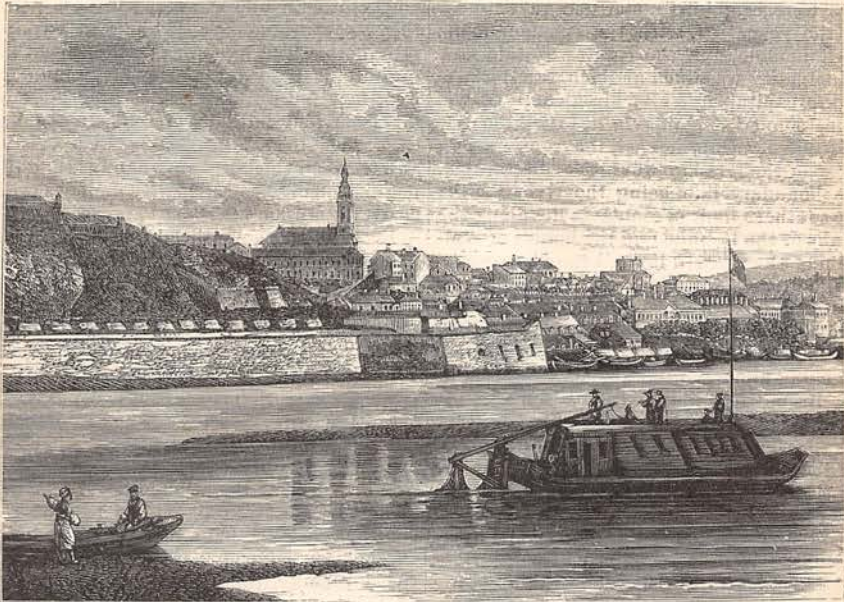


HARPER'S NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

No. CCCX.—MARCH, 1876.—VOL. LII.

THE PRINCIPALITIES OF THE DANUBE.



BELGRADE, THE CAPITAL OF SERBIA.

FOR nearly a century the Turkish Empire has been generally regarded as in a condition of slow but certain decay. One by one the Sultan has lost dominion over large and fair provinces, every year he has been sinking deeper and deeper into hopeless debt, and only considerations of self-interest on the part of other powers have kept life in that body-politic which the Czar Nicholas once so aptly compared to a sick man wasting away by a slow but fatal distemper. The Turks, it was said long ago, are only "encamped in Europe." Their characteristics, traditions, customs, religion, are essentially Oriental; and the time is not very far distant, probably, when their foothold on the western continent will be loosened, and when the sultans will rule in Asia alone.

Ever and anon a war cloud arises in Eastern Europe, and diplomatés and statesmen begin to talk anxiously to each other about

the "Eastern question." It is the gravest problem of the future, the most perplexing of international puzzles. It has reference to the condition of Turkey, and her relations with the other powers. It involves the fate of the Christian subjects of the Sultan, and the designs which Russia undoubtedly has upon Constantinople, the rightful capital, as Peter the Great taught his countrymen and his heirs to believe, of the Greek faith.

Whenever any event (as, for instance, the Herzegovinian rebellion) occurs to vivify this bugbear of the Eastern question, the position and probable action of the Principalities of the Danube become prominent subjects of speculation and discussion. They hold peculiar relations with the Turkish Empire and with Russia. Their geographical position gives them special importance in view of a probable war; and fostered and protected as they have been in their practical independence by the great states, they

may be regarded in some sort both as belonging to Turkey and as wards of Christian Europe. In view of past and future events, it is worth while to describe the Danubian Principalities, their political and geographical position, and the character, religion, customs, and habits of their populations, who are at once among the most obscure and most interesting peoples of the continent.

The three states which are usually spoken of as the Danubian Principalities are Moldavia, Wallachia, and Servia. The first two were combined under one government in the year 1861, with the common name of Roumania, and the capital of this new principality was fixed at Bucharest, formerly the capital of Wallachia alone. Of the three countries, Moldavia lies furthest east and north. On the east, its frontiers join those of the Russian province of Bessarabia, the boundary line being the river Pruth; the southern limit of Moldavia lies along the banks of the Danube and the border of Wallachia; the western limit is the picturesque range of the Carpathian Mountains. Wallachia, lying southwestward from Moldavia, stretches some two hundred and seventy miles from east to west, its southern frontier being along the Danube almost throughout its entire length, while to the north it is bounded by Moldavia and a part of Hungary, and on the west by the principality of Servia. Just across the Danube on the south lies the subject Turkish province of Bulgaria.

Servia, the third of the Danubian Principalities, lies a little southwestward from Wallachia. Its northern frontier is skirt-

ed by the Upper Danube and the Save, the largest of the Danubian tributaries; on the west, the large province of Bosnia gives Servia its limit; on the south, Servia is separated from Albania by the Kaplan range. Thus the Danubian Principalities comprise a long and wide tract, extending almost from the mouths by which the Danube empties itself into the Black Sea, in a south-westerly direction, to within a hundred miles of the Adriatic. Their frontiers touch those of Russia on one side and those of Austria on the other, while at every southern point they are contiguous to still subject Turkish provinces. The two states which together form Roumania comprise not far from forty-five thousand square miles in area, and not far from four millions of souls in population. The Servian area is between twelve and thirteen thousand square miles, and the population of the principality includes rather over a million souls.

Resembling each other in religion, in political institutions, in their relation to their nominal suzerain, the Sultan, and in many of their manners and customs, the most striking distinction between the Roumans and the Servians consists in difference of race. The Roumans are one of the most mixed races on earth. They are a sad puzzle to the ethnologists. They are partly Roman, partly Gothic, partly Magyar, partly Slavic, and partly, though to a small extent, Tartar. The Servians, on the other hand, are regarded as the most purely Slavic race on the continent. They have resisted the admixture of alien blood more obstinately than the Finlander, the Breton, or the Basque.

They have preserved, with wonderful uniformity, the physical characteristics, the customs, and the language of a remote and heroic ancestry. While their neighbors of Wallachia have proved easily susceptible to the influences of each of the many successive conquests of their territory, the Servians have preserved a distinct national type from first to last.

SERVIA.

The story of this most brave and energetic, as well as purest, of all the Slavonic races teems with the most varied, turbulent, and romantic interest. Even now, among the Servian peasantry, who are ignorant



MAP OF THE DANUBIAN PRINCIPALITIES.



MUSSULMANS AND CHRISTIANS.

in most matters, tales of the early valor of their ancestors, of their Oriental origin, of their long and Titanic struggles, are familiar; while the fact that they still preserve and still sing the patriotic songs which have survived from a period anterior to the invasion of Europe by the Turks, indicates the intense pride of the Servians in their national annals and exploits. It seems certain that the first distinct appearance in history of the great Slavonic race, which now embraces a large majority of the inhabitants

of Eastern Europe, was early in the sixth century, when they appeared on the frontiers of the Roman Empire, defeated the imperial legions in Greece, besieged Byzantium, and, after rather more than a century of conflict, made a league with the Emperors of the East. The power of the successors of Constantine was already waning; and this fierce and obstinate race, which was supposed to have had its origin in Scythia and Illyria, compelled the emperors to concede to them a vast tract of country, where they estab-

lished the kingdom of Servia. The contact of these Slaves with the civilization of the Eastern Empire, deteriorated as it was, had the surprising effect of converting them to Christianity, and of softening their rude and ferocious characters into something like order and subordination. The Servian dominions comprised the colonies of Slavonia, Croatia, Servia, Bosnia, and Dalmatia. After entirely throwing off the Byzantine yoke, the Servians grew rapidly in power and culture. At last there arose a great "Kral," or king, Stephen Douschan, who extended the Servian dominions over Bulgaria, Dalmatia, and Macedonia, and who held sway from the shores of the Black Sea to those of the Adriatic. He was by far the greatest and most warlike of the early Servian monarchs. He erected his kingdom into an empire; now for the first time the imperial double eagle was emblazoned upon Servian banners; and he even proposed to raise an army of 80,000 men, and, marching upon Constantinople, to put an end to the fast-crumbling Empire of the East. Under Stephen the Servians had evidently reached a high degree of civilization; the beautiful churches and ruins of stately castles and towns of that period which are still extant are striking evidences of their taste and spirit. In the two centuries during which Servia continued an independent and prosperous realm, its progress as a nationality and as a people was pretty steadily onward. The emperors married princesses of Byzantium, France, and Venice; law and the arts ripened under the civilizing influences which penetrated the wild slopes of the Kaplan through the free cities of the Adriatic; bridges and roads were built; the Servian monarchs were recognized by the popes, and a great and comparatively enlightened feudal nobility grew up in their dominions.

It was in the latter part of the fourteenth century that the Sultan Amurath, the son of the famous Othman, who was the first of the Turkish "Grand Seigneurs," succeeded in conquering Servia, and reducing its gallant people to subjection. At the battle of Cassova, in 1389, the last of the Servian emperors was killed; a Servian chieftain, Milosch Obilitesh, penetrating the Sultan's tent, stabbed him to the heart; and this act was fatal to the independence of his defeated countrymen. The Sultan Bajazet established his rule over the nation; but despite the assassination of Amurath, that rule was far from being harsh or despotic. Two sons of the last Servian monarch were made governors over the country; and far from imposing Mohammedanism upon the conquered race, Bajazet declared that for every new mosque built in his European realms, a Christian church should be erected. The Servians continued subject to the Turks for

more than four centuries. Throughout this period their condition was in many respects a happy one. The rule of the Turkish pashas was less oppressive upon the peasantry than that of their own feudal lords had been; their taxes were not heavy; they were permitted freedom of worship.

At last, however, the old proud spirit of the Servian race revived. The plundering corruption of the pashas, and the inability of the well-disposed sultans to protect them from the exactions and capricious tyranny of their own officials, roused its long dormant but, as it appeared, not extinct energies. In 1804 the Servians rose in general insurrection. They found a rude but heroic leader in Kara George, a sort of marauder, of gigantic stature and impetuous courage, and after a struggle of eight years they achieved their independence. Kara George assumed the power, and ruled despotically; but he preserved order, and for a while sustained himself against the attempts of the Turks at reconquest. A sudden attack, however, was made by the Sultan in 1813, and so unprepared was Kara George that the Turkish troops occupied Servia without a battle, and the upstart sovereign was forced to fly for his life. But the Servian spirit of independence was not crushed by this disaster. Once more the people rose in arms, this time under Milosch Oberonovitch, the son of a swineherd. The Sultan, finding himself powerless to keep the country in subjection, made terms with Milosch, and in 1829 he was recognized as Prince of Servia, and the virtual independence of the principality was acknowledged by an imperial firman. The present Prince of Servia, Milan IV., is the fourth sovereign in succession from Milosch, and is in the twenty-first year of his age. With the exception of an annual tribute to the Turkish treasury, and the nominal right of the Sultan to call upon Servia for a contingent of 12,050 men in case of war, and to represent Servia at foreign courts by his envoys, the principality is entirely independent of the Porte. In local affairs its government is supreme. By the Servian constitution the prince, assisted by five ministers, wields the executive power. The legislature comprises two Houses—the Senate, having seventeen members appointed by the prince, and the Skoopschina, or House of Deputies, chosen by universal suffrage, at the rate of one Deputy for every 2000 electors. The political form is that of a constitutional monarchy. The ministers are responsible to the Skoopschina, and that body has the exclusive right of originating money bills. Indeed, the independent government of Servia appears to have been closely modeled upon that of England. The Servian army comprises about 4000 men; and the revenue of the principality, derived chiefly from a general capitation tax, which does not bear



SERVIAN CHURCH FESTIVAL.

heavily upon the people, amounts to about \$1,700,000.

The character, habits, and customs of the Servians are not less peculiar and interesting than their history. The country, while not precisely what would be called mountainous, is picturesquely varied and wild of aspect. It contains rather a series of isolated hills than continuous chains. These hills, rising from the fertile plains where the villages are scattered, are covered with dense forests of pine and oak, where the lynx, the bear, the chamois, and the wolf roam almost at will. On the lower slopes the forests are replaced by prolific vineyards, which are said to have been first planted in Servia in the time of the Roman Empire. Only from an eighth to a sixth of the soil of Servia is under cultivation. A very large portion is devoted to pasturage and the rearing of swine—the latter the most valuable animal product of the country. In the charming valleys of the Save and the Morava and their tributaries, wheat, millet, and maize are plentifully raised. This is due, however, rather to the fruitful nature of the soil than to the skill of the Servian cultivators. The Servians are but indifferent farmers. The land is still tilled in a primitive fashion, improvements of modern invention finding no favor there. It is singular that in a latitude so low olives are unknown; the fig and the mulberry, on the other hand, are plentiful. The flora of Servia bears a striking resemblance to that of the British Isles. It is remarkable that in this almost tropical section of Europe are found wild strawberries, raspberries, and whortleberries, violets, daisies, and saffron, honeysuckle, clematis, and the white and

black thorn. The cup of a certain acorn is gathered and used for tanning. The wine of Servia is often excellent, especially that called "Turk's blood." There is a curious custom connected with this beverage. "Whenever a bottle of it is opened," says a recent traveler, "the first person who tastes it affects surprise, and asks, 'What is this?' A second, having likewise tasted it, replies, solemnly, 'Turk's blood.' Whereupon the first rejoins, 'Then let it flow freely!'"

Servia holds no mean rank as a country of industrial resources. Its iron is pronounced the best in the world. In ancient times gold and silver mines were worked within its territory, and, indeed, they still exist, though they are no longer profitable. Coal, sulphur, and saltpetre are among its most lucrative productions. Experiments are even now being made to ascertain whether the Servian soil is not favorable to hemp and tobacco. It is an excellent indication of the present prosperity of the principality that its exports considerably exceed its imports. An evidence of the primitive condition of Servia may be found in the fact that a separation of employments scarcely exists there. The people are supplied by "jacks-at-all-trades." As in our own villages, the same shop-keeper supplies his customers with groceries and household ware, hats and farming implements—indeed, whatever they find serviceable in the house or on the farm.

In many respects the Servians are a people much to be envied. Primitive in ideas and habits, patriarchal in their manner of life, intensely devoted to their country and jealous of its institutions, their lot is almost universally a comfortable if not a prosper-

ous one. A strong and stalwart race, much above the average of Europeans and even of Slavens in height and physical strength, they are contented with little, and existence runs smoothly with them. Pauperism is unknown among them. There is no country in the world where life and property are more secure. Foreign tourists find their roads as safe as the streets of a populous city. "The peasants of no part of Europe," says a tourist, "can compare with those of Servia for that truest of all courtesies which is based upon a spirit of independence, and springs from true gentleness of character. The salutations of the peasants to the traveler have no trace of servility. They are universal, but they are the natural homage which one freeman renders to another." The Servians, well-to-do and humble, are noted for their free hospitality and welcome to all who come. In hut and country-house the stranger is always sure of a social glass, a hearty meal, and a comfortable bedroom. The Servians are at once shrewd and imaginative, at once brave and industrious, sincere and simple in conduct as in faith.

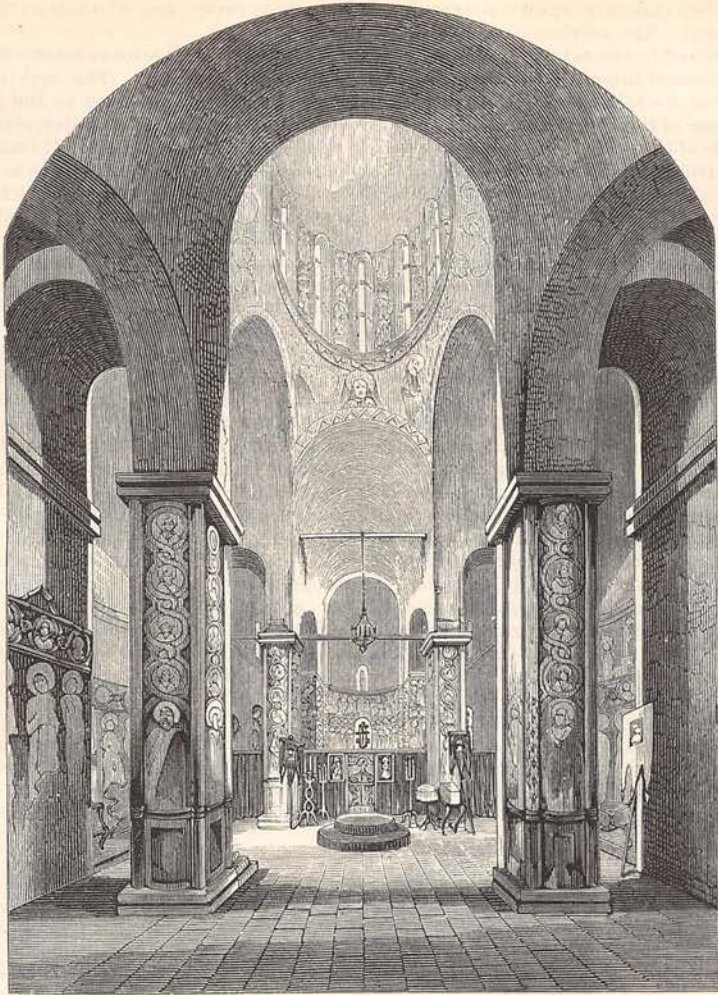
A singular feature of the social state of the Servians is seen in the character of their villages. These are always stretched over a large tract, and do not nestle close, as do the villages in every other part of Europe. Hamlets comprising not more than forty or fifty cottages are spread over a space as large as that occupied by Vienna. The houses are built square, the walls being of clay, and the central apartment being covered with a thatching of hay. In the middle of this room are the hearth and fire. Around it are the chambers, often decorated with polished panels. It is in this curiously constructed homestead that the whole Servian family is collected after the patriarchal fashion, the old man and his good wife, the sons and daughters, and the grandchildren. They work and take their meals in common, and in the evening gather in a group around the hearth. The houses, and even the furniture, are constructed by the owners themselves. These also make their own wagons and their own plows, carve the yokes of the oxen, shoe the horses, hoop the barrels, and make the shoes for the family. Meanwhile the women of the household weave and spin the clothing for themselves, their children, and the men. Very few Servian women are there who can not spin flax and wool, and weave and dye the heavier cloths.

When the patriarch of the family dies, his sons choose one of themselves to take his place, and the family remains together until it becomes too large for a single household. Then other houses are built near by, and thus it is stated that "a single household often forms a whole street." Thus the family tie is a remarkably strong one in Servia, and especially strong is the bond

uniting brothers and sisters to each other. It is customary for the mother and sisters of a dead Servian, and not his wife, to mourn and keep watch at his grave. A singular custom which exists in some parts of Servia is thus described by Herr Ranke: "When one of two brothers, whose birthdays fall in the same month, dies, the survivor is chained to the deceased until he causes some strange youth to be called to him, whom he chooses in his brother's stead, and is liberated by him." The Servians never celebrate their birthdays. Each house has its patron saint, and that saint's day is the occasion of the chief family festival.

The costumes of the Servians, of the men and of the women, are among the most picturesque in Europe. The men wear drab-colored short jackets, lined with red, caps and sashes of red, and their belts are provided with pistols and poniards. Their legs are covered with baggy trowsers to the knee, below which point they fit close to the calves and ankles. The dress somewhat resembles that of the provincial Greeks. The Servian women dress with conspicuous ostentation. They wear skirts of silk of a bright color, magenta being a favorite tint; ample crinoline supports this dress. The robe is trimmed at the wrists with rich and deep silver embroidery, and there is gold-lace embroidery around the neck. A wide sash is worn about the waist, with long fringed ends hanging down in front the whole length of the dress. The women's heads are adorned with red leather caps, worked with silver or gold lace. The hair is braided around the cap in a deep band, so as to conceal all of the cap except the top. They wear gold ear-rings, almost without exception. From their heads, too, one often sees a long wide chain of gold or silver coins hanging down over their backs. These coins are of all dates, some of them being very ancient; and these peculiar head-dresses, as well as bracelets and necklaces made in the same way, are generally heir-looms, and descend from mother to daughter.

One of the most interesting incidents of Servian life is their songs and minstrelsy. The poetry of this romantic people long since attracted the attention of Goethe, Lockhart, Bowring, and Owen Meredith, the present Lord Lytton. The songs which are still sung in the Servian valleys are so ancient that their authors have sunk into oblivion. They are fervidly patriotic. "Inspired by the grand scenery of the country," says a writer on them, "by the patriarchal life of its people, and by the incidents of their eventful history, they are considered the finest of all the Slavonian songs." Many of them celebrate the heroic deeds of Nemanja and Stephen Douschan, and the era before the Turkish conquest; others echo the patriotic refrains of the wars of independ-



INTERIOR OF A SERBIAN CHURCH.

ence; yet others reflect the long era of tranquillity under the mild rule of the sultans. Minstrelsy, which has faded out of France and Germany with the extinction of the troubadour and the minne-singer, still survives in Servia in all its mediæval vigor. In every Servian household is to be found the "gusl," a musical instrument peculiar to the country, by which the national songs are always accompanied. In the long winter evenings, when work is over, and the family is gathered about the roaring fire of oak, one of the men sings stirring melodies to the gusl, while the women spin and weave. Even the superiors of the monasteries sing to the gusl. Song is an invariable incident of public meetings, and probably there is not an inn in Servia where there is not singing every night. "On the mountain where boys tend the flocks, in the valley where

the reapers gather in the corn, in the depth of the forest, the traveler hears alike the echo of these songs, ever the solace of the men in all their various occupations." There are many wandering minstrels in Servia, who tramp about the country with their gusls, and who never fail to receive a welcome, food, and a lodging wherever they go. Even those Servians who are Mohammedans are too patriotic not to join their Christian countrymen in the songs which recount the deeds of a common though Christian ancestry. These old songs are both lyrical and historic, and an English critic declares that the best of them are in no wise inferior to those of Béranger.

The overwhelming majority of the Servian people are attached to the Greek Church. The Church is, however, a national one, not subject to the control of foreign spiritual po-

tentates, but choosing its own metropolitan and bishops. The services in the churches are conducted in the Slavonic tongue; the rites performed therein are ancient and imposing, and are said to resemble in some respects those of the Jewish Church. The parish priests of the Servian Church are obliged to be married by inflexible law; and as the canons also forbid them to marry a second time, when a priest's wife dies he ceases to preside over a parish, and retires to a monastery. There is little preaching done in the Servian sanctuaries, as may be judged by the fact that a recent English traveler visited forty of them, and only found a pulpit in one.

The traditional customs of the Servians are very numerous, and some of them are very quaint and poetic. Many of them are of a religious nature. When, for instance, thanksgiving is had for the vintage, large clusters of grapes are carried in metal basins into the churches by the brilliantly arrayed peasantry, and when the services are over, these clusters are passed about among the people. The corn harvest is attended by a somewhat similar custom. Ornamented plates containing baked corn are brought into church during the Holy Communion, in the centre of each of which a lighted candle is fixed, and these are placed below the altar. They are blessed by the bishop, and carried home and eaten in the evening. It would appear that the Servians are not fond of going to law, for they have a custom of choosing a village elder, to whom

disputants resort, and who settles their difficulties.

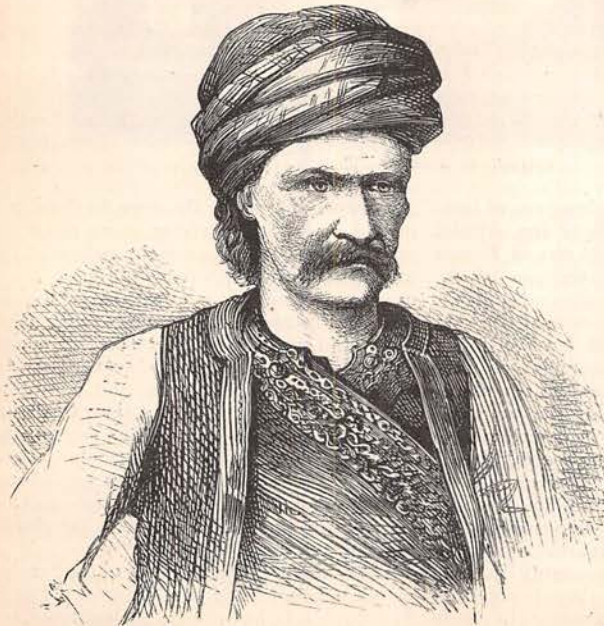
Among the most curious customs are those relating to marriage. The Servian marriages are usually arranged by the parents, with little regard to the preferences of the young couple. It is a matter of commercial contract, as it is to a great extent in France. Before the bride can enter into the house of her new husband, whither she is led by her eldest brother, she must go through certain symbolic ceremonies. She must dress an infant, touch the walls of the house with a distaff, in token that she is to work with it under their protection, and stand upon a table with bread, water, and wine in her hands, as a sign that she is to have these in her care, and with a piece of sugar in her mouth, to admonish her that she should speak little, and that little sweetly. Another singular custom is the forming of what is called "the tie of adoptive brotherhood." Two men make a vow of eternal friendship, brotherhood, and fidelity to each other in the name of St. John. This tie is recognized by the community, and the two are called "brothers in God."

There are many other Servian customs we should like to describe, but must desist from want of space.

ROUMANIA.

The Moldavians and Wallachians, now united as the principality of Roumania, are essentially the same people, with a common history, language, religion, code, and character.

Originally they were a single nation; but for many centuries they were separate states, having at a certain period separated, though not as enemies. There is little doubt that the Moldo-Wallachians were the ancient Dacians spoken of by Herodotus. In the days of the Roman Empire they were a sturdy and warlike race, like their neighbors the Servians. Their fate was, however, a very different one from that of Servia. While the latter nation was not conquered by the Romans, but on the other hand pursued an aggressive warfare against the Empire of the East, and remained to be subjugated by the Turks, the Moldo-Wallachians were conquered in the second centu-



MUSSULMAN BEY.

ry A.D. by the enterprising Emperor Trajan. Trajan found them more civilized than most of the rude tribes with which he came in contact along the Danube; and so proficient, especially, in the art of war, that they could only be subdued with great difficulty. The people of that country still preserve the traditions of the heroic exploits of Decebalus, their last native king, who long held the Romans at bay.

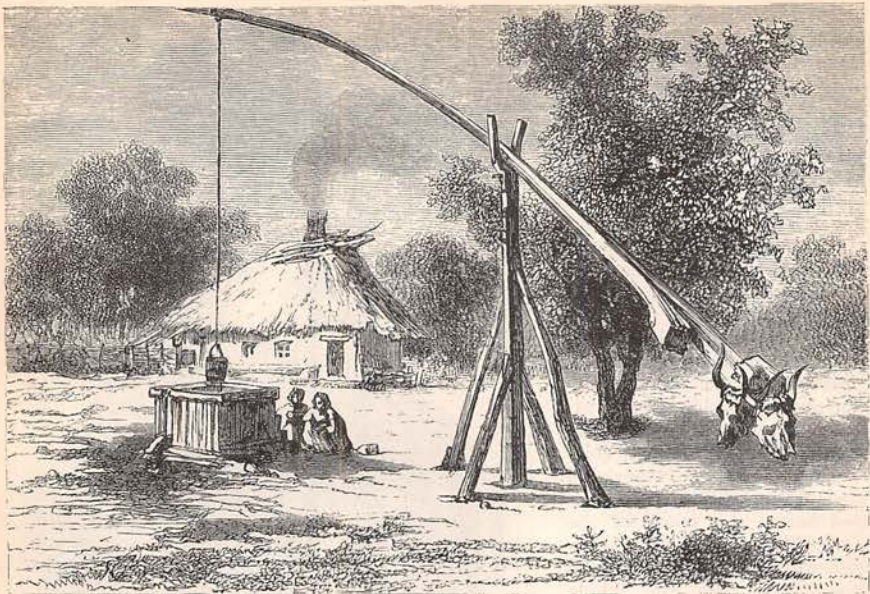
On completing their conquests the Romans carried into Moldo-Wallachia the civilization and arts which they planted wherever they went. More than this: many Roman colonies, some of them comprising the soldiers of the empire, settled below the spurs of the Carpathians, and in the fertile and well-watered valleys of Moldavia. Soon the whole country bore the aspect of enterprise and improvement. Cities were founded, roads built, bridges stretched across the picturesque rivers; swamps were drained and converted into lovely gardens; a fine and noble architecture replaced the miserable buildings of the earlier race. We soon find the Roman historians speaking of this province as "the most flourishing and commercial in the Roman Empire." So Roman civilization succeeded the Dacian, and the admixture of Roman blood in course of time made a hybrid race, with Roman traits dominant, of the Moldo-Wallachians. The present Rouman language is so evidently a corruption of the Latin that we can scarcely doubt that the Roman character mingled with and in some sort superseded that of the Dacian. As time went on, Moldo-Wallachia presented an almost constant scene of war and confusion. It lay directly between the empire and its northern foes, and was too often their battle-ground. With the decline of Rome, it became once more an independent state, and had its native princes, who extended their dominion over Transylvania, Bukovina, and Bessarabia. Then it came their turn to be subdued by the fierce Magyars of the west, who remained their masters until the great chief Wallah arose to throw off the hateful yoke. The Moldo-Wallachians were destined to submit to continual conquests; for not very long after Wallah had re-asserted their independence, the martial Sultan Bajazet, having subjugated Servia and Bulgaria, crossed the Danube, and engaged them in a long, bitter, and sanguinary war. This conflict brought into bold relief the indomitable



CHRISTIAN PRIEST.

courage and persistency of the assaulted people; they resisted until their cities and villages were burned, and their fields and valleys were desolate. It was not until the time of Solyman the Magnificent that they at last submitted to become tributaries of the Ottoman throne, retaining the right to elect their own sovereign and to enact their own local laws. Under Ottoman rule the Moldo-Wallachians enjoyed a long period of peace and comparative prosperity. As in Servia, the Turks governed mildly and wisely. But early in the eighteenth century the Sultan Achmed inaugurated a new and harsher policy toward his Christian subjects. The native princes of Moldo-Wallachia were deposed, and Mohammedan pashas put in their places. The country was oppressed by grievous tyrannies, by the extortion of rapacious officials, and the imposition of exorbitant taxes. Then the sultans began to sell the sovereignty of Moldo-Wallachia to the highest bidder, who ruled with the title of Hospodar. Of course these mercenary princes made the most out of their period of power in squeezing riches out of the oppressed people.

Peter the Great, influenced quite as much, no doubt, by his ambition as by pity for the Moldo-Wallachians, had at one time the design of annexing them to Russia; but seeing that the time was not ripe for it, he contented himself with engaging in secret intrigues with the hospodars. The successors of Peter did more for the subject race.



RURAL SCENE NEAR BUCHAREST.

Moldo-Wallachia was placed under the Russian protectorate, the Porte was obliged to obtain the consent of Russia to its appointments of the hospodars, and it was forced to agree by treaty not to march a Turkish army into the Moldo-Wallachian territory.

From this time the relations between Moldo-Wallachia and Russia became closer. The Czar Nicholas drew up a liberal constitution for the principalities, which provided for the election of the hospodars by a native Senate, freedom of commerce and of conscience, a responsible ministry, quarantine, the organization of an army upon a European footing, and the erection of civil and criminal courts of justice. The Sultan had now ceased to have more than a nominal control over the principalities; the influence of St. Petersburg was paramount at Bucharest. This change was most favorable to the material prosperity of the country. Commerce began to flourish, and the fine resources of the fruitful and central provinces to be developed. But, on the other hand, the frequent wars between Russia and Turkey, of which the principalities were too often the battle-ground, did much to check their material progress.

The almost complete independence now enjoyed by Moldo-Wallachia, or, as it is now called, Roumania, was a consequence of the Crimean war. That war was waged on behalf of Turkey by the two Christian powers of England and France against Russia. Russia was decisively beaten, and with her defeat ceased to a large degree her direct influence in Roumania. The allies could not consent to permit that influence to remain;

yet, on the other hand, they could not deliver Roumania over, bound hand and foot again, to the tender mercies of the Turk. Roumania was, therefore, insured in her independence by the European powers under their guarantee of protection from Russians on one side and Turks on the other. It was still regarded as tributary to the Sultan; but the only mark of its vassalage which yet remains is its obligation to pay a yearly tribute of \$100,000 into the Ottoman treasury. It was in 1861 that the union of Moldavia and Wallachia was decreed by a firman of the Sultan. The first ruler of the united provinces was Prince Alexander John Couza, a native chief who had distinguished himself as a patriot. His reign was, however, of brief duration. He became very unpopular and arbitrary, and in the early part of 1866 an insurrection broke out, which soon became so formidable as to compel Prince Alexander John to abdicate. The legislative bodies assembled in the May of that year, and proceeded to choose his successor. Their choice, dictated no doubt by the combined recommendations of Russia and Prussia, fell upon Prince Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, a relative of the Prussian king. Prince Karl took the ancient Wallachian title of "Domnu." He was soon after recognized by the Sultan and other European sovereigns.

The new constitution, framed in the summer of 1866, and which is still in force, provides that the legislative power shall rest in two Houses, a Senate and a Chamber of Deputies. The members of both Houses are chosen by an indirect election. The people

choose electors, and these electors choose the Senators and Deputies. The only restrictions on the suffrage are as to age, intelligence, and citizenship. The voter must be a native Rouman, be able to read and write, and be twenty-five years of age. The executive power rests in the hands of the Domnu and the five ministers of the Interior, Justice, Foreign Affairs, Finance, and War. The prince can suspend the operation of a law by a temporary veto, which may be overruled, however, by the legislature. The two principalities are divided into provincial districts, each provided with a governor, a tax-collector, and a court of justice comprising three judges. The laws of the principality are founded on the Roman civil law and the unwritten customs of Moldo-Wallachia. Its revenues are not far from \$15,000,000 a year; its debt is about \$65,000,000; its army consists of some 22,000 or 23,000 men, is modeled on the Russian military system, and is in large part commanded by Russian officers.

Moldavia and Wallachia resemble Servia alike in the fertility of their soil and the laxity with which it is cultivated. Wallachia descends gradually from the mountain slopes on the west until it widens into broad level plains stretching to the banks of the Danube. In the upper lands of the west are extensive pastures, prolific in aromatic herbs, where sheep are raised in great quantities; below, on the Danube, cattle are in like manner fattened. A large portion of the country is covered by dense forests of fir, oak, and beech; its soil is dark and rich, and it is well irrigated by the tributaries of the Danube. Moldavia is less hilly

than its sister principality. It is almost wholly a broad and fertile plain, with the picturesque Sereth running through the centre, and on the east many tributaries of the Pruth afford abundance of water. The soil of Moldavia is also very rich, and needs but little care from the hand of man. It is a common saying there that "in Moldavia the millet in the low country has as little husk as the apple in the high land." In the northwestern section of the principality the scenery becomes beautifully varied and picturesque. There the gardens, orchards, and vineyards "smile with plenty." In the valleys are waving fields of grain and vineyards; the hills are crowned with noble woods. Wheat, millet, potatoes, and barley are grown with care and to great profit, while the wines of Moldavia, could they be properly made, would, it is said, equal Tokay itself in tone and flavor. The discovery is not recent that in the Carpathian Mountains there exist, as yet unworked, mines of silver, saltpetre, mercury, iron, salt, and sulphur. Were the people enterprising, the lumber trade of the principality would become probably its most valuable industry. As it is, a great deal of timber is cut for masts and casks.

Both Moldavia and Wallachia are noted for the healthfulness of their climate. Their summer and winter seasons are very long, their spring and autumn seasons very brief, and quick to go. It has long been observed that cholera, in its sweeping forays across the European continent, is less fatal and long-enduring in Roumania than in any other country. The people live long, and



WALLACHIANS.



ROUMANIAN HUTS.

doctors rarely get rich there; the diseases are very few, and it is said that there are none indigenous to the soil.

With all their advantages, however, their political liberty and the unsurpassed bounties with which nature has endowed them, the Moldo-Wallachians, far from progressing, seem to be one of the declining races of Europe. The population of the principalities has actually dwindled within the past quarter of a century. They are neither enterprising nor hard-working. A less warlike race than the Servians, they are even less inclined than the Servians to adopt improvements or accept the later conditions of material civilization. That this is the case is due in the main, no doubt, to the fact that their territory has been for so many centuries the battle-ground between the Cossack and the Moslem. As a race, they have been in the habit of seeing their half-grown fields devastated, their half-built villages burned. Thus they got into the way of sowing but little, and that hastily, and of building the cheapest and least ornamental dwellings that they could contrive.

The Moldo-Wallachian villages present an unfavorable contrast to those of Servia. A traveler who traversed the principalities not long ago describes them as consisting of "huts half buried in the earth," betraying a miserable condition of the people. They are, indeed, almost a subterranean community. In some districts "these subterranean villages have been so effectual-

ly concealed, with grass growing on the top, that were it not for the tell-tale smoke we see making its way upward from the earth, like a spent volcano, we might ride over them without suspecting that several human families were living beneath." Each village has its common granary—a curious edifice about six feet high and several hundred feet long; it is made of open trellis-work, so that the grain may be properly dried. This is always the most conspicuous object which catches the traveler's eye.

The Moldo-Wallachian cities and towns, if we except

Bucharest, Jassy, and one or two others, are scarcely more prepossessing than are the villages. The streets are seldom paved. The inns are execrable, and quite as uncomfortable as those of the Turkish towns beyond the Danube. The beds at these houses of entertainment consist of "a board, elevated a few feet from the ground, furnished with a round piece of wood or a bag stuffed with hay as a pillow." The food, too, is unpalatable to him who has been accustomed to the epicurean luxuries of the Western capitals. The principal dish offered at the inns is a porridge made of corn flour, called "mama-linga." The walls of the rooms are mostly bare of ornament, except that one may always be certain of being able to pay his devotions to a picture or plaster statuette of the Virgin.

The two ancient capitals of the principalities, Bucharest and Jassy, have some pretensions to elegance and life, and are at least interesting in their quaint antique architecture. Bucharest, situated in a picturesque plain in Central Wallachia, and comprising some seventy thousand souls, is notable for its convents, its sixty Greek churches, its pleasant gardens and groves. Near by runs the charming river Dimbovitza, of which an old Wallachian song says, "Sweet water! he who drinks once of thy crystal stream shall never leave thy banks." The houses in Bucharest are mainly of two stories, built of clay and wood, with bay-windows jutting from the upper stories. Even here it is only the princi-



BUCHAREST, CAPITAL OF ROUMANIA, IN WALLACHIA.

pal streets that are paved; they are long, narrow, and irregular, and, withal, wretchedly lighted. Quite elegant mansions stand cheek by jowl with miserable hovels; there is no fashionable quarter, no distinctively paupers' quarter: rich and poor live side by side. Bucharest is in these respects more Oriental than European in character. It is a peculiar place for several reasons. There are so many dogs in the Roumanian capital as to be a downright plague, and more than once it has been found necessary to inaugurate a general massacre of them. The dogs thus killed are given over to be skinned by the peasantry outside the town. A permanent fashion in Bucharest is that of using vehicles. Nobody will go from place to place on foot if he or she can help it. M. De Girardin says, in a letter from there, "To go on foot in Bucharest is like going through a French town with bare feet." A traveler gives an amusing description of one of these turn-outs: "From a house in which a decent English workman would be ashamed to live, so dirty and dilapidated is it, you see the 'noble' proprietor driving out in his own carriage, a half-naked slave, with a few rags hanging loosely about him, acting as coachman; the great man himself enjoying his easy dignity within, not in the cleanest habiliments, with all the comfort the execrable road and the wretched springs, or want of springs, in his carriage will admit of."

A superficial observation of the Moldo-Wallachians in the towns gives rise to the inference that theirs is mainly an Oriental type of civilization. A brief acquaintance with the society of Bucharest reveals that there is a universal craving to imitate the French. The French language is generally

used in "the best circles;" no one is worthy of social consideration who is not familiar with it. The young ladies sing French songs, and not only they, but the lower classes, are extravagantly fond of the French opera. French fashions are followed almost slavishly.

The people of Moldo-Wallachia, though unhappily given over to what seems inveterate sloth and an inordinate love of frivolous pleasures, are still a tall, strong, and comely race, "with oblong countenance, black hair, thick and well-arched brows, a lively eye, small lips, and white teeth." The Wallachians are more vivacious and pleasure-loving than their Moldavian compatriots; amidst their indolence and ignorance, however, both peoples are sober, frugal, and courageous on occasion. It has been remarked that while the Moldo-Wallachians of the cities and towns betray a Greek type of physiognomy, those of the rural districts still retain marked Roman features. The upper classes are excessively and even ludicrously haughty. They keep themselves ostentatiously aloof from the rest of the community, and are not disposed to be hospitable to strangers. The nobility, divided into many grades, and numerous, were, under the old order of things, the controlling political element, and still retain no small portion of their formerly unquestioned authority. The "boyards," or old Dacian nobility, have become much degenerated by the fashionable and dissipated life of the city, but the remains of the old landed aristocracy are still to be found in the rural districts. The country boyard is usually athletic and handsome, and retaining as he does the ancient national costume, is a very

picturesque personage. He wears a black Astrakhan cap shaped like a turban, a large mantle of fur or sheep-skin, this being embroidered in gay colors. It is observed that the costumes of the upper Wallachian peasants, with their sandals, cloaks, and tunics, are very similar to those worn by the Roman peasantry in the days of the empire.

The state religion of Roumania is that of the Greek Church, which comprises almost the entire population. Every village has its sanctuary—a very curious edifice, low, but with a very high and slender spire. As in Servia, the Roumanian Church is virtually independent of the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople, choosing its own head, bishops, and priests. The curates of the churches are elected from among the people, and after performing their clerical functions on Sunday, return to their secular avocation, which may be that of a shepherd, farmer, or wood-cutter, on week-days. The Roumanian priests are generally ignorant and unprogressive, and content themselves with the humdrum performance of the religious rites. Many are the superstitions and traditions peculiar to the Roumanian Greeks. The practice of procuring absolution by the payment of fees is carried to a far greater extent than in the Romish Church; the Roumanian is able easily to compound for any sin he may commit, if he only has the requisite funds. Miracles abound; there is scarcely a plaster image of a saint in the country that has not some supernatural property or power. Holy water blessed by the bishops is said to protect one from the "evil-eye," from witchcraft and disease; it preserves cattle from lightning and the forests from blight, a house from fire and a ship from shipwreck. Unlike the Romish Church, too, that of the

Moldo-Wallachians provides for an easy divorce. The secular power in Roumania has not yet succeeded in freeing itself from the bonds which unite it with the Church. The country is full of monasteries, which have been able to preserve their wealth through all the vicissitudes of war and pillage.

Despite the evidences of a decline in population and national production in Moldo-Wallachia, there are some signs, at least, of a better state of things than formerly prevailed. One of these is the gradual rise of a distinct commercial middle class. Half a century ago the native population consisted almost entirely of two classes, between whom there was a wide gulf—the nobles and the peasants. What trade there was was mostly monopolized by Greeks and Jews. The Jews form a large population, and are easily distinguished from the Roumanians by their high fur caps and long pelisses; they have been much persecuted by the natives, who are very jealous of their superior commercial cunning and their grasping disposition. Now, however, natives are establishing mercantile houses, and are the active rivals of the foreigners.

What the future of these interesting peoples will be it is impossible to predict. They may form a portion of a revived Slavonic Empire, like that which flourished under the Servian Grand Zupans; they may fall finally to the lot of Austria on one side, and of Russia on the other; they may linger for generations in the precarious situation of nominal vassalage to the Sultan, and of real wardship under the protection of the powers; but whatever their destiny, they are likely to retain, as they have done in the past, despite all their vicissitudes, the distinct characteristics of their ancient lineages.

AUNT HANNAH.

By J. T. TROWBRIDGE.

SHE is known to all the town, in her quaintly fashioned gown,
And wide bonnet—you would guess it at the distance of a mile;
With her little sprigs of smilax, and her lavender and lilacs,
Snowy napkins and big basket, and serenely simple smile.

She is just a little queer; and few gentlefolk, I fear,
In their drawing-rooms would welcome that benignant, beaming face;
And the truth is, old Aunt Hannah's rather antiquated manners
In some fashionable circles would seem sadly out of place.

Yet there's something quite refined in her manners and her mind,
As you presently discover; and 'tis well enough to know,
Every thing that now so odd is in the bonnet and the bodice
Was the very height of fashion five-and-forty years ago.

She was then a reigning belle; and I've heard old ladies tell
How at all the balls and parties Hannah Amsden took the lead:
Perfect bloom and maiden sweetness, lily grace of rare completeness,
Though the stalk stands rather stiffly now the flower has gone to seed.