

Harry De Windt Through Savage Europe, 1907

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Chapter I

Down the Adriatic

"Why 'savage' Europe?" asked a friend who recently witnessed my departure from Charing Cross for the Near East.

"Because," I replied, "the term accurately describes the wild and lawless countries between the Adriatic and Black Seas."

For some mystic reason, however, most English men are less familiar with the geography of the Balkan States than with that of Darkest Africa. This was my case, and I had therefore yet to learn that these same Balkans can boast of cities which are miniature replicas of London and Paris. But these are civilised centres. The remoter districts are, as of yore, hotbeds of outlawry and brigandage, where you must travel with a revolver in each pocket and your life in your hand, and of this fact, as the reader will see, we had tangible and unpleasant proof before the end of the journey. Moreover, do not the now palatial capitals of Servia and Bulgaria occasionally startle the outer world with political crimes of medieval barbarity? Witness the assassination of the late King and Queen of Servia and of Monsieur Stambuloff, the Bulgarian Premier. Wherefore the term "savage" is perhaps not wholly inapplicable to that portion of Europe which we are about to traverse, to say nothing of our final destination—the eastern shores of the Black Sea.

I travelled upon this occasion as special correspondent to the Westminster Gazette. My sole companion was Mr. Mackenzie, of the Urban Bioscope Company, a canny Scotsman from Aberdeen, possessed of a keen sense of humour and of two qualities indispensable to a "bioscope" artist—assurance and activity. Nothing daunted my friend when he had once resolved to secure a "living" picture, and I trembled more than once for his safety in the vicinity of royal residences or military ground. For the bioscope was a novelty in the Balkans and might well have been mistaken for an infernal machine!

Our itinerary was to comprise Montenegro, Herzegovina, Bosnia, Servia, Bulgaria, Rumania, Southern Russia, and the Caucasus in the order named. Trieste was the actual point of departure, and from here we sailed one bright morning in March in a comfortable Austrian steamer for Cattaro (with the accent on the first syllable), the gateway of the tiny principality which has such a thorn in the side of the Turk. This two days' sea-journey is a delightful one at any season of the year, for the course is chiefly laid through picturesque fjords rarely ruffled by a strong breeze, and it was pleasant to bask on deck in the warm sunshine and forget the sleet and east winds lately experienced in cold, foggy England. The little *Pannonia* was crowded; no one spoke English and very few a little French, but the innate courtesy and pleasant manners of our Austrian fellow-passengers atoned for any lack of conversation. As a rule I cordially detest sea travel, chiefly for its monotony, but on this little voyage there was plenty of incident, for every few hours would bring us to one of the white palm-girt towns, which, as we progressed

southward, became more novel and picturesque. Zara, on the first day, seemed a picture of loveliness, Spalato lovelier still, but both were eclipsed the next morning by Ragusa, that “Pearl of the Adriatic,” which we shall visit in detail later on. A few hours beyond this we enter the Bocche di Cattaro, three almost landlocked salt-water lakes, each one more beautiful than its predecessor. These must be traversed in order to reach our destination, and on entering the second we lose sight of the sea, and the Fannonia skims swiftly across smooth, transparent waters into the third lake, from the entrance of which we sight the little town of Cattaro, nestling under a perpendicular precipice of rock. As usual, a crowd on the quay awaits the arrival of the steamer. It is chiefly composed of men and women in the national dress of Dalmatia, with a sprinkling of Austrian uniforms and German broadcloth. The Bocche di Cattaro have been likened to the Swiss and Italian lakes, but in my opinion the scenery of the former is as superior to these in grandeur as Niagara to the falls of Schaffhausen. Geneva and Como are pretty enough in their way; but become almost commonplace when compared with this frowning, fortress, and Eastern-looking town, where bright barbaric costumes, dazzling sunshine and, a turquoise sky are more suggestive of some fantastic ballet scene at the Alhambra than of a place within four days’ journey of Charing Cross.

I think it was Lord Byron who once called Malta a “little military hothouse,” and the term applies to Cattaro, where about two-thirds of the population wear the Austrian uniform. The place is as strong as Gibraltar—there is no doubt of that; and yet the work of fortification is ‘still being carried on with feverish activity, more especially since the Russian reverses in the Far East. Cattaro may, indeed, be called impregnable, for in addition to its own formidable citadel no less than twenty-seven forts with heavy and modern guns now command the inlets which divide it from the sea. If appearances go for anything, Austria has certainly “come to stay” in these parts. The place itself consists of an intricate network of tiny streets and squares beautifully paved with huge blocks of granite, but as puzzling to a stranger as the maze at Hampton Court. It almost resembles a miniature town, the available space between the quay and wall-like cliffs being so restricted. Near the harbour are some fine Government buildings and public gardens with the usual café and bandstand, where Mars and Venus meet on summer evenings to discuss refreshments and the latest scandal. This so-called garden—a few dusty shrubs and sickly flowers—is the only bit of verdure in the place, which for all its lovely surroundings is as arid as Aden, and the eyes rest eternally upon glaring white roads and walls until they ache again. Nevertheless Cattaro is pleasant enough in bright weather, but on dull days, when the mountains are wreathed in mist and blue waters fade into a dull grey, it becomes unutterably dreary and depressing—at least so I was told; for during our brief stay the sun beat down so fiercely and incessantly that gloomy skies would have been a relief. Gnats swarmed in their legions, and I have known the flies less troublesome at Suez in July as we threaded our way (through alleys so narrow that a man could almost shake hands with his opposite neighbour) to our inn. The Hotel de Graz is at present the only habitable one here, and is a trifle better, as regards food, than a Siberian post-house, and rather worse, as regards accommodation, than a common lodging-house in Whitechapel. We fared far better in peasants’ huts over the border in Montenegro than in this Austrian so-called “hotel.” Only one room was vacant, and poor Mackenzie who had never been far afield from Bonny Scotland, surveyed the rickety bedstead and dirty sheets, creased by many previous occupants, with infinite disgust. Touched by his distress, I called for whisky to solace the man of Aberdeen, but, alas! discovered that he was a “teetotaler”!

Cattaro is the gateway of Montenegro, and the mass of rock which towers over it is the famous “Tsernagora,” which signifies in Slavonic “Black Mountain.” Montenegro means, of

course, the same thing, but is an Italian corruption of the original, word. Both names, however, are equally unsuitable, for mountains and rocks throughout the principality are unusually light in colour. In former days the Tsernagora was a formidable barrier—a frontier in the most practical sense of the word—for only experienced climbers could then enter the country by means of the “ladder,” a tiny goat which can yet be discerned from Căttaro zigzagging up the mountain until it is lost in cloudland. The natives still scale this with ease, although towards the summit a slip would mean certain death. Pierre Loti, the famous French author, is one of the few strangers who have crossed this breakneck pass of recent years, but the talented writer of “Frère Yves” is a sailor. At any rate there is no necessity to traverse it now, for a driveable road was made in 1881 a few miles to the westward of the old path way, and the ill-fated Crown Prince Rudolf of Austria was the first to make the journey in a carriage and pair. But even the modern ascent looks so steep from below that we mistook it at first for the now disused and perilous “ladder.”

Căttaro has been so often wrecked by earth quake and battered by shells in the past, that it retains few buildings of antiquity or interest. Only some remarkable ramparts, erected centuries ago by the Venetians, have survived countless sieges and convulsions of nature, and these are now modernised by the addition of unsightly barracks and modern artillery. There was no object in remaining here over the morrow, and I therefore set about finding a vehicle for the journey to Cetigne (the capital of Montenegro), while Mackenzie sallied forth to find material for the bioscope, which latter attracted almost as much notice here as a menagerie in an English village. The reader has probably seen thousands of biograph views, but is, perhaps, unacquainted with the instrument itself, which is a square, brass-bound, mahogany case, about the size of an ordinary camera, supported by a spidery tripod about seven feet high. I begged my friend to be careful, for the captain of the *Pannonia* had warned us that spy-mania was raging in Căttaro with unusual virulence, and that only a short time before our arrival an Austrian Archduke, travelling *incognito*, had been arrested by mistake, and had passed a day in the local gaol for merely carrying a “Kodak” in the vicinity of military works!

Having secured a conveyance the morrow, I strolled about the place to while away the time until the advent of a meal, facetiously described as “dinner” by our landlord. All roads in Căttaro lead to the quay—or “Marina,” as this fashionable resort is called—and here, towards evening, I found a dense crowd assembled to witness the funeral of a distinguished official which was to pass here on its way to a cemetery on the outskirts of the town. It was a strange and impressive scene—the verdant shores of the lake fading into a mist of distant hills, the blue harbour sparkling in the sunshine, a military band in the distance; all, on one side, was life and gaiety, on the other that gloomy *cortège* emerging from an archway in the city walls to wend its course, like a dark river, through a restless array of bright costumes and showy uniforms. Low murmurs of admiration greeted the hearse — one mass of costly wreaths and flowers—which was preceded by a score of dark-robed priests swinging censers and chanting solemn requiems of the Greek Church. The procession was perhaps half a mile in length, and at intervals some sacred emblem—a silver crucifix or silken banner—towered above a forest of flickering tapers. Presently my attention was attracted by a strange object, an oblong wooden receptacle, evidently weighty, for it was borne with difficulty and occasionally at a perilous angle, over the heads of the mourners. This relic occupied the centre of the line, where it seemed to excite unusual interest and reverence. What could it be, or contain?— vestments, perhaps, once worn by the patron saint of the city. Curiosity impelled me to press forward for a closer inspection, while the rows of sable-clad figures filed past with slow and measured tread, and joining in the mournful chant of the clergy. At last the mysterious casket came abreast, but, great heavens! Is this a

dream, or rather a night mare, from which I shall presently awake in our mouldy bedroom at the Hotel de Graz? No wonder the natives had surveyed this unusual object with blank amazement (which I had mistaken for awe and veneration), if those Gaelic features and “heather mixture” suit be not an empty vision. But any doubt is soon dispelled by a furtive wink of recognition which momentarily hovers over the melancholy expression assumed for the occasion. This is no dream, and I am wide awake—sufficiently awake, at any rate, to identify, only too clearly and his bioscope!

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My friend returned at dusk to the hotel, cool and imperturbable as usual. “I got the graveyard scene all right,” he said, as we smoked a cigar under the stars; “but there was scarcely enough life and animation in the picture!” And at a funeral, too! But some people are never satisfied.

[...]

Chapter VII

Modern Bosniaⁱ

Had the railway from Mostar to Serajevo (which was built in 1891) been constructed in Western Europe, it would undoubtedly have been the talk of the world; for surely no line was ever laid across so difficult a piece of country. In places whole cliffs have been blasted away to enable the metals to follow a narrow pathway with granite walls and a nasty precipice on either side. As the engine creeps carefully over the slender iron bridges towards the summit you may look down from your carriage window into a thousand feet of space, and feel thankful that cog-wheels are beneath you, for otherwise any hitch with the brakes might cause a frightful accident. At times the track is so tortuous that an engine-driver may glance across a chasm and without looking back see the rear -van winding around a corner. The speed is slow and sure; seventy odd miles in about eight hours; but with those terrific curves and gradients it would be quite impossible to cover the distance safely in less time.

The line traverses a country as fertile as it is picturesque, for the valleys of the Ivan-planina range are one long panorama of arable, pasture, and forest lands, which every year become better cultivated and more densely peopled. At present timber and plums are the chief products of this district, large quantities of the latter being exported to India and the United States. “Slivovitch,” the favourite liqueur throughout the Balkans, is made from this fruit, and is almost as potent, if not quite as nasty, as Russian vodka. But in a few years tobacco, excellent of its kind, will be an important industry in this part of Bosnia, and the Austrian Government wisely affords every assistance to its growers and retains the monopoly. The Bosnian tobacco is not unlike Turkish in flavour, but is at present rather coarse—a defect which, in time, will no doubt be remedied. Of minerals, gold, silver, copper, and iron are known to exist in various parts of Bosnia, and our engine consumed coal of fair quality from a mine lately opened near Mostar. The fare, first class, from Mostar to Serajevo is about ten shillings, which is certainly moderate considering the luxurious conditions under which it is accomplished. When crossing the White Pass by rail in Alaska, a couple of years ago, some of the gradients made my blood run cold, but they were not as bad as that on the Serajevo Railway. But in Alaska trains are run over the mountains in a careless, happy-go-lucky manner that would make an Austrian railway official’s hair stand on end. Sheer luck has hitherto prevented disasters on the White Pass line, but on the Serajevo-Mostar system unceasing care and attention to the minutest details render an accident

next to impossible. Breakdowns, however, do occasionally occur, and some trifling repairs to our engine necessitated a slight delay. This fortunately took place near Yablanitsa, a

health resort which the Austrian Government has established in one of the wildest gorges of the Pass, and where we found a comfortable hotel with charming surroundings. In civilised Europe Yablanitsa would be a gold-mine to the proprietors, with its pure mountain air and glorious scenery; but as it was, we were the sole occupants of the spacious dining-room with its marvellous view and k. of ghostly, unoccupied tables ready laid, but vainly awaiting occupants. In summer-time, however, the place is often crowded, and the visitors' book showed that English tourists had once got as far as this from Ragusa—one of the few occasions upon which we ever heard of, much £ less saw, any compatriots between the Adriatic and Bukarest. As usual, my countrywomen had not been content to inscribe their names, but, inspired no doubt by the romantic scenery, had recorded their impressions in poetry—of their own! Their effusions reminded me of the elderly English spinster who penned the following lines in a visitors' book on the Lake of Como:--

“On the lake of Come,
I hope to find a home!”

But a facetious fellow-guest secretly altered the final “e” of each line into the letter “o,” and I draw a veil over subsequent events.

With Serajevo I was disappointed, partly because its beauties had been exaggerated, partly on account of its prim German appearance, which is quite out of keeping with this picturesque Eastern land. A citadel and fortifications crown the heights, but below them the place seems as incongruous here as would a Turkish town, suddenly dumped down on the banks of the Spree. The Franz Josef Strasse, for instance, has its hotels, clubs, shops and theatres, and looks just like a bit of Vienna or Berlin. Of the old Bosna-Serai, or: “city of palaces,” only a few mosques are left, and a bazaar, which is gradually being absorbed into the modern town. It forms a continuation of the aforementioned Franz Josef Strasse; and to walk suddenly from the latter, with its handsome buildings and street cars, into the dim, mysterious oasis which still remains here of Oriental life, was like entering some barbaric show at Earl's Court from out of the busy London streets. But if the Austrian be not loved (as he certainly is not) by Bosnians the latter are wary enough to see that trade has vastly improved under the new régime. Also the population has largely increased, for the capital now contains over 40,000 inhabitants. Of these, about 17,000 are Mahometans and about 11,000 and 6,000 belong to the Catholic and Greek Churches respectively. The remainder are Jews—a Spanish branch of the race whose ancestors fled here in the sixteenth century from the terrors of the Inquisition. Of late years, thousands of German and Polish Israelites have invaded the towns of this province—and to such an extent that the authorities now contemplate restrictive measures—but from these the Spanish Jews keep strictly aloof, both commercially and socially, maintaining that the intruders come of an infinitely inferior stock to themselves. Moreover, while the new arrivals from Western Europe are universally detested, the Spaniards live in perfect peace and harmony with the Christian and Mussulman population. They speak a kind of Spanish *patois* very melodious, and so far as business is concerned, probably very useful, for no one else in the place can understand it! That they are prosperous is shown by the clean and orderly appearance of the Jewish quarter, and the handsome synagogue, which cost some millions of gulden, and the towers 4 of which are visible for miles around the city.

In 1511, Serajevo was merely a Turkish fortress surrounded by a few wooden huts, which formed the nucleus of the city of to-day. It has always been a fruitful breeding-place of conspiracies and revolts, first against the Turks, and in later years against the Austrian invaders, and the place was not occupied by the latter in 1878 without great loss of life on either side. It is said that the waters of the Miliatchka river which runs through Serajevo, were red with blood before it was taken, and many of the buildings still bear traces of the furious bombardment by means of which General Phillipovitch eventually silenced the Bosnian batteries.

Whatever the bazaar of Bosna-Serai may once have been, it is now dirty, dull, and uninteresting. As in Teheran, the costliest wares are only produced when there is a serious prospect of doing business—and the Bosnian merchant utterly declines to haggle over a deal, be it important or otherwise. It is “take it or leave it,” and to either course he is generally supremely indifferent. As in Stamboul, each street in the Serajevo “Bezestan” has its distinctive trade. The local embroidery, silver filigree work, and inlaid steel, are fairly cheap, but, on the other hand, cannot be called artistic or even pleasing to the eye, besides which many of the goods are rubbishy German imitations. As a rule, the only genuine articles here are articles of copper work, or of black wood inlaid with silver, the latter very beautiful. But the stores for the common necessities of life seemed to be doing the best trade, which does not say much, for although modern Serajevo teems with commercial activity, business in the native quarter is conducted with a lazy indifference engendered of centuries under Ottoman rule. For instance, there are only four working days in the week for the Bosnian. Friday, Saturday, and Sunday being Sabbaths (and, therefore, days of rest) apportioned respectively to the Christian, Mahometan, and Jew! On work-days the “Bezestan” swarmed with strange nationalities, Bosnians, Croatians, Servians, Dalmatians, Greeks, and Turks. The “Tziganes,” or gipsies, were also very numerous, and here do not, as usual, earn money as musicians, but as iron and brass workers. Socially, they are looked down upon by all other races, chiefly on account of their women, whose mode of life was indicated by brazen manners, rouged faces, and a profusion of cheap jewelry.

I have not, in the above census, included the garrison, which is over three thousand strong—a large percentage, for every third person in the street seemed to be in uniform. *Cafés*, of course, abound, also “Bierhalles”; and the theatre is generally occupied by some opera or comedy company from Austria, the winter season especially being one round of dances, dinners, and receptions. In summer-time, when the heat and dust of the city become unbearable, Ilidje, about nine miles away, is the favourite resort of wealth and fashion. A branch line of the Bosnian Railway runs to this pretty little watering-place, the sulphur baths of which were much frequented by the Turks, and discovered by the Romans long before them. Of late years a number of villas have sprung up around the town, which formerly consisted of three primitive inns and a restaurant. Now people come from Belgrade, and even from Sofia, to drink the waters and enjoy life, and during the race week, when the “Seraj Derby” is the attraction, not a room is vacant in the place. Falconry was once the favourite sport here amongst the *jeunesse dorée*, but lately pigeon-shooting has taken its place—and golf-links are to follow. Imagine English jockeys, “caddies,” and *petits chevaux*, almost within sight of the ancient and venerable walls of Bosna-Serai!

Incessant rain prevented our riding out to the Observatory (the only one in the Balkans), which is well worth a visit. From here there is a magnificent view from a peak 6,000 feet high, and on a clear day even the distant ranges of Montenegro are visible to the naked eye. But it is a two days’ journey from Serajevo on horseback along rough mountain paths, and although there

is a rough shelter on the summit for the accommodation of travellers, the game, considering the wet weather, was hardly worth the candle. So we roamed about the city and explored its mosques; but most of them are ban-like buildings, plain and unattractive inside and out. Perhaps the "Begova Djamia," which dates from the sixteenth century, is the finest, but even this would scarcely impress a stranger acquainted with the places of worship in Cairo or Constantinople. Some of the latter here, however, were surrounded by quiet, shady gardens, where it was pleasant enough to stroll about on a warm day and examine the curious old inscriptions on the fez-topped tombstones. How is it that Mahometan cemeteries are always less gloomy and depressing than the places where Christians lay their dead? But the finest view of the city was obtainable from the Jewish cemetery, on the slope of a neighbouring hill, and it was worth the stiff climb to come here at sunset, and look down upon Serajevo, its lights twinkling like diamonds through the violet mists of evening, while the stillness was alone broken by the muffled murmur of the town, and the weird cry of muezzins from a hundred minarets. Occasionally a bugle-call from the barracks or the clash of trucks from the station would reach the ear, but otherwise there was nothing to suggest that a commonplace German town, and not the ancient Turkish stronghold, lay glittering at our feet.

And yet although medievalism is mentally attractive, civilisation is certainly a physical blessing, especially in the Near East. Serajevo, for instance, was formerly a nest of disease, for the broad but shallow Miliatchka (or the "Gently whispering") formed its main drain, which in summer sometimes ran dry for weeks together. Sewage was then thrown into the streets, and the fruitful harvest of cholera and fever which followed this proceeding may be imagined. Now there is no healthier or better drained town in Europe, at any rate in the modern quarter. In olden times Bosnia was the stepping-stone for cholera and the plague to Western Europe from the East, and in 1741 the latter caused fearful ravages throughout the country. This is scarcely to be wondered at, for in those days the sick were at the mercy of native doctors, who treated the disease internally with boiled violet leaves, and outwardly by magic spells and violent "massage." The clothes, &c., of the sick were soaked in a river or running stream for three or four days, while prayers were said over them, which naturally spread the infection with frightful rapidity. In 1865 cholera broke out, but by this time the city, although still under Ottoman rule, had been provided with European doctors, and fortunately so, for even this visitation carried off nearly 40% of the entire population! The first hospital was now erected, and the sick properly tended, so that although there have been three recurrences of the epidemic in recent years, the mortality has not been anything like so excessive as it was. Other diseases prevalent here at certain seasons of the year are typhoid fever, dysentery, and measles, but small-pox has been nearly stamped out by vaccination. Leprosy, however, still exists, as a short walk through the "Tsharshija," one of the native quarters, will conclusively prove. But there are now several free hospitals both for natives and Europeans, one of which, the "Central," is an admirably conducted establishment for surgical and medical cases. It is also proposed to found a special department for the "Pasteur" treatment of hydrophobia, which is very prevalent here, not only on account of homeless, starving curs which prowl about the streets, but also wolves which infest the country districts and which, in winter, often attack men working in the fields. I was shown a curious old book at one of the hospitals which contained some of the weird methods of treatment employed by the native doctors before modern science came to their aid. One of these (which is mentioned as a *certain* cure for hydrophobia) is to kill the dog which inflicted the bite, cut his body in two pieces, and walk between the latter with your eyes shut. This is said to be an infallible remedy, but the writer gravely adds that it should be carried out within twenty-four hours of the accident, otherwise the

patient will *probably die*! Oddly enough many of the natives here still prefer to consult their own medicine-men and apothecaries, whose drugs seemed to be as weirdly composed as some I saw in China. I saw some powder, said to be “pulverised mummy,” sold at an enormous price in the “Bezestan” for the cure of cancer. For the Bosnian is very credulous. I should say also, from a short experience, that he is the least attractive of any of the Balkan races, for he lacks the chivalry of the Montenegrin, the gaiety of the Serb, and the enterprise of the Bulgar. But he has one virtue domesticity, and is, as a rule, as fond of home and its legitimate surroundings as his Servian neighbours are the reverse. The men are fine, stalwart fellows, inured to a life of labour, and caring little so long as they can earn their daily bread; the women rather undersized and inclined to stoutness at an early age; but Eastern races, like the French, admire this! The female costume is becoming to a young girl, but is, in some cases, so *deollété* that its wearer would speedily be arrested in a London street. There seemed to be few pleasures in the existence either sex, and these were taken sadly. Even when dancing the “Kolo” (on the occasion of a wedding, or feast), which resembles the “Horo” of Bulgaria, and which is there performed in riotous merriment, the Bosnian went through the performance as though it were a very serious matter. The music, from a *guzla*, was sad and monotonous, like the country which produced it. I only once saw a group of Bosnians look in any way cheerful, and that was at a funeral.

Bosnia is certainly on the way to become as rich as any other Balkan State, for only capital is needed to develop its many resources, of which timber, tobacco, and hides are now the most important, but will surely not remain so, for valuable minerals are known to exist. And I should here mention that the prosperous condition of this country is due to the ceaseless energy and enterprise of Baron Von Kallay, a Hungarian, who as Austrian Minister of Finance has devoted his life, during the past twenty years, to the complete reorganisation of the State, politically, socially, and strategically. And to this end the Baron has been ably assisted by his beautiful and accomplished wife who, at the zenith of her youth and popularity in Vienna, left the gay capital for this land of exile, which at that time was bristling with discomfort and danger. The journey was then one which few men would have cared to undertake, for railways ceased near the Servian frontier, and the so-called roads of Bosnia were infested by hostile patriots and footpads. Volumes could be written about the adventures which befell this plucky lady before Serajevo was reached; and here the Baroness since remained, doing her utmost to educate, and socially improve women of all creeds and classes, and performing the deeds of charity and self-sacrifice which have earned her the title of “Queen of Bosnia.” Every Austrian I met here agreed that the rapidity with which this once unsavoury and lawless town has been converted into a fine modern city is entirely due to this illustrious pair, and Ilidje itself would never have existed but for their generosity and perseverance. In addition to her social charms Baroness Von Kallay is justly renowned for her literary abilities and is a marvellous linguist, speaking English, Russian, and Bosnian fluently, and her hospitality is a byword amongst travellers of all nations who have had the good fortune to become acquainted with this remarkable woman and her husband. Baron Von Kallay is only just over sixty years old, but he has managed to crowd two centuries of invaluable work into his lifetime.

Serajevo possesses several hotels, of which the “Grand Central” is probably the best. As usual, there was no sitting-room for the use of guests, and when not exploring the streets and suburbs the restaurant was our drawing-room. As at Mostar, it resembled a military mess, and two-thirds of the habitués wore the Austrian uniform, or blue tunic and scarlet fez of some Austro-Bosnian regiment. The officers seemed to have little to do, for at this season of the year military exercises are generally over for the day by 10 a.m., and the afternoons are usually spent

in playing cards or talking scandal which, so far as I could glean, is never lacking here. This restaurant was also the chief centre for news from Europe which was posted up in the shape of telegrams twice during the day, although Serajevo itself is well supplied with newspapers, several being published in German and at least half a dozen in the Bosnian and Turkish languages. In the evening tradesmen came in after the theatre with their wives and daughters to drink Bock and Mélange and to listen to the inevitable string band, while every one spoke German to the exclusion of every other language, and a demand in English or French was met with a blank stare by the “Kellners.” The *cuisine* was good but trying, being of an international character, and comprising such contrasts as beefsteak and frogs, sourcrout and “Risotto a la Milanese”! Austrian politeness is justly renowned throughout Europe, but a lengthened residence in foreign parts had not improved the manners of some of the inhabitants here. For the keenest interest in our movements was taken by the occupants of adjoining tables, and one day a portly Viennese *bourgeois* actually called the waiter to inquire what I had ordered for dinner! It is only fair to add that this disagreeable failing was confined to civilians. The day of our departure a bill was handed to me in the restaurant for fifteen koronas, which, as we had stayed here for three days and partaken of at least half a dozen meals in the hotel, struck me with pleasurable surprise. But unfortunately it was quickly followed by another account in the hall amounting to an additional fifty koronas, and I then learnt that in this portion, of the Balkans the charges for apartments and board are always presented separately. I mention this fact in order that other travellers may be spared the disappointment I experienced!

Serajevo was not always capital of Bosnia—the now obscure little town of Yaïtché, one of the loveliest spots in the country, having first occupied that distinction. Yaïtché is well worth a visit, if only on account of its picturesque position and magnificent waterfall, which dashes with a deafening roar from the level of the town to a foaming cataract sixty or seventy feet below it. The place was built in the fifteenth century by an Italian from Spalato, who also fortified it so successfully that it has often proved a stumbling-block to invading Turks and Hungarians; also to the Austrians in 1878, who only occupied it after considerable loss of life. Here the last King of Bosnia was murdered, in 1463, by an envoy of the Sultan of Turkey, and his skeleton may still be seen reposing in a glass coffin in the old Franciscan church. Yaïtché was formerly inhabited solely by Catholics, and the ruins of many of their churches, destroyed by the Turks, are still visible. St. Luke the Evangelist is said to have died here, and a church dedicated to his memory (since converted into a mosque) is still standing. I was much interested in an ancient and curious custom here, which is, I believe, unknown in other Bosnian towns: Any woman of the community whose conduct has not been above reproach is compelled to kneel in the Street, outside some sacred edifice, for several hours a day until she has repented of her sins. And apparently society in the capital is not overscrupulous in the matter of morals, to judge by the remark made to me regarding this singular rite by a young officer whom I met at the “Grand Central.” “If they had to do it in Serajevo,” he said, “there would be no getting past the cathedral!”

Chapter VIII

Belgrade

At daybreak on a glorious April morning we reached Belgrade, and as the train clattered across the iron bridge which separates it from the town of Semlin in Austrian territory I have

seldom looked upon a fairer picture than that of the “White City,”ⁱⁱ shining like a pearl through the silvery mists of sunrise. Mackenzie was enraptured with the scene, and remarked that the Servian capital must indeed be “a bonny spot,” until I warned him that “distance lends enchantment,” and that recollections of my last visit here were anything but pleasant ones. But nearly thirty years had now elapsed since Servia last fought to free herself from the yoke of the unspeakable Turk. In those days Belgrade contained perhaps thirty thousand inhabitants, and was unlinked by a ribbon of steel with civilised Europe. A tedious river journey brought you, from East or West, to a squalid, Eastern-looking town with ramshackle buildings and unsavoury streets. The chief thoroughfare was generally a sea of mud, although Princess Nathalie (afterwards Queen of Servia) might be seen there daily, rain or shine, the royal barouche ploughing axle-deep through mire and splashing its fair and elaborately gowned occupant. This was then the only drivable road, which signified little, as carriages were so few and far between. A truly dreary place was Belgrade in the seventies, for everything was primitive, dirty, and comfortless. In those days the best inn was a *caravanserai*, chiefly occupied by Russian volunteers, cavaliers of fortune, who swarmed into the country long before war had been officially declared. Every night the gloomy restaurant was crowded with these freelances, and bad champagne and fiery vodka flowed freely while painted Jezebels from Vienna cackled songs in bad French to the accompaniment of a cracked piano. Never had this remote Servian city witnessed such orgies, for many of these Russian allies had money to burn. They were of all ranks, from dandified guardsmen in search of fame to wild-eyed, ragged Cossacks with an eye to loot—and other things. It was a reckless, undisciplined horde, eyed askance by civilians with pretty wives, and cordially detested by Servian warriors who, much as they love to sport a uniform, strongly object to being shot for disgracing it. And this frequently happened, for it is a fact that Prince Milan’s troops were often driven into action like dogs by their Russian commanders. During the war of 1876 the spectacle of Servian privates strolling about the capital with self-mutilated hands in order to escape service was a common one. But Prince Milan was a poor example to his army, for while desperate battles were of daily occurrence in the provinces this apathetic ruler passed most of his time playing “Vint” with congenial companions in the “Konak” or old Turkish palace, where his only son was destined to meet, some years later, with such a tragic fate.

A lively remembrance of old Belgrade and its primitive methods made it a pleasant surprise on this occasion to enter a palatial railway station instead of being dumped down on a mud-bank from the deck of a grimy steamer. There was one advantage in those days, however, for travellers were not subjected to the vexatious police regulations which now exist, and which are chiefly due to the unsettled condition of political affairs since the assassination of Alexander I. This time it was quite as bad as entering the Russian Empire, perhaps worse, for there, at least, the Custom House officials are not (or used not to be) exacting. But at Belgrade, in these days, everything in the shape of baggage is turned upside down and closely examined, and the passport examination often occupies half a day—a very obnoxious proceeding to those who, like ourselves, had fasted for twenty-four hours. Mackenzie was especially indignant, the more so when recalled, as we were on the point of leaving, by an inquisitive police official. “Your name Mackenzie—yes?” inquired the latter. “Your fader live Belgrade—no? Very good man, give plenty money—yes?” “What on earth has my father got to do with you?” returned the irate Aberdonian; “and as for money, you won’t get any more out of me. Here, drive on!” and the carriage dashed away, leaving the man of passports open-mouthed and apparently as puzzled as I was at this brief and mysterious colloquy. And it was only some time afterwards that we learnt

that a canny Scotsman, one Mackenzie, who many years ago left the land of cakes to settle down here, had, after a prosperous career, proved such a philanthropist that he has been handed down to posterity as a public benefactor. "More fool he!" remarked my friend, quite unimpressed by the fact that a fashionable quarter of Belgrade now bears the name (with variations) of his late illustrious kinsman.

Rip Van Winkle, after his long sleep in the Katskills, can scarcely have been more astonished at the altered appearance of his native village than I was at the marvellous improvements which less than thirty years have worked in Belgrade. In 1876 a dilapidated Turkish fortress frowned down upon a maze of buildings little better than mud-huts and unpaved, filthy streets. I had to splash my way from the river to the town through an ocean of mud carrying my own luggage, for no porters were procurable, and the half-dozen rough country-carts at the landing-place were quickly pounced upon by local magnates. Having reached the so-called "hotel" I found that it provided only black bread, a kind of peppery stew called "Paprika," and nothing else in the way of food--although all kinds of villainous wines and spirits were to be had at outrageous prices, having been laid down by a cunning landlord to meet the requirements of a thirsty Russian Legion. There was privacy by day or night, and I was compelled to share a small, dark den with several Cossaks, a Polish Jew, and numerous other inmates which shall be nameless. To-day it seemed like a dream to be whirled away from the railway station in a neat *fiacre*, along spacious boulevards, with well-dressed crowds and electric cars, to a luxurious hotel. Here were gold-laced porters, lifts, and even a Winter Garden, where a delicious *déjeuner* (cooked by a Frenchman) awaited me. Everything is now up to date in this city of murder and mystery, for only two landmarks are left of the old city--the cathedral and citadel, over which now floats the tricolour of Servia. Of course ancient portions of the place still exist, with low-eaved, vine-trellised houses, cobbled streets, and quiet squares, recalling some sleepy provincial town in France, but these are now mere suburbs, peopled by the poorer classes, along the banks which form the junction of the Danube and Save. Modern Belgrade is bisected by the Teratsia, a boulevard, over a mile in length, of fine buildings, overtopped, about midway, by the golden domes of the new Palace. This is the chief thoroughfare, and here are the principal hotels, private residences, and shops, which latter, towards evening, blaze with electric light. The Teratsia then becomes a fashionable promenade, and smart carriages, brilliant uniforms, and Vienna toilettes add to the gaiety of the scene. Servia is lavish in uniforms, most; of them more suggestive of *opera-bouffe* than modern warfare. From dawn till midnight streets and cafés swarm with: officers, who apparently have little to do but show themselves to a rather unappreciative public. On the other hand, I seldom saw a private soldier, except those on sentry outside public buildings and in barracks, and there is, no doubt, good reason for keeping the garrison on the alert for any emergency which may arise from the present disturbed condition of affairs. This I shall refer to in another chapter, and the reader will then probably agree that "Scarlet" would be a more suitable adjective than "White" for a city which has witnessed such infamous deeds, committed under the name of "patriotism." Yet, outwardly, "White" is a sufficiently descriptive term, for, the snowy buildings, cheerful streets, and luxuriant greenery undoubtedly render this the most attractive capital throughout the Balkan States. A distinguished English traveller has described Belgrade as "a smaller but neater version of Budapest." Personally I see no similarity whatever between the two cities, although in early summer, when trees and flowers are in full bloom, the Open-air life and exhilarating climate render the place almost worthy of the name of "Petit Paris," which was given to it, in his pamier days, by that erratic potentate, the late

King Milan. And amongst the novel and civilised objects which here met my astonished gaze was— a motor car! of the very latest Parisian build and I should add, however, that this *rara avis* belonged to a Frenchman who had travelled here from Vienna en route to Ragussa and Montenegro. And a pleasanter trip could not be imagined at this time of year, for the high-roads through the Austrian Balkans could give points to many even in France.

Strange as it may seem, there is a great similarity between the Servian and French people, which is one of the most curious characteristics of this little-known nation. This is, perhaps, explained by the fact that, ever since the attainment of Servian independence, the so-called upper classes have sent their children to France to complete their education which, in the towns at least, is of a very high standard. Nearly every Servian I met in Belgrade spoke at least three languages (one of them invariably French); although in the provinces a stranger unacquainted with the Servian tongue fares badly. When travelling through the wilder parts of the country my knowledge of Russian stood me in good stead, and enabled me to converse, although imperfectly, with the natives. This was also the case in Bulgaria, but in remoter parts of Rumania I was again as helpless with regard to language as I had been in Bosnia and Montenegro. But any way, Servians of a classes are the politest people in the world, who will always go out of their way to assist a stranger. I once inquired my way of a police man, and he accompanied me for at least a quarter of a mile to put me on the right road.

Belgrade is now essentially a modern city, and the traveller is therefore apt to find it outwardly dull and prosaic after the towns he has visited on his way up from the Adriatic. This is partly due to an absence of colour. In Bosnia and Bulgaria bright and picturesque native costumes are continually met with (in Montenegro you rarely see anything else), but the people of Belgrade, with their tailor-made gowns and stove-pipe hats, might have walked straight out of Regent Street. For the first day or two Mackenzie and I wore light-coloured tweeds which, however, so scandalised the fashionable strollers on the Teratsia that we retreated hastily to the hotel and donned soberer suits of dark blue serge. And here, as in Russia morning calls of an official nature must be made in thin dress clothes—an attire hardly adapted to a drive in an open sleigh in something unpleasant below zero. I once had to ply my respects to the Governor of Eastern Siberia at Irkutsk under these conditions, when the cold was so intense that I was compelled to draw on heavy furs and a thick suit of felt over the rest of thy attire—an aggregate of apparel which gave me the appearance of an animated balloon. The object of the interview was to obtain dogs and reindeer for a four months' trip to the Bering Straits, and His Excellency (who suffered from weak sight) condoled with me on the privations and sufferings which such a journey must inflict. "Luckily you are very fat," he said, with a glance at my massive proportions at parting; "and there is nothing like *that* to keep out of the cold!"

During the spring-time a man need never feel dull for a moment in Belgrade, especially if he can as I did, letters of introduction to pleasant people who will tell him what to do and how to do it. For there is no lack of amusement at any time or season amongst these careless, easy-going folk, most of whom, like the Parisians, make a business of pleasure and leave work to look after itself. I strolled into the "Kalemegdan," or public gardens, one Sunday afternoon, and the family groups sitting under the trees or sipping "Bocks" at an open-air *café*, the kiosk with its military band, the nurses, soldiers, and goat-carriages, looked as though a bit of the Tuileries or Park Monceau had dropped out of the blue sky into the Balkans! Come here at sunset and you will be repaid by a view which I have seldom seen surpassed; but it must be in summer-time, when the eye can range over leagues of forest, flood, and field, extending from the broad and sullen river

at your feet to an horizon formed by the boundless prairies of Hungary. But in early spring-time the Danube overflows its banks and these steppes become a sea of water, a vast grey sea, with desolate islets formed by the higher ground, and you search in vain for the kaleidoscopic effects cast by cloud and sunshine over the fertile summer plains. On this spot, when the Crescent waved over Belgrade, stood Turkish sentinels, and here also was the execution ground where the blackened corpses of impaled Christians were exposed as a warning to infidels by the reigning Pasha.

A charming excursion was to Topchider Park, where the residence of Milosh, the founder of the Obrenovitch dynasty, still stands amidst well-kept gardens, in beautiful grounds several miles in extent. Topchider is only two miles out of the capital, and is reached either by train or electric railway—which is as well, for few people walk about Belgrade who can avoid it. This is on account of the atrocious cobbles with which portions of the city are still paved, and which not only torture the pedestrian but inflict considerable discomfort to those on wheels. Many pretty villas surround the Park, for it is a favourite resort of the wealthier classes during the summer months. There is an excellent restaurant, where tables must be booked for days beforehand in July and August, for this is then one of the loveliest and coolest spots imaginable, with its stately forests of oak and elm trees, silvery streams, and miles of greensward carpeted with flowers. No wonder poor Queen Draga loved to seek rest and solace here from the dusty capital which was to witness her martyrdom. And this is not the only sad association with Topchider, for here Serbia's best and wisest ruler, Prince Michael Obrenovitch, was murdered in 1868, a monument being erected to his memory on the fatal spot. But the aged and be-medalled custodian, who showed us round, was much more communicative on the subject of the late King Milan's amours in these historic woods than on the tragic fate of this susceptible sovereign's ancestor. For here, one summer's day, Queen Nathalie first discovered the infidelity of her consort, and the run of ill-luck which has since overshadowed the house of Obrenovitch may be said to have dated from that day. In connection with this incident, the following anecdote may or may not be true; but it was told me by a Servian statesman not given to exaggeration. As the reader is probably aware Queen Nathalie is a Russian by birth, and was a mere schoolgirl, the daughter of a Colonel Keshko, a wealthy landowner in Bessarabia, when Prince Milan first made her acquaintance. A Marriage was arranged shortly after, but before it took place Mademoiselle Keshko was persuaded by some friends to visit a famous cheiromant. "You will reign over a great people," said the seer. "But your crown will be one of thorns and sorrow. You will be driven into exile from your adopted country, but your downfall will be hastened from a journey you will make on foot through thickly wooded ground—a forest. Avoid the neighbourhood of woods or forests as you would the plague!"

The Queen—then Princess Nathalie—was inordinately jealous, and her spouse chafed and fretted under a ceaseless *espionage* which compelled him to resort to all kinds of devices to maintain the *liaisons* formed in his bachelor days. Here was a chance not to be missed, and it was speedily turned to good, account by the wily Milan. "You were told to avoid forests," he said casually one day, having cunningly led the conversation into the proper channel; "of course the thing is as clear as a window-pane. The man meant Topchider, where my ancestor Michael met with a violent death. For the future, Madam, clearly understand that I forbid you to go near, the place."

But this restriction by no means applied to the Prince, whose frequent visits to the royal demesne gradually amused suspicions in the mind of Nathalie, which were only increased by the

reports which occasionally reached her from Menu outside the Palace. The suspense be coming unbearable, the Queen one day resolved to disregard the King's instructions, and to visit Top chide; whither Milan had already gone that morning ostensibly to shoot rabbits. And while strolling through one of the most secluded parts of the park, closely veiled and attended only by a lady-in-waiting, the Queen suddenly came upon the truant in such close converse with a well-known lady of fashion that there could be no doubt as to the nature of their relations. Thus, indirectly, the fortune-teller's prophecy was fulfilled, for a violent altercation was followed by the estrangement which ended a few years later in divorce and the final banishment of Nathalie from Servia.

There is no aristocracy in the English sense of that word in Servia. How should there be when less than a century ago the ruler of the country was a pig-drover who could not sign his own name? On the other hand, the wealthier class of Servians have intermarried with the best families in Austria and other nations, and the result is a so-called "society"; which, though somewhat cosmopolitan in character, according to English ideas, is to an outsider rather novel and attractive. My brief association with the "Upper Ten" of Belgrade reminded me of the Western States of America, where a man is welcomed less for wealth and social status than for an agreeable personality. For the Servian, like the Frenchman, very rightly refuses to be bored, and is, therefore, as a natural consequence, as yet unversed in the ethics of snobbery. During our stay in Belgrade an Austrian nobleman visiting the country for literary purposes (and therefore provided with the highest credentials) was daily to be seen dining in solitary state at his hotel, while an American tourist, of doubtful parentage but ready wit, was much sought after, and seldom permitted to partake of a meal at his own expense. Bulgarians call their neighbours "a nation of swineherds," and no doubt half a century ago there was very little class distinction in town or country. For the *bourgeoisie* here is a recent innovation (chiefly of German importation), and in Belgrade the very limited "upper class" is of as questionable origin and recent growth as the famous "Four Hundred" of New York, which it much resembles, save in the deplorable: vulgarity and tomfoolery which has rendered that select circle, the laughing-stock of Europe. Indeed I have seldom met pleasanter people than those forming what is called the "Court Set" in Belgrade, and the cheery Bohemian existence they led seemed to me worthy of imitation by the so-called "superior" classes of many an older nation. The term "Society" is only too often suggestive of a useless and frivolous existence, especially amongst women, but it is not so here, where the Servian girl of French education is generally better read and far more accomplished than her English prototype.ⁱⁱⁱ And yet there is delightful simplicity about the former, probably inherited from her humble origin, but none the less attractive on that account. Servian home life is absolutely devoid of ostentation, and ladies of good position assist as a matter of course in the menial work of the household. I once attended a supper party at the Winter Garden of the Grand Hotel, a favourite resort after the theatre, where a band of "Tziganes" discoursed sweet music till the small hours amid the usual surroundings of pretty women, palms, and shaded lights, and where digestion was not impaired, as in England, by the tyrannical limits of "time." The feast was given in honour of a young chamberlain of the Court who had that morning succeeded in severely wounding his opponent in a duel—a pastime as popular here as it is in France but attended with considerably more risk. On this occasion I sat next to a young married woman, gowned by Paquin, glittering with diamonds and justly renowned for her numerous attractions. But when, the next day, I called at her house, somewhat unexpectedly, I entirely failed at first to recognise in the neat but plainly-clad handmaiden who answered the bell, my charming hostess of the night before!

And talking of theatre parties, there is plenty to do of a evening in modem Belgrade; for there is an excellent theatre, frequently visited by French artists, & couple of minor playhouses for the production of Servian works, and several music halls with a licence of song and speech which would open the eyes of the London County Council. But the Danubian provinces have never been renowned for morality, and I can recall the days (not so very long ago) when travellers in Hungary and adjacent countries were on their arrival invariably provided by the hotel porter with a photograph book, from which they could select a fair but frail companion to enliven, for a monetary consideration, their evening repast. Indeed there is a legend that, some years ago, a staid British diplomat, travelling *en famille*, and putting up at a well-known hotel in Buda-Pest, was found intently studying this mysterious volume by the "Ambassadrice," and the painful scene which followed is best left to the reader's imagination.

But this is some years ago, and if vice still exists in Belgrade, it is at any rate cunningly concealed, for there is no sign of it in the streets, where an unprotected woman may walk at any hour of the day or night without fear of molestation. I visited one of the music-halls, which would certainly have been voted dull in London, for the performance lasted until one o'clock in the morning, and was conducted with a gravity suggestive of a first-class funeral. This was the more surprising, seeing that wines and spirits of all kinds were on sale throughout the building; but the average Servian is a temperate being, who dislikes alcohol in any shape or form—and generally prefers water to any other beverage. This, however, does not apply to the provinces, where drunkenness appeared to be almost as prevalent amongst the peasantry as it is in parts of the Russian Empire.

ⁱ The provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina are amalgamated together for administrative purposes by the Austrian Government.

ⁱⁱ Belgrade is derived from the Servian words "Beo-grad" or "White City".

ⁱⁱⁱ Servia has now nearly one thousand Government schools for boys, and over one hundred and fifty for girls. Public instruction is compulsory.