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Our Little Servian Cousin

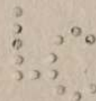


“HE LIKED BEST THE TENDING OF THE SHEEP.”
(See page 20.)

OUR LITTLE
SERVIAN COUSIN

By
Clara Vostrovsky Winlow
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"Our Little Bulgarian Cousin," etc.

Illustrated by
John Goss



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No. 1

PREFACE

OUR little Servian cousin lives in one of the Balkan countries, in the southeastern part of Europe. These countries have just emerged successfully from a war with their old enemy, Turkey which will no doubt result in a considerable enlargement of the territory of each.

Servian people are to be found not only in the kingdom of Servia, but also in the brave little neighboring kingdom of Montenegro, which, tiny as it is, has nevertheless always maintained its independence of Turkey; and also in several countries belonging now to Austria-Hungary: Croatia and Slavonia, Dalmatia, Istria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Banat, etc.

Small and comparatively unimportant though

the Servian kingdom is to-day, it was once a powerful empire. The memory of this past history has been kept alive in the hearts of its people through stirring folk songs and ballads, many of them of great beauty, and the hope has never died that some day their beloved country would regain its past glories.

At present there is a growing, united-race feeling among all Servians, wherever found.

In the past there have been artificial boundary lines, due partly to the diplomatic intrigue of other nations, but largely, too, to a difference in religion, that of Servia and Montenegro being Russo-Greek, that of several of the Austrian countries being Roman Catholic.

With so many Servian inhabitants, one at heart with their Mother Land, Servia, forming part of the Austria-Hungarian Empire, it is natural, perhaps, that the latter should fear and discourage in every possible way the growth and advancement of the Servian kingdom,

which also forms a barrier to Austria's further expansion towards the south.

To understand the mutual hatred of the Serbians and the Austrians it is necessary to keep this antagonism of interests in mind.

CLARA VOSTROVSKY WINLOW.

September 1, 1913.

Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
PREFACE	v
I. WHITE WEEK	i
II. DUSHAN'S POBRATIME	18
III. THE TWO SLAVAS	30
IV. THE MOBA AND A JOURNEY	43
V. THE GUSLAR	55
VI. SCHOOL DAYS	62
VII. A SPINNING BEE	70
VIII. CHRISTMAS	80
IX. BELGRADE	92

List of Illustrations

	PAGE
“ HE LIKED BEST THE TENDING OF THE SHEEP ” (See page 20) <i>Frontispiece</i> ✓	
DUSHAN'S MOTHER	12 ✓
SERVIAN PEASANTS	26 ✓
“ THE WATER WAS POURED OVER THE HANDS ”	34 ✓
“ BY NINE O'CLOCK THE STREETS WERE FILLED WITH VILLAGE FOLK ”	38 ✓
SERVIAN PEASANT GIRL	44 ✓
SERVIAN LISTENING TO A <i>GUSLAR</i>	58 ✓
KING PETER KARAGEORGEVITCH OF SERVIA	68 ✓
“ HE WAS MET AT THE THRESHOLD BY HIS MOTHER ”	86 ✓
A PEDDLER OF SWEETENED WATER, BELGRADE	97 ✓

Our Little Servian Cousin



CHAPTER I

WHITE WEEK

DUSHAN had a secret, and little Militza, his sister, weeding in the strip of flower garden on one side of the long, low, rectangular house which was her home, shrugged her shoulders impatiently as she thought of it. It was certainly most unjust that she should not be told! She had had no peace of mind since she discovered Dushan and three of his companions holding a conference behind the cattle-shed.

At first she had pleaded with Dushan that he tell her, promising the most absolute secrecy; but he had scornfully answered that "little chil-

2 Our Little Servian Cousin

dren mustn't try to be too wise, or they'll get into trouble."

"He hadn't any right to be so saucy," she said, quite out loud, to herself, shaking her little head, by way of emphasis, "for I am already eight, and he is only twelve!" Then she went on so vigorously with her work that she uprooted some basilicum, or sweet basil, which is considered a sacred plant by the Servian peasants. This somewhat startled her, and she quickly tried to repair the mischief.

Suddenly, however, she arose, threw her trowel crossly from her, and stood for a while shoving her sandaled feet back and forth in the ground, and pondering how the mystery might best be solved.

At last, with a sigh, she sat down by the house, leaning her little brown head against the whitewashed walls, and closing her eyes that she might think quite undisturbed.

The garden was on the south side of the

house, and the warm spring sunshine and the air, fragrant with the scent of herbs and early blossoms, made it a pleasant place in which to dream. But Militza was not dreaming; she was busy planning, now a discovery of the secret, and then, with vigorous nods of the head, a clever way of revenging herself by having a secret of her own!

Up in the gables the doves cooed in the untiring fashion of their kind, while on the roof a stork seemed to be examining the chimney as a possible place for a nest; but the very serenity of all this had to-day an irritating effect on the little girl.

It was the beginning of Easter time, which to the Servians is known as "White Week," and when, having discarded all her plans as impracticable, Militza rather gloomily entered the house, she found her mother busy preparing the eggs for Easter Sunday. Having washed her hands, she gravely took her place beside

4 Our Little Servian Cousin

her, and was soon intent on her work of making original designs of wax on each egg. These eggs were afterwards to be dyed a brilliant red, so that, when the wax should be removed, a white pattern would be left.

Militza had first tried her hand at egg decoration when only six years old, and now, at eight years, succeeded in making some simple, but very neat, patterns. Her mother watched her grave face with an amused expression; and at last surprised the little girl by asking: "So Dushan refuses to part with his secret?"

Militza looked up from her work eagerly.

"Why, mother, do you know?" she inquired.

Her pretty mother nodded her head.

"Yes," she answered, "but don't ask me. I'm sworn to silence! Only, don't take it so seriously. It's to be a big joke."

Now, how was Militza *not* to take it seriously? She looked gloomier than ever, so, to

comfort the child, her mother told her a story about the sweet basil that grew in their garden.

“The Basil,” she said, “complained to the Dew that, for two nights, it had not fallen on her.

“‘I was away,’ answered the Dew, ‘watching a great marvel. A *vila*¹ had a quarrel with an eagle, each claiming ownership of the mountain. At last the *vila* broke the eagle’s wings. Then the young eagles set up a cry, for they wondered what would become of them now. A swallow flew up (all swallows are great travellers, you know), and promised to carry the young birds to the wonderful land of Ind, where the clover reaches up to the shoulders of the horses and the sun never sets.’”

Militza’s bright little face had almost a smile as her mother finished.

“Oh, mother,” she exclaimed, “Spring is

¹ Mountain spirit.

6 Our Little Servian Cousin

surely here for, do you know? the stork has returned to her nest on our chimney!"

Just then Dushan's voice was heard outside.

Quickly removing her work, the little girl ran to join her brother. Dushan assumed as unconscious an air as possible, as she came up, even to humming a careless tune; but he quite expected her. He found it very pleasant to be suddenly of so great importance, and such a mystery, to his sister, and he strutted about with what he considered a royal air, every now and then saying or doing something to lead Militza to think that she was on the path of discovery, and then laughing with delight at her being "taken in."

Everything was forgotten after supper, however, for there was to be an impromptu dance on the village green, to which everybody was invited, and to which, of course, everybody would come. There were many such dances all through the Easter season, and indeed at other

times, as well, especially, perhaps, on the Servian holidays, of which there is one almost every other day in the year! This excess of holidays always gives an excuse for merrymaking and may partly account for the light-heartedness of the Servian peasant.

As the dance was to break up early, many of the younger children were allowed to attend. It was a bright moonlight night, and, shortly after an early evening meal, the people began to gather, the women in their short, gay, picturesque costumes, and the men in sober-hued, home-made garments. There was much joking and laughing and snatches of song.

Shortly after, seven immense fires were lit, and then the musicians, who played on flute, bagpipe and fiddle, struck up one of the national dances, and at once a merry company of young men and women, holding each other by the hands, formed a half-circle. First, all moved a few steps to the left, and then a few steps to

8 Our Little Servian Cousin

the right, and then a few steps backwards and forwards, and the dance (*kolo*) was in full swing.

While this was going on, the older folks chatted together in groups, or strolled slowly about, while the children watched and applauded the dancers, or played merry games of hide and seek among the various groups, getting usually into everybody's way, but sublimely unconscious of the fact.

As nine o'clock approached, however, the people began to disperse, for clouds, threatening rain, had gathered in the sky, and all were anxious, besides, for a good night's rest for the morrow.

On Shrove Tuesday the little village, with its long, low, box-like houses, all very much like that in which Dushan and Militza lived, seemed to swarm with children, all in a state of delightful excitement, for this day is also the "Witches' Day," and the children felt the responsibility

rest on their little shoulders of seeing that not a single witch was about!

“Did you see that the shells of all the eggs used at your home were crushed, to-day?” one eager little girl asked Militza, whom she met.

“Yes, indeed,” was the response, with a superior air. “Do you think I don’t know that the witches could use them for boats in crossing streams if I didn’t?”

There was a strong odor of garlic wherever the children moved, for, without exception, all had pieces of it tied to strings and hung like amulets around their necks. These were to be placed under their pillows at night, as the strong odor was supposed to be particularly obnoxious to witches.

Here and there, large groups formed, and told marvellous witch stories, which were received with grave looks, testifying either to the children being good actors or to the stories being received at their face value.

10 Our Little Servian Cousin

“Now,” said one of Dushan’s chums, a tall lad with a particularly merry look in his eyes, “one thing is certain, and that is that any woman who is a witch has only to rub a special kind of grease into her armpits, and, if she pronounces the right words, she can then fly off and take supper with other witches whenever she likes. Petar Popovich told me that the words were: ‘Avoid the thorn, avoid the trees, and carry me straight to meeting.’ He told me, too, he had the right kind of grease, for he had bought some for two *dinars*¹ from the gipsies. I was much interested when he asked me to try it with him. You can imagine how anxious I felt, and also that I was a bit scared.

“We met together in a field, when it was quite dark. Petar had the grease with him, and we rubbed and rubbed as directed, and then solemnly repeated the formula — ”

¹ A dinar is about twenty cents of our money.

Here the merry eyes drooped, as the boy made an impressive pause.

“Well, what happened?” eagerly asked several voices.

“I’ll leave that for you to imagine,” was the languid response, as the mischievous boy skipped away.

But, exciting as Shrove Tuesday was, it could not last longer than the allotted time, and Militza found herself again tormented with the thought of Dushan’s secret. In the meantime she devoted all of her spare moments to the preparation of more eggs.

At last Easter Sunday came. The village had quite a festal air, for the housewives had not stinted their efforts to have everything spotlessly clean for the day. One could not doubt, too, but that everybody who appeared on the streets was in holiday attire, both because of the way in which they carried themselves and because of the gay colors to be seen.

12 Our Little Servian Cousin

Dushan secretly admired his mother, who was still a young woman, when she appeared, ready for church, in a full silk skirt, just short enough to show the embroidered white linen gown beneath, and a snowy chemisette, trimmed with hand-made lace. Over this was a gold and silver embroidered bolero of tanned skin, with the fleece inside, open in front, and edged with black yarn. Covering the front of her skirt was a woollen apron, beautifully hand-embroidered with original designs. Her long, dark-brown hair was coiled around a kind of fez, decorated with seed pearls of considerable value, which had come down to her from her great-great-grandmother.

Militza, who loved bright colors, looked like a pretty flower or a gay butterfly in her quaint costume, cut not unlike her mother's, but embroidered in red. A sleeveless vest, which she wore, was also red. It was of velvet and decorated with gold and coral buttons.



DUSHAN'S MOTHER.

Dushan and his father were dressed in thick homespun of a dark color. Dushan's white shirt reached almost to his knees, as a blouse, and was encircled by a band at the waist. Over this he wore an open jacket or vest. His trousers were tucked into heavy stockings with a broad, flowered band at the top, such as we sometimes see in this country on bicycle or golf stockings. He wore a wide-brimmed sailor hat; but his father had on the conventional cap of sheepskin, and the usual big, leather, peasant sandals with straps around the ankles.

"Christ is risen!" the people called to one another by way of greeting.

"He is, in truth!" was the response.

After church, the eggs were produced, every adult visitor receiving one and every child several.

A band of gipsies wandered from house to house, singing, wishing good luck, and playing on the typical gipsy instruments of violin,

14 Our Little Servian Cousin

zoorle (the Turkish clarionette), talambasse, and drums. They expected, and generally received, a piece of money.

These gipsies were more or less feared by the children, and by many of the peasants, as well, for they are supposed to be gifted with marvellous powers.

As Dushan once put it, "They have only to lift a finger to make any one love you, or despise you, as they choose."

In the afternoon the children gathered together in groups for an egg-breaking contest.

"Here, Militza, let's rap eggs," said one of Militza's little neighbors to her.

"Immediately," was the merry response.

The two children then faced each other and tapped their eggs together. After three taps Militza's broke, and according to custom, she had to surrender it to her playmate, who at once put it into a little basket which she carried.

"You won this time," Militza shouted, as

she prepared for a contest with another friend; "but perhaps I'll win the next!"

Later, eggs, colored black, were carried to the neighboring churchyard, and left on the graves in token of the resurrection.

Easter Sunday was not the only day of celebration. Easter Monday was almost as important, and scarcely less so was the day after. Swings had been erected on a neighboring hillside, and the girls, and some of the younger boys, kept them going throughout the days. Oh, what fun it was to see who could swing highest, or to play that one was travelling on some magical airship above the clouds!

The boys, in the meantime, were differently engaged. Dushan was with a group of wrestlers, who were surrounded by interested comrades. Further on, feats of running and jumping were performed, while stone and dart throwing proved to many a fascinating pastime.

The adult persons were there, too; the

16 Our Little Servian Cousin

younger dancing, the older sitting in groups, chatting, eating, and drinking, and apparently never tiring of hearing or relating strange or laughable anecdotes.

A dance by two Montenegrin men was especially admired, and brought out loud applause.

This was followed by two peasant girls springing lightly forward, their arms apparently glued to their sides, but, despite this one awkward feature, every movement was full of grace. At the end, the girls embraced, and were followed by another couple, and these by still another.

Militza enjoyed herself so greatly that she rarely now thought of her brother's secret. When she did, it seemed quite insignificant. So, when Monday evening came, she was quite startled to see the kitchen door suddenly open, and a strange company enter. They were dressed in bear-skins, their faces were covered with pumpkin masks, with beards and mustaches

of flax attached; one of them even had horns and a tail.

“Ha! ha! ha!” laughed the older people, trying to peer into their faces. Militza did her utmost to keep out of their reach. To her embarrassment she found herself persistently followed by one of the number, and at last cornered. Then she instinctively threw out her hands, and quite unintentionally, displaced the mask of her tormentor! To her amazement she found herself staring into Dushan’s rather startled eyes.

“Why D—,” she began; but a warning finger was raised before she had finished. The mask was hastily re-adjusted, and Militza eagerly followed the group to the door, where a crowd of entranced children were awaiting them, ready to tag at their heels as they made further visits.

CHAPTER II

DUSHAN'S POBRATIME

BUT if there was considerable play on holidays, the more necessary was it that sufficient work should be done on the other days. Dushan and Militza had their set tasks, when not in school.

The little girl already knew something of spinning, weaving, and embroidering, and was just learning how to knit. The work that she did so early in life was not only for immediate use, but there were many pieces already put away as part of her wedding trousseau. Sometimes, when she became impatient over these tasks, her mother would say, "Ah, ah, child, your angel is weeping that your ears are open only to the evil one." By this she referred to the common belief among the peasants that an

angel always sits on our right shoulder, and a little devil on our left, offering contrary counsel.

Militza also worked in the garden, especially at weeding, and sometimes she tended the flocks. When she worked with her mother there were some lessons that the latter never failed to impress on her. One was the beauty of industry, especially in a woman. Another was the kind of modesty most becoming to a girl. There were numerous ways in which she must not try to match herself against boys; she must never cross the street when men do; at certain times it was proper for her to kiss their hands. It was no wonder that healthy Militza sometimes chafed under all these restrictions; but, as they were practised by all the girls she knew, she soon fell in with the general customs and was considered a well-behaved child.

Dushan's work was almost entirely out of doors, and much freer, on the whole. In the fruit season there was work in the orchards,

20 Our Little Servian Cousin

which consisted mainly of plum trees; but also had some apples, pears, and walnuts. Besides the orchards, his father owned several small parcels of land, considerable distances apart. These were planted in vegetables and grain. Dushan helped in all the work of getting these products ready for market.

But, of all his duties, he liked best the tending of the sheep or the swine. The latter were very different creatures from those we know in pens. They had a wide area over which to range, plenty of good clean water to drink, plenty of grass as food, as well as the mast in the near-by forest, particularly the fruit of the beech and oak trees, which gives a very agreeable flavor to their flesh, when killed.

Once, when Dushan was dreamily herding swine, and feeling particularly content with his lot, he received an unexpected shock. Two strangers passed him on horseback. One of them, dressed like a foreign army officer,

pointed at him, and said with a sneer in German, which Dushan sufficiently understood: "There you have your typical Servian, a herder of swine and nothing more."

Young as he was, Dushan keenly felt the insult which lay in the tone, even more than in the words, and his brown eyes flashed, and he clenched his hands. When his father joined him during the day, he related the incident. A glow of indignation spread over the broad, bony face of the father as he responded with the one word:

"Austrians!"

Then, still indignant, he explained matters somewhat to Dushan by saying that, since the customs war with Austria, the latter had endeavored in vain to ruin Servia.

"The trouble is," he continued, sadly, "that Servia stands in the way of Austria's further expansion, and so Austria, being big, dares to act the bully to our little kingdom. She fears

22 Our Little Servian Cousin

too, no doubt, in case of Servia's success and growth, the outcome of the sympathy between the Servian people of Austria¹ and those of Servia."

He was silent for a while and then concluded in a voice choked with emotion: "Our situation, so far, has not been an enviable one, standing, as we do, between a greedy Christian nation on the one hand, and an entirely alien one on the other. In any case, we shall sell the liberty we have gained, and any more we are able to gain, very dearly." And, brushing away the tears which had begun to glisten in his eyes, he hastily left his little son to ponder over what he had said.

For a long while, after his father left, Dushan sat on the mossy ground with his back against the stump of an old beech tree, dreaming that he was already a man — a *Zmay*² — and able

¹ In Bosnia, Herzegovina, Croatia, Dalmatia, etc.

² The name that Servians give their bravest heroes.

to give to Servia all that she so richly deserved, or able to convince Austria of her unfair attitude. These splendid day-dreams were typically ended when he drew from his belt a little musical instrument called the *Svirala*, which he always carried, and, placing it to his lips, gave expression to his feelings by playing some plaintive national airs. While doing so he quite forgot his surroundings, when suddenly a shrill whistle just back of him made him stop.

“ Oh, it's you, is it? ” he exclaimed joyfully, jumping up into the arms of a boy not much older than himself, but considerably taller. This was his bosom friend, Yovan, from whom he had been parted for the last ten days. Yovan seemed equally glad to see Dushan, and, arm-in-arm, they began to stroll about while they exchanged news.

Naturally Dushan related the swine herd incident, so fresh in his mind, which Yovan received quite philosophically with a proverb: “ It

24 Our Little Servian Cousin

is better to have profit selling bran than to have loss selling gold."

Dushan looked up into his friend's calm face, half indignantly, half admiringly, and wholly surprised.

"Don't be angry with me, little brother," Yovan made haste to say, as he looked down affectionately at Dushan, from his greater height. "There are days when I'd feel as hotly as you do, but not to-day. Besides, let laugh who will! wouldn't we all be beggars if it hadn't been for pork, a delicacy forbidden to the Turks, and so safe from their clutches in their old-time raids?"

Yovan went on to say that he had hastened to look up his friend as soon as he had returned home, but that he must leave him now. So, pledging to meet in the evening, they parted.

Yovan's unexpected coming had brightened the day for Dushan, and he sang snatches of gay song as he kept the pigs from straying.

But the pleasant evening, to which he was looking forward, was to be spoiled in a wholly unexpected way. When he returned to the village he was surprised to see a large gathering of peasants in front of his home. In the midst of these the foreign officer, who had passed him during the day, with a face scarlet with anger, was gesticulating wildly.

“The lad must have found it,” Dushan heard him say, as he came up, “and I insist on his being produced and searched and the property returned to me.”

“If he found it, he will return it without being searched,” Dushan's father answered calmly and disdainfully. “As for being produced, he will produce himself at the proper time. You are, perhaps, mistaking us for your own countrymen; we have different standards of honesty, evidently, than those to which you are accustomed.”

The laugh which this produced and, still

26 Our Little Servian Cousin

more, the lack of respect with which he was treated, seemed to infuriate the officer, who bit his lips savagely. Just then he caught sight of Dushan and, without choosing his words, shouted:

“There is the thief!”

At these words Dushan's father sprang forward with his fists clenched, and would have struck the foreigner had not some of his calmer neighbors held him back.

Then it was explained to Dushan, who had pushed his way forward, that the stranger had accused him of finding and appropriating a valuable hunting-knife that he had had with him.

“Do you remember his passing you this afternoon?” asked one who seemed in authority.

“Yes, indeed,” answered Dushan, stoutly. “And I remember, too, that he said: ‘There's your typical Servian; a herder of swine and nothing more!’”

At this a murmur of resentment arose. Be-



SERVIAN PEASANTS.

fore it had made any headway, Yovan elbowed his way forward. Quite out of breath, he yet managed to shout: "I found your knife! Here it is! How dare you accuse —"

But, before he could regain enough breath to finish, the stranger had taken the article held out to him, and, with some muttered words, made his way to where his friend held his horse, glad to be away from the crowd, whose increasingly sullen looks and lowering brows betokened no good to him.

"That is what our national distrust of one another leads to," remarked a peasant with a particularly serious cast of countenance.

As those gathered began to disperse, Yovan and Dushan rushed into each other's arms, and embraced in typical Servian fashion.

"Thou shalt be my adopted brother, my *pobratime*," said Dushan. "Long as I may live, I shall never find friend such as thou!"

Yovan, always the calmer of the two, was

28 Our Little Servian Cousin

nevertheless much touched by his friend's warmth.

"*Pobratime!*" he repeated slowly. He knew very well all that the term implied, for Dushan referred to an old-time custom, known to every Servian and still practised, though rarely, in which persons, who recognize a kinship of soul, swear to a brotherhood more sacred even than that of blood.

"Ah, Dushan," he exclaimed at length, "you are already my brother; but, if you wish, I will take the vow to-morrow with you, for it is the day of our Holy St. George, the defender of growing things and persons. Until then, sleep well, Dushan dearest," and, kissing each other on the cheeks, the two parted.

Early next morning, had we been in the Servian village, we would have seen the two go hand-in-hand to the little church and, kneeling before the altar, swear, in the name of God and St. John, an eternal friendship whose breach

was to be punished by Heaven. The kindly old priest who was present had not tried to dissuade them, young as they were, from following this ancient custom. To him the old institutions were sacred. " ' Better let the village perish, ' " he would often quote, " ' than the old customs of the village. ' " He impressed on the boys, however, the sacredness of the promise they had given, and recalled to their memory the heroes of history and the part played by their adopted brethren.

" Be ye faithful unto death, " were his parting words, " and always help one another to do the right, even in little things. "

It still lacked some minutes to breakfast time, and the boys, uplifted by the ceremony through which they had passed, spent it in discussing future plans and hopes. The difficulties that once seemed insurmountable now looked insignificant in the light of the glorious friendship to which they were pledged.

CHAPTER III

THE TWO SLAVAS

THE days passed on quite merrily, but uneventfully, with their regular round of duties. As usual, the women were far busier than the men. Militza now helped in making the earthenware crockery used in the house. This was done by digging out some potter's clay, pounding it with an axe, adding goats' hair, and, after pouring on hot water, moulding the paste with the hands. The rim was always first drawn out, then the pot was shaped. Cold ashes were next strewn over it, to absorb the moisture, and, lastly, the vessel was placed in live coals, covered with ashes, and left until morning, when it was ready for use.

Whenever the work grew irksome there was always a holiday to which to look forward. The

most important to Dushan's family was the day of their patron saint. Every Servian family has a patron saint, and the fête in his honor is so universal an event that it is generally spoken of merely as *Slava*, the celebration, or *Slaviti*, to celebrate.

For a whole week before this the family fasted. The house was given an especial cleaning that all might be of spotless purity in the saint's honor. This included the large kitchen, which was very neat, the woodwork being all planed, the benches always washed very clean. In this kitchen there was a square, low hearth, with a wide, open chimney in which hams and dry salted pork and beef were hanging, and on the beams of which were suspended chains for various cooking vessels. Most of the baking was not done here, but in a special oven in the courtyard adjoining. There was also a sitting and dining room, with crude religious prints on the wall, and a wooden panel, with the image of

32 Our Little Servian Cousin

the household saint, before which a small oil lamp was suspended.

A bedroom opened out from this, the floor covered with a bright, home-made carpet. Underneath the house was a cellar, which now had barrels of wine and a special kind of brandy, made of plums; but, in winter, also served as a store-house for vegetables. Back of the gardens were the sheds for the domestic animals, and a big granary for grain.

On the morning before the Slava day, Militza gathered a big bouquet of iris, called *perunica* after the old Slavic pagan god, Perun, ruler of thunder and lightning. There was probably no garden in the entire village without the iris, nor any house on whose roof did not grow the *choovar-kutya*, or house guardian, a plant believed to protect the home from lightning strokes.

“I know you like these,” Militza remarked to her smiling mother, as she placed the bouquet

on a table in the sitting-room, in an earthenware vase made by herself. She then accompanied her mother through the rooms in the last round of inspection that nothing should have been left undone, for guests were to begin arriving that afternoon.

In the meantime, Dushan and his father had come in. They had had scarcely time to dress themselves in their best, as Militza and her mother had already done, when the first visitor announced himself with the shout: "Oh, master of the house, are guests welcome?"

Dushan's father hastened forward with hand outstretched. "Certainly," he responded, "such good guests as you are."

It would have been quite curious to us to see these men embrace and kiss, the visitor remarking as he handed an apple to his host, "May your Slava be happy!" And the host responding, "And may your soul be content before the Father Almighty."

34 Our Little Servian Cousin

This first guest was a tall, lean man with a grave face, bronzed by the sun. He was Dushan's *koom*, or godfather, and had been the principal witness at the wedding of Dushan's parents. This *koomship* is considered a very sacred relationship in Servia, and, as the other members of the family came forward, their greeting testified to the esteem in which the man was held.

He was followed by other guests, who each brought a fruit of some kind, and then, after certain ceremonies and prayers had been observed, supper was announced. Militza's mother first carried around a basin and a pitcher of water, that each guest might wash his hands, for no Servian would think of sitting down to a meal without having done so. The water was poured over the hands, which were held above the basin, not in it. Militza followed her mother with a finely embroidered towel. This duty performed, they all placed themselves at



“THE WATER WAS POURED OVER THE HANDS.”

low tables, and the host began to serve his guests. It was not until next day, however, that the celebration, partly social, partly religious, was in full swing. Everybody who met Dushan's father now saluted him with the words, *Sretna Slava* (A happy fête), and a cordial handshake, and the children shouted the same to Dushan and Militza.

A large number of friends accompanied the family to church. No sooner were the services ended, than some one, outside, started to play one of the national dances, and brisk dancing took place.

Many of the younger folks remained to dance all day. Others went to Dushan's home, where a big mid-day meal awaited them, the principal dish of which was a roast of lamb. There was also an especial *Slava* cake, which had been consecrated in the church, passed to each guest. The upper surface was divided by a cross into four sections, each one of which bore the initials

36 Our Little Servian Cousin

of the words: "Jesus Christ, the Victor." But the eyes of the children fastened themselves more particularly on what is called the *Kolyivo*, or sacrifice. This was formerly something killed with a knife, but now consists of boiled wheat, walnuts, and almonds sweetened with powdered sugar and piled up and decorated with colored frosting.

Throughout the day the *Kolyivo*, and a kind of fruit preserve called *Slatko*, were passed, together with coffee, to every guest. There was much singing and frequent firing of pistols — a Servian way of giving vent to pleasant excitement. When, finally, the *koom* began to recite some of the national songs describing the brave fights of Servian heroes with Turkish oppressors, all drew their chairs nearer and listened with a rapt attention which showed that, old as the stories were, they were very, very dear to the hearts of the hearers.

But, if this *Slava* was an important one to a

single family, there was another which was of equal interest to the entire village, the celebration of the village's patron saint. This fell late in June, just after the close of school for vacation.

For several days before, great preparations were made for the event, which was to be followed by a picnic in the woods near the church. The children could hardly contain themselves with excitement. Fifty or sixty sheep were killed. In every house there was much baking, particularly of bread. This was made by placing the dough into a certain kind of earthenware dish, covering it with embers, and baking slowly.

It was only five o'clock when Militza awoke on this *Slava* morning.

"Dushan! Dushan! get up," she shouted.
"It's *Slava* day!"

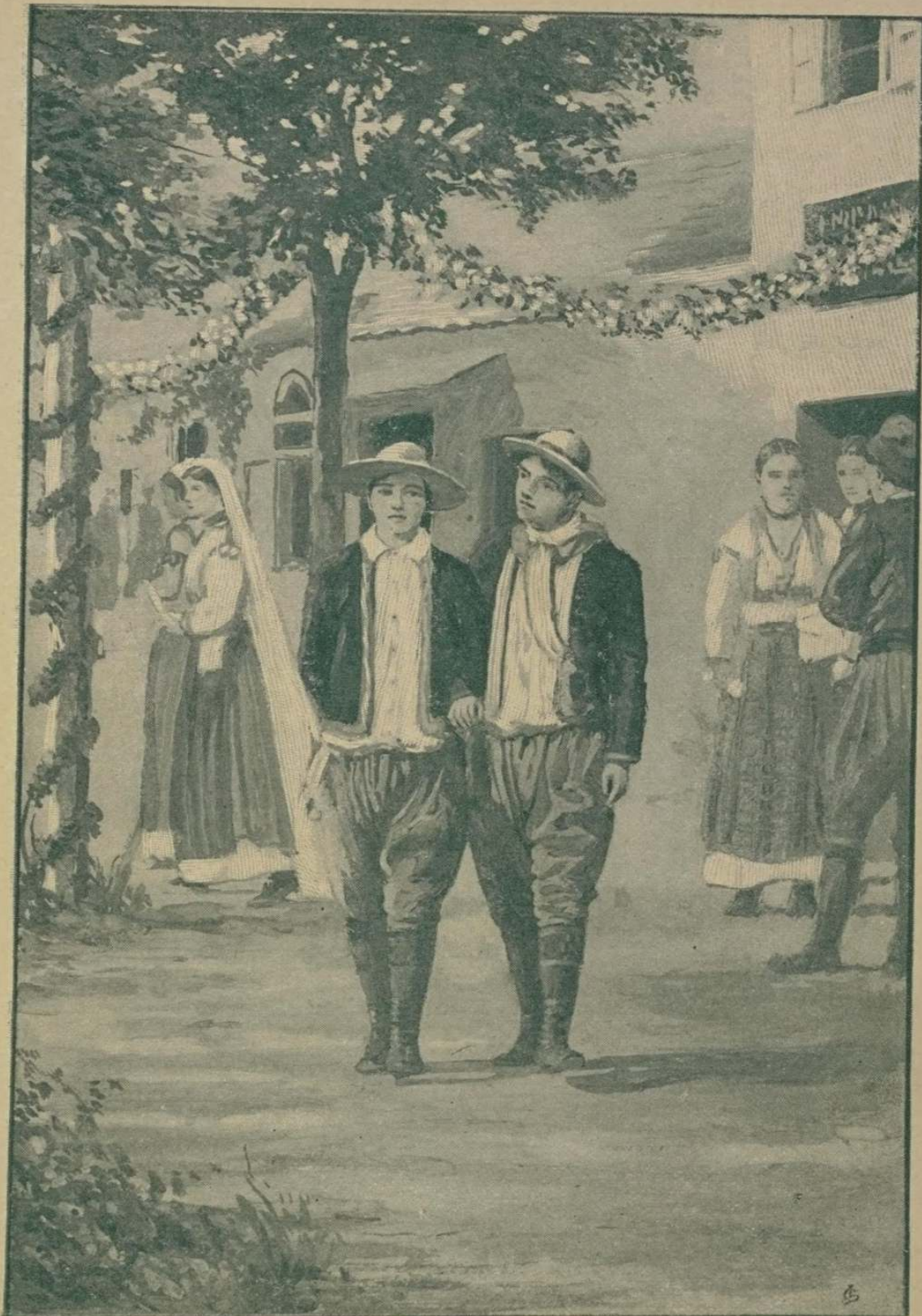
Dushan did not have to be called. By six both children were busy helping their parents

38 Our Little Servian Cousin

pack the things to be taken. These included five big loaves of bread, and several jars of home-made wine in wicker baskets.

By nine o'clock the streets were filled with village folk on their way to the church. There, a procession was formed, with a strong young man, carrying a wooden cross, at the head. Behind him came the priest with the Gospels, and several peasants, two by two, bearing holy pictures, called *Ikons*. Other peasants followed with their hats in their hands. When the procession reached a lime tree which marked one of the boundaries of the village, and on which a cross had once been cut, it stopped, and men, women, and children fell to their knees while the priest, with appropriate ceremonies, renewed the cross. Any tree so marked was considered sacred. It was a sin to break its branches, or even to throw a stone into it.

This ended the purely religious side, and now came the merrymaking part, beginning with the



“ BY NINE O’CLOCK THE STREETS WERE FILLED WITH
VILLAGE FOLK.”

firing of pistols. The place chosen for the picnic was in a little clearing, in a near-by grove of lime and wild pear trees, which was soon reached, and where every one immediately began to work, the children gathering twigs for the fires, the older boys splitting wood, and preparing places on which the sheep were to be roasted whole.

Before these were ready to be eaten, the little girls and boys ran into the forest to gather strawberries and raspberries, which were very plentiful. There was a good-natured rivalry displayed in trying to gather the most. Militza especially exerted herself, and, when she found that two of her companions had outdone her, she felt so chagrined that the tears began to gather in her eyes.

Just then a light step was heard behind her. It was Yovan, separated for once from his mate. He took in the situation at a glance and, bending over, spoke to the child. There was always

40 Our Little Servian Cousin

something peculiarly comforting in the name "Little Sister," which he gave her.

"Little Sister," he now whispered, "remember the saying, 'A middling good luck is the best.'" The next instant he had skipped away, boy fashion; but Militza's face had cleared.

So, after all, it was a merry lot of little girls that danced up with baskets of berries to where their mothers and older sisters were spreading table-cloths and piling pyramids of bread in the center of each.

And how much all did eat when at last the sheep were ready to be served, and all had placed themselves, cross-legged, around the tables! Dushan and Militza sat next to an older brother who had been married only a few months before. His wife, according to custom, addressed her little sister-in-law and brother-in-law with most endearing names, calling Militza most often "My blue iris," and Dushan "pigeon" or "hero."

At the conclusion of the meal, one person after another burst into song. Some of the songs chosen were the national airs: others were entirely impromptu.

Then an old peasant took up his bagpipe and, at the signal, two couples jumped up and danced a peculiar dance which consisted of shakes of the head and clapping of hands as well as movement of the feet. Most of the girls wore several rows of silver coins around their necks, and these added a pleasant tinkling sound to the drone of the bagpipe music. Every now and then one of the men gave expression to his joy by shouting out a few verses — often very saucy ones — composed on the spur of the moment.

It would be tedious to relate all the games played, all the stories told, all the jokes perpetrated, and all the songs sung by the merry party before the hour of departure. As that neared, the company gathered in a cluster

42 Our Little Servian Cousin

and spontaneously joined in the patriotic song of all the Servians, "Onamo! Onamo!" written by the present talented King of Montenegro.

CHAPTER IV

THE MOBA AND A JOURNEY

IT was in the early Fall, before the opening of school, that one of the village folks, a rather elderly man, was taken unexpectedly ill. As there was no physician near, the neighbors did all in their power to help his wife, taking turns in caring for the sufferer, and prescribing herb remedies. Various charms also were practised, and, when the man's good constitution brought him through, these charms were of course given the credit.

Harvest time came shortly after, and the women and girls put aside their home work and joined the men out of doors, unconsciously alive, as they worked, to the beauty of the fine grain with its varying shades of green as it bent before the wind. The peasant who had been

44 Our Little Servian Cousin

ill was only just able to be about, and so the work in the fields fell entirely on his wife and two little daughters, and proceeded but slowly. Seeing this, the young men and women of the village agreed that, as soon as their own crops were in, they would go in a body to their help.

“What would the world come to, if we did not help one another?” they said. This assistance was in accordance with an old custom, called *Moba*, or voluntary co-operation.

Dushan and Yovan, both strong for their age, were allowed, for the first time in their lives, to join in what proved to be a very pleasant and merry pastime, for the afternoon in which the work was done was literally filled with song, laughter, and good-fellowship. From the field all proceeded singing to the peasant's home, several of the girls with field flowers interwoven in their long hair.

They were met at the door by the man, who was still very feeble, and his family, the latter



SERVIAN PEASANT GIRL.

bearing water and snowy towels for hand washing. When this had been done the peasant placed a lit candle before an *Ikon*, carried burning incense through the house, and then invited his friends to pray, for to invoke God's blessing before eating has been practised by Servians since time immemorial. This ceremony finished, a plentiful supper, consisting of meats, fruit, cakes, nuts and sweets, was served to all.

After supper came, as usual, dancing, singing, and the telling of stories and anecdotes. Several of the latter showed how Servian peasants had outwitted their Turkish masters, often making the latter appear decidedly ridiculous. Some were based on the Austrian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which Servians do not consider to have been of benefit to those countries.

"How much better off you are now than when under Turkey," an Austrian, in one of these stories, is supposed to say to a native of

46 Our Little Servian Cousin

Bosnia. "Then, when a Turk met you in the road, you had to jump off your donkey and bow low before him."

"Yes," answers the Serb, "I don't have to do that now. I haven't any donkey."

Yovan and Dushan came in for their share of good-natured teasing on their still new relationship of *Pobratime*.

It was only now and then that the talk at all grew serious, and this was mainly when a tall, fine-looking young man, who had spent several years among the brave people of the neighboring kingdom of Montenegro, Servians like themselves, was questioned. He had much to say about the unexcelled Montenegrin hospitality.

"In 1911," he said, among other things, "while the Albanians were fighting the Turks for liberty, and Montenegro had pledged itself to neutrality, four thousand Albanian women found refuge in the little mountain kingdom.

Fearful though the people were of getting involved in the war, they hadn't the heart to give up these women, knowing that death or dishonor would then be their lot. Poor themselves, they yet fed them daily, thus proving true to the traditions of hospitality, sacred for centuries among them."

There was an impressive silence when he finished, broken finally by the host exclaiming with fervor: "What is to their credit is to the honor of all Servians. May the bond uniting us to our brethren of other lands grow stronger with the years!"

This was greeted with a round of applause, for the Servian cherishes the hope that one day all the Servian countries may be united into one kingdom.

Then the music broke out again and the evening ended in a general dance.

The next morning Dushan felt somewhat disinclined to work, and stopped in the garden to

48 Our Little Servian Cousin

watch Militza rather enviously. She was kneeling under a tree, laboriously trying to build some sort of house out of stones.

“But, Militza,” said Dushan, somewhat mischievously, thinking of the superstition practiced by Servians before building, “I am afraid that you forgot to find out if that place is lucky.”

“No, indeed, I didn’t forget,” replied Militza, without looking up. “Last night I placed four stones in the four corners, and this morning I found a big black bug under this one,” and she pointed to a corner of the foundation.

Dushan was silenced and, looking around for some excuse to linger, saw a snail come creeping out from under the grass. He ran to it and begged it to put out its horns: “Snail, snail, put out your horns!”

Just then Yovan’s merry whistle was heard outside. He came rushing into the garden.

“I have been looking all over the world for

you, Dushan. Father and I are going to visit Ljubitza's folks this afternoon, and father says you may go with us."

Dushan gave a shout. Ljubitza was the wife of Yovan's cousin and, before her marriage, had lived at a *Zadruga*, several miles distant. Life at a *Zadruga* was very different from that in their village, where each peasant family was independent of others, and, being different, was sure to prove interesting. Besides, Dushan looked forward to the long ride in his beloved friend's company.

Militza had jumped up when Yovan spoke, and now, at Dushan's request, ran into the house to tell her mother and help in the preparations for Dushan's departure.

The little girl knew what was needed. With her mother's permission, after tidying herself, she took a mixing bowl from one of the shelves, and proceeded to make a plain cake, on the top of which she carefully stamped a flower design.

50 Our Little Servian Cousin

Her mother, in the meanwhile, was busy making cookies which were to be taken to the children of the *Zadruga*. Dushan then came in and made himself ready.

When Yovan and his father appeared they had similar gifts, with the addition of numerous small bouquets of flowers, to which small coins were attached by a silken thread. These were for the women.

All called "*Sretnj poot*" ("a prosperous journey"), as Dushan climbed into the lumbering wagon, and soon they were off.

The journey was fully as enjoyable as Dushan had expected. They drove by many a fine-looking orchard, and waving fields of delicate, blue flax blossoms, and other fields of stubble that a few weeks before had been grain, until they came to a chain of hills covered with a forest of walnut, oak and wild fruit trees. As they passed more deeply into it, the twitter of birds, with which they had been greeted at the

entrance, grew less frequent, and there was little to be heard except the monotonous rustling of the leaves and now and then the creaking of a fallen branch under the wheels. This silence turned the conversation to woodland nymphs and fairies, and at last to those mysterious, charming creatures of Servian folk-lore, called *vilas*.

“I’d like to see them once, dancing in the moonlight,” remarked Dushan meditatively. “They must look like angels, with their long, golden hair and white, gauzy wings.”

“I don’t much believe in them,” said Yovan, who was usually more matter-of-fact than his friend, “except when I hear the story of Kralyevich Marco¹ and the *vila* who was his *poses-trima* (adopted sister). Somehow that always sounds true to me.”

“I wish your father would tell it to us now,” said Dushan.

¹ The Royal Prince Marco.

Yovan's father, who had Slavonic grey eyes, like Yovan's, that always twinkled merrily under his sheep-skin cap, was entirely willing and at once began to relate some of the incidents in the life of one of the most popular of Servian heroes, Kralyevich Marco, who really lived, but about whom many fairy tales have gathered.

THE KRALYEVICH MARCO AND THE VILA
RAVIYOYLA

Once upon a time the great Kralyevich Marco was riding in the green mountains of Miroch on his clear-sighted piebald, Sharats, accompanied by his dear adopted brother, the *Voyvoda* (chief) Milosh. Milosh was not only a great hero, but also the possessor of a wonderful voice, so pleasing that, when the Kralyevich Marco grew drowsy, he begged Milosh to sing to him.

"I dare not sing here," returned Milosh.
"We are in the country of the *Vila* Raviyoyla,

and she has threatened to kill me if I ever dare to do so in her domain.”

“You need have no fear,” said the Kralyevich Marco, “so long as I am with you with my famous piebald and golden mace. Sing, I beg of you.”

So Milosh did as the prince wished, and sang of the old Servian kings of Macedonia. Before long his song was echoed by the *vila*, until she recognized the voice, which was far more beautiful than her own. Filled with envy, she shot arrows into his throat and into his heart.

Then Marco became very angry, and pursued the *vila* on his swift-footed piebald. At last, in desperation, she flew up to the sky; but the Kralyevich hit her with his golden mace, and she fell back to the earth.

As he stooped over her she begged him not to kill her.

“If you will spare me,” she pleaded, “I will

54 Our Little Servian Cousin

gather herbs to heal your friend, and ever after be your *posestrima*."

So Marco let her go, and she cured Milosh with the herbs which she gathered, and afterwards proved several times of great service to the princely brother whom she had adopted.

By the time the story was finished they had passed through the forest and come into sight of their destination.

CHAPTER V

THE GUSLAR

THIS particular *Zadruga*¹ was surrounded by an immense, strong wall which no doubt, in times past, had helped protect it from the Turks. Inside this palisade was a large expanse of fields, with many fruit trees, particularly plum trees, surrounding the houses, which consisted of one large, well-built house of brick, encompassed by numerous small, wooden houses.

This large house was the home of the *stare-shina*, or elder, who regulated all the work of the community. He was elected by the members, and then was always obeyed without question. Besides the elder's room and a guest chamber — for, to the Servian, a guest chamber

¹A form of co-operative village association which is now disappearing in Servia.

56 Our Little Servian Cousin

is a matter of vital importance — it contained the rooms common to all: the kitchen, the dining-hall and family room. The small houses served merely as sleeping-rooms for the married sons and nephews and their wives.

There was something delightfully cordial in the way in which the guests were welcomed at the place. It was evening when they arrived and after supper, which consisted of potatoes with milk and cheese, corn bread and a flat wheat cake called *pogacha*, Yovan and Dushan were invited by some of the children into the big kitchen.

“We’re going to find out whether evil or good is waiting in store for you,” said one of the older boys, placing his hands on the shoulders of Yovan and Dushan, and leading them to a table.

Here there was some game that had been killed that afternoon, and all the children crowded around to examine the entrails, and,

amid much laughter, read what these prophesied for their guests. Tiring at last of this, all made their way to the family hall, where sixty or seventy persons were gathered for their usual social evening, the women spinning or sewing, the men repairing tools and telling stories, the smaller children playing, and all listening.

Dushan and his party were not to be the only guests, however. They had hardly settled themselves for a long, comfortable evening when the *stareshina*, who had not yet joined them, came in and, with uplifted finger, enforced an expectant silence. Then, going again to the door, he ushered in a blind minstrel (*Guslar*). There were loud and repeated expressions of pleasure at this unexpected arrival, for the *Guslar* was no stranger to the members of this settlement. He was of an interesting appearance, tall and broad-shouldered, his hair perfectly white. There was something unusually calm and dignified in the sightless face. He was followed

58 Our Little Servian Cousin

by a boy of about twelve years, who acted as his guide as he made his way from village to village, reciting the great national songs and accompanying them on the musical instrument (*Gusle*) which he carried with him.

The children clamored at once for songs; but this was not permitted until the singer had partaken of food and drink. After these were placed before him and the youth with him, the young married women of the *Zadruga* continued to hover near, to anticipate any wishes and thus show him honor.

When he had concluded, he told something of his journeying and then began the welcome evening entertainment with one of the never-old stories of the same Kralyevich Marco, who had a *vila* for his adopted sister; of his wonderful mace, made of sixty pounds of iron, thirty pounds of silver and nine pounds of gold; of his charger (*Sharats*) whom Marco treated as his best friend, the strongest, quickest, and



SERVIANS LISTENING TO A GUSLAR.

most intelligent horse in the world; and of Marco's unfailing love and respect for his mother, the wise and good *Yevrossima* (Euphrosyme).

He could not have desired a more attentive audience, as he slowly chanted a couple of lines, then paused, and gave a few strokes on the *Gusle* from which he got his name, then proceeded. This *Gusle*, like all of its kind, was a very primitive instrument, made of maple, the cavity covered by a tightly stretched skin, and the strings formed of horse hair. Its dull tone had something strangely pathetic about it, and added a particular emphasis to the words chanted.

When he finished, and had had time for rest, he proved his wonderful memory by giving the long Servian poem — considered by many the finest in the language — of Ban Strahinya and another wonderful horse, and the victory of the two over the terrible Turk, Vlah-Ali.

60 Our Little Servian Cousin

“ But the just God was with Ban Strahinya;
His grey horse was trained well for the combat;
Such a war steed to-day there is nowhere;
Neither the Servians nor Turks now possess
such!”

This last poem contained over eight hundred lines, and the old minstrel was plainly exhausted at the end. As the last line was said all arose and expressed their hearty thanks, one or two almost reverently kissing the old *Guslar's* hands, and then all separated for the night, Dushan and Yovan to whisper long of the heroes of old, whom they desired above all things to emulate.

It seemed to the boys very early next morning when Yovan's father bade them make ready for departure. Breakfast was awaiting them in the big dining hall where, to their surprise, the boys found the other members of the community already assembled. The breakfast was a hearty one, and at its conclusion the women who had waited on the table kissed their guests' hands with the quaint adieu: “ Go with fortune and

forgive us." The oxen were then brought out and harnessed to the wagon, the *stareshina* walking to the gate with them.

When they had passed out, and had proceeded a short distance down the road, Yovan's father fired a gun which he had with him and cried out, "God be with you!" This was answered by "Good luck to you!" from the *Zadruga*, and the firing of another gun.

Nothing of importance occurred on the home trip although, in passing near a village, they heard many rifle and pistol shots. Instead of being alarmed, all smiled, for they knew that this only showed that a wedding party was near, or that some young couple had just become engaged.

CHAPTER VI

SCHOOL DAYS

THE school of the little village was in a small, whitewashed, one-story building near the outskirts. The boys and girls, all under twelve years of age, that assembled there, when the fall term opened, were filled with curiosity, for a new teacher had been appointed, a teacher who had arrived at the village only the night before, and had not yet been seen by any of them. It is true that Peter Markovic asserted with considerable vagueness that he had heard that he was rather tall, and rather thin, and had either grey eyes or brown. At first Peter attracted some attention, but soon was listened to by the smaller children only.

The pupils' curiosity was satisfied when a man of medium height, but vigorous and energetic

in build, strode into their midst. He greeted them pleasantly and invited them at once into the schoolhouse. The master of the school who had preceded him had been elderly, fond of politics, and, though not without talent, rather long-winded in his discussions and explanations to his class. So it was with an unconscious relief that the boys and girls came in contact with a new vigor and clear-sightedness.

The discipline, rather strict the first few days, gradually relaxed; but, although no great formality reigned in the school, there was never any lack of respect for the teacher.

With Dushan history was a favorite study, and he always rejoiced that considerable time was devoted in school to that of their native land. Even the youngest children, however, knew more of their history than is usual with the children of other lands, for they had imbibed it since babyhood through ballads and folk stories.

64 Our Little Servian Cousin

Now, although Dushan was unusually bright in oral recitation, he had a great dislike for written work. The trouble was partly that his thoughts came more rapidly than he could put them down, and, in consequence, he was apt to make great haste and so express himself very poorly.

The teacher often called his attention to a Servian proverb which he had written on the blackboard: "A wise man walks slowly; but reaches his goal quickly," carefully explaining each time just what was meant.

Dushan appreciated the teacher's interest in his efforts, and did his best to please him, until, at last, he produced the following creditable essay: —

A GLIMPSE INTO OUR HISTORY

If Servia is not as great now as we could wish, it has its past glories to cheer our hearts, and to give renewed hope of what the future may bring.

In thinking of our famous rulers, some of us go back to the renowned Emperor Justinian, born in Northwestern Macedonia, who ascended the throne of Constantinople in 527, and became the ruler of Rome, and of a great part of the Christian world.

Our greatest glory was achieved under the Emperor Stephan Dushan Nemanyich, who lived in the fourteenth century, when Macedonia, Albania, Thessaly, Northern Greece and Bulgaria, our neighbors, were annexed. This emperor was a famous law-maker and a renowned patron of literature and learning. But, alas, under the reign of his son, the empire rapidly went into dissolution. In 1389, on the field of Kossovo, the Turks defeated the Servians, who made a valiant resistance, and practically ended Servian independence.

From then to the beginning of the nineteenth century, the people of the entire Servian nation, with the exception of the brave mountaineers of

66 Our Little Servian Cousin

Montenegro, were changed into *Rayahs*, which is Turkish for "conquered infidels." They lost all rights and privileges, were compelled to pay one-tenth of the product of their labor to the Sultan, and lived in wretched fear of Turkish landlords, officials, and soldiers. For nearly four centuries our people had no means of redress for the injustice and indescribable wrongs committed by their heartless masters, except through their *Hyduks*, bands of armed Servians whom the Turks called brigands, but whom we reverence as the greatest of all of our heroes.

It was through a leader of the *Hyduks*, through Kara George, or the Black George, that our freedom was won. We had then no schoolhouses, and our churches were ready to fall into ruins, for the Turks forbade our repairing them. We were restless, many of us hopeless. But, after a particularly horrible massacre by the Turkish Janissaries stationed in

our capital, in which our leading men were slain, Kara George, a violent man, but a great leader, rallied the Servians together and drove the Turks from the country.

Kara George was proclaimed king, and for nine years kept the Turks at bay. In 1813 Turkey proclaimed a Holy War and succeeded in reconquering the country, forcing Kara George to flee to his mountain home. A new revolt broke out under Milosh Obrenovich, who had been a general under Kara George. This again was successful and the grateful people proclaimed Milosh a hero.

When, later, Kara George returned and was murdered, people became divided in their allegiance to the two houses, that of Kara George and that of Obrenovich, a fact that has led to many disgraceful feuds in our history.

It was scarcely a week after Dushan had had the honor of reading this essay to the class, that

68 Our Little Servian Cousin

not only the whole school, but the whole village, were thrown into a state of violent excitement by a report that war with Turkey was about to break out. The feeling against this enemy, through whom they had suffered such grievous wrongs, rose so high that even the youngest children were affected and it became necessary to close the school temporarily. Whole families gathered together daily and almost hourly in the village square to listen to extemporaneous speeches and to sing patriotic songs.

After four or five days of this life of passionate excitement it became plain that the news had been at least premature. An alliance, it was learned, had been formed with Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Greece. Although this seemed to indicate war in the future, no one could say when that future was to be.

It was a considerable time after the scenes of our story that this alliance did lead, finally, to the war which began in October, 1912, in which



KING PETER KARAGEORGEVITCH OF SERVIA.

the Balkan allies utterly defeated their old enemy Turkey. Unfortunately some of the good results of this war were nullified by the dissensions which broke out later regarding a proper division of the conquered territory. Whether these dissensions were encouraged by Austria, who has never looked with favor on the growth of the Balkan states, is a mooted question.¹

¹ See Editor's note, page 99.

CHAPTER VII

A SPINNING BEE

WHEN the time came that there was no apple to be found on a tree, no late autumn flowers brightening the fields, and no stork hovering above the tree-tops or standing on house-chimneys; when the air began to feel as if an invisible snow was present, then spinning bees became a subject of conversation in the village.

To Militza's and Dushan's joy it was decided that the very first was to be held at their house. So it came to pass that one Saturday the people of the village began to assemble there. All brought refreshments with them, this sensible custom of the place relieving any one family from the expense of providing for so many. The men came, as well as the women, for they were necessary to the full enjoyment of the eve-

ning. All were in their Sunday finery. A big fire was burning in the wide-mouthed fireplace, above which a pot of water was boiling. The young girls, distinguished by red feathers in their hair, formed the first circle around the fire, never speaking, except to whisper together, unless spoken to by their elders; but giggling often in girl fashion among themselves, and now and then glancing shyly at the young men who sat furthest away.

There was a gladsome, care-free, childlike spirit in the gathering, not often found in such gatherings in other lands. While the spinning was going on there were little witty ballads improvised in which the men and women disputed, the latter generally winning. Now and then a woman chanted a beautiful lyric song, which, unlike most Slavonic songs, was full of a serene, cheerful spirit. At last came the story hour, in which all sorts of quaint folk tales were told, an effort being apparently made to see who could

think of the most ridiculous things. At last it fell to the turn of the oldest woman present to relate something, and, after a few preliminary coughs, she began a story of

THE LITTLE COW BARULA

“There was once a man,” the story teller began, looking very important, “who had a son called Péra. This son’s mother died, and the father, hoping to make it easier for the child, married again. But the stepmother took a dislike to the lad and mistreated him, at last not even allowing him to live in the house.

“The boy offered no resistance, and so came to spend most of his time in the cow stalls, where he devoted himself to cleaning and caring for his one possession, a cow left him by his own mother.

“After a while his stepmother noticed it, and resolved that she would take away this comfort. She complained to her husband of being ill, and insisted that nothing but meat from the cow,

Barula, would cure her. Her husband, believing her, promised that the cow should be killed. When Péra heard this he burst into tears and ran to Barula. When the little cow saw his tear-stained face she inquired what was the matter.

“When Péra had told her, she said: ‘Do not cry; they won’t do it, for they can’t catch me. When they find they can’t, they will order you to try. Do so, and I’ll let you; then grab hold of my right horn, jump on my back, and we’ll run away together.’

“It happened as the cow foretold. No one could catch Barula, so Péra was called. He did so at once, and, grabbing hold of her right horn, leaped on her back. In a flash they had started away, and were soon out of sight.

“After a long run they stopped at a deer meadow. Péra jumped down and, while the cow pastured, he lay in the grass. At noon the cow let Péra have a drink of milk, and then

74 Our Little Servian Cousin

again left him in order to pasture. At night she fed him again, and then lay down beside him.

“ Thus the days passed, until one morning, after the cow, Barula, had left him, Péra found himself confronted by a big, fat stag.

“ ‘ Good morning, Péra,’ said the stag.

“ ‘ God be with you,’ answered Péra.

“ ‘ Where is Barula?’

“ ‘ Pasturing.’

“ ‘ As early as this? Well, I intend showing her on whose meadow she’s been feeding so gayly for more than a year. I am going to kill her.’ And the deer ran away, leaving Péra in tears.

“ When noon came, Péra related all to Barula.

“ ‘ Pay no attention to it,’ she answered, ‘ I know him. I am stronger than he.’

“ The next day the stag came and at once ran at the cow, who simply bent down her head and caught him on her horns.

“ Péra rejoiced, but not for long. The very

next day another stag came, bigger and fatter than the first, and swore to kill Barula, not only because she had been pasturing on their meadow, but also because she had killed his brother. Péra began to cry; but, when he told Barula, she again comforted him.

“When the stag came the cow caught him on her horns, just as she had his brother.

“The third day still another stag came. He bore little resemblance to the other two, for he was so thin that every rib was visible. He also threatened to kill the cow; but his frail appearance gave Péra no anxiety. He sang and played on his pipe until Barula came, then he merrily told her how a stag who could hardly stand on his feet had threatened her.

“To his surprise the little cow gave a deep sigh. ‘Ah, Péra, he will kill me, for he’s lighter than I. You must watch us carefully as we fight, and, when you see tears come into my eyes, catch hold of my right horn. It will come off, and

76 Our Little Servian Cousin

you must run with it wherever your eyes lead and your feet carry you.'

"There was no help, loud although Péra complained. The next day the thin stag and Barula fought from early morning till evening. As it began to grow dusk Péra saw the tears, and caught hold of the cow's right horn as he had been requested. It came off, and Péra ran away with it. At last, tired out, he rested.

"Hardly had his weariness passed than he began to wonder what was in the horn. At last his curiosity caused him to open it, when all kinds of domestic animals dashed out; horses, cattle, pigs, sheep, geese, ducks, and chickens.

"Péra would have liked to drive them back; but he found this impossible. It seemed that the more he tried to do so, the more came out. Suddenly, a dragon stood before him, and offered to get all back if he would promise to give

him his wife to devour the night after his wedding.

“Knowing no other way out of the difficulty, and having no thought yet of marrying, Péra agreed, and the dragon drove all the cattle into the horn, closed it, and gave it to Péra.

“When dawn came Péra started home. As soon as he had entered the gates he opened the horn, and the domestic creatures trooped out until the yard was filled.

“When his stepmother saw this she could not behave graciously enough. Soon the news of his wealth spread, and the boy was urged to marry. He refused again and again, until at last the daughter of the Czar was offered him. But Péra remembered his promise to the dragon, and would not consent for a long time. At last, tired of entreaties, he agreed, and the ceremony was performed.

“No sooner was the act done, however, than Péra was overcome with grief. He refused to

78 Our Little Servian Cousin

taste a morsel of food. At night his step-mother thrust a sweetened raisin roll into his hand, and this he placed untasted under his pillow.

“ At midnight he heard a knock at the window, followed by the dragon’s voice, ‘ Péra, Péra, fulfil your promise ! ’

“ Before he could answer the wheaten roll under his pillow answered for him.

“ ‘ I will,’ it said, ‘ but first you must hear what has happened to me. First they buried me in the ground; I mourn for that, and yet do not mourn. Then they cut me down; but for that I mourn, and yet do not mourn. Then they bound me; and I mourn, and yet do not mourn for it. Then they threshed me; and I mourn for it, and yet do not mourn. Then they rolled me; and I mourn for it, and yet do not mourn. Then they ground me; and I mourn for it, and yet do not mourn for it. Then they kneaded me; and I mourn for it, and yet do not mourn. But,

that they baked me, and then tore me apart, has made both my eyes run out.'

"As the roll finished speaking the cock crowed, and the dragon was so amazed that he flew away, never to return.

"Thus Péra lived happily with his wife and, after his father-in-law's death, he became the ruling Czar."

CHAPTER VIII

CHRISTMAS

“As there’s no day without light
So there’s no rejoicing without the Servian
Christmas.”

FROM the first of December the village children, when out of school, talked of little else than the coming of Christmas. Grandfathers and grandmothers, fathers and mothers, were teased to tell of how the day had been celebrated when they were little, and the children themselves never tired of recalling the joys of former years, and anticipating those to come.

For more than a month before the day no meat, and no milk or eggs, were allowed as food, the meals consisted entirely of fish, vegetables and fruits.

On December third, the eve of St. Barbarosa, came the first of a series of preliminary celebra-

tions. On that day the families attended church, and in the evening Yovan came over to Dushan's house. Militza, dressed in her best, skipped about with a big hymn book, written in queer-looking characters; but, when all had gathered in the living room, and sang Advent hymns, she forgot entirely to look into it.

After several of these had been sung, all gathered around the hearth in the kitchen to watch, half merrily, half anxiously, the boiling of a mixture of grains and vegetables in a big pot of water. This was supposed to forecast the weather of the forthcoming year, and to foretell deaths in the family. It was important that the mixture should be tasted by every member and even by the cattle.

But this was of small importance compared to what came on "Mother Feast Day," on the Sunday preceding that immediately before Christmas. For several weeks before

Dushan's mother had prepared gifts for the children. These she put under her pillow on Saturday night.

Dushan and Militza awoke early, and, quickly dressing, hurried on tiptoe to her room. They found her apparently asleep and Dushan, who was in the lead, hastily tied her feet together with a string which he had brought with him. His mother now opened her eyes, and begged to be free.

"No, no," cried the children, "not unless you pay us to release you."

"Pay?" exclaimed the mother, pretending surprise. "That is a strange request! Are you serious?"

"Very serious," responded Dushan and Militza in chorus.

"Well, since it must be," the mother said, sighing, "how will this do?" and she pulled out a long strand of red ribbon, and handed it to Militza.

“ Oh, dear mother! ” cried Militza. “ That’s beautiful, and I’ll loosen the first knot.”

“ Dear me! are there more knots? ” said the mother. “ Then here’s something else,” and she handed a bright blue neck-scarf to Dushan.

“ Beautiful! ” said the boy. “ That unloosens another knot.”

Next a note book, in which Militza could keep recipes for jams, jellies, cakes, etc., was produced; then a handkerchief for Dushan, and so other knots were untied, one by one, until the children, satisfied nothing more was hidden, let the mother free, kissing her hands, and then dancing away with their gifts.

The next Sunday was the “ Father Feast Day,” when the same performance with the father, instead of the mother, took place. This over, the children knew that the great festival was near.

The Servian name for Christmas is *Bojich*, which means “ the Little God.” The celebra-

84 Our Little Servian Cousin

tion of "the Little God" begins on the morning of the day before Christmas. This day is called the *Badnyi Dan*, a name of which no one seems to know the exact meaning, it perhaps having come down from pagan times.

The morning was still full of the moisture of night when Dushan and his father went to a near-by forest to perform a very important part of the Christmas ceremony, the selecting and bringing home of a young oak tree — the Servian Yule log. Having decided on one, they made a sign or two of the cross and uttered a short prayer. Then Dushan threw a handful of wheat at the tree and gravely greeted it with "Happy *Badnyi Dan* to you!"

Next he helped his father cut the tree down, working slowly and carefully, for it was very important that it should fall to the East about the time the sun's rays should first be seen. Anything else would indicate ill-fortune.

When the tree was down it was cut into two

logs, one a little longer than the other, and taken home.

Militza and her mother stood at the door, anxiously awaiting them. The mother held a flat, unleavened wheat cake, which she broke on the larger log. The logs, now called *Badnyak*, were left to stand outside.

This was only the beginning of what proved to be the busiest day of the entire year.

The spotlessly clean house was decorated with ivy, and then Militza helped her mother to make ritual cakes of various forms and sizes, one for each member of the family, and also one for each of the domestic animals. These were to be served with the Christmas dinner. While his sister was busy indoors, Dushan was sent for a bundle of straw, which he bound with a rope and let stand near the *Badnyak*.

He was helping his father prepare a suckling pig for roasting, when a group of his schoolmates entered the yard, singing Christmas

carols. Militza at once joined them to visit the other village people.

Before sunset, however, each of the band had returned home.

At the precise setting of the sun, all of the family assembled in the family kitchen. The mother handed Dushan a pair of woollen gloves, and he immediately went out, returning soon, staggering under the weight of the larger log, and considering himself quite a Hercules.

He was met at the threshold by his mother, who threw a special handful of wheat at him. As he stepped over the hearth he called out "A Happy Christmas to you all," which was answered in chorus: "May God and the Holy Christmas help you!"

Then Dushan's father placed the log on the andirons on the hearth so that it stuck out ten or twelve inches beyond.

Now came the play part, dearly loved by all Servian children. The mother brought in the



“ HE WAS MET AT THE THRESHOLD BY HIS MOTHER.”

bundle of straw, Dushan and Militza took their places behind her and followed her as she walked through all the rooms. As she threw handfuls of straw on the floor she imitated the cackling of a hen: "Chok! Chok!" Dushan and Militza, representing baby chicks, followed, squeaking, "Peep! Pee-y-oo! Pee-y-oo!"

When the floors were well strewn, the father threw a handful of walnuts in each corner, exclaiming as he did so: "In the name of God the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, Amen!"

After various other ceremonies were performed, the table and the chairs were taken out of the room and the family sat down on sack-
ing, placed on the floor, to a big supper — without meat, however. The children were reminded not to harbor ill thoughts, and not to quarrel, or ill luck would come to them that year.

When the supper was done Militza carefully

88 Our Little Servian Cousin

gathered up all the crumbs and scattered them outside for the birds, for they, being also God's creatures, were not to be forgotten.

On Christmas day smoke could have been seen ascending from all of the village chimneys by four o'clock, and from then until eight there was, of course, the usual firing of guns.

At sunrise Militza was running as fast as her feet could move to the village brook for water. Before she filled the two pots which she had brought, she threw a handful of wheat into the spring, wishing the water a Happy Christmas as she did so. When this water was brought home the first cupfuls were used to make a special Christmas cake, into which a small coin was placed, and pieces of crudely carved wood representing a cow, a pig, a sheep and a bee. At dinner it was Dushan's luck to get the piece of cake with the coin, which made him certain that good luck would be his. To him, too, fell the wooden bee, which indicated that bees were

to be his special care during the coming year.

But, before the dinner was announced, a special Christmas visitor arrived. It was Yovan, Dushan's bosom friend. He had some wheat with him, which he threw at all, while Dushan's mother threw some at him.

"Christ is born," exclaimed Yovan.

"In truth, He is born," responded the others.

Then Yovan walked to the hearth and, striking the burning log with a shovel so that it threw out hundreds of sparks, said, "May you have just as many oxen as there are sparks." Then, striking it again: "May you have as many sheep and pigs," continuing this until he had mentioned all of the domestic animals and ending with "May you have just as much good luck, prosperity, and happiness!" Then, walking up to Dushan's father, he embraced him, and, returning to the hearth, crossed him-

self several times and, falling on his knees before the *Badnyak*, kissed it and then placed a small coin on it as his Christmas offering.

This done, he was led to a low chair. As he was about to sit down, Dushan snatched the chair away, so that he fell to the ground. This was done so that every good wish uttered by him should remain right there and not be carried off when he left.

During the very merry meal to which all gathered later, the shades were drawn and a candle lit. Then the shadows of the different members of the family were carefully studied, for, if any appeared headless or with neck too far outstretched, it would betoken death. But the shadows, exceedingly grotesque though many of them were, behaved very well and, although they darkened the table, did nothing to darken the hearts of the gay company. The roast pig, with a small red apple in its mouth, had been placed in the center of the snowy cloth

on the table. Around it were vegetables, cakes, and fruit in quantities, so that there promised to be an abundance for many days to come.

CHAPTER IX

BELGRADE

DUSHAN and Yovan were together almost constantly during the winter and, when, in early spring, Yovan departed with his father for Belgrade, the capital of Servia, his friend felt very much deserted. He walked around with a woe-begone air which all the raillery of his schoolmates and sister could not change.

It was not until the third day after Yovan's departure that he came home in a happy, excited manner, waving a letter which he had just received from his friend. The whole family gathered around him as, with trembling hands, he tore open the envelope.

It was written in the queer Cyrillic characters used in Servia and several of the neighboring countries, and was as follows:

“BIELGOROD,¹ March 29.

“MY DEAREST POBRATIME: Here I am, enjoying all the novel sights, although my heart aches that you are not with me, and I sadly miss my little village home.

“Bielgorod, as you know, is situated on high ground at the junction of the Danube and Save Rivers, and one has only to stand on the banks of the Danube to imagine the dark-skinned Magyars who live on the opposite shore, in Hungary.

“I hardly know what first to describe to you, dear Dushan. Perhaps you would like best the white fortress, high up on a hill at the junction of the two rivers — a magnificent location, commanding a view of miles of the Danube and the near-by, monotonous-looking plains of Hungary.

“Just back of it is the extinct volcano of Avala, where a *vila* is supposed to live. On its

¹ The Servian name for Belgrade, meaning “the white city.”

top is an old citadel, once white, but now dark with age, which probably belonged to some Servian of noble birth. If you were here I should be tempted to go with you to dig for the great treasure that is said to be hidden there.

“Near the fortress are some very pretty gardens, called the *Kalemegdan*, where we spent one afternoon admiring a famous view from the *Fikir-Bair* (the Slope of Dreaming).

“On the banks of the river, too, is a tower, called the *Neboyscha* (the Fearless), of which many terrible stories of the days of the Turks are related.

“Life in Bielgorod seems very different from that of our village. Electric tram cars and electric lights are everywhere. In the morning the people promenade the streets, among them very beautifully dressed ladies, and many officers in neat uniforms. Then, from one till three, all is quiet — people are at home, many of them taking an afternoon nap. From three till seven

the streets again buzz with voices and the cafés are filled to overflowing.

“ In these cafés I hear a great deal of French and Italian spoken, although my father tells me that there is much less than in former years. Every one who enters seems in the gayest spirits, and the air resounds with laughter.

“ Most of the houses are small and white in color, with pretty gardens planted with acacias, lilacs and lime trees. I was interested in seeing that storks are permitted to build their nests in the chimneys, as with us.

“ There are many public school buildings, and a university where I hope to study some time. The only Turkish houses I have seen, so far, are old dilapidated-looking ones, built of plaster, with red tiled roofs, on the river banks. These will probably soon be torn down.

“ My uncle, with whom we are staying, introduced us to a Russian gentleman who could

not express enough astonishment at there being no squalid quarters in our capital.

“ ‘ You are a fortunate people,’ he said, ‘ not to be daily confronted with misery as we are in Russia, and as people are in most of the countries of the civilized world.’

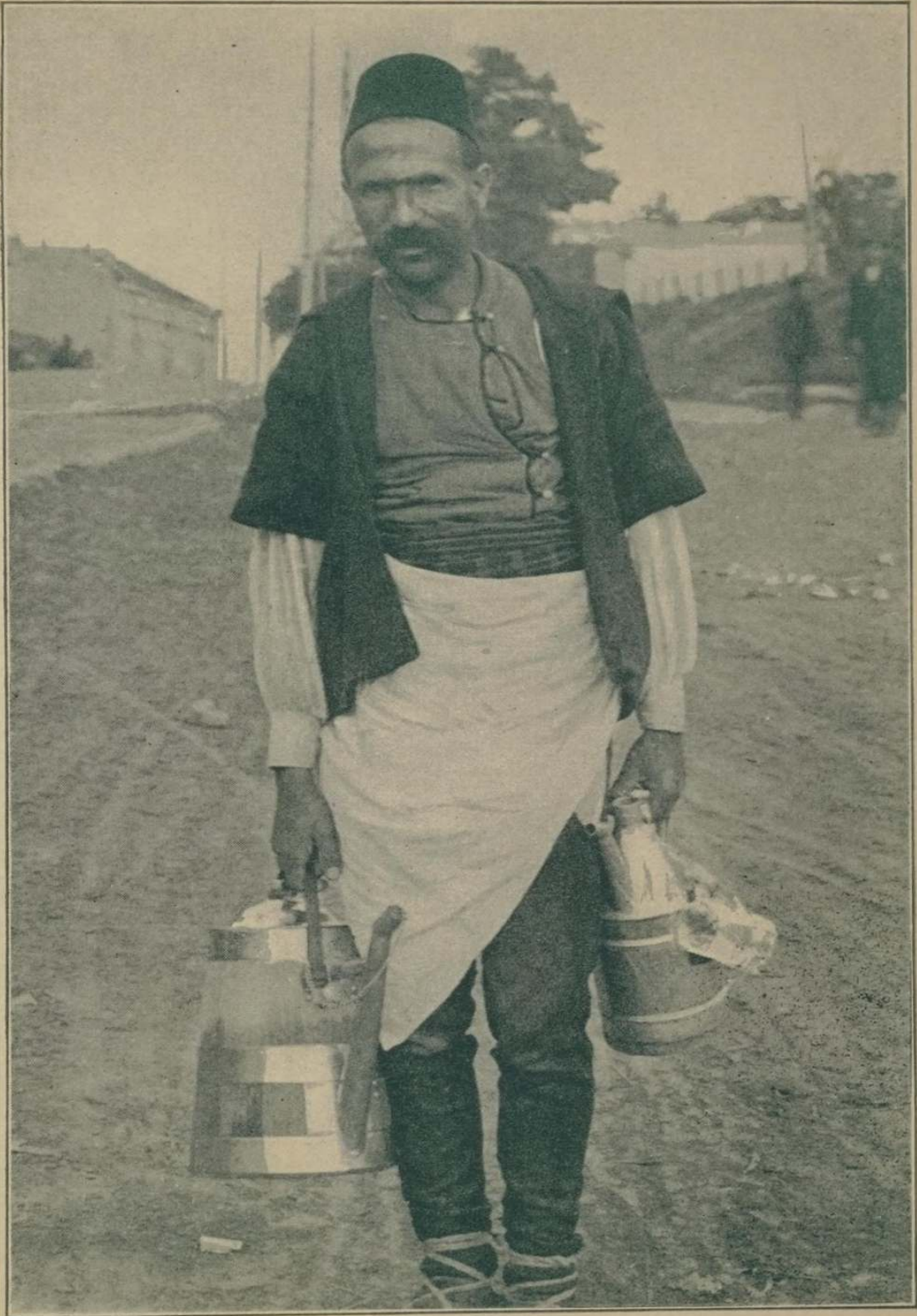
“ Then, turning to me, he remarked: ‘ I don’t suppose you know what a pauper is!’

“ I am afraid that I made a blundering answer, for he laughed and, patting me on the shoulder, exclaimed:

“ ‘ Be proud of that and not ashamed, my boy.’

“ I wonder how we happen to be so fortunate. Can it be because of our *Zadrugas*, our *Mobas*, and other ways of helping one another?

“ Yesterday my aunt took me with her to the market where the peasants sell their wares. There were crowds of country people under the great trees, all in Sunday finery. We saw many flat, sheep’s-milk cheeses, piles of fruit, inclu-



A PEDDLER OF SWEETENED WATER, BELGRADE.

ding enormous melons, and great masses of tomatoes. My aunt had to do considerable haggling before the prices suited her. While we were there two or three peddlers passed us with sweetened water for sale.

“ On the way home I bought a dozen picture post cards, one with the portrait of our beloved King Peter, and I shall surely send several to you.

“ I have been to the National Museum, the Botanical Gardens and the National Library. I visited the last with the son of one of the professors of the Military Academy and saw many valuable old Servian manuscripts. My friend was very enthusiastic over them. He says that he is going to make an especial study, some day, of our old literature and that, if he has the ability, he will translate some of it into other languages.

“ And O, Dushan, you should go to the theater and hear the singing! We saw there

98 Our Little Servian Cousin

the drama written by His Majesty, King Nicola of Montenegro, called the 'Empress of the Balkans.' It shows very truly the great heroism of Montenegrin women.

"Father has been telling me something of the history of Bielgorod. It is wonderful to me to think that, after passing through the hands of many conquerors, after being besieged time and again by the Turks, it should still belong to us. One reason why it has been changing hands is because it has been considered the key to Hungary, and so an object of fierce contention between Austria and Turkey. Perhaps Austria still desires it. I learned, too, that the Turks used to call it *Darol-i-Jehad*, which means 'the home for wars of faith.'

"The people here are as fond of discussions as we are at home, and I have heard much regarding the jealousies that exist between us and our neighbor, Bulgaria. I had to laugh heartily at some of the absurd stories told to illustrate

this; but, when I heard my uncle and the Russian talking of the many Austrian spies in the city, I felt a fear clutch at my heart, for Austria would foster any differences.

“This must do until I return to our quieter village life next week, my *pobratime*. I embrace you. My father joins in greetings to your family.

“Your ever true friend and brother,

“YOVAN.”

THE END.

EDITOR'S NOTE:—Serbia and her allies, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro, declared war on Turkey in October, 1912. The history of the war was one of unbroken success on the part of the allies, and in a short time Turkey lost all of her territory in Europe except the narrow strip in the immediate vicinity of Constantinople, and Constantinople itself was in danger of capture.

At this point, the Great Powers of Europe intervened, and a treaty of peace was concluded whereby Turkey ceded to the allies all of her European possessions except the small territory extending along the Dardanelles and the Sea of Marmora from the Aegean Sea to the Black Sea. The Great Powers required that the Kingdom of Albania should be created between Montenegro and Greece, but left to the allies the partition among themselves of the other territory ceded by Turkey.

This was a signal for dissension among the allies. Servia and Greece, with the moral support of little Montenegro, claimed that Bulgaria was demanding as her share more territory than had been originally stipulated in the treaty of alliance. Bulgaria, on the other hand, made counter charges, and matters went from bad to worse until finally, on July 8th, 1913, Servia formally declared war against Bulgaria, and similar action was promptly taken by Greece. The war, while of short duration, was one of the fiercest and most sanguinary in all history, and was only brought to a close when Roumania, which had remained inactive during the

war with Turkey, suddenly took the part of Servia and Greece and prepared to invade Bulgaria from the north.

A treaty of peace was signed on August 10th whereby the division of the territory ceded by Turkey is left to the arbitration of Belgium, Holland and Switzerland. Nothing has yet been settled, but it is hoped that the result will be not only the final freeing of Macedonia and Thrace from Turkish rule, but a lasting peace between the Balkan States.

September 23, 1913.



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