



Serbian folk songs : fairy tales and proverbs

Maximilian August

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PREFACE

In spite of an ever-growing network of tight-fitting iron ribbons and copper threads, our old planet Earth still refuses to be squeezed and reduced to a nicely manageable globe, just so many times the size of the Albert Hall, with properly numbered and defined departments, with a common larder and with—an American Board of Directors. Distance and language are yet barriers proving as formidable to "progress" as racial antagonism, human inertia, greed, and ambition.

True, only about thirty-six hours are needed nowadays to travel from London to Serbia. No longer does the traveller settle all his worldly affairs before he crosses the frontier at Belgrade, as the author of *Eothen* did in 1835. But that the relatively shorter distance has not achieved everything Miss Mary E. Durham has shown us in her delightful book. Through the Lands of the Serb. It is but a little over ten years since she drew her charming word-pictures of impressions during her journey; but we read, "Guards and ticket-collectors agreed in telling me that it was impossible for me to go to Belgrade." When she travelled from Nis to Pirot an officious and stupid fellow-traveller actually succeeded in frightening her about her dangerous enterprise, "until I had a hail-Csesar-we-who-are-to-die-salute-thee feeling, which became less and less dignified as the West Balkans themselves came into sight. We reached Pirot, and I descended from the train in a state not unlike 'funk'."

During the last eighteen months Serbia has come nearer to us. Fighting against terrible odds, our brave little ally held up the "walk-over" of her powerful northern neighbour, and thrice she threw back the vast armies of Austria. Little Serbia not only impaired the prestige of her foe, but also kept fully occupied those legions of Austria which otherwise would have been employed elsewhere. The fine peasant army of Serbia was the rampart which for long weary months defied the Central Powers in their policy of joining up with the Turk.

Finally, however, gallant little Serbia went down under the avalanches from North and East.

She had done all she could. Yet her heroic army still exists to fight again for Liberty and National Unity. The Spirit of the Serb is unbroken. And the Great Powers amongst the Allies will never forget their debt to Serbia. I cannot state the case better than by quoting Professor R. W. Seton-Watson:—"She has borne the burden and heat of the day, she has rendered signal services to the allied cause, and her valour has finally dispersed the calumnies with which her enemies so long assailed her reputation. ... I have no hesitation in asking you to sympathise with Serbia!"

The object of this book is to enlist such sympathy. England was the champion of Greece and Italy when these two countries fought for their liberty and unity. And Serbia, who, within a hundred years after her liberation from four centuries of Turkish "rule," has performed the miracle of almost attaining the civilisation of Western

Europe, deserves likewise the championship of the free Britons.

The folk-songs given in this volume are for the greater part taken from J. Bowring's Serbian Popular Poetry, O. Meredith's (Bulwer-Lytton) The National Songs of Serbia, and from various reviews, and some I have translated from the Serbian original. I have made some alterations in those poems which are reprinted. The fairy-tales and proverbs I have translated from Miss Karadzic's Volksmdrchen tier Serben. The music given in the appendix has been taken from F. S. Kuhac, Juzno-Slavjenskc Narodne Popievke.

I am under great obligation to Professor Bogdan Popovic and to Professor Pavle Popovic, both of Belgrade University, for the kind help they have given me; and a subsidy granted by the Serbian Government to the publisher mny also be most gratefully acknowledged.

I am personally indebted to the present Earl of Lytton for the kind permission to make extracts from his father's book, and...

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