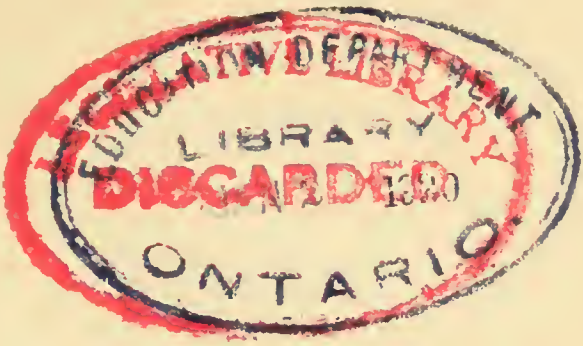
THE HEART OF THE BALKANS

DEMETRA VAKA



By Demetra Vaka
(Mrs. Kenneth-Brown)

THE GRASP OF THE SULTAN. Illustrated.
A CHILD OF THE ORIENT.
IN THE SHADOW OF ISLAM. Illustrated.
HAREMLIK: Some pages from the Life of Turkish Women.
FINELLA IN FAIRYLAND.

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(*Mrs. Kenneth-Brown*)

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TO

HONORÉ WILLSIE

THESE PAGES ARE AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
BECAUSE SHE INSPIRED ME
TO WRITE THEM

Contents

The Heart of the Balkans

I

WILD ALBANIA

We landed at Avlona, and from there were to proceed through the interior. It was immediately after one of the uprisings in Albania, in which villages had been burned, men had been killed, and women — well, women always pay the largest penalty in the fighting of men. Avlona, the morning we landed, was serene and enchanting. Framed by the blue Adriatic at her feet and by the distant mountains above her, she gave me the impression of a spoiled, handsome woman, who knew only the beautiful things in life, and refused to hear of distressing things that had taken place behind her back.

Our journey was to be made on mules, and the first thing, of course, was to engage them

and the muleteers, and to buy the provisions we should need during a trip of several weeks. Our tents and bedding we had brought with us. During these preparations I rested, and then walked about the fascinating town. The next morning we were waked at five o'clock, and before six we were climbing into our saddles. The air was still and light; yet I had the impression that there was a tremendous movement in that stillness — that the air constantly traveled from the sea to the mountains and back, acquiring the saltness of the sea and the freshness of Pindus and Olympus.

We were now off for the heart of Albania, where the men were to find out the extent of the damage done, and make a report on it to the Turkish Government. The political side of our expedition did not interest me greatly. Not that I was indifferent to it, for no Greek woman can be indifferent to the fate of Albania — the land which contains Epirus, one of the adored daughters of

Greece, who, like Thrace and Macedonia, is ever looking to the mother to free her from the Turkish yoke. If I was not interested in the political side of our journey it was because I knew the futility of any of these investigations.

Albania was coveted by Austria and Italy, both members of the Triple Alliance, and to balk their desires, France and England meant to preserve the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, no matter how much blood soaked the soil of Albania, or any other part of the Balkans. The political situation in the Balkans had been the milk, so to speak, on which I had been nourished, and I had had a little too much of it. Knowing already what the practical results of our investigations would be, what interested me personally was the women of Albania; and since, after leaving Albania, we should cross the entire length and breadth of the Balkans, I was to have an opportunity to study the women of Montenegro, Servia,

Rumania, and Bulgaria. I should see the women of all these nationalities with my own eyes, should have a chance to talk with them, and hear what they had to say.

With this vivid expectancy was mingled nervous dread. Ever since my brother had told me that possibly I might be permitted to accompany him on this expedition, I had been eager for this great privilege. I had read books and books about the countries we were to travel through, and they had told me of the history, of the men, of the political squabbles, and of the commercial possibilities: of the women no book spoke. What were they like, the women who lived in this land of blood-feuds and never-ending killings? Were they educated at all? Were they so ignorant that they were stupefied, or were they savages? What would be the cardinal differences between them and me, their sister, who, though a Greek, and a Turkish subject, did not know the terrors of constant combat?

Even as I mounted my mule and took my reins in my hands, I was afraid lest at the last moment some of the men might grumble and say that this was no trip for a young girl; but no one spoke the dreaded words, and all having mounted, on and on we rode, at the fast amble of the mule. Sometimes we were speechless because of the wondrous beauty of the land, and again we dropped into pairs, and talked in subdued tones of the horrors of the present, of the glories of the past. All the men in the party were Government officials. There was one Frenchman, one Englishman, and the rest were Greeks.

The Frenchman's mule fell in beside mine, and M. Gaston Decourt, having asked permission to smoke, began to deprecate the unreasonableness of the Albanians in their revolts. He had brought to the investigation, along with his slim figure, his silky beard, and his French witticisms, all his Turkish prejudices, acquired at so much

a month as an official. We had already had several conversations on the boat, and I knew that Albania would not gain much from him. Presently, as his mule ambled along beside mine, he asked a question which showed that his mind was occupied with the same theme as mine.

"Have you seen many Albanian women, Mademoiselle?"

"A few, in Constantinople."

"Are they beautiful?"

"Beauty is such a question of taste," I answered.

"I wish you would make your answers less evasive." His manner was pettish. Had he been a girl, one would have said he pouted.

"Well, they are not good-looking in the way a Frenchwoman is: they are different."

He twirled his mustache, as a certain type of man always does when talking of beautiful women, and looked up at the blue sky, which seemed to rise higher, the higher

we mounted. For a while I watched my companion in silence. I broke it to remark: —

"In these uncivilized countries they retain certain virtues we have discarded."

"What are they?" he inquired absently.

"They wash a woman's honor — even if it only be coveted — with blood."

A supercilious smile played upon his full red lips. There was no doubt that M. Decourt was attractive, and no doubt that he knew it. He did not seem to realize, however, that he was now in a different country from his usual haunts — in savage Albania, where life was not worth a farthing. It is true that we were escorted by soldiers, and were attached to the Government; but I had met a great many Albanians in Constantinople, and I knew how they felt toward the Government and its soldiers. In a sense I liked M. Decourt. He was the charming, weak man who always makes an appeal to the mother in a woman.

That evening I spoke to my brother of M. Decourt and his question. We were camped at the foot of a mountain, which looked quite near, but was a day's journey from us. In a cluster of trees the soldiers were pitching our tents, while the muleteers were preparing to cook.

"I do not think M. Decourt appreciates the danger in Albania. You had better speak to him," I urged.

My brother smoked on, his face calm and unruffled. One who did not know him might have thought the conversation did not interest him; but I knew better. Presently he took his cigarette from his lips and said: —

"I'm sorry I brought you along. Even a slight provocation on Decourt's part, and none of us may come out of here alive. I must speak to him seriously."

Late on the afternoon of the next day, we came to our first village, a cluster of

huts, and more huts in the distance, with much land around them. Again our tents were pitched. Here the scenery was of the wildest. When Italy and Austria are forced by human decency to take their shadows off Albania, the country will develop into one of the wonders of the earth.

My brother and I walked to the village briskly, for the evening cold was descending upon us. It looked quite deserted, so tightly closed were the wooden shutters on the small windows, and in such an unfriendly manner were the doors barred. A plant with two red flowers was growing upon the window-sill of one cottage.

"Some one must be in there," I said, pointing it out to my brother.

We walked toward it, stumbling over the rows of huge stones which protruded at intervals, and which remain above the snow and mud during the winter and permit the inhabitants to have intercourse with one another. We knocked for some time at the

door before a woman opened a crack. She scrutinized us with a pair of black eyes, large, unfathomable. I had expected to see fear in them: it was my first agreeable disappointment. Indeed, she gave the impression of not knowing what fear was.

"May we come in and get warm?" I asked. "It is long after sunset, and there is a chill in your air in spite of its exhilaration. This is my brother, and we are here to see in what way we can help Albania."

"Who sends you?"

"The Government."

"The Government can help us best by leaving us alone." The Greek she spoke was as pure as the air of the mountains.

Noticing that she was about to close the door, I hurried on: "Please don't shut us out. After all, though we come from the Government, we are Greeks, like you."

"If you are Greeks, the greater shame to you for serving the Turkish Government."

I laid my hand on the tremendously

thick door. "Please let us come in and get warm," I persisted.

She stepped out of our way, and we entered. In the depth of the low, long room was a small fire, built against the stone wall on the earthen floor. Before it sat two small boys eating bread, which they were warming while eating. It was really colder in the room than outside, unless one sat quite close to the fire.

The children continued eating stolidly. Again I was surprised that they showed no sign of being cowed. From my pocket I took a piece of chocolate and unwrapped it for them.

"Pantele," said the mother, "these people are from the Government."

The older boy got on his feet, and came and stood before me.

"We don't want gifts from the Government," he said. "We eat what is ours."

"You are not very civil," I replied, "especially since we have come here to get

warm, and should like to give you something for your hospitality."

"We do not sell our hospitality in the Land of the Eagle," the mother interposed.

Pantele stepped in front of my brother, and examined him without fear or shyness.

"What are you doing in my mother's house?" he demanded.

"We have come to hear your grievances, and to see what can be done about them. How old are you, Pantele?"

"I am eight — and you?"

"I am twenty-eight."

"How many Turks have you killed?"

"He does n't kill the Turks," the mother put in contemptuously. "He serves them. He is in their pay."

The boy came nearer, and touched my brother with one finger. "Then you are a goat," he observed.

"Why am I a goat?" my brother asked, smiling.

"Because there are in the world the women who bear men, and the men who kill the Turks; the persons who do neither are the goats. I am eight, and I have not yet killed a Turk, but I have at least carried food through their lines to the men who were killing them."

Perhaps there is no Greek who would not — while yet so large a part of the ancient Greek Empire still belongs to Turkey — have sympathized somewhat with Pantele. In French I said to my brother: "I envy this woman her boy."

"I envy the boy himself," my brother replied; then to Pantele: "I wish you would make friends with us." And laughable as it may seem, there my brother and I sat for a whole hour, explaining to eight-year-old Pantele, and to six-year-old Anastasi, and to their mother, the intricacies of the political world of the great Christian Powers. The mother, squatting low, was rapidly knitting, from natural sheep's wool, coarse

stockings for the men who were fighting for their independence.

When we emerged into the open again, and the door was shut after us, I took a long breath of the cold, crisp air and exclaimed with the thrill of the neophyte: —

"Brother, do you think we have helped them?"

He put his arms around my shoulders. "No, dear, not a bit. You tried splendidly, but they are accustomed to listen, these Albanians. They know that Austria and Italy want their country — Servia and Greece, too, wish to annex part of their territory. Each of these nations tells the Albanians what it is going to do for them; but the Albanians are too shrewd not to be aware that all this interest manifested in them has the ultimate aim of acquiring their land — and to that they will cling with their teeth."

"But *we* don't want to take any territory from them," I cried. "We only want to

help them — and don't you think we are going to?"

"Not a bit."

"Yet you seemed so interested in the thought of coming here."

We were now walking, arm in arm, under the moonless, azure sky, filled with silvery stars, which dimly guided us and kept us from stumbling over the stones. We had mountains behind us, and mountains alongside us, and mountains in the distance, and from everywhere we could hear water falling with a rattling sound like musketry, as if it had absorbed the bellicose spirit of the country. They were wild and warlike little streams, rushing from the mountains to empty into the most enchanting of lakes.

My brother laughed at my remark, his laugh sounding weird in the magnificent night, and I felt annoyed; for I did not think laughter a proper reply to me.

"Did you not want to come?" I persisted.

"Of course I did, but not for the reason

you suppose. In the Balkans I am no longer in the nineteenth century; they transport me back hundreds of years. I do not have to read of the Middle Ages — I *am* of the Middle Ages. Not only do I face their discomforts — I face their problems. In all the civilized world you would not find a child like eight-year-old Pantele. Here he is common: he was common in the Middle Ages. Before he is fourteen he will be taking life — and running for his life — as they used to in the Middle Ages."

We were now nearing our camp. A big fire was burning outside, a fire which was to keep away the bears and wolves from us and our beasts. One of our Albanian escort was singing. My brother seized my arm: —

"Listen!" he whispered.

The song matched the sky and mountains and the rushing waters — matched Pantele and his family. It was a song full of passionate worship, and it was addressed, not to a deity, not to a woman — to a rifle.

Two days later we reached a larger village, and I asked to be permitted to stay at a house instead of camping out with the rest of the party. To begin with I wanted some hot water for a bath, and then I wanted to see how they lived here.

My brother and I went to the priest's house, which was very clean and neat. After partaking of his simple hospitality we explained to him what I wished to do.

"Yes," — he pondered for a minute; — "yes, I think you will be made comfortable with the Karajhannis."

They apparently were the leading family; for their house was the largest in the village, and there were curtains at the windows. They received me with mute hospitality, and I ate of their goat's-milk cheese and muddy bread, and was put to sleep in the best bed. The sheets seemed woven of coarse hemp. How many distinguished guests had slept in them since last they had been washed, I do not know; but I am

certain I was not the first. In the morning, as I came down the main hall, the mother was in earnest conversation with her five-year-old son, who, like Pantele, was blond, with large gray eyes.

"Good-morning!" I said to the mother. "You seem to be having a very earnest conversation with your little Stathe."

"What do you mean by earnest?" the mother replied.

Thinking she did not understand the word I explained: "Earnest is vital."

"And what is vital?" she asked again.

"Very important."

"Well, why should I be talking, unless I had something important to say?" she said slowly.

"Tell me what you were talking about, so that I may know what you consider important."

"I was telling Stathe you were from the Government, and showing him this." She pointed to a dark blotch on the wall.

"What is that?"

"That is his father's blood. He was cornered here by ten soldiers. He killed all he could, but they finished him."

I shuddered. "You saw your man killed before your very eyes!"

She looked at me with the utmost disgust. "If I had been here it would have been an equal fight — ten Turkish soldiers to two Albanians — and my man would have been living to-day. He killed six and disabled one before they finished him. I was telling Stathe that there were four soldiers of the Government you represent who must die for his father. The rest he kills will be for Albania."

"You will not clean this spot?"

"Not till Stathe takes the blood that is owed us."

I sat down limply on a low stone which served as a stool, feeling quite weak.

"Have *you* ever shot a Turk?" I asked presently.

"What do you think I am — a cripple? All of us women fight when the men are in the mountains and we are surprised. Those are my guns."

She pointed to an array of weapons on the wall, clean and shiny as few things are in Albania. And that woman was barely twenty-two. She wore the Albanian fez on her head, with a bright kerchief wound around it. Her eyes were large and blue; yet she had the Dante hooked nose, characteristic of Albanians of the North. Evidently her family had intermarried with the Northerners. Her Greek, too, lacked the purity of that of Pantele's mother.

The next woman I talked to was one we met on the road. She was afoot, walking with the proud, pantherlike stride of the Highlander. She was barely sixteen. Her throat and bosom were bare, and she wore her dowry, in the shape of coins, around her neck. Since she was traveling in our direction, my brother offered her his mule,

but on learning that we were from the Government, she refused to accept it. I dismounted and walked with her for several hours. She had already walked steadily for two days, and she was going to walk perhaps for a month. She was going from one place to another in search of her husband, who had been taken alive by soldiers. She hoped to ransom him with her dowry. On her shoulders she carried a gun, like a man, and above her hips hung a belt filled with knives.

"If you don't find him, what will you do?" I asked.

"I shall find him if he is alive."

"And if he is not?"

"In five months I shall be a mother. His son I will bring up to avenge him."

Sincerely I hoped that the child of that bride would be a girl. But in Albania Nature provides for what she most needs. There are five boys born to one girl. That is why there are always plenty of men, in

spite of the blood feuds, in spite of the uprisings, and in spite of the fighting.

As our journey progressed it seemed to me that in every village we came to marriages were being celebrated. Both brides and grooms were very young. At one wedding in particular the girl was a mere child. We stopped to watch the ceremony.

"How old is she?" I asked her mother.

"She is in her thirteenth year," she replied.

"Is n't she too young to be married?"

"In a way she is. In fact, she was not to be married till spring after next; but this last uprising has cost us so many men that we have to have more born. That is why the brides of the next year and of the spring after are all being married now."

She spoke much as if the men were trees: so many having been cut down, so many more must be planted for future use.

In one large village — they called it a town in Albania — I decided to remain for

a few days. Our party was now going into the heart of the mountains, where the men of the uprising were in hiding. Terms of peace and settlement were to be discussed. I wished to remain behind because I was a little tired of constant traveling, and also because there was a Greek lady whom I wished to know, who had been doing missionary work here for years.

I found my compatriot living in a very nice stone house, built for her by grateful Albanians. She had one of those sympathetic personalities which make people natural, and to the attraction of her face was added a lovely voice and manner.

"Are they often ill?" I asked, after I had explained to her how I happened to be there.

"During epidemics, yes, — smallpox especially; for they accept epidemics as a scourge from God, and refuse to do anything to prevent contagion because they think it will anger God. At other times they

are very healthy. Most of the children are born in the fields where the women are working, and neither mother nor child has any medical attendance."

"Do you feel that you are helping them?"

"A little."

"Is your work discouraging?"

"It was at first. I was twenty-five years old then: I shall soon be sixty, and I have learned that Rome was not built in a day. To-day they come to me. They trust me, and that is a great deal. Even in the midst of feuds sometimes they listen to me."

"What a wonderful life yours must be!" I exclaimed admiringly. "What made you take it up?"

"I am an Albanian Greek, you see. My father was killed in a feud. My brothers were brought up by my mother to avenge him. A rich uncle who lived in Russia adopted me when I was five. He died when I was eighteen and left me all his money. I came here and stayed two years, then I

went away and studied medicine and came back, and I have been here ever since."

"Your brothers?"

"They avenged my father, and they have been killed in their turn. I have succeeded in being respected, although I do not mean to take the blood that is owed me."

She was the one loving spirit whom I met during my journey through Albania.

On leaving her house I encountered M. Decourt, who also had not accompanied the rest of the party to the mountains, because he said he was feeling seedy. During the last two days he had been giving me food for thought. I saw him now, in his courtly way, bending low as he talked to a young Albanian girl, with whom he had spent much of his time since coming to the village. She was a girl of seventeen who had been engaged three times to be married; but all her *fiancés* had been killed, and for each of them she had been obliged to mourn a year. She belonged to prominent people,

and all the men of her family were among the leaders of the uprising, and consequently were in the depths of the mountains. Her mother was dead, and she was living with her grandmother. While M. Decourt was speaking with her, I noticed an old man looking at him out of fierce, half-closed eyes. Since M. Decourt and I were not staying at the same house, I had no opportunity of warning him of the danger of his course.

My own hostess was an educated person. She could read, and even write slowly. She had been nice to me in a sulky kind of way. As I now entered her house, she nodded pleasantly, and remarked: —

"The priest has sent you some candied rose-leaves, so I have made you some fresh bread to eat them with."

I was extremely touched. "You are very good to me!" I exclaimed.

"Well, you are not much bother, — and you may have some hot water to-night."

This last was overwhelming. It is true she had given me hot water ungrudgingly the first day I came to her; but she had peremptorily refused to do it again, and asked me why in the name of Mount Olympus I needed so much washing? Was I a leper? So now her voluntary offer of hot water touched the climax of kindness, and I expressed my appreciation.

"Well, I have not lived to be forty without knowing that people have peculiarities," she replied. "Yours is washing. But you have been good to my little Zoë" — that was her ten-year-old daughter; "she has been reciting to me the rhymes you taught her, and they are pretty. Please teach her some more of them, and I will give you hot water every day."

Thus, in untamed Albania rhymes did what nothing else would have been able to effect: they made us friends and brought us together. That evening we all sat by the fire, she knitting woolen socks, her mother

weaving coarse cloth, and her two widowed sisters making men's garments. Everything these people wear they make themselves. Under normal conditions the house would have been like a beehive. My hostess, Kyra Melitza, had six sons, little Zoë, and her husband. One of her sisters had seven sons and the other four; and they all lived in that house. Now the entire male population was in the mountains, awaiting the outcome of the negotiations.

I asked them what the cause of the latest uprising had been.

"Taxes, as usual," replied the old mother. "They raise and raise them. Now they want one sheep out of ten. And what do we get for our taxes? I was a young girl when they promised us roads. You have come from Avlona — have you seen any roads?"

In the middle of our talk M. Decourt came to call on me. He wore a flower in his buttonhole. I apologized to the women for

our French talk, since he could speak no Greek. Yet I was glad no one understood us, because it enabled me to warn him of the imprudence of the course he was following. I might as well have saved my breath, however. He was fatuously disdainful of my words, and I believe even thought them inspired by jealousy.

After M. Decourt had gone away, Kyra Melitza asked bluntly: —

"Is he your future husband?"

"No," I replied.

"What did he come to see you for, then?"

"He is a friend," I explained.

"Fine customs!" she sneered. "Young girls talking to strange men in foreign tongues!" A little later she asked more pleasantly: "Do you like him?"

"Yes, he is very nice."

"He is a fool!" There was a note of menace in her voice; and after I was in bed those few words haunted me and made me uneasy.

The next morning I awoke with the sun and stood by the small window. Like an Alp the mountain rose formidably before me and cast its shadow across the view — or perhaps the shadow was a presentiment. Several people were moving in one direction, and in the distance I saw the white-haired old man and M. Decourt. It struck me that there was something amiss here, and in vague dread I quickly dressed and went out of the house. I had gone but a little way when I heard the report of a gun. I broke into a run, and, turning the corner, saw the old man open the weapon, take out an empty cartridge, and blow through the barrel. Then I noticed in a heap, at a little distance, the body of Gaston Decourt.

I reached the old man, breathless. "You — you — have n't — " I gasped, and pointed to the body.

He nodded. "So long as there is left an old man in this place, no foreigner can wear an Albanian woman's flower in his coat."

The women stood in a wide circle around the old man, heads erect, shoulders thrown back. There was a fierce pride in their eyes because the men held their honor so high.

The Greek woman doctor now came on the scene. She addressed the old man in the way old men are always addressed in Albania: "Grandfather, may I bury him?"

"If you like, though such as he disgrace a grave. His carcass should belong to the jackals."

I cannot say that I behaved well, for I wept and became hysterical, to the amazement of the women around me. Even little Zoë expressed her astonishment, saying: "I never saw a woman who wept for nothing."

When our men came back, they hushed up the affair, and officially M. Decourt died a natural death from typhoid fever. They thought it lucky we did not all die in wild Albania.

II

ROMANTIC ALBANIA

THE death of Gaston Decourt fell upon our party like a deadening blow and dampened the spirits of all.

"You must have a strong stomach to stand the diet of Albania," one of the Greeks remarked with a grimace. "Mine has always been delicate, and I have tasted enough of the food of this savage country to give me indigestion for the rest of my life. I go no farther."

The others agreed with him. They were pampered city men, and the coarse food, the unavoidable hardships, the constant traveling on muleback, over trails that made them dizzy, — coupled with the risk of losing their lives should they chance to offend the untutored Albanian sense of propriety, — were not to their taste. And since the terms of peace between the Alba-

nians and the Government were settled, for a time at least, that section of Albania and the Turkish Government would be at peace — until — until the Albanians, exasperated anew, should rise again.

Only for my brother did the Balkans possess an allurement he could never resist. As for me, I was young and full of enthusiasm: my world had been made up of books, and the mystery of the Balkans attracted me beyond the desire for comfort.

"Oh, *do* let us go on!" I urged my brother, who needed no urging. And thus our party of many dwindled down to us two and one *zaptié*, himself a Southern Albanian and a good fellow, who knew how to control the muleteers and how to obtain what we needed from the Albanians without getting into fights with them. Moreover, he had a good voice and enlivened our long rides with the weird Albanian songs, which seemed to invoke the spirits of that wild country. The rest of the military escort we

dismissed; for, as my brother remarked, it added to our danger, not to our safety, since one could see the hair of the Albanians rise like the ruffs of angry dogs at sight of the Turkish soldiery.

Albania is not only the oldest child of the Balkans, but the oldest country in Europe. It is ancient Illyria, and has resisted or survived the Romans and the Huns, the Macedonians and the Greeks, the Serbs and the Bulgars, and it seems quite likely that it will survive the Turks. Yet it lacks the two great fundamentals which unite a people and make a nation of it — a common language and a common religion. Capable of resisting aggression and of fighting fiercely and stubbornly, the Albanians have never been able — in spite of their great pride in and love for their country — to put aside their family, their tribal, and their religious feuds, in order to form a homogeneous nation.

We found the southern part to be Greek in

speech, Greek in looks, and Greek in faith. When we entered the mountainous region which, after several days of arduous mule-back riding, brought us to the plateaus of Central Albania, most of the people were Mohammedans, though only the officials — who came from Constantinople — spoke Turkish. Turkish, indeed, was little known among the Albanians unless they had worked in Constantinople as bodyguards — a career for which their faithfulness and bravery eminently fitted them.

These Mohammedans of Central Albania were despised alike by the Turks and by the Christians. The fact that they had turned Mohammedans to save their lands and to keep on the right side of the conqueror made them an object of contempt to the Turks and of hatred to the Christians. It is true that this happened away back in the fifteenth century — but in the Balkans they have long memories. Being in the majority here, they are a powerful faction, and in

addition to their periodic uprisings against the Turks they are engaged in fierce religious feuds against the Orthodox Albanians of the South and against the Albanians of the North, who, under Austrian and Italian influence, — are Roman Catholics. Though religion sits lightly on the shoulders of these wild mountaineers, in its various forms it has helped to fashion those differences which have impeded the welding of the inhabitants of the country into a homogeneous whole. The only sure hyphen between the various tribes is their excessive pride in Albania and their lust for blood. Every rock, every stronghold, every mountain has its history — and that history is written in blood.

Yet they compel one's sympathy, and they compelled my admiration. If at times they exasperated me with their boastfulness of being the greatest country in the world, because they were the greatest fighters, — if I became weary of hearing how once,

under Iskander Bey, they had held millions of Turks at bay, — I had to remember that they were only children in civilization, and that greatness, from their point of view, consisted in the capacity to shed blood.

After we left the South we did not take our own mules with us. We reasoned that the best way to procure guides for the interior would be to hire mules with their muleteers. Our logic proved false. To begin with, we discovered that the muleteers only knew the main-traveled roads, — if one may thus dignify the mountain trails which connected one section of the country with another, — and in addition, seeing that all our muleteers "owed blood," they had to leave us at most inconvenient spots, since their feuds had not at all been arranged with a view to the convenience of travelers.

During the first three days of our journey we encountered little that was interesting beyond our unexpected changing of mule-

teers. The villages we passed through — whether large or small — were squalid and miserable. The contrast between the grandeur of the landscape and the human misery was overpowering. Amid these wonderful, lofty heights one expected to see wonderful edifices and men and women of intellect: and one saw only huts; women bowed under the burden of heavy work; and men armed to the teeth, ready to take life. At times it seemed to me that I could actually hear Albania moaning and begging for peace, that she might end this existence of always tearing to pieces, and an unfathomable sadness settled upon me. My smallness, my incapacity to help, crushed my spirit. I heard Albania call, and all I could answer was: "No, Albania, I cannot help you. No one can help you, because you are the key to Constantinople from the Adriatic; and all the great Christian Powers — pretending that they are trying to preserve the balance of power — all have their greedy

eyes fixed on the Golden Horn and the hegemony of Europe, to which everything else shall be sacrificed. Bleed on, Albania; for through your blood each one hopes to wade to Constantinople."

At one of the larger villages, where we spent the night, our trouble with guides came to an end. We always made it a point, while our tents were being pitched, to call on the religious head of the community, be he a Mussulman, a Catholic, or an Orthodox. We were always courteously received, and since we spoke their respective languages, we came into direct communication with them. As a rule they were men of simple minds, and one felt that although desirous of putting an end to the feuds, they were more or less imbued with the spirit of the country; and I regret to say that we found more animosity between the two groups of followers of Christ than we found between the Christians and the Mohammedans.

In this particular village there were two flocks: the Orthodox, who were mostly Vlachs, and the Mussulmans. We called on the heads of both, and each offered us the hospitality of his house. The Mussulman had a charming little wife, so sweet and childlike that I wished to stay with her; and we chose fortunately, for not only had I a delightful bed to sleep in, but a bath, which was the most ingenious thing I had seen in Albania. It was a hole sunk in the floor of the kitchen, about the size of a barrel, and made of cement by pretty Emmené Hanoum's husband himself. He had built it to keep vegetables in, but Emmené Hanoum used it as a bathtub.

She was a delightful and vivacious hostess, and waxed eloquent over the peaceful spirit that possessed their villagers and the friendship that subsisted between the Christians and Mohammedans. "We have n't had a blood feud or an uprising for ever and ever so long," she declared. Holding up two

rosy fingers she went on impressively — "not for more than two years."

Her hands were pretty and well kept. The Mussulman Albanians treat their wives better than the Christians do, and whenever they can afford it, they engage Christian women to wait upon them. Sweet Emmené had "never put her hands into cold water," as the saying is, which means that she had always had a maid. She was tall and slender, and her two little sons were always climbing in her lap or upon her back. She could neither read nor write, but embroidered wonderfully. The village, she told me, was unusually prosperous, and there were men there who owned as many as a hundred sheep. They were all very hospitable, and every prominent citizen wished to entertain us. Those to whose houses we could not possibly go — for it would have taken us a month to accept all the invitations — gave us presents of meat, eggs, vegetables, milk, and fruit. Indeed,

provisions for several days were thrust upon us; and they begged us to tell the Government what a worthy, peace-loving community they were.

The Greek priest here was a find. He was not only an educated but a broad-minded man; and unlike most Albanians he appreciated that Albania was not the greatest country in the world, with a past to which those of Greece and Rome were nothing. He was a Southern Albanian, an Epirote, and his Greek was delightful. Certainly his salary could not have come from his small flock, and we concluded that Greece was awakening to the possibility of Albania's being divided, and that the Albanians had better be prepared to choose wisely. It was owing to Father Basil that the Orthodox Christians and the Mussulmans got along well together. These two religions, I believe, had formed an alliance against the Catholics; for Turkey viewed the protégés of Austria and Italy with greater dis-

favor than those of little Greece. Greece only dreams of the redemption of Constantinople: Austria plans to acquire it.

Father Basil saved us from guides and the troubles that went with them for the rest of our journey. He took us to his heart; for he had seen nothing of civilization since leaving Constantinople some years before, and it was really on his account that we stopped so long in that village. Holding sway over the entire Orthodox population of that section of Albania, he had traveled a great deal about the country and as far up as Montenegro. He was quite aware of all the political intrigues at work, and now and then would close one eye and remark: "You see how things work up here."

After he heard of our troubles with the muleteers, he caressed his silky beard in silence for some time. "I wonder!" he murmured at length, and again, "I wonder."

"What?" my brother asked.

"I wonder if Acheron, the fairy's son,

would consent to go with you. He knows all Northern Albania. Moreover, he owes no blood, and none is owed to him, and every one likes and respects him."

"Whose son did you say he was?" my brother asked.

"A fairy's. You see he was found in the woods when he was only a few months old. He had been kept alive by a goat, who daily stood over him and gave him suck."

"But what makes you think his mother was a fairy?"

"Because the honor of Albanian women is above reproach: hence his mother could only have been a fairy. And since he was found near the river Acheron, he was named Acheron, although the man who found him and adopted him was a Mohammedan and brought him up in the faith of the Prophet."

"Oh, *do* get him for us!" I cried. Both his origin and his Homeric name fascinated me.

"I will try, though I don't say he will come. Just now he is guarding his adopted

father's flocks in the mountains. I shall send for him to-day."

The next evening at dusk Acheron appeared. He certainly did justice to his origin. He was the handsomest specimen of a Greek I had seen in Albania. Tall and well built, with classical features, he might have been Achilles in person. He wore the fustanella, the starched white kilts, of the Southern Albanians; and the long blue tassel of his fez fell gracefully on his shoulders, mingling with his hair, which he wore rather long. He was as different from the average, unkempt shepherd as a thoroughbred is from a cart-horse. His leggins, his waistcoat, his coat were all beautifully embroidered: it seems that the women of Albania took pleasure in presenting him with handsomely embroidered garments to propitiate the fairies, his kinsfolk.

Acheron liked my brother, and, having looked me up and down, said he would go with us if the priest would get some one else

to guard his father's flocks. This Father Basil promised to do, and at the next daybreak we were off, the Father admonishing us not to dare offer money to Acheron. "He will tell you what he would like to have and you can send it to him."

Acheron proved to be the greatest delight of our journey. With all his other good points he was clean and loved to bathe. How he could have acquired such habits in Albania I cannot imagine — heredity must be very strong. Whoever his parents were I am sure they could have been no common people. Although he was a Mussulman, Acheron adored the Virgin Mary, of whom he spoke as "the little Christian fairy." He had also picked up Greek as uneducated people rarely do. It had come natural to him, as had his love for poetry and his graceful manners. He was Homeric in name, face, and disposition. He believed absolutely in his fairy origin, and played the part with fervor.

Our journey became Acheron's journey. He knew the hiding-places of birds, snakes, and beasts, and was quite at home with them. Had we been following any particular route and in a hurry, he would have been the most exasperating of guides. As it was, we stopped whenever he wanted us to, and we awoke and started on whenever he told us to. Thus we saw the northern part of Albania as that handsome, irresponsible creature knew it. It was in the springtime and the peaks were yet snow-capped; the trees were in blossom, and millions of wild flowers tapestried the precipitous flanks of the mountains. And we had Acheron to explain everything, mingling fancies fearlessly with facts, and speaking of the fairies as ever present.

Bathed in blood as Albania is, one would imagine her devoid of all except the fierce romance of armed strife; yet together with the rifles and knives and blood feuds live the fairies and all sorts of woodland and

mountain spirits, who, like the millions of wild flowers, bring beauty and charm to that wild country. And Acheron was the embodiment of mystic, romantic Albania. Even its horrors were not horrible to him. He told of the killing of men with the same simplicity with which he one day brought me a snake to play with, never imagining that I might not care to touch it. To him all wild animals were friends.

Once, at dusk, as we were riding along a steep mountain-side, he walking by my side, suddenly he seized the reins of my mule, bringing it to a dangerous halt, at the same time ordering the others to stop. As we waited, breathless, not knowing what to expect, we heard from afar the hoofbeats of a galloping horse coming toward us at full speed.

Considering that our mules had to walk on our rocky path with the utmost caution, this was marvelous. Acheron was greatly excited, and so were my brother, the *zaptié*,

and I. The galloping came nearer and nearer, and we strained our eyes to see the daring rider. Yet, although the sound passed quite close to us in the gathering dusk, I saw neither horse nor rider: I only saw Acheron salute, and heard him say: —

"May thy journey be of good omen!"

"Did you see the rider?" I questioned eagerly.

"No; but I know who it was."

"Who was it?"

"The bride of the mountains."

He had often spoken to me about this particular fairy, who, mounted on an invisible steed, galloped over the roughest defiles of the mountains. There was not the slightest doubt that Acheron believed what he said, and I, being young, and in Albania, and in the deep dusk of a towering mountain — I do not know whether I believed it or not. At any rate, I heard the galloping hoofs; and although my Philistine brother explained them to me, when we were alone,

as the reverberations of some curious trick of echo among the mountains, — like the whispering-galleries in certain churches, — his reasoning did not wholly convince me at the time.

Before it became quite dark we pitched our tents and lighted the brilliant fire which was to keep wild beasts away from us; and how wonderfully well I slept that night, and every night in the Balkans, after many hours in the saddle.

During our trip we passed many small villages, where the women, prematurely old, worked in the fields; and at evening we always met them returning to their homes, carrying tremendous loads on their heads, the little children towing from their skirts. The women perform every labor in Albania, in order that the men may preserve their strength for use in fighting. Near many of these villages we dismounted to talk with the women; and they stopped their work to talk with us, or to fetch us some milk or

cheese, or even to go home with us and cook us some mutton. As a rule, they were absolutely uneducated, but honest, shrewd, and capable.

After leaving one of these villages, we came upon a place where four paths crossed, and there, securely fastened in a sort of sling, a baby was hanging.

"Acheron!" I cried, "there is another fairy baby, like you."

Acheron shook his head. "No; that is an ill-omened baby, and it is left here, where four paths meet, to break the spell."

"What kind of a spell?"

"All his brothers and sisters have died, because the djinns have crossed the threshold of his home, so now they hang him here, with three Maros [Marys] watching, to break the spell."

He pointed to a group of three women seated at the foot of a tree, some distance off, and continued: "Every magic requires three, or seven, or nine Maros. That is why

every family, be it Mussulman or Christian, names one girl Maro, after your little Christian fairy. There was once a village where all the Maros died. The inhabitants knew there must be a spell over their village, so they all left it."

The three Maros had got up, and they met us before we reached the baby. They asked us to say a prayer, as we passed beneath it, to help break the spell, in order that it might live, and not die like all its brothers and sisters.

In the outskirts of another village we came upon a group of children feasting around what looked like a small, newly made grave.

"What are they doing?" I asked Acheron.

"They have buried a cat," he replied. "You know a cat is a sacred animal, because Christ produced one from his sleeve. When a cat dies, the children of the household invite their friends to come and help

bury it, and then they sit around the grave and feast."

These were Mohammedan children, but throughout Albania we found Christian and Mohammedan beliefs and superstitions commingled almost without regard to the particular creed of any particular person.

On arriving at a town of some size, my brother suggested that I wait there a few days while Acheron and he climbed to the summit of a certain mountain. I was invited to stay in the household of the pasha of the town. The house was more like a fortress than a home. It was two stories high, built around three sides of a courtyard, and the outer wall was pierced only by narrow windows, just wide enough to permit the muzzle of a rifle to be poked through.

The household was tremendous. The wife, — and in Albania most Mussulmans are monogamous, — the sons and their wives, the daughters and their husbands, numerous near and distant kin, besides

guests, all lived in this one abode. The women of this household went about unveiled, and were permitted to talk with men. They all wore richly embroidered bloomers, reaching to the ankle, with an ankle-piece of exquisite embroidery, short jackets or waistcoats, with long coats of blue and white. All evinced the greatest interest in my journey, and especially in the conditions we had found in those sections where the uprisings had been.

Every one wanted to do something to make my stay as pleasant as possible. I slept in a large room where several beds were made up on the floor every night for the guests. Among us there was a young girl with an extremely attractive Oriental face, who wore especially well-embroidered clothes. I could not make out what her position in the household might be. At meal-times, when we sat down, cross-legged on the ground, around a huge, revolving table, she seemed to have no special place. In

spite of my youth, I was placed next the head lady. This particular girl took any place that happened to be vacant; yet everybody petted her, and the old hanoum often pinched her cheek and called her naughty and endearing names.

On the second day of my stay I chanced to see this girl — her name was Kouzé — sitting in a small, hidden arbor with a young man, and he had his arm around her waist.

Knowing how the Albanians felt about their women, I was seized with the fear that in a short time I should be in the midst of a feud, when first this young man, and then all his male relatives, would have to be killed.

An hour later, when we assembled for our evening meal, Kouzé came in, bright-eyed and unconcerned. The more I looked at her, the more she puzzled and attracted me. Deviltry was in every glance of her eye. After dinner I began to talk with her

and her humor surprised me. As we were parting I said: —

"Do tell them to put your bed next to mine to-night."

She shook her head till the long gold-blue tassel of her fez danced. "You have too large eyes," she answered. "They see too much." Nevertheless, when I went to bed, hers was next to mine.

At dawn I was awakened by a whistling in the courtyard under our windows — a whistling which turned into a soft song.

From the bed next mine Kouzé rose quietly, slipped on her bloomers and long coat, crept to the window, scrambled over the sill, and, with the dexterity of a cat, sprang to the ground.

I rushed to the window just in time to see the arms of the same young man encircle Kouzé, before the two disappeared among the trees beyond the courtyard. Though it was still very early, I slept no more. Who was there that I could warn, without

bringing on the catastrophe I wished to avoid!

At breakfast-time Kouzé came in, debonnaire and impish as ever. After the meal was over, I joined her.

"You rose very early," I ventured.

"So I did." There was laughter in her eyes and on her lips. She pinched my cheek, and, bending like a bird, gave me a kiss that was more like a peck. "Come, and I'll show you some of my pretty clothes."

From a cupboard in the room in which we slept she brought forth an armful of the most exquisite clothes, besides a lot of silver brooches and bracelets. "They are all mine!" she said.

I wanted to warn her of the danger she was running, yet somehow I could not manage it. I felt that I should receive only ridicule in reply.

That afternoon the mother invited me to drive with her, and as we were returning through the woods, I espied Kouzé, and

then made out that the young man was again with her. Quickly I turned my head away, afraid to look lest I should attract attention to her. Yet it was my hostess's laughter which made me look again.

"Madcap children!" she murmured; "madcap children!"

"Who are madcap?" I asked innocently.

She laughed again. "Why, Kouzé and her husband."

"Her *husband?*" I cried. "Why, is Kouzé married?"

"Yes; she's married to my youngest son."

My tragedy had blown away in smoke. "Then why does she live the way she does?" I asked.

"Because she has no children. Though she has been married a year, no child is coming yet — so she has no standing in the household, and must take whatever is left."

That night when we were in bed, I reached

over and took Kouzé's hand. "I am so sorry, dear," I said. "This afternoon your mother told me all."

Kouzé dropped my hand, got up, pulled her mattress nearer mine, and then took my hand again in hers.

"Why are you sorry?" she asked, her face very close to mine.

"You are treated terribly — just because you have no children."

"You," she answered, "are a simple goose. I am as happy as a new moon — I'm happy as a young rose — I'm the happiest of olive trees."

"Happy — without being able to see your husband?" I cried.

"But I do see him all I want. Sometimes I go to him, and sometimes I don't — and I make him suffer. Sometimes I let him kiss me, and sometimes I don't — and he is madly in love with me. It is a year we are married, yet his hand trembles in mine. I pray to the moon and to the stars and to all

the trees that grow on the mountains that they may withhold my son's coming yet another year. I shall be fifteen when the frost comes in — why should I bother? And it is such fun, and I am the lord of my master. We are lovers now. When children come we shall be old married people, and I don't want to be old. Besides, if I had an apartment, he could come to it as his right. Now I hold that right, and it is as it should be."

In amazement I listened; that wild Albanian child, who could hardly read and write, was promulgating sentiments which I was to hear again, years later, from the lips of the most advanced feminists of America.

III

THROUGH THE LANDS OF THE BLACK-MOUNTAINEERS

When we left Albania and entered Montenegro, or Tserna-Gora, as it is called by the inhabitants, we left behind whatever was tender and soft in the scenery, whatever was bloody and poetical in the people. Perhaps I am wrong, but it seems to me that over every country hovers an atmosphere which emanates from the thoughts of the people. In Greece, the sky, the hills, the plains are clothed in an infinite variety of soft, tender hues. One breathes in the intellectual and artistic achievements of Greece. This cannot be entirely a figment of my imagination; for one day an American — after confiding to me that Athens was a "one-horse town" — went on to say that what bothered him most in Greece was the unwarrantable desire that gripped him to read and to study.

In Albania I was prey to a sadness which, while it depressed me, at the same time made me live within myself a life of thought and of dreams. It was a companionable mood. The moment we crossed the border and were on Montenegrin soil, every bit of psychical influence departed. I saw things with my eyes, heard them with my ears, and analyzed them with my brain: my senses had plenty of food; my soul alone went hungry. It was not that I did not know the story of Montenegro; for I knew it better than that of Albania. It was not history, it was not facts that I lacked; but my imagination was not stimulated.

I have always been aware of two receiving capacities: the one through the concrete, the other through the occult; and in Montenegro, at first, there was only the concrete. I saw the olive groves, the fig bosques, the admirable vineyards, the tall, handsome men, the gaunt, bent women, the dark, steep hills rising high, high above us; and I

knew that on the highest of the hills were the remains of Vladika Peter the First, whom his people loved so greatly that on his death in 1830 they turned him into a saint. And they buried him up there on the heights so that all his subjects could see him — so that he could keep watch over all his subjects. Yet the soul of Vladika Peter the First said nothing to my soul. I knew only that his body was buried up there.

In the first Montenegrin village we exchanged ponies. A fair was going on in the village, and it afforded me my first glimpse of Montenegrin costumes, which are far richer and more sumptuous than those of any other Balkan nation. I enjoyed gazing at the tall, martial-looking men. In some ways they reminded me of the Cretans, except that the latter are very slender and dress in black, and their faces — in spite of their history of continuous fighting to free themselves from the Turks — are essentially intellectual. The Montenegrin men, even

when they are educated and speak French and Italian, — even when conversing on intellectual topics, — always give me an impression as if I were talking with wild animals, who might spring on me if they took a dislike to me.

In the company of Acheron I wandered freely about the market. My brother had gone to pay his respects to the priest and to ask for information concerning our further journey. At the latter's suggestion we parted that same day with our last *zaptié*, since no military escort whatever is necessary in Montenegro — especially if there be a woman in the party.

Good-naturedly Acheron joked with the natives, whose language he spoke fluently, while I looked about in vain for a pretty face. There were none to be seen. Although there were girls between thirteen and fifteen, and young married women and young mothers, all the faces were hard and unresponsive. They seemed only to say that

life was a continual burden. Even their costume was less gorgeous than that of the men, while their headgear seemed designed more to conceal whatever favor Nature had shown them than to enhance it. I was glad to remember that in Tserna-Gora the women were valued for their chastity and for their capacity for toil more than for beauty and charm; had they been dependent on the last two, it would have gone hard with them.

We spent that night at the priest's home. He was of the Orthodox Church. Montenegro, like Servia, has this great advantage over Albania, that the Christian population is not divided into different religious sects. There were, however, a great many Mussulmans, who — as we understood from themselves — were very happy and comfortable under Prince Nicholas.

Acheron insisted that we ought to start next morning at three o'clock. He wanted us to reach the heights, and from there to

gaze down upon the lake of Scodra and the Adriatic, "just as the sun gives them his first kiss." Since we had learned by experience that Acheron was a past-master of scenic effects, we were in the saddle by half-past three. The beasts that were to carry us looked as if they could never manage to scramble up that terrifically steep hill; but the priest assured us that they looked so bony and hard simply because it was their business to climb these steep hills — and they did prove wonderful. They moved slowly but steadily, knowing exactly where to put their feet in the dangerous going. Acheron, as usual, walked by my horse and talked. He did not like Montenegro. He cherished toward it the hostility of all Albanians, who know that it can expand only at their expense.

With the first glorious colors of the sunrise we began to feast on the beauties Acheron had foretold. No other part of Europe can be so lovely. It was magic.

The enchanting lake of Scodra glittered below the steep, black mountains; beyond it was the blue Adriatic, and again beyond that, Italy. And all that beauty belonged, not to Montenegro, but to Albania, and to the seas. Montenegro itself is nothing except piles of rocks, bleak and savage, rising thousands of feet above this loveliness which accentuates its bleakness and savagery.

When we reached Cettinje, the capital of Tserna-Gora, we went directly to the house of Gospody Pietro, who was to be our host. We had met him in Turkey, and we were now to meet his wife, reputed to be — next to the princely family — among the prettiest women of Prince Nicholas's dominion. They received us very charmingly, and Gospody Pietro himself lifted me from my horse.

"Well, Gospodija, so you have come to find a husband in the land of the brave?"

Being well aware that the Montenegrins looked down upon all other women but their own, I replied: —

"How could I, since there would be none for me? I am an alien."

"But you are a Greek, and we make some exceptions for the Greeks."

Gospoda Lena, the wife, came out, too. She kissed my brother's hand, and then kissed me on both cheeks. She was dressed in the native costume, but wore the headgear with a bit of coquetry, displaying her ears and neck. She was pretty for a Montenegrin, but would have been plain anywhere else. Their house, like that of all the well-to-do, was a simple, whitewashed edifice of two stories, clean and homelike. She herself took me to my room, and though we had come unannounced her guest-room was spotless and smiling.

Since I had risen before three in the morning and had been in the saddle so many hours, I said I should like to lie down.

She looked at me incredulously.

"But my dear child, it is daytime," she expostulated. "People don't lie down in

the daytime unless they are sick. Take off your hat and wash your face and hands."

There was nothing to do but comply. She herself poured a little water over my hands, with which I washed my face. Then I began to braid my hair.

"Let *me* braid it for you, my dear. It is always better when done by some one else."

"Are you not a lady of the court?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Then I am a princess, since you are doing my hair."

"I never did any of the princesses' hair. Princess Melena, their mother, used to comb the eldest one's and the others helped each other."

When I was ready she conducted me to the dining-room, where our host and my brother were already waiting; and there we had our first three drinks, the three inevitable ones of some terrible burning stuff which one must always drink, in the name of the

Trinity, to make the welcome binding. The rest of our meal consisted of bread, fruit, and coffee.

Cettinje is the capital of Montenegro. The word "capital" probably suggests to the mind tall, handsome buildings, avenues, theaters, and parks. There was nothing of all this in the capital of Montenegro. It was a small unpretentious village, dominated by the monastery and the palace — both whitewashed, barrack-like houses. The palace at that time consisted of twenty rooms for the Government and the princely family, with not a single bathroom.

Yet Cettinje does give the impression of being a capital. In spite of its poverty and smallness, it had the dignity and the aloofness of a real capital; and its stern simplicity, its lack of pretentious buildings and of crowds, made it a fitting first-city of the Black-Mountaineers. The people there, as in the whole of Montenegro, were hospitable and honest, open-hearted, and essentially

democratic. Our host would address his servants, during meals, in this wise: —

"Oh, my brother, for the sake of God, give me some more potatoes."

During the few days of our stay in Cettinje, I was exhibited mercilessly, and the direct questions that were asked me gave me a clear idea of the working of their minds, which were straightforward and clear-sighted.

Gradually the lack of beauty and grace in the women receded in my mind, and in its stead came forward their simplicity, their fearlessness, and their undaunted courage. I began to understand why Montenegrin men preferred their women to those of other lands. They were worthy mates of those brave men. For over five hundred years the Montenegrins have fought to keep Tserna-Gora for themselves, and the women have done all the other work. They are the builders, the planters, the harvesters; and during the fighting they

do the work of army orderlies. Indeed, I have been told that if there be any crippled men, the women carry them on their backs to the front ranks that they may fight.

In Cettinje, and in two or three other towns of equal size, one felt that the mountaineers at last were free from their perpetual struggle and fight against the encroachment of the Turks. But after we left Cettinje and began to see the small villages, we knew that Montenegro was not yet a country secure in her freedom — and then we came to the frontier outposts!

The frontiers of Montenegro were drawn by the men who made the Treaty of Berlin. I said before that in Montenegro all that I took in seemed to be of a concrete nature; but in these frontier towns my imagination was again appealed to. To find out to what extent the Treaty of Berlin was unjust — even infamous — one has but to study these frontiers. They were delineated not for the purpose of delimiting the various countries

to their best advantage, and for their future welfare, but to further the political intrigues of the Great Powers. Servia and Montenegro were deliberately separated, and between the two Serb peoples the Turks were thrust. That was done to please Austria, whose interest it was to keep Servia and Montenegro apart, and to keep them constantly harassed by the Turks. England acquiesced, because it tricked Russia and humiliated her — and at that time Russia was the savage bear who dominated Albion's fears.

I have seen those frontier towns, and though that was years ago, I wonder as I am writing this whether the blood flooding Europe at the present moment is not an atonement for the wrongs Europe inflicted on the peoples of the Balkans. Sorrowfully I read of the massacre of the flower of European manhood, and thereupon I am transported back to those frontier towns of Montenegro and Servia. I see again the Serb

women with their dull eyes and expressionless faces, and I hear the people say: "She lost four sons in the last fighting"; "That one lost her husband"; "That other one lost all her brothers"; "The one with the basket on her head lost every man who belonged to her." And although I did not see those women shedding tears, I felt that their hearts must sob to breaking,—and I wonder if the sobs that are wringing the hearts of the women of Europe to-day are not the echo of the sobs of the women of the Balkans.

In those frontier towns the people go armed to the teeth, and a lot of desultory fighting goes on, which the European chancelleries may know about, but of which the people of Europe are kept in ignorance. The Albanians are constantly incited to strike at the Serbs, either by the Turks or by Austria. Austria, in the last fifty years, by money and intrigue has obtained great influence in the northern part of Albania.

She is ever pushing forward the Church of Rome; and now she often interferes — ostensibly for love of the Nazarene; in reality with the greed of the Hapsburgs.

It is to the interest of Austria — and also of Italy — that there should be constant turmoil on these frontiers. Then one day there may be a chance to step in — to set things right; and after things are set right — to stay. That this has not happened already is only because Italy prevents Austria — and Austria prevents Italy.

On these frontiers the people live in huts, dress in rags, but walk about like moving arsenals. Every one seems to be listening for something to happen. Often it does happen; and numerous newly dug graves on both sides of the boundary tell what has happened. The drama of Montenegro is played on these frontiers. The rest is bleak and poor — so poor that no Western mind can conceive it. Whenever we stopped at a small village and partook of their ever-

ready hospitality, if we were allowed to pay I went away feeling like a fairy queen at the treasure we were able to reward them with. But when we were sternly told that a Montenegrin brave did not sell his food, but was willing to share it with us in the name of God, — I went away feeling like a robber; for they had so little to share. God in Heaven! how little they had! The women of the poor never had a new dress till the one they were wearing fell off them in sheer rags. And then the new one that they got was second-hand, bought at the fair. Yet their pride and their courtly manners redeemed their terrible poverty and clothed them in dignity. Both men and women everywhere were nice to us. They knew my brother had fought in the Cretan uprisings and they respected him. Me they held in complete contempt; for I was small and slight, and ten hours of riding on a scrambling pony, up and down those terrific heights, was likely to leave me without much starch, especially

since it often happened that we had to rise at three and even at two o'clock in the morning, while our food consisted only of dark bread and cheese, sometimes with milk. After a few days in Montenegro I learned not to speak of lying down. No matter how tired I felt on arriving at our journey's end, after refreshing myself with a cupful of water to wash my face and hands, I was ready to answer the questions asked of me. They were always wanting to know how we fared under the Turk in Constantinople, and they were all greatly surprised to hear that we lived in comparative quiet and friendship. And once — but only once — I mentioned that I even had friends among the Turkish girls. This admission brought such an avalanche of reproach upon me that I never mentioned it again.

I believe a Montenegrin woman is the toughest human being in the world. She does not sleep more than a few hours, and the rest of the time she works in the fields,

in the house, in the market, with the fortitude of a Spartan, with a resignation which is truly Christian. She adores her man, of whom she always speaks as "my brave one." She asks for nothing in the world except the certainty that her man will live to see his sons grow up.

Montenegro, in spite of its geographical position, has nothing to do with Europe, and it came as a shock to me to see — mounting the steeps like undaunted fighters — regular telegraph poles. They were the only things out of place in Montenegro. A woman once pointed them out to me, exclaiming: —

"Oh! my sister, look well at these; for each one of them carries a message to our Prince. Hast thou ever seen such before?"

"Yes," I replied, "they are all over the world, so that your Prince may talk with the whole world."

"Ah, but God is good!" was her answer. And I think she believed that God planted

the telegraph poles in order that the outer world might have word from the Prince of Montenegro.

I had various amusing experiences with these women, less in Cettinje and Podgoritza than in the villages, where I had to share a room with other women. They all assembled to see me undress, and if we stayed more than one day, on the second night they invited all their outside friends to see me go through the ceremony. To them it was one of the most marvelous sights that they had ever witnessed, to see a woman take off her clothes and put on a night-gown. They would take up my garments, one by one, examine them, pass them from hand to hand, and then, laying them aside, take up my underclothing. And here I may say, for the benefit of those who may contemplate traveling through the Balkans, that underclothing of pongee is the best kind to have. It does not require ironing, and it is distasteful to certain

minute Balkan inhabitants, which abound. If possible, pongee sheets also will prove a great comfort.

To return to the subject of undressing to go to bed; in every village it was the greatest mystery to the Montenegrin women why any one should wish to do this. Like a pack of excited monkeys the women would discuss the subject.

"Your clothes are quite clean. Why do you object to keeping them on at night?" they would ask.

Having never analyzed the reason, I searched for it.

"It is more healthful to air one's clothing," I said.

"It can't be healthful," they retorted triumphantly, "or it would have made you big and strong, like us."

"Perhaps," I suggested, "I should have been even smaller."

They shook their heads in disbelief.

Then a very old lady said to me: —

"My child, by taking off your underwear at night, you lose the healthy heat which would keep you warm. Look at us! The only reason we ever take our dresses off is because we do not wish to wear them out."

When, however, I ventured to take a sponge bath, they were actually wrathful. In one of the villages, early in the morning, my hostess invited as many as twenty of her friends; then came to my room, woke me, and told me to get up and take a bath — "for I want my friends to see the unholy use to which you put God's holy water." Fortunately for me I was a Greek, and born and brought up in Turkey, the land of public baths, otherwise I might have died of the shock of finding myself everywhere a public spectacle.

The houses of the poor were so badly built that the air and rain could come in on all sides; and sometimes in the smaller villages my brother and I even had to sleep, fully dressed, on the floor of the living-room, with

both men and women. On one such occasion, when the wind blew through the cracks so gustily that the cloak under which I was lying was repeatedly blown off, my brother, after replacing it over me several times, finally told me to wind it around me, as the Montenegrins did. When I had followed this advice, the hoarse voice of an old Montenegrin at the other end of the room sounded through the night: —

"God be thanked, they have at last found the sense to do as we do."

Yet with all this hardship, I do not remember to have been ill once in Montenegro.

Little as it gave them, the men and the women of this country loved it with a passion amounting to mania, and whenever a new boy was born, there was jubilation all over the village, because there was a new man to fight for Tserna-Gora.

One day, standing on a plateau a little way from Cettinje, looking at the country

all around, I was wondering wherein lay the strength of the sentiment we call patriotism. Montenegro stands in Balkan history as the bravest of all states, because she has resisted the Turk for five hundred years and kept herself independent. Yet that independence meant terrific isolation, abject poverty, and absolute ignorance. My thinking was disturbed by Acheron, who was coming up from below, climbing like a goat. It was wonderful to watch him moving among the rocks. Presently he reached the place where I was standing.

"Acheron," I said, "the Montenegrins are very brave, are they not? They have always managed to keep their country to themselves, have they not?"

"Oh, yes," he replied carelessly, "though why any one should ever have wanted it, I do not know. It is nothing but a heap of stones, and I will tell you how they got here. When God finished making the world, he realized that stones were needed, so he

appointed two angels to take a big bag of stones and distribute them all over the world. When they were flying over Tserna-Gora, the bag split and all the stones fell here."

And from where I stood the reality certainly fitted the tale. Yet what patience, what courage, what ingenuity the women exhibited in raising their crops! There was not a bit of earth on the edge of a precipice, not a deposit of silt in a crevice, that they did not manage to dig up by hand and plant in potatoes. To Acheron I pointed out some of these efforts of the women.

"How they do work!" I cried.

"They have to," he retorted. "You know there are no fairies in Tserna-Gora, and where there are no fairies to make things grow with their breath, the people have to work much harder. Look!" He pointed far below us, where Montenegro and Albania met. "Down there, near our borders, even flowers grow. That is because our

fairies take pity on Tserna-Gora, and cross over and make things plentiful. But you cannot expect them to come up these horrible bare rocks."

At this juncture our hostess joined us, and Acheron went away.

Gospoda Lena put her arm through mine, and asked: —

"What were you looking at, little sister?"

"I was looking down at Albania and her fertile lands."

"Ah, some day Tserna-Gora will wrest that part from the Turks, and then we shall prosper."

"But that part belongs to Albania," I expostulated. "You love your country, and you have fought for centuries to keep your liberty. Why do you wish to subjugate the Albanians? They will fight you as stubbornly as you have fought the Turks."

"The Albanians are very unreasonable," Gospoda Lena returned. "Always they

have been misgoverned. If we took them, for the first time in their history they would be well governed; and besides, it is vital to the welfare of Montenegro to acquire that district on the sea."

As I saw no immediate prospect of Montenegro getting any portion of Albania, I did not argue the question. Also the words of Gospoda Lena had truth in them. The Albanians had constituted the phalanxes of Alexander the Great, then the legions of Rome, and later they were the backbone of the wonderful Turkish army; yet they had never been able to govern themselves, or to stop killing each other, nor had even achieved an alphabet.

Together Gospoda Lena and I walked to the monastery, and presently came upon the tomb of Danillo I, who, on his accession in 1850, at the death of his uncle, Peter II, separated the Church and the State. Up to that time the succession had passed from uncle to nephew, because the reigning

prince was at the same time the archbishop, the Vladika, and naturally was condemned to celibacy. Danillo, however, who was of the marrying kind, and who cherished the ambition to leave a son to succeed him, with the help of Russia brought about the separation of the secular and spiritual governments, and then married brave and capable Princess Darinka. As I stood by his tomb, I leaned over to see whether his epitaph read thus: "Killed by one of his own people, because he did not respect the honor of a woman"; for that was the fate of Danillo. He was shot in the back, on the promenade of Cattaro, by an outraged Tserna-Goritsi husband, eight years after his accession, and died without leaving a son. The present ruler, then Prince, now King Nicholas Petrovitch of Niegush, is his nephew, son of the famous warrior Gospody Mirko.

The epitaph of Danillo, however, like most epitaphs, told no tales; and from there

we passed through various enclosures, and met the Vladika, whose hand I was permitted to kiss. Since the separation of the secular and spiritual powers, another member of the reigning princely family becomes archbishop.

As far as I could see, every bit of comfort in Cettinje, every scrap of luxury, came from Russia, who also gives an allowance to the Prince, has educated his handsome daughters, and, if I am not mistaken, has even dowered them. Most of them are now married. Three of them were at home when we were at the capital, and we saw them on Sunday at service. They mingled freely with the people, and we were presented to them, as every stranger is — or used to be, before Prince Nicholas put aside the simplicity of his ancestors and assumed the antiquated title of king, and with it, I presume, the ceremonies that go with the precious anachronism. This must rob Montenegro of one of her great charms, the simplicity of the

ruler and the patriarchal traditions which united the people to their Prince.

We spent twenty days in Montenegro, a large part of the time on scrawny ponies as sure and trustworthy as the Montenegrins themselves. They took us up the terrific hills and down the precipitous descents with courage and patient endurance, and we learned to like and trust them as we did the people themselves. It is impossible to describe to what extent the life and honor of a woman are secure among these Black-Mountaineers. To them, to harm a woman is to destroy the spring of life, to sin against God Himself.

They are the most frugal and economical of all people in the Balkans; yet they are lavish to extravagance in the matter of embroidered clothes for the men, in weapons, and in powder. At a great fair we witnessed a dance executed by youths and "braves" of Montenegro. At one point in the dance, they leaped high in the air and

discharged their revolvers, and it was as if a battle were going on. They must have shot a thousand times while we were looking at them. We were also invited to many song parties, where the *guslé*, the national musical instrument, was used for accompaniment. The *guslé* is as primitive as the Montenegrin, and like him it is poverty-stricken; yet the Montenegrins love it and play it by the hour, while they sing their national songs, which always tell of the deeds of the "braves."

Though the most abject poverty is theirs, I do not remember to have heard them complain, either about their lack of comforts or about their lack of education — though when it comes to education they were worse off than the *guslé*. The number of women who could read and write, when I was there, was infinitesimal. There was more poverty than in Albania — at least we saw more in the twenty days we were there than we saw during the two months we were in Albania.

How could it be otherwise with the sterility of their land?

One day, one of our hosts, on bidding us good-bye, pointed to the fertility some thousand feet below us.

"We won that from the Turk," he exclaimed bitterly; "but the Treaty of Berlin took it from us and handed it back to Turkey. Yet it is a part of Old Servia; it is inhabited by Serbs; it is drenched with Servian blood, and it was ours, because we had won it. It is now Turkish again, because the Treaty of Berlin decreed that it should be so; because Austria demanded it, and England acquiesced. Well," he ended, "God from above some day will right things that are now wrong."

We left him standing there, a handsome, stately figure in his embroidered clothes. After that we heard it over and over again from people of all classes: "We took it from the Turks, but the Treaty of Berlin, to please Austria, gave it back to the Turks,

and left us hemmed in here, poor and miserable."

A few years ago, when I was in Italy, and an Italian lady was complaining of Queen Elena's inability to cope with her new position, and especially to spend money on her clothes as a queen should, my mind traveled back to the little church in the monastery of Cettinje where Queen Elena, then the young Princess of Montenegro, with her sisters and her parents had come to worship, and I remembered the people — the poor people who were worshiping with her. My Italian friend continued: —

"What do you think she did the other day? She refused to buy a pretty hat — because it cost a hundred francs! 'What makes it so expensive?' she asked. 'This piece of lace is real, Your Majesty,' the milliner explained. 'Then take it off and put on something less expensive. I cannot wear a costly bibelot on my head when people are starving.' Imagine a queen re-

fusing to wear a hundred-franc hat, because people were starving!"

The contemptuous indignation of my Italian friend was great; but I realized that she could not see the world through the eyes of Queen Elena. She had not been to Montenegro; she had not seen the huts, the gaunt women, the rocks, the cultivated crevices between, — and above all she had not seen the frontier posts studded with graves. But I had been to Tserna-Gora: I had seen it all. I had partaken of their frugal fare, and I understood the Queen of Italy. There are some things that become printed on one's soul, and not even the crown of a queen can efface them.

IV

THE EAGLE AND THE SPARROW

At the frontier of Servia we were to part with Acheron. We did not require his services any longer, and he — which was more important — was homesick for his own mountains. We had become accustomed to the wild, untamed creature, just as we had become accustomed to the hardships of his native land; and, like his land, he had been a source of pleasure to us, a source for the discussion and speculation which are so pleasant to the Greek mind. Young as I was, my brother had acquired the habit of talking to me as if I were as old as he, one of his theories being that mind has no age.

In the starlight, seated outside our tents on the last evening that Acheron was to be with us, we told each other that we should miss him greatly.

"Why could n't we take him with us and gradually fit him into our manner of living?" I suggested.

"Because then he would no longer be Acheron, and that which charms us in him would no longer be there. He is to us what he is because of his surroundings, and above all because of his irresponsible nature, which so delightfully blends with his surroundings."

We retired that night without dispelling the feeling of sadness at the impending separation. Generally my brother and I, in talking over matters, managed to clear the surcharged atmosphere. That night we not only did not clear matters for each other, but we were both aware that we did not wish to. Children of the Greeks, we preferred to revel in sadness at the approaching loss of Acheron. We mourned him beforehand, knowing that he would never again be to us what he had been; that he was one of those brief idyls of life impossible to be

revived. We were both in a mood to encourage sadness, to be thrilled by it, and to bathe in its gloom. It is a mood more necessary to the Greeks, I think, than to other nationalities.

Before dawn we were ready for our last day's journey. Acheron was not to accompany us the whole way to the station where we were to take our first railway trip in the Balkans. He was a dramatic manager by instinct, and was going to take leave of us long before we reached the commonplace convenience which adds to the rapidity of locomotion, but robs the traveler of a most attractive means of knowing the country.

It was a cool, overcast dawn, and Acheron was walking by my pony.

"Think, Acheron," I said, "after to-day we shall never see you again."

"I have thought of that, and I am not going to have it so. Your brother may not, but *you* must."

"If my brother does not, neither can I."

"Do you remember the eagles I showed you in Albania?"

I nodded.

"You saw how they lived?"

I nodded again.

"Well," said Acheron, "I don't want you to go to dirty Servia. I want you to go back with me to my mountains and be my eagle woman."

Shamefully I confess that when I understood what he meant, the first feeling in me was the wrath of pride. He, Acheron, the Albanian guide, to ask *me* to be his wife! Then — it may have been the scenery around us, it may have been the life in the heart of Nature which we had led for almost three months, or it may have been something better than pride — I did not answer him from the meanest side in me. Instead, I saw him as he saw himself, an eagle, free and untamed, having his looks, his strength, himself — a great deal to offer.

Fearful lest I might hurt his feelings, or

worse yet his unreasonable Albanian pride, I became at once a woman and a Greek. Tact and cunning were my counselors.

"I cannot go back to the mountains with you, Acheron," I replied, "for I am not an eagle."

"*I* can teach you to be an eagle," he announced, throwing back his head.

I shook mine. "I am only a little sparrow, Acheron, and were I to attempt to be an eagle, I should appear ridiculous or be killed in the attempt."

He looked at me with a new light in his eyes — with the appraising consciousness of an eagle for the sparrow he is proposing to make his mate. Then he smiled encouragement, and the smile banished all doubt from his handsome face.

It has been, and after so many years still is, a great disappointment to me that not for a single instant did the girl of books in me become the girl of nature; that not for one unforgettable second did my heart leap to

meet his. His beauty touched me incontestably, and all along I had been conscious of his charm; but stronger than those two potent elements was the fact that my mind had never accepted him. Between us stood a chasm of thousands of years of intellectual demarkation. It was as impossible for me to bridge it as it was for him even to realize its existence. Yet what I have regretted is that his charm and his beauty did not for the fraction of a second cause my lips to desire his; and that I remained, if not indifferent, at least mentally conscious that we belonged to different civilizations which raised an impassable barrier between us.

"You need not die in the attempt," Acheron corrected me; "for you will have me to protect you. And because you will be my little sparrow, the eagles of Albania will not laugh at you."

"But I am not only a little sparrow, but a horrid little sparrow. I must have a great many things that Albania cannot give me."

"What is there that Albania cannot give you?"

I temporized, and did not give him a direct reply. "You have been seeing me now on my holidays, Acheron, when for a little time I could do many things, such as ride all day, sleep in tents, eat black bread, and, above all, live without books — and those things I cannot do always."

Resentment began to grow in his large brown eyes.

"It is better for you to live as we do. You have grown prettier since the first day I saw you. You remember that day at the priest's? I did not even dream I should ever come to want you. Now I do! And all that because you have lived our way. As for books, I can teach you much more than they can. Why, two years ago a man from Angleterra came to our mountains to learn. He had three times my age, and the priest told me that he had read thousands of books." Acheron shrugged his shoulders

and snapped his fingers. "Why, the man knew *nothing!* I had to teach him everything! Books!" he sneered. "Does Allah write books? No, he makes Albania, and people come to Albania to see and learn. Come with me to my mountains, and I will teach you everything, and make you grow stronger and prettier every day."

Over his wild beauty there came a little tenderness and the mist of loveliness was in his eyes; and I am happy that the mother of men in me, rather than tact and cunning, took the lead.

"I will tell you what I will do, Acheron: I will not come with you now to your mountains; but some time I will come back and try to learn how to be an eagle woman. If I can do it, then I shall be proudly yours."

He sulked for several minutes.

"I have not offered myself to any woman before, and there is not a woman in Albania that I could not have. Since I ask you, you

ought to come to me at once and not stop to bargain."

"It is not bargaining, Acheron, it is thinking. There are so many things I am accustomed to have."

"You will have *me*, and that is more than all things put together." His white teeth flashed into a smile; yet with it there came a gleam into his eyes which proved him wholly Albanian. In the æons during which we humans have struggled onward from our remotest ancestors, we must have acquired some of the traits of the animals who people the earth with us; and in the eyes of Acheron there shone the savagery of the panther. Nor did his words alleviate the gleam in his eyes.

"I have a mind to do as I fancy — to take you now with me to the mountains." He glanced at the figure of my brother ahead. "I can easily kill *him*."

I saw that he was seriously considering the idea.

"That would not be mating, Acheron; that would only be the great and powerful eagle dragging a poor sparrow to his nest — and you would find that in the dragging the claws of the eagle would inflict a mortal wound on the little sparrow. You are too proud an eagle to do such a thing. The best plan is still mine: I must come back to Albania, and if then we can teach the little sparrow to soar to the heights of the eagle, without getting dizzy, than I shall be yours, and you shall teach me the great things of Albania."

He considered the proposition for fully a minute.

"I believe that what I like best in you is the way you put things, and if I were to take you by force, you might not like to talk with me as you do now."

"I should not talk at all. I should always be weeping for my brother, and his slayer would be for me the most hateful person in the world; because you see, Acheron," I

explained further, "mating is n't only the mating of what we can see, but the mating of the souls we cannot see. If you were to drag away my body, you could never have my soul."

"What is a soul?" he asked.

"That thing which makes us dream wondrous dreams in the daytime when we are not asleep."

He laughed. "Do you ever dream when you are not asleep?"

"Don't you?"

"Yes; but I am the son of a fairy."

"Well, I dream, too, and if you were to take me by force, I could never dream again in the daytime."

My wild Albanian suitor turned upon me the first glance of intellectual light I had ever seen in his eyes. "If we could only save the things we dream!" he exclaimed. "Why can't we?"

"But we can, when we are really mated."

"When are you coming back, then? You

must come very soon. If you stay away too long you will grow old, and I may no longer wish to marry you."

At parting, he boldly told my brother that I had promised to come back again and learn to be his eagle woman.

Mano did not look at me. He only asked Acheron earnestly if he thought I was capable of the great task.

"Oh, she will have me to teach her," he replied confidently.

They shook hands.

"I should be proud to have you for a brother," Mano said, and presented him with a revolver of a new make such as Acheron did not possess, and promised to send him a further supply of cartridges besides those he had with him.

After we were left alone, Mano reined back his pony beside mine. "Did Acheron make love to you?" he asked, with what I thought was amusement.

I laughed. "I don't know that you would call it 'making love.' At least it is not the kind I have read of in books."

"That kind you will never meet, little girl; for the people who write that love-making are sober, and those who make love are drunk with a liquor made in heaven." Then he threw back his head and did laugh. "To think that Acheron should have wanted you, of all human beings."

This time his amusement hurt.

"Why not? Because I am not pretty?"

"It is not beauty that makes a woman loved — but you are no more a woman than a cloud is."

Because I was afraid that he might be right, I argued vehemently, and in the midst of my argument I tumbled on the basic fact that Acheron *had* wanted me for his wife.

The cold, intellectual gleam of the Greek race was in my brother's eyes again. "You must learn to look at things with reason," he commented. "If Acheron had really

wanted you — as a man wants a woman — do you think for an instant that he would have gone back without you? Do you believe if — for a moment only — you had kindled the fire in that wild breast that you could have put it out with clever phrases? By this time you would be seated in front on his horse, going up his mountain, and I should be lying somewhere by the roadside with a bullet-hole in my back."

I had not intended to tell my brother that such an arrangement had passed through the mind of Acheron; but we were two Greeks at that moment, and if the light in my eyes in any way resembled what I saw in his, the process which goes to make an intellectual must have eliminated the panther influence long ago. His was cold, like that of the alchemist, searching for some verity; and I was willing to lend him all the aid I could.

"Yes," I said, "Acheron contemplated such a method. He put it simply: to kill you and take me."

"Did he, indeed?" Mano rode on in silence. A little later he reined in his horse and inquired: "How did you dissuade him?"

There had existed a long argument between my brother and myself about the mind and its power. I took it up again now: —

"You see, Mano, although you are older and cleverer, and have read ever so many more books than I, to-day I have the proof that I am nearer the truth than you, when I maintain that if we fully use our inheritance of mind, we can go safely into the den of a wild beast or walk on the waves of the sea."

He clucked to his horse and we did not speak again of Acheron. Late that night, in Servia, in the house of General Petrovitch, after I had gone to bed, my brother came to kiss me good-night. Bending over me he asked earnestly: —

"Tell me, little girl, did you not even wish to kiss Acheron?"

"I am sorry to confess, brother, I did not."

He gave my head a pat. "Well, I have no reason to complain, for once, that you were nothing but a cloud. Had you kissed him —" He broke off. After a slight pause he concluded: "You and I do not mind dying. What we care about is the manner of our exit."

V

SERVIA, THE UNDAUNTED

ONE day's journey, and we passed from Montenegro into Servia — Servia whose people were the same as those of Montenegro, yet with what a difference! The standards, the attitude toward life, even the material comforts were of a different world. It was the Balkans still, far behind the rest of Europe; but the Balkans a trifle mellowed, a trifle civilized, a trifle humanized.

The twenty-one days we had spent in the stony parcel of land ruled over by Prince Nicholas, whose ability would have done justice to a greater kingdom, had been very trying ones to me, personally, less for the physical hardships I had endured than for those my pride had been called upon to suffer. I found tremendous joy in life; but the thought that came to haunt me more

and more was: What was life to get out of me? A young girl, slender as a reed, who needed to lie down and rest after a day in the saddle, and who stood aghast at the tremendous amount of work performed by the Montenegrin women, appeared an insignificant atom, compared to these capable women of the Black Mountains. My last hostess, in her perplexity over the reason for my existence, turned to her husband and asked: —

"Master Nikita, can you imagine this young girl ever giving sturdy sons to her husband?"

The husband caressed with his two hands the belt which carried his many weapons and shook his head doubtfully.

"That is why the Greeks are of no account nowadays," he replied. "They pamper their women, and they school them as if they were boys. Why, the brother of the *gospoditja* here tells me, without shame, that she has read hundreds of books, and

can poke her inquisitive little nose into many foreign tongues."

"I call it positively indelicate," my hostess concluded — my hostess, a lady of the court, who could neither read nor write, but who had given to her master five sturdy sons and a few girls besides.

In this wise, during each of the twenty-one days that I had passed in the land of the brave, I, who had gone there with a pretty good opinion of my small person, saw myself a little more depreciated in value. Not that the Montenegrins meant to be unkind or rude; but they were a simple people, and their amazement at me was so great that, though a silent people, it lent them speech. And so much did they marvel at my slenderness and smallness that I began to wonder myself if I were not really a pretty useless baggage.

Then we came into the land of the Serbs. We knew no one at our first stopping-place, and went to the inn. It was late in the

afternoon. The hostelry was well lighted, and with pomp and ceremony we were conducted to one of the three rooms which composed its sleeping-apartments. It was unpretentious and uncurtained, but it had a real bed, a chair, and actually — I am not making this up — it had a small mirror hanging on the wall.

In Servia, as we gradually discovered, the price for lodging depended on how many people occupied a room. If you are willing to pay for the space of a whole room, it is yours. If you are willing to share it with others, then you pay only for the space you use. At times these three rooms may have held twenty or thirty people!

After Albania and Montenegro, this inn seemed sumptuous. I said that we knew no one in the place; but there was an officer whom my brother had met casually in Paris, and him he wished to hunt up in order to procure information about our journey through Servia.

"You lie down. I will order dinner, go out and hunt up Petrovitch, and come back presently," my brother said.

I threw myself on the bed. A few minutes later mine host entered unceremoniously, carrying a pitcher of water and a glass. He filled the glass and offered it to me. I sat up and drained its contents with pleasure. He refilled it, and offered it to me again. This, too, I drank, more slowly, and when I had finished, I had consumed all the water I desired.

The Servian patiently refilled the glass and presented it to me for the third time.

"I do not wish any more," I said.

"Ah, but do!" he coaxed. "In the name of the Trinity, for welcome and good luck."

He was so earnest about it that I drank the third glass also.

"God bless you!" he said, beaming upon me, "God bless you!"

He went away, and I lay down again, only to be redisturbed, half an hour later,

when he appeared with a cup of coffee and a slice of bread. There was no use trying to rest. I got up, drank the coffee, and began to talk with him.

"How big is this place?" I asked.

"Not very big." He shook his head sadly. "Nothing is big in Servia — not even Belgrade or Nish. How could it be otherwise, with the shadow of Austria falling on us like a blight, and preventing our growth; with Bulgaria, on the other side, hating us; with the Turks holding the better part of the lands inhabited by Serbs; and with our long, long conscription?" He lowered his voice. "And now, even God is against Servia. The king — ah! the king, and his terrible queen! What can Servia do with Austria, Bulgaria, Turkey, and God against her?" He leaned toward me, as if I could give him an answer to the riddle. Could I tell him why God was against Servia — giving them first the unspeakable Milan, and now his son, a degenerate?

Could I tell him what was to become of Servia?

All my fatigue had gone from me. Was it the coffee or the intense human interest aroused in my heart? Servian history I had known long before I had ever thought of going through the Balkans. It is a history made up of great battles and great glories. It contains Kossovo, fought and lost in the fourteenth century, and glorious as any of the battles of ancient Greece. Servia then fought against Turkey, as Belgium fought against the Germanic invasion, in our time. Like Belgium she fell, but there fell with her Sultan Amurad; and though Turkey was successful — as Germany was — the crest of the wave broke, and Europe was saved. Servia's bleeding body, like Belgium's, lay across the pathway of the conqueror, a bulwark he could not scale.

From the glorious past of a great Servia, I was brought back to a small Servia, harassed and hampered, and misgoverned by

the degenerate son of a licentious king. The innkeeper, the coffee-cup in his hand, stood before me, demanding: —

"My young lady, what can we do? Even threatened on all sides we could still be something of a nation, had we a man as a king."

"Why don't you rise and depose him?"

"Yes, but if we do, there may be a revolution. We shall be weakened, and Austria will take us."

I leaned forward and touched the innkeeper's arm. The last three months I had spent in Albania and Montenegro.

"Why don't you kill him?" I asked simply.

With a thud the innkeeper put the cup on the table, and, bending over, kissed the hem of my dress; but he spoke no word.

"What is happening?" my brother asked, entering the room.

"I have just asked him why they did n't kill Alexander?"

"H'm!" my brother muttered. "You are getting pretty well acclimated."

"And monsieur?" the innkeeper asked hopefully. "Does monsieur agree with his sweet sister?"

"My dear fellow, the wonder to me is that you have not done it long ago."

The innkeeper beamed, and left the room to prepare us a very good dinner.

"Do you know what broods over this place, and indeed over the whole of Servia?" my brother asked.

"What?"

"The longing of the people to be delivered from Alexander and Draga. We may see the thing done while we are here. The Servians are a slow-moving people, but they will not stand such a king forever. In Albania or Montenegro it would have taken just the time to pull the trigger of a rifle. But now make ready and let us dine; for we are going to leave the hotel presently."

"Where are we going?"

"I found Petrovitch, and he will not hear of our staying in an inn."

"But I thought you only knew him slightly."

"That does n't seem to make any difference. He simply will not permit us to remain here."

When an hour later we were driven from the hotel, we were taken, not to Petrovitch's home, but to that of his father, because it was a better one. The old gentleman received us outside his house, and told us how happy he was to have us. He held my hand and caressed it.

"You must be very tired, my pretty child," he said. "I do not see what your brother was thinking of to subject such a delicate thing as you to the fatigue of many hours of horseback traveling."

"Don't you despise me for being delicate?" I asked.

"Despise you! And does God despise the roses?"

I almost wept with gratitude. Only twelve hours ago and nothing but scorn had been heaped upon me, because I was not a useful cabbage.

His wife received us indoors, and was delighted to welcome two people into her home of whose existence she had been unaware two hours before and who were thrust upon her at a moment's notice. Like her husband, she begged God to witness that she would do her best for us — which she did.

In a little while I was put to bed, but not before a delightful foot-bath had been given me, my hostess considering that essential to draw the fatigue from my body; and I slept the sleep of the comforted, between sheets that smelt of rose-leaves, and with a sense of being in a land where women were no longer valued for their physical endurance alone.

We spent three days with the old general and his family, and met all his friends, both

in our house and in theirs. After that we were passed on from place to place, like royalty. When we were leaving one town for another, our host and his friends were solely occupied with the thought: To whom shall they go next? Who would be the most likely persons to give us comfort, and to show us Servia at its best? They all discussed it, and invoked the help of God to guide them in their efforts. Sometimes we tricked them, and instead of going to the town where we said that we were going, we stopped at inns in by-places — not that the whole of Servia, judged by European standards, is not a by-place; but we stopped at by-places even for Servia. Thus we saw the country both as honored guests and as simple tourists.

The impression the Servians made on us both — and especially on me as a girl — was a charming one. Unlike the Albanians and the Montenegrins, they could talk of the past without boasting, and without

always dwelling on the great empire that once had been theirs. Although their history is most heroic, it was of the present that they thought — for their doubtful future that they planned. The shadow of Austria was black and menacing even then; and the treachery of Bulgaria, whom Austria was ever using as a weapon against Servia, was feared everywhere. To these anxieties was added the old, old fear of Turkey. They were indeed a trapped nation, surrounded by enemies, governed by a degenerate pair, and helpless through poverty. Yet with it all they remained chivalrous, and their attitude toward women had some of the charm of the age of knight-errantry.

The women of Servia of all classes admired openly, but without envy, my small intellectual accomplishments. They would sit around me and listen, without understanding a word, when officers came in to talk with me in French and Italian. They prized education as only the people of

America do, and they looked upon it as the greatest sign of civilization. Over and over again they remarked that Greece was the most civilized country in the world, since it was the first to give equal education to men and to women. "We here are so poor we can hardly educate our men," they would say simply. Poor little Servia, hard-pressed and tired, always preparing for the great struggle that was to come. No wonder her streets were filled with soldiers and officers. No wonder there was the severest conscription, and yet she alone was not dreaming of ascendancy over the other Balkan States, but only of commercial and educational civilization, to fit her to take her place as a European State.

At that time there was little even of primary education for women. The daughters of the better class could read and write, and I knew several who could speak French; yet I did not meet a single girl who was still a student after her fourteenth year. They

were very childlike, with a great deal of innate refinement. Unlike the Albanians and Montenegrins, the girls of the better classes were secluded, their occupation consisting of needlework, visiting, and church-going. The women of the lower classes, like those in the other Balkan States, worked in the fields; yet during the six weeks we spent in Servia I never saw a woman carrying a package, large or small, in the company of a man who was carrying nothing. The Servian men seemed to have a tender attitude toward the women, and to be anxious to shield them as much as possible from the drudgery of the daily struggle.

We were at several fairs, both for cattle and for other wares, yet I never saw a drunken man. The whole Servian nation seemed singularly sober. When they wished to offer us of their best, they offered us water. Those who do not like the Servians call them water-logged. Water-logged although they may be, they have never

shirked their duty to fight for any part of Servia that needed their blood.

Compared with Albania, the natural beauty of Servia may seem tame. One is rarely awe-struck by Servian scenery. It is of a different sort: it soothes and caresses; it is ever present and becomes a part of the daily life. Though one rarely exclaims "Oh!" one is always aware of it, whether it be the blue waters of the Danube or the purple hills in the distance. That which really compels the imagination in Servia is the past: I had the same feeling I always have in Florence, where the present recedes and the past becomes predominant. As in the old Tuscan city I always hear the *clink! clink!* of the chains falling across the narrow streets, and the crash of the stones hurtled down from the battlemented houses, so in Servia the present seems to vanish and I live again in the Servia of old — in the time of the great Nemanza princes, in the time of the immortal Tsar Lazar. I march the

streets with the Servian armies, defending their lands, inch by inch — now against the Bulgar, their first oppressor, and then against the Turk, the second and more terrible invader.

So intensely did I feel the past that I made everybody tell me of it; and they told it, not in the grandiose way in which an Albanian would have told of the imaginary millions of Turks they held back, when Iskander Bey was alive, nor with the ferocity with which a Montenegrin would have told of his country's bloody exploits, but with the calm fatality of a nation which fought, and fell — fought as fights a lion at bay, and fell, like him, before overpowering numbers. But in the past they were never content to remain. Invariably they would return to the present — to the degradation of being ruled by a man who was neither brave nor intelligent; and they were ashamed to look you in the face, because they could not speak proudly of their ruler.

When we were in Belgrade I hurt the feelings of my host and hostess by expressing the wish to see the kingly pair.

"We beg of you not to see them," they implored. "We do not deserve such punishment."

By accident I did see the king and queen, and I understood the horror of their subjects for them. There is no use dwelling now either on their looks or on their conduct. Servia to-day is ruled over by a man and a warrior: a man who can rule in peace and lead in battle. We have seen the Servians in three consecutive wars, and we know what they can do when they are led by a man.

Servia enjoys the same advantage as Montenegro in being entirely Orthodox, and not split up into different religious sects. I went to church every Sunday and every holiday, and although their Church is the Church of Greece, the difference between the churches is as vast as the millions of

books which separate the development of the two nations.

The Greeks of the better classes — and all the Greeks who are educated immediately belong to the better classes, whether they be rich or poor — take their religion mentally, while the Slavs take theirs emotionally. Being still children in civilization, their God is not a part of their soul, but something grandiose, holy, barbaric, and revengeful. He enters into their lives more as the punisher, as the inflicter of pain, than as the daily bearer of forgiveness and help. His name is more often evoked in Servia than in Attica; yet one feels man's unity with God in Greece: in Servia, rarely.

In spite of this, the Servians' attitude toward the poor is brotherly and democratic. At the doors of the churches, immediately after service, the bakers appear with their wares, and with them all the poor and the maimed. And as the people come out of the church, they buy bread and give it to

the poor, and the latter put it in bags which they have brought along for the purpose. The Servians have little, but that little they divide — always in the name of the barbaric Deity whose pleasure it is to torture Servia. Even when they were teaching me Servian, for every sentence I mastered their inexorable God was called upon to listen to me.

A Servian may look ferocious or gaudy, according to localities, yet when one begins to talk with him one finds him a delightful child. I never felt so old and so learned as I did in Servia, for the little I knew was very much admired and very much praised.

Servia, like the rest of the Balkans, is subject to terrific storms. We were at Nish when one of these storms broke upon us as if it were going to annihilate the town. Several officers came to the house where we were staying, to help us pass away the time when we could not go out. They all spoke French, some even very well, except that their construction was Servian. They offered

to play cards, and our hostess, her two daughters, and I played with them, while the lightning and the thunder raged outside. In the midst of our game I asked a question, and gradually the cards were laid on the table while we talked on and on, of Servia, of Austria, of Bulgaria, and of Turkey, until the storm had worn itself out. It was always thus: no matter what we started doing, we always came back to politics and to the hemmed-in state of Servia. That afternoon the officers were amazed at my knowledge of the Balkan situation, and especially of the Treaty of Berlin.

"But your history is my history," I argued. "I belong to the Balkans as well as you."

"What!—you belong to the Balkans!—how can that be?" they exclaimed. "Greece is the most educated country in the world—how can it be a Balkan State?"

To them, somehow, the Balkans were not so much a matter of geography as of educa-

tion — and I am not sure but that they were right.

Our progress through Servia revealed the land — in spite of its beauty and its fertility — as a bleeding, maimed thing. It is true that in traveling on the Pirot Road one was no longer obliged to gaze upon the ghastly tower of skulls which formerly obtruded itself upon the passer-by: a small chapel is now built over it, and only those who wish to know how the Turks treated the Servians need enter. This Chela Kula, as it is called in Turkish, is a grim monument, worthy of the Balkans. It commemorates the heroic defense of a little Servian stronghold by Stefan Sindgelick. When finally the Turks brought up an absolutely overwhelming force, and all was lost, Sindgelick fired his pistol into the powder magazine and blew up what remained of the Servians, together with a great number of Turks.

The pasha was so enraged at the loss inflicted on the Turks that he ordered the

heads of all the Servians to be brought to him, paying as much as twenty-five piastres ($1.25) apiece for them; and he had them embedded in rows on the outside of a tower of brick and cement, their faces staring forth at their conquered country. From time to time, however, relatives of these dead Servians dug the heads out of the cement and buried them; and, as I have said, a chapel is now erected over the tower, and only four skulls remain to tell the tale of this most gruesome deed.

But if the Chela Kula is now covered from view, everywhere else — in towns, in villages, by the roadside, and in lonely mountain passes — we came across monuments erected to the Servians who had fallen defending their country; and these monuments are as simple as the Servian nature itself. They are plain stones, sometimes solitary, sometimes in small groups, and again in battalions; and on each of them, carved in flat relief, is the full-length por-

trait of a man who died for his country. They are all painted, too, and look like toy soldiers — not that they are small, because some of them are six feet in height; but the anatomy and coloring are those of a toy soldier. They were all painted presenting arms, and the effect was ghastly, especially if one came upon them at dusk. Surrounded by these dead heroes, all Servia gave one the impression of being a vast Thermopylæ, and each one of these stones seemed to give the same message: "Go tell to our beloved Servia, O stranger passer-by, that faithful to her laws we are buried here."

Indeed, the whole of Servia is an appeal of the dead to the quick. It is the past presenting arms to the present. It is a song of battle, sung by the dead to the living. And while in Florence the past is only a background, in Servia it dominates the present: the souls of the dead guide the souls of the living. This difference in effect may be because Florence has outlived the

past, while to-day Servia is facing the same problems, is fighting the same battles, as in the past.

The realization of this came upon me very strongly at a great cattle fair. It was a soft summer day. The cattle were standing or lying about; the pigs with their young were huddled in holes they had themselves dug in the ground; and the people were dancing — for the Servians will dance on the slightest provocation. The women were dressed in gay colors, with gorgeous, barbaric sashes, which the men held while dancing. It was the *kolo*, their favorite dance; they were in a circle, the men coquetting with the women — and the attitude of the men toward the women was quite different from that of the Albanians, Montenegrins, or Bulgars toward *their* women. It was more Latin than Balkan.

We were in a valley, the soft breezes blowing, and the men and women dancing and making love to one another — yet high

above us stood a fortress, and the sentry passing to and fro stood out against the sky. My eyes traveled from the gay group of dancers to the fortress above and to the grassy mounds which I knew concealed death-dealing cannon. How emblematic the scene was of Servia — Servia, whose frontiers were drawn by the Treaty of Berlin not for the good of the Servians, but to please Austria: and Austria's ultimate aim was to make of brave Servia a Hapsburg State. The pathos of the little kingdom became intensely my own: though Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, Rumania, and Montenegro can look upon the freedom of the seas, Servia alone cannot raise her eyes without meeting those of sentries, guarding her borders against hostile lands.

In spite of all this, or perhaps because of it, there is something soft and tender about the women of Servia. In their melancholy voices they would sing the ballads of the past, yet when we were able to talk together,

they spoke of the wonders of love and marriage with a feeling quite foreign to the average woman of Albania, Montenegro, and Bulgaria.

It was while staying at Nish as the guest of an old Serb family that I witnessed a curious ceremony, both pathetic and humorous. On the third day of my visit I noticed great preparations in our household and among the various relatives who were always coming and going. Food was prepared in great quantities; boxes were filled with small candles, quantities of incense and incense-burners; while table-linen, table-silver, and rugs were made into packages.

On inquiring the reason for all this I was told that the morrow was the anniversary of the death of the head of the family, and that they were all going to the cemetery. Of course I wished tremendously to go — but was that according to Servian etiquette? Before going to bed I confided my wish to

my hostess, begging her to forgive me if I was doing something wrong.

"Not at all, my child," she answered. "You see, as our guest we could only ask you to share our joys; but when it came to our sorrows, you would have to ask to share them with us — and we are very sorry that such a sad date should occur during your stay."

The morrow was a soft, lovely summer day, with all the fragrance of late June. We started in several carriages, one of which carried the necessary provisions for the observance of sorrow. At the cemetery the candles were placed in rows on the grave of the departed, and lighted; the incense-holders were filled with incense and lighted; and the rugs and flowers were strewn all about. Then the women fell on their knees, and wept and wailed, and told the departed one, in endearing terms, how much they missed him, and how they wished he would return to them. Naturally I entered into

the mood of the mourners, and prayed with them; whereupon the women imparted the news to the departed one that a young girl from the land of the Greeks was with them, and praying for the repose of his soul.

After a while, priests in magnificent robes — presents from Russia — arrived, kneeled by the grave, and prayed for the dead. The service lasted about half an hour; and when it was over, all dried their eyes and began to prepare the banquet. It was considered a bad omen to know the number of people present, but surreptitiously I counted them: men, women, priests, and servants, there were forty-nine. We had a sumptuous feast of cold viands and all sorts of delicacies, besides wine of the country, which, in my opinion, is superior to that of the Rhine or of Italy. The best table-linen and the best plate were used. The Servians, as I understood, at that time entertained very little in their homes, and all their display was kept for these funeral feasts.

While we were eating, one after another the mourners related humorous anecdotes which had happened in connection with the deceased. Since I had been in Servia nearly six weeks by this time, and since they were teaching me Servian every minute, I could follow their conversation pretty well, and whenever they thought I did not understand, they would translate for me. I must say that the whole scene was very funny, although the elders tried to keep a decorous countenance. As for the young people, they were ready to explode with laughter, and only the strictest etiquette kept them quiet.

The eldest son of the family, who was seated next to me, said: "*Gospodilja*, it is not necessary for you to refrain from laughing aloud, because — although you are good enough to share our sorrow — you did not know my father."

Not being of a laughing disposition, I replied that I did not wish to laugh aloud.

"Perhaps not," he agreed; "only if you

should happen to wish to laugh, the young folks will have to laugh with you, out of politeness — you see?"

I did see, and it struck me as so funny that I burst out laughing; and then all the young people — and, I must admit, the old ones, too — proved to be very polite.

After hours of feasting and anecdoting, we rose. The candles had burned to the ground. The incense had flooded the place with its perfume. The silver, the rugs, the plates, and the table-linen were gathered up. What food was left was placed in separate baskets, and at the entrance to the cemetery I understood why; for there were assembled all the beggars of Nish, each with a basket on his knees. Among those baskets the remnants of the funeral feast were divided with scrupulous exactness; and each of the beggars, on receiving his share, begged God to forgive the sins of the departed and to give repose to his soul.

We did not reach home till very late, and

the young people told me that we were to dine out that evening. But dining out did not mean going to a restaurant: in fact, I doubt whether at that time Servian families ever went to hotels to dine, and I do not remember having seen any restaurants. Dining out meant buying our food from the street venders.

Servia possesses certain facilities, which, if they could be introduced into America, would go far to solving the housekeeping problems of many classes. At meal hours, different venders sally forth, and, at the top of their lungs, advertise their eatables. One man sells soup, another fish, another meat, while yet another dispenses pastry. Thus anybody can acquire a four-course dinner, deliciously cooked, for the great expense of from ten to fifteen cents. These venders provide not only the food, but, when desired, plates, forks, and knives, and many a time my brother and I joined the diners-out in the streets of Servia.

On the funeral day we did not sally forth into the streets, neither did we accept the plates and forks of the venders: we sat decorously in our dining-room, while the servants bought the food and brought it to the table.

Six weeks, of course, is a short time in which to judge a nation, and my impressions of the Servians may be wrong. All I can say, however, is that during the six weeks we were there I did not see a single drunken man, or a street brawl of any kind, although we attended every fair on our way. That we were Greeks even seemed to exempt our passports from examination, and once a body of students hailed us in Greek. Not that Servia and Greece have not had periodical skirmishes, or that they had not questions to settle between them: for Macedonia was yet undivided. But the Servian has the great virtue of not being a perpetual hater. When he fights you, he

loathes you with his whole soul: when it is over, he does not even remember it, and if you recall it to him, he deprecates the whole affair and observes how sad it was. If you should ask him if he would fight again, he would nod, and say, "Quarrels, you know, must be settled — but why dwell on them afterwards?"

When the men discussed the political situation with us, they spoke of the Treaty of Berlin, which had condemned them to years of misery and bloodshed, much as an injured child would speak, who felt the injustice of the grown-ups, yet knew he was incapable of coping with it. They would invariably end by saying: —

"It is so long now that God is punishing us! Surely, some day, He will stop and give us comfort. We have suffered for over six centuries: is it possible that He cannot yet be satisfied?"

Perhaps the God they feared so much is at last satisfied. Perhaps when this terrible

war is ended, He will decide to give Servia the chance she has been looking for so long — unless the great Christian Powers again squabble among themselves, and again call upon Servia to pay the price.

VI

THE GYPSIES OF THE BALKANS

On leaving Servia, my brother and I decided to travel through the country called Old Servia, which before the last Balkan war against Turkey still formed a part of the Ottoman Empire. It was here that we came more into contact with the gypsies, although these nomads could be found anywhere throughout the peninsula. They were a migratory population, but like the swallows always remade their nests in the same places. Remaking their nests consisted of unharnessing the half-starved, scrawny ponies from their dilapidated, springless wagons, and turning them loose to graze; then pitching their tents, which harmonized admirably with ponies and wagons.

When settled, the gypsies immediately set up their industries, and remained in this locality until they had collected enough

money for the next migration. They traveled in companies, each one consisting of a clan united by ties of blood or marriage, and there were numerous babies to be tended in each encampment. These same gypsies of the Balkans came down to Constantinople and encamped in vacant places, on the Bosphorus, or on the Sea of Marmora. There I had first met them, had come to know them, and — I confess — to like them, although they enjoyed a reputation of the worst. There was no crime that could not be imputed to them. Fact and fancy were mingled in the sinister deeds attributed to them; for the people of the East have vivid imaginations, and the Fourth Crusade, the Bulgars, and the reign of the Turks have helped to stimulate their powers of belief in evil.

Wherever the gypsies encamped, the Devil's own halo encircled the place, and God-fearing citizens would think many times before passing their camp after dusk. In-

deed, I was told by my nurse that whenever the gypsies came to our island, she could see the sparks of hell during the whole night, and hear the cries and groans of the wicked ones whose souls were under the heels of the dark power. Considering that blacksmithing is one of the industries of the gypsies, and that they work at any hour of the night, it is quite natural that the hammer and anvil should be heard in the darkness, and that the sparks from the anvil should be seen.

I was only eight when I first spoke to a gypsy girl. A large encampment had settled down not far from our house, and one day, on returning from a visit with my mother, I came upon a girl, seated under a tree and moaning as I had never heard a human being moan. I was some distance ahead of my mother, and stopped and spoke to the little girl. I touched her on the shoulder several times before she raised her head, and then I saw that she was hugging

a small dog, whose blood was dripping over the sole garment she had on. There were no tears in the girl's eyes, only misery. As my mother had not yet come up to us, I kneeled before her and the dog.

"Is he dead?" I asked.

"Not yet," she answered somberly, "but he is going to die, and when he does, I shall take the life of the man who did this."

The little dog's tongue was hanging out of his mouth, and his eyes expressed the misery so graphically reflected in the eyes of his mistress. Poor little gypsy cur, like his mistress, unwelcome upon the face of the earth! Ever since I can remember I have had a feeling of sympathy for all those whose footsteps were dogged by unexplainable scorn. Out of that feeling I next spoke: —

"The dog may still be saved. Come with me to my home, and let my sister see him. She is wonderful with sick animals."

A gleam of hope came into the eyes of the

little girl. She rose quickly, and then I saw how profusely the dog was bleeding.

"Do try to stop his bleeding," I cried, "or he will lose all his blood before we reach our home."

She put her little brown hands, the fingers covered with extravagant paste jewelry, over the little creature's wound. Moved by the misery before me, I offered my best unused handkerchief, and told her to put it on his wound. To my horror, Valerie bent her head and licked the wound, and only then applied the handkerchief.

My mother now came up to us, gave a glance at the gypsy and her dog, but said not a single word even when I explained to her that they were going home with us.

At home, my sister bathed the wound and carefully bandaged it. She told the gypsy that she must let the dog stay with us for a few days. The girl hung her head and considered, and only consented to let him remain behind after my sister had declared

that the dog might die if he were moved. She dropped on her knees, threw her arms around him, and poured out in her outlandish tongue the anguish she was suffering in the separation. I did not understand her language, but from her face I realized her misery, and I ran to my mother, who had left us after we had reached the house.

"Mamma," I cried, "the little gypsy dog is going to stay with sister till he is cured, and his mistress is weeping so! Can't we let her stay in the house, too?"

"What you ask is absolutely impossible," my mother replied severely. "What is more, I never again wish you to speak to a gypsy. Do you understand — never again!"

"You did n't seem to object out there."

"I did not know in what language to speak to you. Those gypsies know so many. I was afraid she might understand and revenge herself on us."

"Now she is in the house," I persisted. "Can't we, just for once, let her stay

with her dog and not be separated from him?"

My mother looked at me, and from experience I knew that the last word had been said. I left her, and eight years old though I was, I began that day to wonder why they engaged priests to teach us the Gospel of the Nazarene and then never let us practice it.

The few days that the gypsy dog remained in our house his mistress spent as near our windows as she was permitted to by those who kicked her about whenever my sister or I was not looking. The dog was cured, and when, leaping with joy, he was placed in her arms, she was so grateful she wanted to kiss my sister, but my mother, who happened to be present, motioned to my sister not to permit it.

Although I was forbidden to speak with the gypsies, I did so whenever I could clandestinely. My little gypsy, who was named after Empress Elizabeth's favorite daughter, Valerie, was a source of delight

to me. I told my sister how she, too, could speak with Valerie if she wanted to; but she exclaimed: —

"I can't. Mamma forbids it."

"She will never find it out," I suggested.

"But I shall have to confess it to the priest, and he will reprove me — and so he will you," she ended.

"I don't mind," I replied. As a matter of fact I did not mean to tell the priest; for I had already begun to settle my affairs without his help.

My friendship with Valerie was dear to me. First, because it had in it an element of adventure, since I had to see her without being found out. Second, because she told me of their travels and their way of living. From Valerie I learned much more than I did later at college from a full course in sociology.

They did not come to Constantinople every year. Their travels extended from there all across the Balkans and into

Austria, and as they did not travel by express trains, it took them a long time to go over so much ground. From the tales Valerie told me I was quite aware that the code of my new friend was different from mine. Lie the gypsies did, steal they did, and, when it was necessary, they killed. Yet Valerie made everything quite natural, and I accepted her code quite as naturally. Philosophy and tolerance are inborn in a child's nature. It is only later, as the various teachings of our elders take root in our souls, that we acquire standards and begin to judge the world from the particular brand of civilization that is ours.

Thanks to my early clandestine friendship with Valerie, when my brother and I were traveling through the Balkans I was able to talk freely with the gypsies, and did not avoid them with the superstitious hatred which is our heritage in the East. We used to come upon their encampments everywhere in the wilds of Old Servia, and they

certainly were a villainous crew to look at — the men with their long hair and longer earrings, the women in their fantastic raiment, their hair dressed in veils of such daring colors that they screamed at one as far as one could see them. And then, when we came nearer there was the filth!

People will tell you in the Balkans that a gypsy camp is to be avoided; yet I used to hail them with pleasure. They added to the wildness and savagery of Nature around us. One day, several miles from Uskub, our horses raised their heads and listened to something we could not hear. At first we thought they were smelling human blood; but we came to the conclusion that something different caused their sniffing, since no tremors of fear were passing through them. Reining them in, we listened; but could hear nothing, and started to ride on. After a while a sound came to us, a sound like the faint moaning of a torrent. The effect on our horses was very peculiar: they seemed

to have forgotten their fatigue, and were sidling along in a way that made me nervous.

Finally we made out that it was weird strains of music that reached us. "We are nearing a gypsy camp," my brother said with relief. "Some one is playing with more fire than usual."

Within sight of the camp the music came to us in its full beauty, or its full horror, I do not know which. In subsequent years I have heard many great masters play; but such music as this I have never heard. It was heavenly — it was hellish. Our horses were as much affected as we: they pranced as if they were steeds of the *haute école*, instead of poor, scrawny, Balkan ponies. As for me I began to dream of things unheard, unknown — only dreamable.

Sitting on a wagon, a youth was hanging over his violin, playing, playing like mad. Presently, without interrupting his music, he sprang from the wagon and paced up and

down on the ground, still playing torrentially. We sat fascinated both by the player and by his playing, trying all the time to quiet our horses.

At last the music seemed spent; the boy let his violin fall to the ground, where he, too, threw himself, and the music was succeeded by heart-breaking sobs. His weeping, like his music, was torrential as a storm. Like it, it ceased, when it had reached its climax.

A girl was sitting in the entrance of a tent, nursing a wee baby. She regarded the figure on the ground apathetically. We dismounted, and I gingerly approached her. The tent was full of gypsies, either sleeping or cooking, and in the woods were others cutting wood for their fires.

"Why is he crying like this?" I asked the girl.

She shrugged her shoulders. "He always weeps when he plays as he did to-day."

"Is he your brother?"

"No, I belong to him, and this is his son. He came into his little body only six weeks ago. Before that he lived in me." She said the last words with great pride in herself for being the mother of a son.

My brother approached the now silent player and touched him on the shoulder. The boy raised his head and then sat up. His eyes were deep black pools, filled with woe. Mano offered him a handful of cigarettes. The boy accepted them eagerly and pressed them to his cheek. His hair was floating on his back and his clothes were scanty and dirty. He looked more dressed for bathing than for living in the mountains.

"It went well to-day, did n't it?" Mano said.

The boy smiled sadly, displaying his magnificent gypsy teeth. He picked out one of his cigarettes and tossed it to the girl with the baby. She leaped, with the baby, and caught it in midair, and her pleasureful laugh resounded for a second.

"Since it went well, why did you have to weep?" my brother asked.

"I wept because it went so well."

"Why?"

"I do not know. Because I want things, and do not get them!" he cried. "A year ago I thought I wept because I wanted *her*." With his eyes he indicated the sitting girl. "She is now mine, and she has given me a son — but I cry just the same."

A sob, and then another shook his breast.

"I know," my brother said sympathetically. "You want extravagant things — things that you only fancy."

The gypsy gave a strange look at Mano, then leaned forward and touched him on the chest.

"You understand — you? Then you fiddle?"

"No; but I write. It is just as bad."

And then the boy, feeling the sympathetic atmosphere we were creating around him, began to talk. "I think what I want is

to be an emperor: to have people kneel before me and kiss the hem of my garments."

I could not help covering my face and laughing silently; for his poor worn trousers and his torn shirt had no hems.

Mano did not laugh. Seriously he amended: "It is n't exactly an emperor you want to be. What you want is to play, as you played to-day, before millions of people — to make them all worship your music — to make that human sea weep when you will, and laugh when you will."

The boy seized my brother's hands. "You see into my head — you see into my heart!" he cried. "Could I — could I do that?"

Mano nodded. "You did it to-day, even though it was only three riders and three horses. It was marvelous, my friend, your playing. Never have I heard its like."

At that the boy began to tremble like a leaf, and the tears sprang from the dark pools of his eyes and trickled down to his chin, and then to his chest and on to his

poor hemless shirt. And through his tears and his sobs he talked wildly to us — talked of the visions that came to him, and which he brought to life with the power of his violin. "Sometimes I can do it," he said, "and at others I cannot. Yet I am most unhappy when I can make alive the things that live in the air only."

For days and days afterwards I thought a great deal about the gypsy boy, and fervently wished to be present when he should play to millions of people and be worshiped. I wanted to see him realize his dream and be present at his happiness. I was too young, too inexperienced to know that the dream of a great artist is never realized, and that he is happiest when he is most miserable.

Some days afterwards we were caught by one of those terrific, sudden storms that I have witnessed only in the Balkans. It was so violent that it uprooted trees, and the rain washed down great stones.

"There is a sheltering place in a gorge not far from here," said our guide; but when we came to it, it was already occupied by a gypsy encampment. The camp was bedecked with all kinds of bright-colored rags, hanging stringily in the storm, and our guide told us that it was a bridal encampment where a wedding was soon to take place.

Some of the gypsies invited us to go into their tents and lie down until the storm passed; but since, with our mackintoshes and the overhanging rocks, we were partially protected, we preferred the cleanliness of outdoors to the dubious shelter of their tents. We sat down at the opening of the gorge to watch the storm.

It ended as abruptly as it had started, and our guide went in where he could dry himself and prepare a meal for us. The gypsies came out of their tents to give us a look of inspection. They were more villainous in appearance, if possible, than the

others we had come across, perhaps because they had been so huddled together in their tents during the storm. To my intense delight, however, among them was my old friend Valerie, and it was she who was to be the bride in ten days. They were waiting for other gypsies in different parts of the Balkans to come to the encampment.

It was several years since I had last seen Valerie, and she had taken the time to grow into a real woman. Her hair was braided into a great many braids, in which were inserted hundreds of imitation coins. With her copper color and her shining teeth and her muscular, lithe figure, she made a very stunning picture in that grandiose background.

She came and sat down near us. Her eyes took in my brother in a long, comprehensive look; then they closed for a minute and then opened again full on him. She moved a little nearer him, crouching like a dog at his feet. For some time she ignored

me totally, but at length she turned abruptly to me and asked: —

"Are you married to him?"

"I'm too young to be married," I replied. "He is my brother."

She frowned. "You are not lying?"

I shrugged my shoulders.

She turned all her attention to my brother again. He on his side sat gazing at the landscape as if he did not know she was there.

She did not seem to mind it, and there ensued a long silence, broken only when she commented: "Funny he should be your brother. He is so handsome!" My feelings might have been hurt, had I not, for the last three months, been accustomed to remarks like this from all the people of the Balkans. Having made this observation, Valerie stretched herself full length on the ground, her chin in her palms, and lost herself in contemplation of Mano.

"When you finish looking at the trees, you can begin to look at me, effendi," she

said wistfully, after we had sat thus for full five minutes.

Mano at once turned to her. She smiled very prettily at him, and he returned her smile.

"Where is your wife?" she asked.

As my brother did not reply — and feeling quite left out — I answered for him: "He has n't any," and at once knew that I had displeased him.

In amazement Valerie cried, "But how old are you?"

"Twenty-eight," he replied reluctantly.

"How curious — how very curious!" she commented. "Are all the women you know bloodless?"

I should have been amused at her questioning, except that I felt my brother was greatly annoyed. Valerie sat up, and from her bosom brought forth a small pouch of tobacco and a booklet of tissue paper. She tore out a leaf and carefully rolled a cigarette, licking the edge of the paper to make

it stick. When it was made, she lighted it, took a puff, and with great ceremony presented it to Mano. Knowing how fastidious he was, I felt certain he could not possibly smoke that cigarette. She rolled one for herself, and then observed: —

"I am to be married in ten days, and yet I have not prepared a cigarette for the man who is to possess me."

My brother said nothing to this.

"Smoke with me now!"

"I am sorry," Mano replied. "If you will permit me, I will take this cigarette with me as a souvenir; but I cannot smoke it."

"Why?"

"Because I have already smoked, and the doctors do not permit me to smoke much on account of my heart."

I had never before heard my brother lie — and I knew he was lying now, and I was storing it away for future reference.

Valerie held out her hand for the cigar-

ette. "Give it to me. Don't waste a good cigarette for a souvenir. I wanted us to smoke together, that was all."

She put out both cigarettes by spitting on them, and then tied them to the edge of a gaudy cotton scarf she was wearing.

"Let me tell your fortune." She crawled nearer to Mano, and stretched out her hand.

Mano put a coin in his hand, and held it out to her.

With an imperious gesture she brushed the coin away. "I am not telling you your fortune for gain, but because I want to."

She took his hand in both of hers, and stroked it several times. "It is the most beautiful hand that I have ever seen," she said slowly. She scrutinized the lines in it, and presently began to read his fortune: "Many women have loved you madly, but a gypsy is coming into your life, and she will love you more than any before, and you will be very happy."

She watched him intently as she spoke, but he was again gazing at the landscape before him, his hand lying impassively in hers.

Valerie became angry, and threw Mano's hand from her. Addressing herself to me, as if she were years and years older, she ordered: —

"Go and play, child."

"No; I do not wish her to move, please," my brother intervened. "She is resting for her journey."

Valerie showed her annoyance by the movement of her shoulders, but that mood did not last. She changed and began to be sweet and lovely, like a nice dog. She untied the cigarettes from her scarf and smoked them, one after the other, telling all sorts of charming things to Mano; taking each one of his features separately and eulogizing it. Then boldly she asked: —

"Have you ever fallen in love with a gypsy, effendi?"

"I have never had the honor of knowing a gypsy."

"You know *me*, now."

Although years lie between that day and the present, with the eyes of my memory I can see her still, alluring, feline, uncompromisingly feminine. And I cannot help thinking that it is an advance in our civilization that it is the men who do the courting, and not the women.

There were a group of men seated around the entrance of one of the tents. Pointing to them my brother asked: —

"Is one of the men there to be your husband?"

Valerie indicated one of them.

"Don't you think that you have played enough on his feelings for to-day? You must not hurt him too much even for the sake of the game."

A gleam of anger came into Valerie's eyes. "I was n't thinking of him at all. Till to-day he filled my brain. I have for-

gotten him now, and — I am not playing a game."

"Oh, yes, you are. You are trying to make him jealous." Mano's tone was ice cold. It froze me, but it transformed Valerie into a fury.

"Make him jealous of *you* — you white-livered, soft-handed scorpion!" In her rage she was a match to the storm of a little while ago, and her rapidity of speech was marvelous. Epithet followed epithet, in half a dozen languages, and I knew that my brother would have given a great deal to have had me away. The things she called him were full of color and picturesqueness, but the groundwork was indecency. At last I understood why my mother had forbidden me to speak to the gypsies.

After she had told Mano all she thought about him, Valerie rose majestically. "My man told me last night that he would give me anything I wanted. I shall tell him that I want your corpse for a footstool."

All the tales Valerie had told me of yore returned to me now with new power. In that remote place, what chance had three of us against a campful of gypsies.

"Oh, Valerie!" I cried, "remember how good I was to you for years — and think of your little dog and how we cured it!" It was silly for me to think of so small a thing in this crisis, but I added: "And I gave you my best handkerchief, and you lost it."

To my surprise and relief, Valerie became calm at once.

"Yes, you have been good to me," she acknowledged; "and as for that pretty handkerchief, I have it still. I never had one so pretty."

"Did you find it again?" I asked.

"I never lost it. I lied to you, because if you had known that I had it, you would have told the police."

"But, Valerie, you were my friend."

"Was I?"

"Yes, and I loved you. And because I

loved you then, you are not going to hurt my brother now."

From the corners of her eyes she watched him, instead of answering me, and a tremor passed over her.

"Do you know why I do not have you killed by my man?" she asked Mano.

He smiled. "You are a very delightful young person, Mistress Valerie. First you tease your future husband; now you wish to tease me by pretending that you will have me killed; and all the time you are playing a game, just because you are young and happy."

She leaned against a tree, drawing her slim, well-formed young figure up to its full height. When she spoke her tone was tender and wistful: —

"Effendi, effendi, can't you understand? I am not playing a game." Again she repeated: "I have not been playing a game." She raised her arms appealingly, and put her hands behind her head, and gazed at

him with eyes that looked like a hurt dog's. She was entirely different from all the creatures she had been during the last hour. She was sad and lovable and extremely appealing. "Effendi, why are you so cold — and do not understand?" And as he did not answer her, suddenly, as if thirsting for information, she asked: "Tell me, which way does the brook run?"

"It runs downward," he answered.

"It runs downward because it cannot help it. I am a little brook, effendi —" She waited for him to speak, entreating him with eyes that were lovely to look into now. "You have nothing to say to that, effendi?"

Very gently he smiled at her.

"Do you like little brooks?" she asked eagerly. "There is one not far from here. If you walk straight, in that direction, you will come to it; and on this side of the brook there are three large trees, coming out of one root. These trees are called the 'Three Brothers.' A long time ago there were three

brothers brave and handsome and tall, like you, and women died for love of them. They were slain, but because they were so handsome and brave, these three trees sprang up where they died. They are tall and straight, and their branches are long and shady. One cannot fail to find them."

She turned her face upward and scrutinized the sky.

"The moon rises late, to-night, effendi."

She made him a long *teména;* and ignoring me as if I were not there, she turned and walked away.

I never saw her again. As soon as it became dark, while the music of the gypsies was playing its loudest, with infinite precaution we left the camp — left it as if we were thieves, escaping for our lives.

His finger on his lips, my brother imposed silence, and on and on we rode, in the wilds of the Balkans, while the stars came out one by one, until the full company had taken their places in the pageant of the

night. We did not even halt when the moon, as Valerie had predicted, rose late.

I touched my brother's sleeve and asked: "Why are we traveling as if we were thieves?"

"Thieves," he repeated musingly. "No, little sister, perhaps never before have we been so pure of purpose, so stainless of theft."

VII

THE PRUSSIA OF THE BALKANS

We entered Bulgaria late in the afternoon. The sun was gone; only the faintest trace of the multi-colored sunset rays remained. A chill was in the air, — not the chill of Italy at sunset, since that is essentially physical, — a chill that numbed deeper. It was the same sinking sensation one has in America on entering a third-rate hotel. I had just come from the squalid discomfort of Albania, the Spartan discomfort of Montenegro, the apologetic discomfort of Servia. I had borne them all with the sporting spirit of youth. But the discomfort that gripped me on that first evening in Bulgaria chilled my soul. I was miserably sad, without visible reason.

"I must be extremely tired," I said to my brother.

"Why?" he asked, with curious interest for so simple a statement.

I laughed nervously. "Because I want to cry, without knowing why."

He nodded comprehendingly. "So it has got you, too, has it?"

"What?"

"The chill of Bulgaria. All sensitive and nervous people feel it, and there is no inoculation against it."

Of all the joys in the world, the greatest is the sympathetic understanding of the untranslatable. To find suddenly that a sensation which overpowers one, and which one does not rightly understand one's self, is shared and understood by another, is to give one an idea of divine comprehension.

I put my head on my brother's shoulder. "Do you mean that I shall have this feeling every day?"

"Yes, after sunset — and it will help you to understand the Bulgarians."

I raised my head. "Do you like them?"

I asked; for oddly enough during our travels in the Balkans, while we had discussed all the other nationalities at length, we had never touched on the Bulgarians.

"You must know nothing about them from me. You must meet them without prejudice, as if you were a newborn child."

A Greek, I at once began to argue: "No child can be born without prejudice, since it is born with its heredity."

"Nevertheless, if you take a French child and bring it up in England as an English child, it will have the national English prejudices, no matter of what quality its brain may be."

I took another tack. "I already know the history of Bulgaria, and that cannot help prejudicing me."

"In a way, yes; though since you are a Greek it is not so bad as if you were English or German."

I slept on Bulgarian soil knowing no more about the Bulgars personally than the im-

pression I got from the family with which we were staying. The mother was a stern woman, old before her age. The father was a military man, sterner than the mother; and the two daughters, with straight black hair and high cheek-bones, were unbeautiful to look upon. Although they were well-to-do, there was only one servant, and the girls had many duties, and during the meal, which was abundant and tasty, they rose and helped with the dishes. The father said the meal-prayer, and we all crossed our breasts three times, in the manner of the Orthodox Church. The conversation was meager and desultory, and the language contained many more Turkish expressions than in Servia. It lacked the charm of the speech of the Albanians, the appalling directness of the Montenegrins, and the suavity of the Servians. In spite of the hot meal I could not shake the chill of Bulgaria from me.

When we had finished eating, we crossed

ourselves again; the father rose and invited us to go into the "best room."

I asked if I might not stay in the dining-room and help. Housework was to my liking, and this would afford me an opportunity to talk with the girls, who were several years older than I and looked twice my age.

"There is no need," the father said, and there was absolute finality in his words.

He decided everything, as the man always does in Bulgaria. When you ask a woman something, she raises her eyes to those of her man. I have never seen in a Bulgarian woman's eyes — be she mother, wife, daughter, or sister — command, entreaty, or even earnestness. Her eyes were merely the physical windows of a soul trained to obedience.

After the work was done, the mother and daughters came into the room where we were. The mother darned; the daughters worked on their trousseaus. They did not speak during the entire evening.

The girls shared their room with me, they in one bed on the floor, I in another. The room, devoid of any comforts or prettiness, was scrupulously clean. Alone, I expected the girls to talk with me as the other Balkan girls had. They kept silent. Only when I was ready to slip into bed, Stassa, the elder, said: —

"If you will come with me, I will show you where the ikons are, and you can tell your prayers."

Like all the peoples of the Greek Church, they had niches for the ikons of the saints and of Mary, with oil lamps burning before them, and thither Stassa took me. I remember that I prayed to be spared the chill of Bulgaria; but fervent as my prayer was, I fear it was not even heard by the Lord above. Perhaps the Greek poet is right and "the hosannas of Paradise drown out the cries of earth."

My two companions, as soon as they had taken off their dresses and crept into

bed, fell to sleeping soundly and not very quietly. At daybreak, Philio, the younger, shook me by the arm.

"Get up! It is rose-gathering day," she said.

God was good to me after all to make my first knowledge of Bulgaria come in rose-gathering time; for only then does the stolid, unemotional Bulgarian soul seem to breathe and stir in the stolid, unemotional Bulgarian breast. All over Turkey and the Balkans there grows an exquisite rose to the height of four and five feet. It is known as the "Rose of the Sweets," because from its crushed leaves we make rose preserve — one of the sweetest remembrances of my childhood; yet nowhere else have I seen a festivity made of the gathering of its leaves.

Stassa and Philio dressed themselves in heavy, home-woven white dresses with lovely, embroidered aprons. I begged for one to wear, too, and silently they gave it

to me. We went down to the dining-room and ate a piece of dry bread with a small cup of black coffee, the usual breakfast of the country. Then we made ready the luncheon and supper which we were to take with us to the fields. Guests arrived, and we all piled into a springless carriage, drawn by a pair of oxen whose heads were adorned with rose wreaths.

Thus we started for the rose orchards. It was a heavenly morning, soft and warm and radiant, and as wagon after wagon filled the streets with garlanded oxen and white-clad women I began to feel happy. When finally from one of the wagons the primitive, native music started, I actually began to like Bulgaria. We drove for an hour before coming to the rose orchards. In some of the fields people were already at work, and I was pleased that our host's orchard was quite in the middle of them all, so that we had to cross a full half-mile of rose-bushes.

The whole valley was given over to the cultivation of roses. We began to smell them before we could see them, and when we were in their midst, it seemed to me as if I could fairly taste the perfume. At our journey's end the work began. The men sat about and smoked and talked while the women and the young boys picked the rose-leaves. This was the only time I ever saw Bulgarian men idle. I tried to work with the girls, but soon found that their big, coarse hands possessed a deftness and an accuracy which came only with years of practice. Both the eye and the hand need training. Each girl carried two baskets, and unerringly judged which rose was for attar and which for preserves. They tried to show me how to differentiate between the two, but despite my best endeavors, they crossly told me that I was putting the roses into the wrong baskets, and that I had better confine myself to cutting up the leaves after they were picked. It was very morti-

fying, and yet the day stands out for me as the one lovely day of my stay in Bulgaria, the one in which the girls smiled like other girls, and the boys treated the girls with a trace of the gallantry they would have received in other countries.

The rest of my stay was stern and loveless. Why not? The Bulgarians are a race with a stern and loveless purpose, which in the reign of Ferdinand has been nursed and tended and given every chance for growth. Of that great purpose I received my first inkling that night. We returned home with the moon, having eaten our supper in the fields. In our room we undressed silently, by the light of the little lamp — a bowl about the size of a drinking-glass, half-filled with water, with an inch of oil at the top, and a wick the size of a match floating through a cork. This is the lamp commonly used all over the Balkans and Turkey.

Seated in my bed I was watching the girls

undressing when Philio said to me: "Are you the prettiest girl of your town?"

Truth compelled me to answer that I was not considered pretty at home.

The big round eyes of the girl bovinely stared at me. Then Philio went on: "Your town must have the most beautiful girls in the world."

This sounded like the subtlest compliment. It was not intended as such. Bulgarians do not compliment. It was a matter-of-fact statement. To say something, I answered: —

"The Greeks are supposed to be a beautiful race."

"They are also a lying, thieving, cheating race," added Stassa. Again it was a matter-of-fact statement. Had she spoken with animosity I might have thought she wished to hurt me for something I had done to her; but there was no anger in her tone. She spoke quite simply, from the conviction in which she had been brought up.

After that I frequently heard similar frank expressions of Bulgar opinion of the Greeks. My nationality began to frighten me at last, and to make it worse my brother refused to discuss the matter. Usually we talked things over, and he had a way of throwing light when light was needed; but as if the chill of the country had changed his affection for me, he would not discuss the Bulgarian opinion of our race with me. So alone and forsaken I had to bear my cross, and it was a cross under which I staggered daily.

To understand this national hatred which I encountered, and also to excuse it, one must know its origin. The Bulgars were the last comers into the Balkans before the Turks. They were of Tartar stock, and arrived early in the sixth century, about three hundred years after the Serbs. Unlike the other Balkan peoples, they were not divided into tribes, but formed a compact whole, led by a king to whom they

owed absolute obedience. They successfully fought the Serbs and the Greeks, and history tells us that even in those cruel times they were noted for their cruelty. In a hundred and fifty years they planted themselves in the heart of the unhappy peninsula. But although they subjected the Serbs to their sway, the Serbs superimposed their language and their ways of living upon them. What the Bulgar speaks today is Old Servian, their own language being entirely lost. From this springs the fallacious idea that they are Slavs.

During the time of their supremacy they were converted to the Greek Church. A monk — Cyril, I believe, was his name — landed in Saloniki from Constantinople, made his way thence to the capital of Bulgaria, and presented himself before the king, who sat surrounded by huge paintings representing his military exploits.

The good monk told the king of the power of the Christian God.

When the monk had finished, the monarch waved his hand toward the paintings on the walls.

"That is what *I* can do," he said. "Can your Christian God do any greater things?"

"He can," replied the monk. "Give me a few days with paint and brushes, and I will show you."

Cyril retired, and with all the fervor of a monk of that period set himself to painting the Last Judgment. It is a pity that in subsequent wars this masterpiece should have been lost. It must have been terrific in the barbarity of its conception, since we are told that on seeing it the Bulgar monarch fell upon his knees and implored to be baptized and saved from the wrath of such a powerful God. Not only was he converted himself, but he ordered all his subjects instantly to become converted also.

In this spirit did Bulgaria accept Christianity, a spirit which has changed little in the centuries that have elapsed.

The Bulgars continued to be powerful for a while longer. They even began to dream of conquering Constantinople, then the Greek Byzantine Empire. They harassed the Greeks until Emperor Basil, called "the Bulgar killer," gathered together a strong force and so defeated them that the Serbs also were able to throw off their yoke and oppress them in turn. In the tenth century the Bulgars and Vlachs again became powerful for a short time, but from then on the Serbs maintained their supremacy until the Turks appeared in the fourteenth century, and, with the others, the Bulgars went down, not to be heard from again until 1877, when Russian rubles and Russian soldiers fought to make Bulgaria free once more.

Russia had been disappointed in the new Servia, created a few years before. She was also exasperated at the new Greece, and thus decided to resurrect Bulgaria, call her a Slav nation, and use her against them, and

also as a stepping-stone for her desires to acquire Constantinople.

Thus it will be seen that the hatred of the Bulgars for the Greeks and Serbs dates back to the Middle Ages. As a matter of fact everything in the Balkans dates back to the Middle Ages. When Russia fought Turkey in 1877 and created a quasi-independent Bulgaria, the people rose with the same ambitions, the same hatreds, the same scores to settle, that they had gone down with in the eleventh century. There was but one desire in their hearts: to fight the Serbs, to fight the Greeks, and to get back the lands they had once before wrested from them.

How strong this feeling was I did not appreciate until the close of our visit to the family of an old general in Sofia. He was a nice old man on the whole, and had not said a single disagreeable thing about the Greeks during our stay. When we were about to move on he invited us to wait over a day

in order to witness the maneuvers of the Bulgarian army. He procured us good seats and sat with us to explain the wonderful fighting machine as it marched by.

I have seen practically all the armies of Europe on defile. Three of these stand out above the others: the Bulgarian first, with the German and the Turk following. Those are, indeed, bodies of men whose object is to conquer. Two other European armies to me are pathetic: the English and the Greek. When I watch an army it is the faces of the men I look at. The Bulgars, the Germans, and the Turks possess the suitable faces. The Greeks and the English seem to apologize for being an anachronism in the civilized world. One feels that both the Englishman and the Greek will "do his bit," and die if need be — or kill; but God! how he hopes he will never have to kill. It is n't natural for him to kill. His face, his mouth, the shape of his head tell you that. The French army alone, bristling with *la gloire militaire*,

possesses something which robs war of both its horror and its apology. There is something in the French face which makes possible that incongruous phrase, "civilized warfare."

On that day in Sofia, as I sat watching, for hour after hour, regiment after regiment pass, there was transmitted to me the joy of the barbarian, the thrill of the untamed beast. Oddly enough, although the men carried the most modern weapons and were clothed in modern uniforms, they reminded me of the picture of Vercingetorix of ancient Gaul, in my little French history. Perhaps this was due to the preponderance of the Tartar type among the men: high cheekbones, straight black hair, and the lips and forehead of a race for whom war was the noblest pursuit, its outrages the keenest pastime.

Our host turned to me, in his eyes the same unholy look as there was in the eyes of the passing men.

"That is the army that is going through yours as a knife goes through a cheese," he said.

My teeth were fairly chattering, yet I answered: "Why do you call the Turkish army *my* army just because I was born in Constantinople?"

"I am not speaking of the Turkish army — I am speaking of that pampered, *pretty* army of the Greeks."

"You wish to fight the Greeks? Why?"

"Because when Macedonia ceases to belong to the Turks you will claim it — and we want it. Once it was ours."

"But it was ours thousands of years before Europe even heard your name."

"That is a lie — a lie, I tell you! Because you could always read and write, you wrote the histories, and filled the world with lies."

Be it to my eternal shame that instead of arguing I began to cry.

Our host touched my brother roughly on the arm.

"You know, you, that what I say is true."

My brother's eyes never left the splendid army that kept on passing before us. Slowly he answered: —

"It is true! that this army looks as if it might go through ours as a knife goes through cheese."

Thank God that it did not! When in 1913 the Bulgarian army at last fought against the Greek, to the wonder of the world, to the still greater wonder of Austria who was backing Bulgaria, and to the greatest wonder of the Greeks themselves, the civilized Greeks found that they could fight as well as the uncivilized Bulgarians.

My brother's answer seemed to mollify our host, and he continued talking, first about the various regiments as they passed, and then about the country as a whole.

Bulgaria is, indeed, a remarkable country in many respects. Determined to be the dominant race in the Balkans, under Ferdinand it has neglected no possible

means to this end. They are to the rest of the Balkans what Germany is to the rest of Europe. Industrious to the point of stupefaction, utterly subordinating the individual to the State, capable of complete obedience, they become an easy prey to the schemes of the most unscrupulous of rulers. A Bulgar can only stop working by getting drunk. That is why one sees more drunkenness in Bulgaria than anywhere else in the Balkans. It is the sole means of relaxation. Sober, the Bulgar must work: drunk, he can give to his body much needed rest. He prides himself on his morality and on his freedom from human tenderness. A young officer boasted to me once that he had never wished to kiss a woman. The Bulgar takes a wife to himself so that he may have an unpaid partner and toil-mate, and one who will multiply the hands that will toil with him.

The unlovely position of women in Bulgaria alone justifies them to me for their willingness to enter Turkish harems, as no

other Christian Balkan women are willing to do. The fact that there women are loved, they hear, and do not toil often lures them away.

Lena, our host's granddaughter, was proud of her learning. She had a smattering of French and paraded it shamelessly. She spoke of their eating-room as "our library," because it contained a shelf full of yellow-backed French novels. George Bernard Shaw depicts her perfectly in Raina, in "Arms and the Man." When I saw the play in New York I was transported back to Sofia, and forgetting that I was in a public place, I exclaimed aloud, "Why, I know Raina," to the scandal of my companions.

Lena pointed to her yellow-backed French novels, and haughtily explained: "We Bulgarians are cultivating our minds, and whereas you grew by inches, we are growing by miles."

In certain material respects she was

hardly exaggerating. In the thirty years of her freedom Bulgaria has given a wonderful account of herself. In comparison with her, Greece shows the same dowdiness that England does when compared with Germany. Yet there is something in the Greek eyes, as there is in the English eyes, which makes you prefer their unprogressiveness to the efficiency of their pugnacious antagonists. One feels that both the Germans and the Bulgars, to acquire their material efficiency, have sacrificed the right to think for themselves; that they have mortgaged their souls for their bodies. The exchange is brutally inadequate.

I did not mind Lena's exalting her people at the expense of mine. I have never been a partisan, nor felt the satisfying conviction that my race was better in all respects than any other. Through Lena I could hear and feel the Bulgarian soul, and she made me understand how the Bulgarian soul was being Prussianized, how systematically it

was being made to believe itself the super-race that must govern all the Balkans.

"Why do you think that you can rule the Balkans?" I asked.

"Because we are not a dead race, like you Greeks. Once, in the tenth century, you prevented us from taking Constantinople. You were strong then; you are not now — and Russia hates you. We shall dominate you as you have never been dominated before."

There was the power of absolute conviction in her voice. She was twenty years old, and to be married that year. Well could I imagine how she would teach her sons the lesson of conquest-to-come.

"What about Servia?" I asked.

"Oh! after we have made war on them they will never rise again."

This was the spirit that animated all the well-to-do classes. Simply but superbly each one intimated to you that he was a super-man. And from one and another I

learned more of the fate in store for Greece. One evening we went to a soirée, outside of Sofia. Some were in evening clothes, some in afternoon, and some in morning garments. Of all the Balkan nations, the Bulgarians alone have the air of parvenus. Perhaps it is because they are not yet at ease in their quasi-European clothes. Pushing ahead too quickly, it has been difficult for them to retain poise. One cannot have everything.

We were an incongruous assembly that evening. We danced and sang without ever getting into step or being in tune. After all it did not matter: the Bulgarians are not a dancing or singing race — they are a race with a purpose.

Walking home that night a young officer was at my side whose physical strength was impressive.

"Things look different with the moon from what they do with the sun," he observed.

"They are more elusive; they give more scope to the imagination," I answered.

My harmless little answer caused him to explode. "That is the contemptible thing about you Greeks," he cried. "You talk as if you were writing books — and, in the end, that is all you are good for. That is why you must go under, and the strong man will take your place."

His arrogance and his immense muscular splendor goaded me to rebellion.

"Don't try to outshine the Greeks in literature, then, or it might hurt your power as conquerors."

"You let our conquering power alone," he growled. "Pretty soon we shall reduce Servia to the place where she belongs — and then we'll come to Greece."

I was so small by his side that I had to throw my head back, as if looking at the sky, to speak to him.

"Which of us do you hate most?" I asked, tantalizing him.

"I think we hate Greece the most," he said slowly. "I don't know why."

"It is her past splendor which is so much greater than yours," I agreed sympathetically. "And then, all people who think, love her — when they have not even heard of you."

With a blow he could have crushed me. I felt that he would have liked to — the Junker Prussian of Bulgaria exterminating the flickering intellect of Greece.

"When we get into Athens, we shall tear down the Acropolis, stone by stone," he retorted grimly. "*Then* the world will hear of us — and you will be forgotten."

It was the first time, but again and again, while we were in Bulgaria, I heard that this was to be the fate of the Acropolis, spared by the Turks, and only partially destroyed at the command of a German. Absolutely to obliterate the Golden Age of the Athenians was the noble aim of Bulgaria.

This was the attitude of the upper classes.

The peasants were influenced in another way. Passionately fond of their land, they were told that the Serbs and the Greeks coveted it, and would try to take it from them. "But wait," they said. "We are building up an army second to none. It costs us half we earn; but after we have crushed Servia and Greece, we shall have all the land we want."

This was the song of the land: to crush Servia and Greece; and for this, noble and peasant gave all they could to the nation, subordinating everything to the dream of a greater Bulgaria. They impressed me — as they impressed all the American and English travelers I met later — as the coming race of the Balkans.

On the deck of the little steamer which was taking us from Varna to Constantinople I stood at my brother's side watching the retreating coast of Bulgaria.

"Brother, they hate us with a powerful, all-absorbing hatred," I said in a hushed

voice. "They are strong, and we are weak. Some day they will conquer us."

As I looked up at him, my brother's face was typical of my race, which exalts books and loathes militarism. Compared with the burly, cruel Bulgarians he was so civilized, so frail even. I felt sure we should never be able to withstand them. "Yes, they will surely conquer us," I repeated.

He shook his head.

"They are a splendid race, but they are possessed by hatred, and hatred is a poison which consumes those who nurse it."

VIII

THE SONS OF THE HELLENES

And what about the Greeks? How are they preparing to meet Bulgaria?

To write about them is not so easy for me as it has been to write about the rest of the Balkans. Ten years ago a great editor said to me: —

"Will you write me an article about Greece and her people of to-day? You possess special qualifications for it."

I shook my head. "My special qualifications are against my writing it."

"How so?"

"The Greeks are my people. Their faults hurt me. I should dwell more upon them than upon their virtues."

"Don't write it, then," he cried. "It would not be just."

In the time that has passed since that conversation, I have learned much, and

have purged myself, I hope, of more still. Can I to-day write better about this people which is my race? The task is fraught with difficulties. To begin with, when one says "the Greeks," one naturally thinks of the inhabitants of that little land known as Greece. Yet only a small minority of the Greeks live there. In the Ottoman Empire alone live twice as many. Then there are those under the British flag, and many others scattered all over the world.

I ought to know these various Greeks pretty well, since I was born and brought up among those of Constantinople, have traveled through the interior of the Ottoman Empire, lived for a while in Athens, and have been in almost all of those towns throughout the Balkans, in Servia, Turkey, Bulgaria, and Albania, where the Greek population forms a large part of the total. I have also been on some of the Greek islands.

From the golden times of Pericles to those

of Constantine the Dane, to-day, — whether Greece was leading the world in civilization or had sunk beneath the yoke of Macedonia or Rome, during her second florescence as the Byzantine Empire, during her slavery to Turkey, or after her desperate nine years' struggle against tremendous odds had won freedom for a small portion of her race, — there never was a day when millions of Greeks did not form Greek communities, speak the Greek language, and cherish Greek ideals. The Greeks have been nearly as scattered as the Jews, and even more nationalistic; that is one reason why it is not so easy to write of Greece and the Greeks as it is to write of the other Balkan nations.

Because of their intellectual life the Greeks have persisted throughout the ages. During the three hundred and seventy-seven years in which they, as a whole, remained under the Turks, they never for a moment ceased to be absolutely Greek in spirit, Greek in ideas, and Orthodox in wor-

ship. Unlike their neighbors in the Balkans, the Greeks are not a primitive race. They are staggering beneath a heritage of past grandeur which puts them, nationally, in the category of fallen gentlefolk. That heritage, in a large measure, is responsible for many of their faults. Among the Greeks — be they free or under alien domination — I have always found a threefold bond uniting them: pride of race, adoration of their language and past, and a tenacious clinging to their Church.

Only in certain parts of Asia Minor do we find Greeks speaking Turkish instead of Greek. There the conqueror has tried to obliterate the Greek's nationality by forcing him to abandon his language. As a result, there the Greeks carry nationalism to fanaticism. In the first family that we visited, I received a thrill which neither time nor distance has lessened. Before retiring to bed, the members of the household, the servants, and the guests assembled in the living-room.

A large Greek flag was unfurled, and all kneeled before it; then the grandfather of the family, in his old voice, tremulous with age and emotion, prayed to the God of the Greeks: —

"O Lord, have mercy upon thy children! Help them that once more they may become tenants of their own lands, occupants of their own churches, spokesmen in their own assemblies, and teachers in their own Greek-speaking schools. Help, God Almighty, the small struggling Hellas once more to rise to its ancient splendor and civilization."

It is impossible for me to render the incongruity of that prayer, pregnant with Greek sentiment, addressed to the Greek God, — and made in the Turkish language. We remained in that household for almost a week, but the nightly ceremony never lost its thrill for me, nor did I experience less fervor as I witnessed it over and over again in other households all over Asia Minor.

It is in that portion of Turkish-speaking Greece that the great Greek patriots are found, those who in times of national need always come forward with their purses.

They are people of few graces and an extreme lack of polish, but of adamant virtue and absolute religious conviction. They fulfill their duties in the early Christian spirit. During periods of fasting all the butchers' shops close, even though the period be forty days. We were in Asia Minor just before Easter, and for three whole days no food of any kind was served. The whole population fasted, in order that they might receive the Holy Sacrament on Easter Day in cleanliness of body.

It is my belief that we handicap the human mind by teaching it nationalism from the dawn of its existence. We do not dwell on the brotherhood of all men, and of the love we ought to feel for one another, but on the superiority of our own race, whether we be civilized or savage. And excessive

nationalism will be found wherever three Greeks come together. It is a nationalism different from that of Bulgaria: it is not aggressive — it is complacent and self-sufficient, but irritating, nevertheless.

Ever since Alexander the Great, the Greeks have passed from one conqueror to another, saving only the period between the sixth century and the fifteenth, when they once again formed an independent nation as the Byzantine Empire. It is true that Greek culture often imposed itself upon its conqueror, yet, with the one exception just mentioned, the Greeks, politically, were not independent from Alexander's time until in 1821 a part of them succeeded in throwing off the Turkish yoke.

Each conqueror has undoubtedly polluted the Greek race, and in a measure its language; but no conqueror — not even the Asiatic Turk, who has kept him, and is still keeping him, in semi-servility, and who alone has refused to borrow from his culture

— has been able to pollute his intellect. The Greek remains to-day, as of old, a race *par excellence* intellectual. Although illiteracy in Greece is about fifty per cent, let a Greek once start going to school and only the greatest obstacles will prevent his going to the university. He becomes education-drunk: he wishes never to stop learning.

Even among the illiterate Greeks I have not met one in whose life the writings of ancient Greece did not play a major part. They constantly quote the classics, while as for Æsop he is to them what "Alice" is to certain classes in America.

On the shores of the Sea of Marmora I was fortunate enough to be in a little fishing village the day on which the fishing boats were to leave for their long annual fishing trip. At dawn I was awakened, and came down to the shore to watch the ceremony which preceded the going of the fishing squad. Although the men were every one of them Ottoman subjects, a little Greek

flag flew from the stern of every boat, reflecting the color of the sea and sky. They were very graceful, those fishing boats, with long black hulls, with one bright-colored band above the water-line. All of them bore names from Greek mythology or history: the Argonaut, Golden Fleece, Jason, Poseidon, Pallas Athene, Aphrodite. The men were to leave for a winter's cruise to where the fishing was more abundant, and they were seen off by the entire balance of the population. Everything was festive, with a festivity tempered by the knowledge that the sea was treacherous, and that some of the men might never come back to those who would be anxiously waiting for them during the cold winter months.

As the sun was rising the priest started his service, surrounded by the men bareheaded, the women with heads bowed in great reverence, and all clustered about the figure that represented their faith to them. It was a simple ceremony, suited to those

simple fisher-folk, most of whom, as the priest told me afterwards, could not read or write. The service over, the men kissed the hands of the priest and of the elders, embraced their women and children, and got into their boats. Laughter mingled with the parting words, and the moist eyes were not devoid of joy. The men and women were exchanging light badinage, and most of it consisted of allusions to past Greek history and mythology. One woman, for example, near whom I was standing, whose name was Penelope, called out to her husband: —

"And Penelope shall remain at home, and if it be necessary, she shall weave in the daytime and unravel at night, in order that she may wait for her master."

"And I swear to thee," the man answered, "O Penelope, that there shall be no Calypso in the path of thy man."

After all the boats were under way, there came back to us from over the water, on the

cold, crisp morning air, the words of the national Greek hymn: —

"From the holy bones of the Hellenes thou emergest, O Liberty!"

Everywhere the simple folk among the Greeks are kindly, hospitable persons. The worst of the Greeks are to be found among the well-to-do classes in all the large cities, where money abounds and has brought with it the so-called "smart set." In this respect Athens and Constantinople are the worst of all. There we find the least attractive Greeks. Educated they always are, and speaking probably two languages besides their own with fluency; but we find them devoid of the simplicity and charm characteristic of the Greeks of less well-to-do classes. In this set, too, there is an entire lack of morality among the men, and the double standard is appalling. From the time the man is eighteen until he marries, — which is thirty or older, — he knows no duty toward his body except to gratify

his senses. He never thinks of himself as the father of his race. When the Bulgarian says, "I am better than the Greek because I am moral," he means that he better conserves his vitality than the Greek, which is absolutely true. From earliest childhood great stress is placed on three things: the fitness of our intellect; the virtue of the woman; and the independence of the man. No physical fitness is expected from the man, and it is in this that the Greek is inferior to the rest of the Balkan nations.

It is the conviction of every Greek that some day we are to come back again into our own — once more to become leaders in intellectual civilization; yet never once have I heard the virtue of self-restraint preached for the men. We are to achieve our ends merely by training our minds.

Every Greek in every class, however, attaches the greatest importance to the purity of the woman. The more dissipated a Greek is, the more he insists on the purity

of his bride. Unblushingly he maintains that this is important for the welfare of his children. The slightest aspersion on a woman's name — so slight as a broken engagement — may easily lead to murder. Only a few years ago, in one of the leading hotels in Athens, a Greek of one of the best families deliberately shot another who had broken his engagement with his sister. All a woman's male relatives will spring up spontaneously to avenge the least suspicion cast on a woman's good name, and public opinion will back them up in the extremest measures they may take. Yet these same men have for themselves an absolutely different code of morals. "Bah! a man is a man," they say, and that will dismiss the subject. Up to the time of his marriage his life is his own; afterwards it is a different matter.

The interdependence of the physical and the mental seems never to have occurred to the modern Greek. In furtherance of his

ambition to take his place again among the leading nations of the world he demands the best schools and the best universities, of his own and other countries. His physical well-being he neglects utterly. Yet in our homes we are constantly being told to be worthy of the past of our race.

In my tenth year, when I was bristling with nationalism, I assigned to myself the rôle of a Greek priestess. I felt that I ought to talk to all the illiterate Greeks, tell them about our past grandeur, and awaken them to a realization of our present fallen state. In my campaign I started with Agamemnon, an old boatman. I found him seated by the shore, mending his fishing nets, not far from our house. Agamemnon was a particular friend of mine. He possessed a queer sort of humor which had a way of transforming tragedy into comedy. Our acquaintance had started on a day when a terrific storm had swept the coast. A belated fishing boat manned by three men was trying hard to

make the harbor. It struggled desperately with the sea, while men on the shore stood ready with ropes to try to help it. When nearly safe, the boat was capsized, and despite the best efforts of those on shore, the owner was drowned. All the men uncovered their heads as his body was carried away; but after Agamemnon had replaced his dirty hat on his head, he winked at me and said: —

"Poseidon has got him at last. His score is of long standing: now he is before the mighty emperor of the seas to answer to his charges."

"Do you expect to be called before Poseidon yourself some day?" I asked.

"All of us who sail over his domain expect sooner or later to be called before his mighty presence."

When I started out on my nationalistic preachment it was Agamemnon whom I first approached. I watched him in silence for a while, admiring the way he handled

the *langhetta* with which he was mending his net. His dexterity was almost womanly: it fascinated me, but it did not make me forget my great mission.

"Did you know, Agamemnon," I said, "that once we Greeks were the greatest nation in the world?"

He looked at me with his quizzical eyes. Instead of answering, however, he began to relate tales of our past exploits. Greeks are natural story-tellers, and I listened, delighted, while in this practical way he was proving to me that he was aware of our great past.

When he came to an end of his stories, I cried: "We must again regain our former position and power. We must train ourselves as soldiers, and take back the lands that once were ours. Our youths all over the world should go to Greece and do their military duty."

Agamemnon's *langhetta* was poised in midair. His well-shaped head was erect,

with its Socratic hair and beard, and a flicker of laughter twinkled in his eyes.

"We cannot get back our position in the world by fighting," he observed.

"But that is how we got what is free Greece to-day," I argued.

"H'm! that miserable little bit of land," he sneered. " I wish we did n't have it."

"Agamemnon!" I cried, horrified. "Do you realize that the Acropolis is there, and that free Greece protects it with her flag?"

Agamemnon laughed so heartily that I became offended. He mimicked me, as he replied: —

"Free Greece protects it with her flag!" He chuckled anew. "My little one, how long do you think the Greek flag would protect it if England, for instance, were to make up her mind that she wanted the Acropolis — or the whole of Greece, for that matter? Just about two days, I should imagine, and then —" With his hands,

langhetta and all, he made a motion as of a flag falling from its pole.

"Then what is there for us to do?" I asked, in consternation.

"Get education, build schools everywhere, have every woman's son learn his letters — that is the mission of the Greeks. Did we have to fight to turn Roman Constantinople into the Greek Byzantine Empire? Not at all: it just got turned naturally. The influence of the Greek mind could not be withstood." He dropped his *langhetta*, folded his big bony hands together, and shook his Socratic head. Mimicking me again he went on: "Send every youth to Greece to be trained? Not a bit of it, my little one, not a bit of it! Do you know what I believe? Had we, during all these years that we have been under the Turk, bent our energies to educating him, teaching him the Greek language, and initiating him into Greek thought, he would have *turned* Greek before now. The Turk does not know his

soul is immortal, does he? Well, it was our duty to teach it to him."

Agamemnon picked up his *langhetta*, and painstakingly resumed his mending of his fishing net. Presently he glanced up at me once more.

"If I had any education I should n't be sitting here mending a fishing net: I should be teaching little boys and girls all over the world just what the Greek spirit stands for." He shrugged his shoulders. "Well, I have n't any education. I don't know how to read and write — but I do my best. I do not neglect opportunities. Whenever a chance presents itself to me, I seize it — as I have done with you this morning."

Agamemnon was not an exception in his way of thinking; rather he was typical of many. Illiterate, he believed in the omnipotence of education, as he believed that the future of Greece lay in the ideals of her mind, not in how much land she held. I have talked with many of the working-class

among the Greeks, and everywhere I have found them the same — worshiping money, because money meant education for them or for their children.

When I was older I talked with a sponge-diver of the Ægean, not in the same spirit with which I had talked with Agamemnon, but argumentatively. I told him that unless we developed a good army Russia some day would take Constantinople, and then we should lose it forever.

"Forever? No!" he replied. "Let the Muscovite have his smell at it; it is his turn. He will not Russianize it any more than the Turk has Ottomanized it. The Greek soul can't be drowned. He will get the city, that is all. And it will come back to us because of its spirit."

Everywhere among the people I encountered this same feeling. They did not mean to fight for what would automatically remain their own. I do not mean to say that there is not a considerable party in Greece

which believes in fighting, or that half the clergy is not militant, or that there are not a great number of Greeks outside of Greece who dream of fighting for Greece. One of these latter, an uncle, had charge of me during my earliest childhood. On my fifth birthday he presented me with a little Greek flag, told me to make my prayers by it, and to teach my sons to fight for it. But from my experience I should say that the majority of the Greeks do not believe in fighting. They consider it futile.

Nevertheless, when the call comes to fight for their country, like the English they flock to it from every part of the globe, although they may have become naturalized citizens of other countries, or even may be only the sons of naturalized Americans, English, Russians, or others. They answer the call without hesitation, paying their own transportation whenever they can. I have known of humble Greeks here in America, who had flourishing little fruit,

candy, or flower shops, and who sold them at a great loss so that they might be free to go.

"What will you have?" they said to me; "the mother country needs us."

"But you are an American citizen: you don't have to go," I replied to one of them.

"No, we don't have to go; but would you have Greece call to her sons in vain?"

And so they went, and seven thousand of these American citizens were killed in one battle alone, fighting against the Bulgars. They will respond whenever the call is for the liberation of their compatriots, although they will not, like the Bulgars, prepare to fight for the enslavement of other races. Therefore the Bulgar thinks the Greek effete, and meant to be conquered by him who believes in fighting. The manner of thinking of the Greek is beyond him who knows that through physical strength and material efficiency he has a lead over the Greek. While the Bulgarian glories in

his muscle, the Greek delights in the plasticity of his mind and in his belief in the immortality of his soul — and from these he derives an exquisite joy which no conqueror has yet been able to take from him.

All over the world to-day the Greek is amassing money, reading books, and dreaming of a future to match his past; and he is perfectly certain that some day, through his mind alone, he will arise once more a leader in thought, a master in spirit.

IX

SALONIKI, THE CITY OF HISTORIES

THERE are two ways of going to Saloniki,—by sea, and by land; and whichever way the traveler takes, he will be amply satisfied.

Until the last Balkan wars, or perhaps a little earlier, when the Young Turks started their revolution from Saloniki, the average person hardly knew that such a town existed; yet for hundreds of years Saloniki has been the political objective of Austria, Russia, and even Italy.

Nature did its best in creating Saloniki, but some black djinn must have cursed her at birth. Admirably situated by sea and by land, watered by three rivers, surrounded by various chains of lofty mountains, and mirrored in the most beautiful of seas, the Ægean, she was created by God to be a queen city: she has been transformed by man into a storm center, or abandoned to squalor.

I came to Saloniki for the first time from Servia, on a summer afternoon. A laziness, a sleepiness, an unliving haze hung over the city. She looked to me as if put to sleep by the wand of a magician for thousands of years, and just awakening — dazed by sleep, dazed by the events she had to face. And all the people in the streets had the same look of not being awake yet. Even the Greeks had less of their catlike movement, and their quick-wagging tongues seemed to be spellbound.

Indicating our luggage to a flowing-robed Jew, possessor of an antiquated vehicle in accord with the antiquity of the town, my brother said: "Take it to the father *hegoumenos* of the Panaghia, and tell him that the people to whom it belongs are coming later."

Then, hand in hand, we set out through the streets of the sleeping town. How teeming with history it was. Everything spoke of the past, nothing of the present. To that

atmosphere of the past the Jewish population especially added. They were garbed in the clothes — one might almost think in the identical clothes — they had worn when they fled from Spain and the massacres of Ferdinand and Isabella; and they looked and talked as if they were still running to save what they could from the wrath of the Christian God. The then Sultan of Turkey had offered them an asylum and liberty to love their Maker as they chose. That was during the halcyon days of the Ottoman Empire, when the Turks, ruling the fairest portions of Europe, lived and let others live. It was during the period of their magnificence, in which they were gentlemen and acted like gentlemen.

Revolted by the injustice of the Spaniards, they had invited the Jews to come, and they came, frightened by their persecution, dazed by their martyrdom, and wondering why all they had had been taken from them. That was hundreds of years ago, yet to-day

in Saloniki, when you see them in their long flowing robes of calico print, and when you talk with them, although they say never a word of that haunting past, it is that past that dominates you. They speak softly a Spanish rendered Jewish by their Hebrew tongues. It is caressing and soft, and so absolutely the Spanish they brought with them then that it differs materially from the Spanish of to-day. Something about them, whether seated cross-legged behind the counters of their little shops caressing their long flowing beards, or walking stealthily through the quiet streets, speaks of the past and of Spain. It is the same with all the other nationalities one sees in Saloniki: they represent the past, never the present.

We walked, as I said, hand in hand, as if we were afraid of being separated and becoming lost in the past. We hardly talked. The history of ages enveloped us; for we were walking on the same road Xerxes trod when he set out on the invasion of Greece.

Saloniki, the City of Histories

Each of the Balkan nations claims Saloniki. The Greeks, because hundreds of years before Christ it was a Greek city, known as Therma. The Serbs and the Bulgarians, because from Saloniki they had received their religion and what culture they possessed — in return for which they sometimes looted it and sometimes held it. The Macedonians claimed it because — again before Christ — a Macedonian king had remade it and renamed it Thessaloniki, after his wife, a sister of Alexander the Great. And since all the Slavs in the Balkans imagine that they are more or less descended from Alexander the Great, they claim it, too, — and all these pretensions date from the Dark Ages. Even the Italians regard it as rightfully theirs, because Rome, and afterwards Venice, held it.

It is, indeed, a town that is saturated with history: Greek, Macedonian, Persian, Balkan, Turkish, — even French, for did not the French Marquis de Montferrat, of the

Fourth Crusade, receive it as a part of the loot of that piratical expedition, which set out for the deliverance of the tomb of Christ and ended by taking Constantinople and many other towns? The French held it for almost twenty years, until the Greek Prince of Epirus fought them and drove them out. Each nationality has left something behind. You may even imagine, as you listen to the *phloisvos* of the Ægean, that you are listening to Cicero, in exile, repeating his orations.

To us Greeks, Saloniki is the second city of our Byzantine Empire, in that period in which we were once more a power, before the Turks came and reduced us to slavery. As my brother and I walked sedately through the streets of the town, with Olympus and Ossa, the great Greek sentinels of our rights towering in the distance, we fell to reciting fragments of poetry, now in the pure Greek, again in that adorable Laïc language, in which the Armateloi of the late

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries wrote. Yet we neither skipped with joy before that wonderful physical beauty, nor did we experience the exhilaration which every Greek feels at the sight of the sea. For several months now we had been ringed about in Servia by the great mountains which overshadow that country and rob it of mental agility. Even when we don't like the sea, we worship it — it lures us on; it is a part of us, and lends to our minds its fluid quality. Subdued and sobered we walked on for hours, always conscious of the necessity of treading softly, lest we frighten the drowsy city.

Saloniki, at the time of which I write, was Turkish, and the day when she was to become the cradle of a supposed Turkish regeneration was far off. She was merely old Turkish, unkempt, squalid, picturesque.

We entered a few shops and bought some trinkets, so that we might talk with the Jews. To Greeks their lingo is not difficult,

and we liked the men as we talked with them. I even felt like patting one particular old Jew and telling him not to be afraid, because my Christian God was less exacting and less bloodthirsty than that of Ferdinand and Isabella.

We sat on backless stools in the middle of the sidewalk, before a Turkish café. We ate our *loukoums* and drank our coffee, watching the ever-tranquil waves caress the shore, listening to the murmur of the flowing rivers, and all the time history was pouring its presents from the arms of the past. Our Turkish *cafedji*, clad in white, with a large red-figured handkerchief as an apron, and another twisted around his red fez, presented a wonderful bit of color. He was a veritable Turk, not merely a Mohammedan, and followed the only profession, outside of soldiering, for which he is fit and which he graces to perfection. We talked with him a great deal, inviting him to come and sit by us, which he did without humil-

ity, without arrogance, with that dignity which only the Turk possesses.

Our *cafedji*, of course, could neither read nor write. History did not trouble him; he was as innocent of the past as if it did not exist: —

Was there prosperity in Saloniki?

Oh, yes, it was not hard to make a living, and the average Turk's living is so simple.

Was he married?

Why, of course, since he was almost thirty.

Did he have any children?

Naturally. What did people marry for? If his wife had had none, he would have taken another, in order that he might have sons.

We arose and tramped a little longer, and just at sunset came to the abode of the priest where we proposed stopping. We opened the wooden gate and entered the extensive vegetable garden of our host. He

was walking among his vegetables, rapidly knitting a woolen sock, started from the toe. He had no *kalimafk* on his head, and his long hair, curly at the temples, was gathered into a knot at his neck. He was dressed in his flowing black robes, with a wide purple velvet belt above his rotund hips.

"We are your self-invited guests," said my brother.

The *hegoumenos* stopped his knitting, made the sign of the cross with three fingers of his right hand as a benediction, and then let me bestow a kiss on his plump white hand. My brother he only patted on the shoulder, avoiding the awkwardness that might have ensued had my brother belonged to the horrid Young Greece which no longer kisses the hands of its priests. Under his left arm was a long thin stick, into which the knitting-needle was stuck and from which the stocking was now hanging.

"We have come to ask your hospitality, since there is not a hostelry which could give us even passable comfort."

The Greek priest nodded cordially.

"I am indebted to this lack of the town for much pleasure that comes to me through travelers."

At once we knew that he was not born in Saloniki, that he was not newly awakened, but that he was alive, possessed by the past, conscious of the present, and that consequently we might learn from him more of Saloniki than its streets, more even than its past alone could tell us.

A little donkey, blindfolded and attached to an old-fashioned water-wheel, was drawing water from a well, and a number of young priests were working in the garden. It was a lovely picture, full of quiet and charm and rest. The *hegoumenos* called out: —

"Here, brothers! Bring out chairs and refreshments."

These were placed in the shade, and presently we were partaking of dry fish, black olives, and black coffee, with a basket full of such a variety of fruits as if it had been sent by the Goddess of Abundance.

"Where do you come from?" our host asked, with such lively interest that it was manifest that he lived upon the visits of the people who came from the outside world and brought him news of his race.

"From Servia."

"How interesting! What were they doing up there, the Serbs? What are they thinking, and how do they feel toward the Greeks? Ah! if only a perfect understanding could be reached between us." And there in that slumbering town, on that beautiful afternoon, in that enchanting garden, we talked of the future, the future of Greece and its people, a future fraught with dangers and possible disillusionment.

"Some day the Greeks must be strong enough to take Saloniki from the Turks.

They can no longer hold it." Thus spoke the priest, the priest who had come from outside to guide the spiritual welfare of his flock — and who was more alive to their future political status. His next question was full of anxiety. "What were the Greeks thinking? Were they preparing? Were they remembering Macedonia, its misery, its misrule?"

With him we stayed three days. Our rooms were clean and spacious, our fare of the best. They are good livers, those Greek priests, who are half the servants of God and half soldiers. And we talked always of the great problem, the fate of Saloniki and of the time when she must become Greek again because the Turk could no longer hold her.

And what of the Turk, the Turk who owned Saloniki, only to keep her misruled and in squalor — what did we see of the Turk in Saloniki? Alas for his past grandeur, we saw him as we saw him all over the

Balkans, where the jealousies of the Great Powers still allowed him to remain a nominal ruler. He represented the near past, crumbling to pieces before our eyes. He, to me, was the real pathos of the peninsula.

On the third day of our stay we climbed a long hill, at the top of which was a fortress. We sat down under a plantain tree near the entrance. An ill-clad sentry was marching up and down. For a while we were undisturbed, then he came up to us.

"Get up and go away," he said. "You can't stay here."

Had my brother not understood a word he could not have acted more indifferently. He always left the Turks to me, maintaining that I understood them better than they did themselves. Perhaps it was because as a child I had eaten their food, had slept in their houses, and had twisted myself up in the gymnastics with which they pray before their Allah.

"I told you to get up and go away," the

sentry repeated. "What are you doing here?"

"We are sitting down, and you had better sit down, too," I answered. "We come from Constantinople. Perhaps you would like to ask us some questions. We will answer them."

"I have never been to Constantinople," he said surlily, " although I saw it from the boat. But you can't sit here."

"But we *are* sitting here — how can you say we can't?" I argued. " Where do you come from?"

He frowned.

"Asia Minor?" I insinuated.

Like a little child from whom a confession is being wrung, he nodded.

"Married?" I persisted.

He nodded again. His frown was no longer commanding; it was dejected. Yes, he was married.

"How many boys?"

"Two."

"How long is it since you have seen your wife?"

At that he broke down. To see a man cry is the most terrible sight in the world; and when the man who cries is young and strong and healthy, then his tears are the most harrowing arraignment of the world's injustice. He fell, rather than sat down beside me, and I patted him and comforted him; because I love the Turks and know their great qualities — know also that there is every excuse for their faults.

Between his sobs he told his pathetic story: how he had been taken from his wife to fight in the Balkans, and then, when his time of military service was at an end, he had been forgotten, and he, the capital of the empire, had been left to rot and fall to pieces. For years he had received no pay, so that even if he got his release, he would have no means of returning to his far-distant home. His youngest boy, five years old, had been born a few months after he had

left his wife, so some soldiers who had been rushed through Saloniki a year ago had told him.

As he talked in broken sentences, I could imagine a hut, somewhere in Asia Minor, where a young, poverty-stricken woman had struggled with death to give the world a son, who was to be taken from her to fight for a country which gave her nothing in exchange. This soldier before me, weeping like a lad for his wife and children, represented a people hated and abhorred by the world largely because it prayed to its God in a different way from ours. Religion is the highest expression of our development. It is the dream our soul dreams, the song our heart sings, and yet we hate our brother because his soul dreams a different dream and sings a different song. If God has human feelings, how He must loathe us.

While the man wept, I was thinking. Could we not have helped the Turk? Could not the great Christian Powers have come

to his assistance — for his sake, and not for their own? The Great Powers seemed to me like the soldiers who sat by the dying Christ and raffled his clothes; but whereas *they* came to an understanding in the raffle, the great Christian Powers sat watching a once great empire falling to pieces before their eyes, just for want of a little help, like rival vultures on the battlefield watching a soldier dying.

That is what I saw in Saloniki of the Turk. It was not a solitary case. It was to be found all over the Balkans — men taken from their homes, forgotten, and left to rot in uniforms which were falling to pieces. Of all the peoples under the rule of the Turks, the Turk himself is the most pathetic. And now that the time has come when he will have to go, when he, the only outside conqueror of Europe who came and stayed as conqueror, is about to be ousted, let people think of him as part of that great brotherhood which ought to be the creed

of our civilization, and remember that he who is going has nowhere to go.

As I look back now I wonder why we did not go down to the silent Jews and beg for the necessary money to send the soldier home. I feel certain that they would have given it to us, and I also feel certain that with the money in our hands we could have obtained his release from the Turk in command; for he would have understood. The governing Turk knows well enough that all has not been well with his country, and if it were not for his fatalism and the insidious wormlike work of the Powers there might have been a chance for him.

That night we told the father *hegoumenos* about the young Turk and his tears.

"They are crumbling to pieces," he said with unction. To him the incident was only satisfactory proof of the disintegration of the race which was keeping his own in subjection. He caressed his long, gray beard. A mist of happiness softened his eyes.

"Who knows, perhaps I shall yet preach from the pulpit of our great Byzantine church, for five hundred years desecrated as a mosque."

He remained silent, hiding his hands under the long sleeves of his priestly robe. Presently, his eyes burning with national fanaticism, his voice vibrant with emotion, he went on: —

"I have that sermon already written. Shall I read it to you?"

Rising, he kneeled in the middle of the room, removed two tiles from the floor, and from a home-made safe beneath extracted the beloved sermon.

He read it as if we two were a multitude of Greeks flocking to St. George, with Saloniki once more under Greek sway.

He was not an old man then. When in 1913 Saloniki hoisted the Greek flag, and all the Byzantine churches once more echoed with the language of John Chrysostom, perhaps he, our *hegoumenos*, mounted the steps

of the pulpit and delivered that sermon which years before he had read to us while Saloniki was still a Turkish town. To few is it given to see their dreams realized: he may have been one of those few.

As I am writing, Saloniki is Greek in name only. Once more the queen city of the Ægean is a storm center. She is the base for the operations of the Allied armies in the Balkans, and French soldiers and English soldiers and soldiers from Italy and soldiers from Servia are there, and for the first time mighty Russia is treading the path where Xerxes and Alexander trod. Saloniki cannot now be wearing her sleepy expression. Awakened from her historic past, she has become the vital point of the present; for it is also there that the Cretan, Elentherios Venizelos, — great Greek patriot, or traitor to his king, — presides over his provisional government, while still the Vardar flows, the Ægean never angrily laps the shores, and Olympus and Ossa look down

upon the modern hosts as imperturbably as they gazed upon Xerxes when he came to invade Greece. What will be the fate of Saloniki after this devastating, never-ending war? Will she remain Greek, or will she, as in a new deal of injustice, be handed over to another alien ruler, to await the day when the curse shall be lifted from her and from the rest of mankind? — the curse which makes men regard the world in the light of trade-routes and gold-reserves, forgetting that we should be brothers first and merchants afterwards.

THE END

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Brown, Demetra Vaka
The heart of the Balkans