment;
O'er his eyes he drew his samur-kalpak,
Laid him down,—yes! laid him down for ever.

By the fountain lay the clay-cold Marko
Day and night; a long, long week he lay there.
Many travellers pass'd, and saw the hero,—
Saw him lying by the public path-way;
And while passing said, "The hero slumbers!"
Then they kept a more than common distance,
Fearing that they might disturb the hero.

III. SERBIA: SEAWARD

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he Nations of Europe that had over-looked Serbia in her days of strength—she was so young, and so far away, half hidden in her wilderness of mountains—the Nations of Europe that had turned deaf ears to her cries when the Turk attacked her, began to make inquiries about the little sister. She had been asleep so long that some of them really imagined her dead. But they heard some plaintive music: they recognized her voice as she sang. They saw that she was not only alive, but

awake, thoroughly wide awake, and that she was asking for help. But they had troubles enough of their own—revolutions and things of that kind. The people were altogether too troublesome—so at least the rulers said—and the people, who ought to have heeded poor Serbia's cries, did not take time to find out just who she was, and what she desired. All might have been different had they known that Serbia was one of themselves, acknowledging no privileged classes and desiring little but a chance to get on her feet and walk alone. For this she needed space to expand in, space in which to exhale the spirit of freedom that filled her. The Turk, her master, was growing [Pg 49] weaker. She could almost strike off her own shackles when suddenly a deliverer came—one of her own people, a son of her mountains.

When her master was driven away, Serbia began to look about her, a little humbly at first, for she was trying to understand herself. She saw that she needed education before she could take her proper place in the world. So she set herself bravely to learn from books. She noticed that the stronger Nations were governed by rules, and she gave herself a Constitution patterned on theirs. Regular work was hard for her, but she worked diligently and saved a little, though disinclined to hoard. She had rich treasures hidden away but she had never thought about them, even as playthings. What does a child care for diamonds? But when it was made clear to her that wealth is power, she worked more heartily.

The other Nations began to admit that Serbia was no longer Nobody. Indeed she was so near being Somebody that many thought it would be wise to win her friendship, and wiser to put her under obligations. So when she asked for an Hereditary Prince, presto! the thing was accomplished! though once she had hardly dared ask more than the privilege of naming her own chief.

In outward aspect Serbia began to be more like other people, although some of her neighbors remembered too well her hoydenish days and her years of poverty. Still, they could flatter her sometimes, for she held the key to certain things that several of them needed—trade routes, fertile lands, and other things that no ambitious Nation should live without. Soon some of her neighbors desired to control the sale of things that modestly enough she had begun to offer to the world. She had heard that money was power, and she hoped to send her goods to market in the best way. She noticed that every one who made a success of business had a place by the sea. In the whole family of Nations she was the only one who had not a place by the sea, except the littlest one perched up in the high mountains. But this little one makes a success by trading in beauty. Yet beauty is an intangible thing to carry to any market and is best disposed of in the mountains themselves. [Pg 50]

When Serbia first expressed her longing for the sea every one frowned. "Impossible!" There were other things that ought to please her as well—opportunities to help them in their wars, little snips of territory here and there if she helped them gain anything. But a seaport—ridiculous! Why, the Imperial cousin on one side of her would be insulted! What better could little Serbia wish than to market her goods to him, or at least send them over routes he had picked out?

Then Serbia said less and thought more. She sang less, but she composed more songs, and she listened to the people talking, not singing. She found she could not live by poetry alone. The Young Serbs and the Panslavs told her their plans and she looked hopefully at her big fur-clad Cousin. But though with him it wasn't a question of trade, he had ambitions of his own. He wasn't sure but that Serbia with a seat by the sea might watch him too closely. Then all the others in the great family of Nations took sides with one or the other. [Pg 51]

Serbia was restless, but she knew she could wait. Her household was now much more closely united than in the days of her youth, and she had realized what had once seemed a vain dream—comparative independence. So she could wait! [Pg 52]



Who would look at pictures of massacres extending throughout Serbia! at plundered villages! at tortured women and fatherless children shrieking in agony! All the horrors inflicted by the Turks on the Serbs in the early nineteenth century were the convulsive movements of one near his end. The Turk himself was growing weaker and weaker, and his weakness was Serbia's opportunity. But where was the man to lead her out of bondage? There was now no heir to her throne, the throne of what had once been a proud kingdom. Assassination and exile had led also to the passing of the old nobility. Although the family of the ancient kings was no more, the old racial stock had little changed. The Serbs were still of the same indomitable race, still breathing the spirit of freedom, still bound to one another in a true brotherhood. Yet, loyal though they were, ready to die for Serbia, where could they look for a leader? [Pg 53]

In the early part of 1804, Mustapha Pasha, the Turkish Governor of Belgrade, was much too kind and benign a man to suit the Janissaries and the Dahias, their leaders. They had dealt slaughter right and left, and at last had killed Mustapha himself because he had opposed their cruelty. While they were planning a general massacre of the most eminent Serbs in the country, all Serbs who could were fleeing to the mountains. The rumored massacre was the last straw, and a silent cry arose, "Oh, for the right man!" Then came the whisper that a leader had been found—Karageorges, Black George, a prosperous raiser of swine, at this time about forty years old. He had served in the Austrian armies nearly twenty years before under Joseph I, that Emperor who, of all the Austrian monarchs, is said to have meant the most and to have done the least. [Pg 54]

Karageorges, Black George, so called either on account of his dark complexion or his moody disposition, a brave man and a man of character, had fled to the Sumadia for safety. He had great

influence among the large body of refugees in that beautiful forest region of secure mountain fastnesses. Karageorges was a blunt, plain man, and honest. He had a strong sense of justice, though notably hot tempered. At the meeting, when he was chosen leader, there were about five hundred Serbs, men all under arms. In responding to their request that he would lead them against the Turks, he said: "Again, brothers, I cannot accept, for if I accepted I certainly would do much not to your liking. If one of you were taken in the smallest treachery, the least faltering, I would punish him in the most fearful manner." "We want it so, we want it so!" they cried. When he saw that they were in earnest, Karageorges accepted the office they conferred on him and the Archpriest of Bonvokik received and consecrated his oath. Upon this Karageorges took supreme control of the insurrection.

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At this same meeting, in the little village of Oorshats, they organized a National Assembly. At first the Serbs with tactics worthy an Oriental managed to keep the Sultan's attention from their insurrection by protesting that they were in arms not against the Sultan himself but against the Dahias, who, by disobeying him, were the real rebels. Deceived, or willing to seem deceived, the Porte let them work out their own plans. But the battle of Ivankovitz awoke The Sublime Porte. Turks defeated by Serbs! The world had never heard of such a thing! In vain Napoleon advised The Porte to take no notice of the Serb insurrection. It was merely part of a Russian plot! Soon the army of Karageorges was before Shabaz, where the Turks were intrenched. The Turkish commander shouted from the heights, ordering Karageorges and his men to give up their weapons. "Come and get them!" cried Karageorges. In a short time the Serb leader and his army were in Shabaz, from which the enemy had fled in great disorder. Austria was now too intent upon her own war with Napoleon to give the Serbs the help they sought. She merely advised them to make peace with The Porte. In accordance with her usual policy, she wished to cramp the little State within small limits, subject to her interests. Russia, though more sympathetic, had little thought to spare for Serbia. At this moment she herself was trying to make an alliance with Turkey against Napoleon, but she did advise Serbia not to accept the recent offer of The Porte to give her self-government and to recognize Karageorges.

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Pathetic enough was the vacillation of Serbia between Austria and Russia. Had Austria been more responsive, Karageorges would have preferred closer relations with her. But while Austria was indifferent to Serbia's advances the Tsar, showing more interest in Serbia's affairs, agreed to send his agent to her. He promised help also if the Serbians would agree to all things initiated by the Russian government. Austria was disturbed. Serbia was too bold; she must be watched!

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Like most really great men Karageorges, even when first acclaimed his country's deliverer, had enemies. The old question of centralization and decentralization had come up. Many thought him too autocratic. The enemies of Serbia encouraged decentralization. Divided, she would be easier to subdue. Russia disapproved of many things done by Karageorges. But he had the strong support of the Sumadia in whatever he did. When the Turks again tried to invade Serbia, Russian and Serbian troops, fighting side by side, drove them away. But for the party troubles, but for the loudly expressed ill will of leaders of the opposition, Karageorges might have been happy.

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Though Serbs fought side by side with Russians until 1812, it happened that no important battles took place on Serbian territory. During these years Serbia not only had self-government, but she somewhat increased her boundaries by lands taken from neighboring Pashiliks. Yet she had her disappointments. Turkey, when Russia's war with Napoleon began, disregarded the few concessions made to Serbia by the Peace of Bucharest. At last, the Grand Vizier led his army against Serbia, and although her men fought bravely, they had to draw back from the frontier. Then a strange thing happened! With no obvious reason, Karageorges went back to Belgrade with the army reserves. Without staying there even for a day, he and part of his officers practically deserted the army. Crossing the Danube into Austria, they forsook their country in her day of trial. With them went the Russian consul and the Metropolitan and many leading Serbians with their families.

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The downfall of Karageorges was due to no fault of his. No one ever doubted his courage, and could he have had his own way, when he saw the impossibility of pushing back the enemy, he would have gone again to his stronghold in the Sumadia, there to fight to the last. But there was a frontier to be defended, and Serbs owning property along the rivers begged for protection. The army was not large enough to accomplish all that was demanded of it. The Turks were victorious and with their victory there began again a series of acts of unspeakable cruelty.

Among the Serbs who remained in Serbia when Karageorges and his friends crossed over into Austria was Milosh Obrenovitch. He had not only served with Karageorges in the Austrian armies, but he had worked for him as a keeper of swine on his Sumadia estate. During the recent revolution he had helped his great leader by watching the Balkan passes for unfriendly Bosnians and Albanians.

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When Milosh saw that the Turks were, for the time at least, masters, he offered to help them reconquer the Serbs. In reality, faithful to his own people, he was only waiting a chance to aid them. The time came and one memorable Palm Sunday, 1817, he appeared near the church at Tokova and the people called upon him to lead them against the Turks. He told them that this would be a difficult undertaking. "We know that, but we are ready for anything. Dost thou not see that we perish as it is?" "Here am I," he replied. "There stand you!" "War to the Turks! With us is God and the right." Then arms were brought out from underground hiding places. His men were ready and Milosh led them on to victory over the Turks. When later the Turks came to treat with him, they made him tribute collector. Many of the Serb chiefs were therefore displeased and

wished to fight openly. They suspected Milosh of double-dealing. Among these was Karageorges who had landed unexpectedly in Serbia. Karageorges and Milosh were no longer friends. One explanation of this was that Milosh suspected Karageorges of poisoning his brother Milan, who had died suddenly, but no one who really knew Karageorges could suspect him of using poison to a rid himself of an enemy.

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But the world does believe that Milosh betrayed Karageorges to the Turks. Certainly the latter was murdered by the Turkish Governor's men—beheaded in the lonely house where he was sleeping. This was a pathetic end for a great life that had held as many melodramatic as tragic events. Karageorges was a true patriot. He was neither cruel nor blood-thirsty, though circumstances often compelled severity. A glance at his portrait shows his nobility of character. That he was a lover of law and justice was evident by his promptly establishing a system of law-courts for Serbia. He reduced taxation, and though he could neither read nor write—or because of this—he zealously supported education. He hoped that the time would come when Serbia need no longer send outside to get the trained men whose help she needed. He established many good public schools, among them the High School at Belgrade, which later grew into the University.

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Among his tragic moments was that one when he had to shoot his father in order to prevent his torture by the Turks, and that other when he refused to save his brother from execution when he found he deserved the death penalty. More melodramatic than tragic was a critical moment in the National Assembly when members sat with pistols held at their heads that they might not act foolishly.

Though not a crowned King, in name, Karageorges had all the power of a monarch. Yet with so much at his command he retained his taste for the simplest life. His dress was that of the peasant and, even when Chief Executive of Serbia, he often cooked his own meals in the kitchen of his dwelling.

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After the death of Karageorges the efforts of Serbia to have Turkey recognize her dragged on. At last, in 1820, the Sultan by a special *bérat* made Serbia a hereditary principedom. This was a long step in the right direction.

Milosh, feeling secure in his seat, did well by his country, and better by himself. Years after his death, Serbs in gossiping groups would recount the divers ways in which Milosh had filled his coffers. His keenness for the main chance, and his general canniness, all his subjects admired hugely. But the burly neighbor looking on was less pleased. Why did a little struggling State trouble herself so about education, and economical housekeeping? Why should she try to attain the impossible? Then, to show poor Serbia how impossible her ambitions were, Russia frowned and agreed with those who thought the hereditary Prince too autocratic. In eastern Europe there was room for only one Autocrat. "Moreover," muttered Russia, "why should an Autocrat give a Constitution to Serbia?" A threat was mingled with the muttering—and Milosh withdrew the Constitution.

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Yet Russia used her influence so strongly with Turkey that Great Britain began to take an interest in Serbia. The young State was growing too fast, there was no telling where she might wander. She needed a guardian—some one to watch her, to note where she was going and tell her she must not. So Great Britain sent Colonel Hodges to Serbia as her General Consul, and he whispered—for Russia must not hear him—that in case Serbia had trouble with Russia, Great Britain and France would stand by her. Next, the Porte, never before known as a constitution maker, invited Milosh to send deputies to Constantinople to plan a new Constitution for Serbia. But Milosh found this new Constitution no better than the one Russia had made him withdraw. Alas for Milosh! alas for Serbia! Although the new Constitution was to have the guarantee of the Great Powers, the Constitution itself would not hold water. A few months later, the authority of the Prince of Serbia was modified. It was ordered that he should have a Council of seventy life members. He had desired Councillors whom he could appoint and dismiss at will, but Turkey, forgetting a promise to Great Britain, had yielded to Russia. As the Constitution required Milosh to appoint the most distinguished men in his realm as Councillors, and as at this time Serbia's men of influence were chiefly his enemies, he was disturbed. Although the British Ambassador counseled patience, Milosh plotted to do away with this Constitution by a military vote. When his plans fell through, he abdicated, in June, 1839, and retired to his home in Wallachia. Before abdicating, however, Milosh had to sign the Constitution imposed upon him at the instigation of Russia, and this limiting of the power of the hereditary Prince was a good thing for Serbia.

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Milan, the eldest son of Milosh, survived but three weeks after his father's abdication. Michel, the younger son, succeeded him. While he was wrangling with the Porte and Russia, Vuychitch, a Councillor, started a rebellion and Michel, not knowing what else to do, left Serbia. This suited Vuychitch and soon the National Parliament elected the son of Karageorges Prince of Serbia. Serbia was quiet and prosperous during his reign, but Alexander himself was of a timid and wavering temperament, not even bold enough to summons a National Assembly. Friendly to Turkey and to Austria, rather than to Russia, he pleased no one of them, and finally, when he did call a National Assembly, the Council dethroned him. Old Milosh was now asked to return and the change of rulers was made without excitement or disorder.

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At the death of Milosh after three short years, his son, the exiled Michel, returned to the throne. In his exile he had grown wiser and he was ready with a definite program for Serbia's good. He saw that if his country was to be respected, her independence must be guarded. First among his many reforms was a new Constitution to replace the one Russia had imposed on Serbia. Michel was a good diplomatist and, in 1862, when the Turkish Government at Belgrade bombarded

Belgrade, he demanded the evacuation of all the forts, and some of them complied. Next he sent his wife to London—the beautiful Julia, Countess Hunyadi. She interested Gladstone, Bright, and other influential Englishmen in little Serbia. He armed and drilled a national army and had an understanding with Greece and other Balkan states for a general uprising against the Turks. Finally he requested the Sultan to remove all Turkish garrisons in Serbia, and when Great Britain supported the advice the other Great Powers gave the Sultan, the later, at last, gave up the forts to Michel. Michel did much for Serbia. He built good highways, laid out parks, and gave her many fine public buildings, including an opera house. He was among the first to emphasize Serbia's need of a seaport, and he was equally far-sighted in many other matters.

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Michel had no children and when the Karageorges exiles heard that he meant to divorce his wife and remarry, their own hopes of power in Serbia faded. Poor Michel, their victim, was assassinated in the spring of 1868. No change of dynasty followed Michel's death. Serbia proclaimed as Prince, Milan, son of a first cousin of Milosh the elder.

Milan's early years had been spent in Paris, and the kind of education he received there left its bad impress on his whole life. When confirmed by the Skupchtina he was barely thirteen, and little more than of age when, five years later, urged by Pan Slavists, he had a war with Turkey. Although Serbia was defeated, this war forced the Balkan situation, and the attention of Europe was turned toward the little Nation that held the key to the Balkans. Milan had made strategic mistakes, and when the vast Turkish army was invading Serbia, he called on the Great Powers for help. While they hesitated, Russia ordered Abdul Hamid to sign an immediate truce. When Russia within a few weeks of this went to war with Turkey, Serbia, in spite of her recent losses, was able to help her. After capturing Vrania, Pirot, and Nish, Serbia had the joy of celebrating Mass on the Field of Kossovo where five hundred years before she had lost everything.

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Yet at the Peace of Stefano Serbia did not get a fair reward. Her welfare was but a shuttlecock, beaten back and forth between great nations. She could secure, at the Berlin Congress, neither complete independence nor the annexation of certain territories she hoped for. But at this Congress Austria gained her own ends by giving Serbia two strong neighbors for watchdogs, Bulgaria and East Roumelia. She also imposed a barrier between Serbia and her strongly desired goal—the sea.

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When Milan saw that he could not depend on Russia, whom he had been brought up to regard as a friend, he turned to Austria. He began to pay long visits to Vienna. Thus he angered both his own people and the Tsar, but Austria was always ready to give him the money his manner of life required. The building of new railways threw the Nation into debt, and between the advice given first by Progressives, then by Radicals, Milan the ne'er-do-well could barely enjoy a life devoted to pleasure. At the beginning of his reign the Porte had acknowledged him hereditary Prince of Serbia, but Milan, aiming higher, in 1882 had himself proclaimed King. Not long after this, in a war with Bulgaria, he had to retreat ingloriously before Prince Alexander of Battenberg. Indeed, now, as on other occasions throughout his reign, Milan behaved like the proverbial spoiled child. Sometimes, fearing his people might use a rod made of something more stinging than words, he would completely disarm them in a brilliant speech. When things were at their very worst his statesmen would extricate him. Yet gradually he lost influence with the Nation in spite of the new Constitution which gave them most things that enlightened nations seek. But various happenings were tending to estrange him from his people, not the least of which was his undignified quarrel with his wife, with whom, even after their divorce, he continued to bicker about their son. Milan was rather a blunderer than a villain, and as he had managed to hold the affection of his people through all his misdeeds, political or domestic, his abdication was a great surprise. He went away suddenly to live in Paris the life he preferred, after making provision that Alexander, his son, should succeed him.

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Alexander was but a boy of fourteen when he came to the throne—a subnormal boy, and wilful, too. As an Autocrat he had no rival among modern Serbian rulers. No one unmade and made so many Constitutions. No Prince or King of Serbia surprised his people with so many coups d'état. But the time had passed when the misdoings of a ruler could make the people of Serbia very unhappy. Although the King never failed to show that he despised not only statesmen and scholars but even distinguished army officers, he could terrorize neither individuals nor the Nation. The three great parties, Liberal, Radical, and Progressive, were not afraid to express opinions, and many reforms were projected and carried out. Serbs as a whole were anxious to be counted among the people of the world of intelligence and culture. Alexander and Draga mortified them; but the assassination of the wretched pair lowered the Nation in the estimation of humanity.

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Less than a week had passed since the killing of the King and Queen, in the spring of 1903, when the Skupchtina elected Peter Karageorgevitch to the throne. This grandson of Karageorges had been an exile for forty-five of his fifty-seven years of life. Austria and Russia alone among the Great Powers were willing now to recognize him. Great Britain waited three years before sending back her Minister to Serbia. This was after the regicides had gone from the country.

IV. SERBIANS

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So Serbia was no longer a child, and she wore a royal crown. She even had to be considered by the



family of Nations when making plans. Some members of the family, indeed, would like to have made all her plans for Serbia, without intimating that in so doing they would profit themselves. Serbia realized that there were things she could not do without the consent of some, or even all of them; but she did not wonder why—for Serbia herself had grown up, and it wasn't merely a physical development. She understood a great many things that in her more primitive days she could not have comprehended.

Sometimes they fought among themselves, with an occasional black eye for one or the other, because they found it hard to decide, not what they could do for Serbia—the youngest and most inexperienced—but what they could get from her without her discovering their motives, without the others objecting. They forgot that Serbia was no longer a child; they did not know that she could spy self-interest in the proffers they made her. So she was coldly distant with them at times, though she leaned most toward the big, fur-clad Cousin from the North. He was closer of kin, a double relation, and he seemed less mercenary than some of them. But even he could not get her a home facing the sea. She longed so ardently for this! Why did every one hinder her? The Imperial Cousin on the West was determined to stop her. Had he not given refuge to her exiled children in the days of darkness? Had he not let them win victories for him when she had hardly a friend in the world? Was it likely—as human nature goes—that he had done this without expecting a reward? No, she must be reasonable and must let him have the first choice of all that she had to sell, and at his own price. Should she reach the sea, others would tempt her. She would find all sorts of people there anxious to trade with her—new people whom she herself had never yet had a chance to help. No! he, the Imperial Cousin, knew what was best for her. The only trade route for her was the one through his land. She must send her things that way and, after he had looked them over, if there was anything he did not wish, she might sell it to some one else. Moreover, of course, she must pay whatever he charged for transportation and customs as she passed through his country.

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But Serbia had grown more sophisticated. Her costume of red and gold still followed the old lines; indeed, only a close observer could see any changes in it. But the material was richer than formerly, and she had thrown aside the little veil—symbol, as it seemed to her, of the darkening oppression of the Ottoman. Her people were clamoring around her. They assured her they were not lazy, though perhaps a little slower than some of their neighbors. Their fields yielded abundantly. They discovered that by digging they could get much wealth, not only from the surface but from their rocks far below. They must be able to exchange it—to send it readily where they wished. Why, why, since they were willing to pay for it, could they not have a seaport of their own?

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But there was another who was determined to hold Serbia back. She did not know him well; for though he bore the Imperial eagle, he had appropriated a title that belonged to the old house that for a time had held the world in its grasp. She would not call him a parvenu—not wholly a parvenu—yet why should he trouble her? She was not really in his way. Could it be that he was trying to curry favor with the turbaned Turk, and hoped to ingratiate himself the more thoroughly by tormenting her? What had the Turk to give him? Ah! Serbia had now grown so worldly that she suspected motives in every action, even in those sometimes that were really guileless.

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erbia, in the same latitude as France and Italy, has a similar climate, though with greater extremes of heat and cold; and its average of one hundred rainy days yearly prevents its being called a land of sunshine. With an area about equal to that of the State of New York, its population of four millions is much smaller—nearer, indeed, that of Massachusetts. About fifteen thousand of its nearly thirty-four thousand square miles of area is territory added since the Balkan wars. The rivers of Serbia flow toward the north into the Danube. Its boundary rivers, the Danube, Save, Drina, and Timok are navigable, but of those within Serbia, only the Morava is navigable, and that for but sixty miles. Serbia is not only protected by the ranges on her boundaries, but four-fifths of the surface is covered with mountains, a "chaos of mountains," a fact both helping and hindering her progress through the centuries. The general aspect of Serbia is one of beauty, with high and rugged mountains, mysterious forests, and long narrow river valleys as picturesque as fertile. Even the Sumadia, called the rallying point of the Nation, is now well cultivated and enterprising. Many medieval buildings add to the picturesqueness of the country, forts and churches perched on rocky heights or half screened in the woods.

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Serbian towns resemble one another, with their wide, clean streets, and red-roofed houses built of stone, with suburbs that show many attractive dwellings surrounded by shrubbery. Even if the churches are not very graceful, there are many modern school buildings throughout the country. The five largest towns have—or, alas! had—from fifteen thousand to about one hundred thousand inhabitants each, from Passavowitz to Belgrade; in order, Leskovatz, Kraguievatz, and Nish, but Belgrade is by far the largest.

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Although the original Serb type was probably blonde, the mingling of the Slav with the other races in the Balkans has brought it about that most Serbs are now dark-skinned and dark-haired and of only average stature. The tall blonde peasant of the Sumadia is an exception to this type, though the Serb generally has a clear gray eye.

The Serb is excitable and volatile. While holding to old things he is ready to grasp new ideas, but his new ideas he cannot always make practical. It is probably for this reason that Serbia is behind many countries in agricultural and industrial development. The Serb is not of a jealous

disposition. He is ready to praise what others have done, and though tenacious of purpose he is neither dogged nor blunt like his neighbor the Bulgarian. The modern Serb desires to be well thought of. He is anxious to be measured by Western standards, yet in his heart he still cherishes many old customs. If he is less straightforward, especially in politics, than one might wish, his love of strategy may be ascribed to the many years when it took something besides physical courage to save him from the brutality of the Turk. Even his enemies admit his bravery. In general character, the Serb may be compared to the Scotch Highlander, "brave in battle, with much canniness in prosecuting material interests." All visitors to Serbia note the great hospitality of the Serb, and he shows a marked courtesy in dealing with others. He is fond of fun and laughter, as any one realizes who sees him at a festival, dancing the national dance—the kolo—to the sound of the flute and the bag-pipe, and often, afterwards, listening to the heroic verse of the guslar as he accompanies them on the gusle.

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The Serb's religion is almost the same as patriotism with him. The Orthodox Church of Serbia today has a strong resemblance to the early Christian Church of the eighth century. "Here we know the English very well, and your Church is not unlike our own," said a Serb to an English traveler recently. The independence of the Serbian Church is largely due to the fact that the Turks did not interfere with the religious faith of the Serbs in the long dark night of oppression. Though this may have been merely from their contempt for the conquered and their Church, the result was to the advantage of the Serb.

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Many Serbian traditions are contrary to the spirit of the Christian Church, but the Church early found that the only way to hold the Serb was to be patient in the hope that Christianity would eventually modify his Pagan beliefs. In few nations is there such a mingling of heathen traditions and piety. The traditions, yes, even the superstitions of the Serb helped him bear the hardships of the Turkish reign. While the Serb has held fast to Christianity for more than a thousand years and while bigotry and atheism are almost unknown in Serbia, the Serb does not attend Church devotedly. He is, however, very faithful to religious customs, though many of these originated in heathendom. The Saints are very real to him and each one has duties, yet some of them are very like the gods of mythology.

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The Serb is a great observer of signs and they deeply affect his daily life. His manner of getting up, of dressing, the person whom he first meets in the day, the way the dog barks or the moon shines—all these things have some influence on his actions. Many of his superstitions naturally relate to birth, death, and marriage. Most youths and maidens know just what to do to discover their future husband or wife.

There is poetry in many Serb beliefs about death, notably that death can be foretold by the person himself or by some of his family. Very beautiful is the idea that there is a star for every person, that disappears when that person dies. The Serb has a strong faith in immortality. He believes in both good and bad spirits, and in witches and enchanters, as well as in the poetic Vili. He occasionally hunted and killed witches in the olden times. Vampires, too, have had an existence in his imagination. To protect himself from all these evil things, the Serb of old had various superstitious practices, and it is surprising sometimes to-day to find him cherishing primitive beliefs. As cattle raising for example is certainly one of his chief occupations, many superstitions exist and are put into practice for making the cattle healthy and fat, and for protecting them from wild beasts. The Serb also knows what charm to use to make his wheatfields grow, to prevent droughts and other things that might injure his crops or his fruit trees.

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Among all their festivals, the Serbs celebrate Christmas the most elaborately, with feasts and ceremonies, many of which come down from Pagan days. After supper, on Christmas eve, seeds and crumbs are scattered outside as a treat for the birds, which, they say, are also God's creatures. A young oak or baidnak always plays a conspicuous part in the Christmas festival and the ceremonies attending it are most picturesque. The Slava is also a most important festival. It is a family celebration and generally falls on the Feast Day of some great Saint. After a man's death, the same Slava is kept by his son. In some regions, people with the same Slava do not marry, for having the same Slava may mean that they are of the same stock. Of all people the Serbs are most scrupulous not to marry those who are nearly related to them.

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While religion is so strongly a part of his daily life, the Serb is yet disinclined to engage in abstract religious discussions. This is strange since he is very fond of long political and historical arguments. An English traveler came upon two men engaged in a fisticuff fight. When he inquired the cause, he was told that the two had a disagreement about something that had happened at the Battle of Kossovo, five hundred years before.

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Although there is less now than in former times of the unique and formal swearing of brotherhood between Serb and Serb, the feeling of brotherhood is still very strong. Travelers through the country sometimes come upon rude stones erected to soldiers who have died "for the glory and freedom of his brother Serbs."

What has been said about the men applies to a great extent to the women of Serbia. It must be admitted, however, that in the interior of the country woman is still reckoned inferior to man—the plaything of youth, the nurse of old age. But the modern Serbian woman is coming to the front. She is not strong-minded in the limited sense, not anxious, like her Russian kinswoman, to mix in politics, yet she is deeply interested in national affairs and in crises she is always ready to help. If she does not work as hard as the Montenegrin woman she still performs much heavy labor. The men of Serbia encourage her higher ambition. Of late years, many Serb women have

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gone abroad for training as teachers, or to engage in technical work. Not infrequently, their expenses have been paid wholly or in part by some brother or cousin whose own earnings were small.

To tell what Serb women have done in the many wars of their country would be a long story. Not content with providing food and clothing for the soldiers and nursing the wounded, time and again they have carried guns and have fought by the side of the men of their families. This was notably the case in the late war with Bulgaria, and in the present war also many of them have served as soldiers.

The Serb woman is not willing to go out as a domestic. She prefers to earn money, if she has to, as a teacher, secretary, or nurse, or in a profession; but in her own home the Serb woman does no end of work. She is the first to rise, the last to go to bed, and seems never to rest, for she does all the housework. She spins, weaves, and embroiders; cooks, washes, milks the cows, makes cheese; she takes care of the children and the sick; she makes the family pottery and sometimes the opanke or shoes.

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But the condition of her country the past few years has to a great extent destroyed the home life of the Serb women. Very remarkable was the "League of Death" the women formed in the war before the present. Young and old of all social conditions became good shots, and stood side by side, rifles on their shoulders, like men. They made the men wear the medal of the League. In that war women did not join the fighting troops, as in the present. But they often accompanied them on the march, carrying on notched sticks their heavy bundles with clothes and domestic utensils, and set up their little households wherever the men happened to halt.

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In the present war, Serbia has a three-fold claim on Americans: Because of the democracy of its institutions and people; because of the simplicity of life as it is lived there; and because of its centuries of struggle for political independence.

Serbia is one of the most democratic countries in the world. It has no titles, except those of the King and his next of kin. All other Serbians are "gospodin" and "gospoja," our "Mr." and "Mrs." The farmer is the real aristocrat and eighty per cent of the Serbians are farmers.

The farmer has many things in his favor. Even the peasant has five acres of land allotted him by the government; and in his home garden he raises carrots and turnips and pumpkins and melons. The larger farmers raise wheat and corn and sugar beets, oats and all the cereals; and cattle in large numbers. They raise their own food and they are chiefly vegetarians; and they carry their surplus in ox-teams to the nearest market. Prices are regulated by the Agricultural Society. Every farmer gives one or two days a year to the State and pays his taxes in kind. When crops fail, the Coöperative Agricultural Society lends him money. It also advances money for implements and buildings, and offers prizes for cattle and improved stock.

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Living a simple life, the average Serbian needs little money. One dollar in Serbia is equal to five dollars here. If a farmer enters trade, he is thought to be going down in the world. He may enter banking or life insurance with no discredit, but the shopkeepers of the country are largely foreigners. In all Serbia there are hardly two-score millionaires. Serbian women are good housewives and do much of their own work. Serbians, in general, are too independent to be servants; and the latter are largely Austrians. Government employees in Serbia are natives. Young Serbians also are educated for the church, the army, for law, and for school teaching. Young men intended for the army generally study in France, for scientific work in Germany, for the church in Russia. Many young Serbians, too, have studied in Switzerland and in Belgium. Thus, Serbian society as a whole is sympathetic with foreign countries.

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Of the four million inhabitants of Serbia proper, the larger number belong to the Orthodox Greek Church, but there are also a good many Roman Catholics and some Moslems. Though their life is in general very simple, Serbians are not wholly untouched by modern progress. Many towns have electric lights and telephones, and electric trams are by no means unknown. Serbia has rich mineral resources, which the State is undertaking to develop. Among their manufactures is a remarkable wool carpet and a certain kind of coarse linen. Though they have a fairly large output of silk, silk fabrics as well as finer textiles are imported. A man who has a salary of three thousand dollars is an exception, and considered very prosperous. Salaries of cabinet ministers hardly exceed this sum, and court life does not tend to any magnificence.

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Serbians marry young. There is little illegitimacy in the country and infrequent divorce. They have been called automatically eugenic—on account of their strict marriage laws forbidding marriage under certain degrees of relationship. The Serbians are a domestic people, devoted to their children; hence, the present condition of the country is especially tragic.

The people of Serbia have the greatest admiration for Americans, and for the independence and political ideas of America.

The valorous struggle of little Serbia against Austria, its tireless enemy, astonished the world at the beginning of the present war. It accomplished hardly less for the cause of the Allies in the East than the resistance of Belgium in the West. Yet, at first, the sufferings of the more distant Serbians attracted less attention than the case demanded. Their agony continues acute and terrible.

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Then, at last, Serbia reached the sea. Unexpectedly, it is true, and not at the point that she had long had in mind. Sad and bereft, was she deserted by God as well as by man? As she sat there alone she heard a confused murmur of voices, and she vaguely distinguished the cries of children for their fathers, and wives for their husbands—and tales echoed in her ears that were sadder, more horrible, than the most horrible tales of the Turkish night. Poor Serbia! Her garments were torn and stained with snow and mud, her face was bruised. Gone, gone her aspect of happy prosperity. Yet in spite of all she had suffered there was a light in her eyes—the light of her soul shining through the sadness. She was not bowed down, though her attitude spoke of sorrow. She was disturbed not for herself, but for her people. How they had suffered! She did not try to shut her ears to the murmurs that still came to her—children crying faintly and oh, so pitifully! and strong men, yes, she heard the moaning of strong men. Then as she looked in the direction of the sound, she saw a mother bowed in grief beside a long snowy road, yet uttering no word as old men, strangers to her, found a place for the little frozen body under the hard ground. [Pg 94] She saw a long, long line winding up the narrow, shelving road, where a false step at any moment might send a man to death into the river five hundred feet below. "The best fighters in the world!" It had made her proud to hear this, but now how could they fight the savage winter? Worst place of all, Kossovo, where not so long before she had celebrated Mass triumphantly, Kossovo, again to be as when it was first named "The Field of Black Birds," "The Field of Vultures." Now the stricken lay never to rise again and for a moment Serbia could look no longer.

There were other things along the road—rifles, and cartridge belts, burdens too heavy to carry far, and she wished that all such things might lie on the ground forever, never to be used by young or old.

Alas, the little boys! the little boys who had never been away from their mothers—the hope of Serbia—dying by thousands along that dreary road; dying, dying on the plain of Kossovo. War, for them, a kind of holiday! They were soldiers now; they would be real men when they reached the sea! The little boys, the hope of the future! Of the thirty thousand who trod that dreary road, only a half lived to reach the sea. Not one-half of these reached the island where they were to have their training as soldiers. [Pg 95]

The soul of Serbia was in agony as a ghostlike army, pale, pinched, and starved, crept over the snowy mountains, over the soggy roads—men, women, and poor dumb animals sinking in to their death. Of those who came to the edge of the sea some could hold out no longer, but died when comfort was near. [Pg 96]



Despite the circumstances under which he came to the throne, no one believed that King Peter had planned or had anything to do with the murder of Alexander and Draga; he, the direct descendant of the honest Karageorges. Yet it could not be denied that he had profited by this murder and, consequently, even when the horror of the whole thing had faded from the minds of other Europeans, he had a certain amount of prejudice to overcome. Yet in the first ten years of his reign, Serbia had prospered. Her nearly one thousand miles of railways had brought her in closer connection with the world. Though the debt incurred for these railways and other improvements were large she had no trouble in borrowing money. Her loans were readily taken by outside capitalists. [Pg 97]

In the hundred years since she had been freed from Turkish rule, Serbia had made constant advance in culture, in all that may be called economic life. Her peasant farmers not only produced all that the Serbians themselves needed—wheat, barley, maize, fruits of various kinds, cattle, and pigs—but there was a demand for some of their staples in other countries, and more and more they required a larger market; more and more they chafed under the restrictions made by Austria. The whole country realized, as outsiders had realized, that Austria was slowly squeezing her; that Austria would be ready to devour her when the right time came. The King had a difficult task in keeping his people contented.

Politically, however, Serbia in the nineteenth century had made great advances, and King Peter's domain was a well-organized limited monarchy. After many vicissitudes Serbia at last has an excellent Constitution, well meeting all the needs of the Nation. In the King and the Skupchtina is vested all the legislative power. The Skupchtina, an assembly elected by proportional representation, has complete control of the national finances. Serbia has good Courts of Justice and a humane prison system, and her standing army not only has to be taken into account by the Great Powers, but has spoken loudly for itself in the present war. Serbia has also good local government; the scheme for which includes two public bodies, a municipal council and a communal tribunal. [Pg 98]



King Peter about to leave Serbia—November, 1915

Serbia, after many years of backwardness, has been paying great attention to education. The Minister of Education is a man of great prestige and influence. Teachers are well trained and well paid. It is not strange, perhaps, that a people with the Serbians' deep poetic sensibility should in the past have given little attention to technical training, but a change has of late been coming, a change of attitude that after the war will undoubtedly produce important results. From the earliest days the Serb has had a marked aptitude for handicraft. In medieval documents, certain Serbian blacksmiths are named as expert makers of penknives, and to-day Serbian metal work has high rank. Unlike the Greek, the Serb has little aptitude for trade, and unlike the Bulgar, he is rather sluggish in working his farm, slow to use improved methods or new implements. Yet, in spite of the many upheavals at home, he has been constantly progressing, and since he threw off Turkish rule has each year become sturdier and more self-reliant. Indeed, he can be called to-day efficient in both the economic and the military sense.

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In the Middle Ages Serbia was one of the largest silver-producing countries in Europe. Her mountains have as yet given up but little of their treasure. The Romans knew the mines and brought out of them much gold, silver, iron, and lead and, during the later Middle Ages, the merchants of Ragusa obtained no small portion of their wealth from the same source, but about the middle of the fifteenth century the Turks put an end to all enterprises of this kind. In the first half of the last century, mining was revived. Belgian capital had a large part in this, especially in producing copper and iron.

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The copper mines south of Passarowitz were said to be among the richest, if not the richest, in the world. But as yet Serbia herself hardly appreciated the value of her own resources. Her less than one thousand miles of railways had loaded her with a heavy debt. Austria had improved the Danube—largely, however, for Austria's advantage. But Serbia began to look about. She was determined to gain, if possible, the economic independence she longed for. With a resourceful King, with a competent Ministry headed by the eminent Pachich, this ought not to be difficult, she thought, ought to be much less difficult than her long, hard struggle for political independence.

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The spirit of the Serb has been shown in the remarkable development of coöperation in industry, especially in the twentieth century. "Only Union is Serbia's Salvation"—this was St. Sava's famous saying in the distant twelfth century. Politically, his words had proved true for Serbia, and economically they had begun to show their value, especially in King Peter's reign.

One reason for the success of nineteenth century coöperation in Serbia may be found in the Zadruga of ancient times. This was a large family association including male kinship to the second and the third degree. It often numbered more than a hundred individuals; each member had a fixed duty and the revenues were divided among all the members. The Zadruga was ruled by an elder or Stareschina. Sometimes the Stareschina was a woman. The Stareschina kept the money-box and attended to the payment of taxes. The women of the Zadruga obeyed the Stareschina's wife. This kind of community life was so familiar to the Serbs that it was no unusual thing when some one asked, "Whose is that drove of sheep?" to hear the reply "Ours," never "Mine."

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In Literature, in Science, in Art, the Serb had begun to take his rightful place in Europe, encouraged by the example of a large-minded, cultured monarch.

Serbia had long realized that within her boundaries lived hardly half of the Serb race in Europe. The feeling of brotherhood with all his kin which is so powerful a characteristic of the individual Serb is even more marked in the Serbian Nation. A generation ago Serbia was willing to go to war with Turkey to help her downtrodden kindred in Bosnia and Herzegovina. "The saving of Old Serbia and the Union of the Serb peoples is the star by which the Serb steers," said a traveler in

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the early part of King Peter's reign, and certainly to the liberty-loving Serb this was a beautiful vision—that he was sometime to liberate from Turkish and from Austrian control all his oppressed brothers, the four and a half millions whom the twentieth century found so restive under Turkish, Teutonic, or Magyar control.

For Serbia, then, her entrance into The Balkan League in 1912 was a natural sequence of many of her previous aspirations and efforts. In presence of a common danger—the Teuton working through the Turk—the Balkan States put aside their own particular rivalries and formed a Union. This was effective, and the Turks were defeated. But when Turkey was defeated, Bulgaria and Serbia were again at sword's points. It was not a question of jealousies between small kingdoms, but rather a larger issue—Pan-Slavism as against Pan-Teutonism. Serbs, wherever found, were outspoken, and Austria saw that she might have to give up not only her hope of adding Serbia to her dominions but besides this lose her dominion over the Serbs within the dual monarchy. From that time she hardly tried to hide her intention of punishing Serbia for her ambition. Serbia, meanwhile, was growing bolder, stronger. Though her successes in recent wars had not given her her coveted seaport, she had found ways of getting a considerable proportion of her products to market without sending them through Austria. Her imports from Austria fell off largely. Austria and Germany saw that they would have difficulty in making Serbia a docile ward, especially as M. Pachich in 1912 had made it plain to the other Powers that it would be to their advantage to give Serbia a chance to expand.

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It was eleven years almost to a day from the time he came to the throne, when Peter's security was shattered by an explosion. The Archduke Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, and his wife, while making a tour through Bosnia, were killed at Sarajevo by a Serb, not one of the kingdom of Serbia but a Serb of Greater Serbia. Austria, that had been for so long watching Serbia as a cat watches a mouse, quickly pounced on the little kingdom. She made demands such as no civilized country could comply with, and at last gave an ultimatum on the twenty-seventh of July which had far-reaching consequences. It was a stone thrown into a quiet pool and the ripples and eddies reached unthought-of shores, as the whole world now knows.

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There are many strange circumstances connected with this murder. Those who have followed out the various clues have seen evidence that the Serb government had no knowledge of the proposed murder, but there is much that tends to show that the assassination was not a great surprise to Austria—that Ferdinand, even at home, was in fear of his life. He always slept in a room without furniture and not long before the assassination he had taken out a life insurance, the largest life insurance known. In case of his death, it was necessary to make provision for his consort who could hope nothing from the house of which he had long been the heir. When Ferdinand's heir had a son born to him, the Austrians turned against Ferdinand and wished him out of the way. His removal, indeed, was a greater object to Austria-Hungary than to Serbia, for it was generally known that he was liberal in his ideas regarding the Serbs in the dual monarchy, and had even formed a plan for giving them Home Rule.

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From the beginning Austria-Hungary tried to impress on the world that the shooting of Archduke Ferdinand was part of a revolt of the southern Slav provinces of Austria instigated by the Serbian government. On the twenty-third of July, Austria sent an ultimatum to Serbia demanding that she use every means in her power to punish the assassins and stop all further anti-Austrian propaganda. The next day, Russia asked for delay, and on July twenty-fifth, ten minutes before the time of the ultimatum expired, Serbia made due apologies and agreed to all the conditions imposed by Austria except the one that Austria should have official representatives in the work of investigation. Two days later, the Austrian foreign office issued a statement with these words: "Serbia's note is filled with the spirit of dishonesty." Austria was determined on war. She had not accepted Serbia's apologies.

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Then the Great Slav came to the rescue of the smaller. Russia immediately notified Austria that she would not allow Serbian territory to be invaded. Now it was Germany's turn. She let it be known semi-officially that she stood ready to back Austria. No one, she said, must interfere between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. On this twenty-seventh of July Sir Edward Gray, Great Britain's Foreign Secretary, proposed a London conference of the Ambassadors of all the Great Powers. France and Italy at once accepted but Austria and Germany declined this invitation. On the twenty-eighth of July came the fateful call to war. "Austria-Hungary considers itself in a state of war with Serbia." The reason given for this was that Serbia had not replied satisfactorily to Austria's note of the twenty-third of July. Events followed in quick succession. Russia's mobilization was followed by a request from Germany that she stop this movement of the troops and make a reply within twenty-four hours. Whereupon England notified Germany that she could not stand aloof from a general conflict; that the balance of power could not be destroyed. Russia made no reply to Germany's ultimatum but instead sent out a manifesto: "Russia is determined not to allow Serbia to be crushed and will fulfil its duty in regard to that small kingdom." Next, the German Ambassador at the French foreign office expressed fear of friction between the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente unless the impending conflict between Austria and Serbia should be strictly localized.

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On August first, the German Ambassador handed a declaration of war to the Russian Foreign Minister. This meant war with France, and hardly had the French Government issued general mobilization orders when the invasion of France began. A day later, Germany demanded of Belgium free passage for her troops, and the French Government proclaimed martial law in France and Algiers. All Continental Europe was now aflame. The German Ambassador had made a strong bid for British neutrality, and Great Britain's reply was noble. After speaking of its

friendship with France it concluded with the words: "Whether that friendship involves obligations, let every man look into his own heart and construe that obligation for himself."

On the fourth of August, after Italy had proclaimed her neutrality, England's ultimatum was sent to Germany. When no reply came, the British foreign office announced that a state of war existed between the two countries and Germany gave the British Ambassador his passport. A day later, President Wilson offered the good offices of the United States to bring about a settlement between the warring powers. On the seventh of August, a day after Austria-Hungary had declared war on Russia, Germany announced that jealousy of Germany was the real cause of the war. On the ninth of August, Serbia, in order to get rid of the German Ambassador, declared war on Germany and, finally, war was declared between France and Austria, and Austria and Great Britain. Portugal reported that she was on the side of Great Britain.

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Soon Austrian troops were invading Serbia, three to one. On the twenty-seventh of July, the Serbian army had mobilized. It had barely recuperated from the recent war with Bulgaria and, while men were in trim for fighting, the army was ill equipped and to an extent unprepared for a new war. This in itself shows the folly of the accusation that the Serbian Government had encouraged the murder of the Archduke in order to precipitate a war with Austria. An additional bit of evidence in Serbia's favor, if more were needed, was the fact that when the Archduke was murdered, many Serbian officials and other men of importance were at German or Austrian watering-places and had difficulty in getting back to their homes and their duties.

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Little of the war material destroyed in the recent conflict with Bulgaria had been replaced and even when the Serbs took the field they had not sufficient ammunition, for much of their ammunition was French and, owing to conditions in France, the latter country could no longer supply Serbia with what she needed. Yet by the middle of August the armies of the Crown Prince in a five days' engagement, the Battle of Jadar, sent the Austrians across the river, and out of Serbia. In dead and wounded the invaders had lost about twice as many as the Serbs, as well as a large amount of ordnance and stores. They returned in September, but after inflicting much damage on the country were again defeated and again driven out of Serbia about the middle of December.

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Serbia, invaded by an army three times as large as her own, fought valiantly and drove the Austrians outside her kingdom, not, however, until much damage had been done. Not only had she many wounded but the invader destroyed everything, even the property of non-combatants who had remained passive on their farms. So viciously had the Austrians treated the non-combatants that all who could fled the country toward Macedonia. Crops were seized; cattle were killed or taken away; farms and implements destroyed, and in fact the whole country was laid waste.



Serbian villagers on their way to exile

Perhaps in no better way can the barbarous methods of the Austrian invader be understood than from a quotation from an appeal made by the Serbian Archbishop.

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"The barbarous methods of warfare of the German Allies, the object of which is to annihilate other nations and their culture, have inflicted on us, as well as on the Belgians, bloody and incurable wounds. Whole crowds of our best and noblest Serbs, who as non-combatants peacefully received the Austrian army, have been killed with a cruelty of which even savages would be ashamed. Men and women, old men and innocent children have been murdered by terrible tortures, by arms, and by fire. Many have been locked up in school buildings and other houses and burnt alive. All the churches to which the Austrians got access have been desecrated, robbed, and destroyed. The schools and the best houses have fared in the same way. Belgrade, the beautiful capital of Serbia, its churches, its

educational and humanitarian institutions, have been destroyed. The university, the national library, the museum, and scientific collections, have been ruined. For those who have escaped, and for the orphans of the fallen, speedy help is most necessary."

Said Madame Grouitch an eye witness of these depredations, "Imagine the farming districts of our Middle States charred and trampled, and everything killed. This would give you a faint idea of Serbia after the Austrians first entered it." When they approached Belgrade at the very beginning of the war, within six hours they were shelling the city and killing women and children. In other cities, as at Shabats, for example, they did many things from what seemed a mere spirit of wantonness, emptying the contents of shops into the streets and carrying away property that could hardly have been of use to them. But while they devastated the country they had entered and terrified the non-combatants, they had few engagements with the Serbian soldiers worthy the name of battle.

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It was during this second invasion that King Peter especially endeared himself to his men. In one instance where they were growing disheartened, he entered the trenches and discharging his rifle as a signal, led them to victory. The Serbs from the beginning of the war felt confidence in their leaders—the Crown Prince, Putnik, Misich, Pasich, the king.

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The Serbian soldiers were gathering strength. The world knew before this that they were brave fighters; since that autumn of 1914 they have known that they are unsurpassed. Facing an enemy that outnumbered them three to one, they did not flinch, and by the 20th of December the Austrians were driven out of Serbia—not to return for nearly a year. During that year, however, the Austrians from the other side of the Danube were constantly bombarding Belgrade, while the inhabitants for the most part went about their business as usual. The army, which had early been ordered out of the city in a vain effort to save Belgrade from bombardment, was now putting itself in good condition. The return of the invaders was certain, the time less sure. All that Serbia could do was to spare no effort to put herself in the best condition to meet the inevitable attacks of the foe. The hospitals were full of wounded and Serbian women and nurses from outside were doing their best for the Serbian soldiers and for the many sick Austrian soldiers, when the dreadful typhus broke out.

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But for famine and disease during their fatal six months Serbia might still be on her feet. Her tragic condition interested the whole world, unwilling to see the women relatives of a million fighters suffering, aye, even dying. The first invasion resulted in taking away from their home the majority of the peasants who had remained behind to provide food. The invaders did not even respect the hospitals—they cut off the water supplies so that the nurses could not even provide for the sick.

During those months of disease the black flag hung over hundreds of houses in every Serbian town. The whole country was demoralized, for many officials had lost their lives. The fever was so virulent that it may be said that no country has ever suffered so severely. The typhus that broke out in the early part of 1915 came from the bad sanitary condition of the Austrian prison camps, and Serbia, weakened by war, was in no condition to resist. Several thousands a day died in the early months of that year. In six of the most fertile districts, more than half of the children died—of hunger, cold, and exposure as well as of disease—and it was not until the Red Cross physicians and others from various countries took hold, that the disease abated.

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Meanwhile, men of Serbia were fighting bravely and hopefully until an advancing wave of Teutons swept over the country and the populace fled. It had been wiser, perhaps, if non-combatants had stayed in their homes, but so fearful were the atrocities reported, the atrocities committed by the German armies in Belgium and elsewhere, that retreat seemed wisest. Many Serbian soldiers, however, wished to stay and face the invader until they could fight no longer. But they would have had to fight with three against their one. The hordes rushing on were beyond belief—Germans, Austrians, and Bulgarians. The humbler people might with less danger have stayed behind, but the Government, naturally, could not remain in its capital and there were many others upon whom a price was set. When once the retreat began it rolled up by tens of thousands, and this human flood could not be stopped. It was a spectacular flight. All the private vehicles that the Government could get together; all the motor trucks which could be collected; all in one great procession, peasants carrying their household goods in bundles over their shoulders—chiefly old men and women, for the young men were in the army; young women carrying babies in their arms with little children clinging to their skirts were following close behind. Those in motor vehicles did not have a painless journey. Often their cars broke down; they were thrown into the mud from which they were with difficulty rescued. Sometimes a car and its occupants fell from the precipice into the foaming river below. They went over mountains as high as our Alleghanies and as wild as our Rockies. Sometimes they passed feudal castles on steep rocks; sometimes they went through dangerous passes and slept in the open, fearing attacks from the murderous Albanians, who were certainly to be dreaded. For not a few of the poor pilgrims met death at the hands of these cut-throats. For days and days, they moved on in the drenching rain, cold and starving! And it was not only the animals that succumbed to the horror of the march; old men and women, children, and soldiers who once had been strong at last had to give up and lie down in death. Constantly they were in dread of the approaching enemy, whose guns after a while they could hear rumbling in the distance. But they kept moving on toward the sea, where they expected ships to take them to a safer country.

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The wraith of an army reached the sea and the wraith of an army of non-combatants,—all of this

suffering merely to find a haven from the advancing Teutonic armies! Perhaps those men were right who had refused to retreat, who had begged for death by a comrade's gun rather than have the dishonor of turning backs to the enemy. Though they saw that the conquest of Serbia was inevitable, it was hard to admit that they were beaten. At last, after all this hardship, when the poor Serbians reached the Adriatic, they found no food! Transports loaded with food had been sunk in the harbors! Weary, starving, they must wait a little longer.

Was there ever before such a flight? The retreat of one civilized Nation before another; the flight of a whole people, Government, soldiers, non-combatants, and all because of the rumors of the terrors the pursuer would inflict if he caught his prey! At the sea they breathed more freely—they could look across the water and there, far, far beyond, lay the lands where for centuries the weaker had not been sorely oppressed.



Serbian soldiers on the banks of the Drina

Then the wraith of an army began to hope; and on the island the soldiers were recuperating, and the little boys—a quarter of those who had poured into the great procession from all the roads, from every little village, from every town—the dead, would not swell the triumph of the victors. Those by the sea rested and grew stronger; and after a while the world began to hear that Serbia, deprived of her country, a Nation living in exile, was getting ready to claim her own. She was now one of the Allies. Her army could give an account of itself. "Poor Serbia!" they had said. "Plucky Serbia!" they were now saying, and it was even possible to imagine the world crying, "Lucky Serbia!" The soldiers recuperating at Corfu; the women working at Corsica making the wonderful embroideries that had given Serbia fame the world over; the downtrodden under the feet of the Conqueror, living in shattered dwellings in Serbian town and village, and praying, praying for the restoration of their homes, hiding their tears while they worked or prayed or nursed the sick—all, all working for Serbia.

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Then those people who recognize heroism, those people who admire patience and silent bravery, those people who long had cried, "Plucky Serbia!" who had long been working for Serbia, now worked the harder, and other workers joined them, until there were few sections of the globe where there was not a group working for Serbia. The remnant of the army, too, worked harder than ever, training, gathering strength, adding to its numbers,—and at last it was ready.

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Then Serbia had a vision of the men who had made her great—Vladimir, who first showed that union is strength; Michael, her earliest King, and Stephen Nemanya, who gave her a real kingdom, and Stephen Dushan, whose dreams of a Serb Empire had given her glory; then Lazar Grebelyanovitch, her brave and generous defender at Kossovo. Again, after her long sleep, Karageorges, heroic and just, grandsire of King Peter; and last, Milos Obrenovitch, whose cleverness had laid the foundation for much of her present good.

Had she changed too quickly from the old patriarchal system before she could rightly replace it? All this time, she now realized too well, she had been only half-educated. It was easy enough for the great Nations to criticize her, forgetful of the long past years when they were in her condition, yet none of them could deny her her heroic past.

Then Serbia looked toward the sea. She no longer felt the pain of her grief and her bruises; she was no longer alone. Friendly hands reached out to her on every side, and beyond the sea lay noble England, and strong Canada, and heroic France—Allies fighting for her, for her who might never be able to reward them; and, nearer to her, she could see fair Italy, magnificent Russia, and brave Montenegro and Roumania. All, all had been fighting for her, for in fighting for liberty, they fought for the oppressed of the whole world. They had been fighting her battles—the battles of the days of her strength. And there, farther off, was friendly America. For the moment she saw her ideal State—the union of Serb countries into one independent National State—a Serbian or a Croato-Serb monarchy.

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Then, a shout, a clamor of voices, "Monastir! Monastir! Serbia! Serbia!" Not a year since that awful retreat, and now the long exile was nearing its end. King Peter, and the Crown Prince, the Government, the whole Nation were hurrying home!

"There is no death without the appointed day," chants the old pesma. Serbia will live!

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SERBIA: A SKETCH ***

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