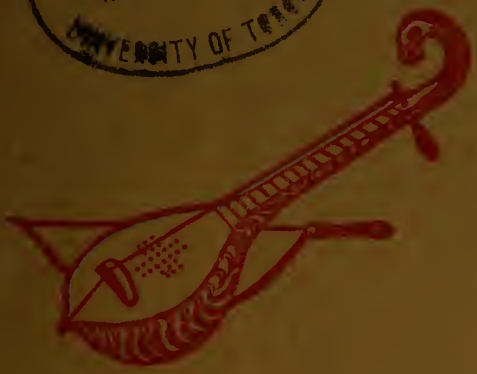
THE WOMEN OF SERBIA

A LECTURE BY

FANNY S. COPELAND

WITH A PREFACE BY

LADY (RALPH) PAGET



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PREFACE.

I HAVE been asked to write a prefatory word to Mme. Copeland's lecture, and I am glad indeed to do so, although I feel it needs no recommendation on my part.

The History of Serbia is a subject to which Mme. Copeland has evidently devoted much study, and I cannot in any way pretend to knowledge such as hers. I can speak, however, as one who knows Serbia of the present day intimately, and has witnessed, at close quarters, the heroism of her people in face of the most cruel agony that any nation has been called upon to suffer; because of this, her lecture strongly appeals to me, and it must likewise appeal to others, for none of us, surely, has failed to respond in spirit to the unspeakable pathos of Serbia's tragedy.

Most of us know very little of Serbia's past, and are apt to think of her as emerging for the

first time into the light of the world when she cast off the yoke of the Turk. Mme. Copeland reminds us that she was a great country, *with a civilization of her own*, before ever she came under Turkish domination, and the special subject of the lecture is the best possible reminder of this fact, if, as George Meredith thought, the position of women in any society is the test of its civilization. Here we find heroic women, not neglecting their proper duties and services, but taking also a bold and unflinching part in the struggles of their country, and the sketches which follow, brief as they are, leave vivid pictures on our minds, pictures of courage and devotion worthy of these brave women's descendants.

LEILA PAGET.

THE WOMEN OF SERBIA.

A LECTURE BY FANNY S. COPELAND.

FOR my sins, or perhaps because I am really of no use in any other department, my personal work during the war has lain with art, history and literature, just as in the days before the war. The one difference is this, that since some time before the war I have been called upon to work specially in connection with Serbian literature and history. The crying disadvantage about work of this kind is that you feel perpetually that you ought to be "doing lovely things"—"not 'writing' about them all day long." But there are compensations, and Art is not only a "pleasant isle of Aves" in which to take refuge and whither to bid your friends for some little relaxation in the midst of a welter of trouble.

What a nation lives through, what it hopes and dreams, is recorded in the songs it sings, and the knowledge of those songs is a key not only to the holy of holies, which is the temple of the whole nation, but to the needs, ideals and generosities of the separate individuals who are the stones thereof.

Serbian poetry, owing largely to historical circumstance, is a wonderfully complete mirror of Serbian history; and Serbian history, down to the very day in which we live, strikes its roots deep into her poetic tradition,—being rooted *upwards*, as it were, in a Serbian land that her foes cannot lay waste and whence her patriots cannot be exiled.

Now it is not possible to go into Serbian history or the art that reflects it, from the national ballad-poetry to the statues of

Mestrovic, without being struck by the fact that women occupy a large and exceptional place in it. Of course there must be reasons for this—apart even from the causes which much be sought in the national temperament—reasons which spring from the strange, the sad and glorious history of the race of the Southern Slavs.

There, now, I have suddenly said Southern Slavs, and in case there is anyone here to whom the expression is misleading, I had better make a short digression. There is a nation which lives in a land that stretches from the Carinthian Alps, through the valleys of the Drave, the Save and the Drina across to the Vardar and into the heart of Macedonia—and again from the Danube through the Serbian and Bosnian forest lands, over the Dalmatian mountain ridge, to the rock-bound coast of the blue island-studded Adriatic—the "Plavo Iadransko more," as they call it. And all this nation speaks but one language—with negligibly small deviations—a beautiful language—best known as the Serbian tongue, but perhaps more correctly called the Serbo-Croat tongue. And all who speak that language, by whatever names it has become customary to call them—Croats, Slovenes, Dalmatians, and what not—are, indeed, one nation and share not only one language but one tradition of the past and one hope for the future.

And in saying these words I have perhaps come upon one of the causes of woman's part in Southern Slav history and literature—for the guardians of the traditions and the hopes and the language of a nation are the women of it, and how can it be otherwise? And when that is no longer the case, then it is time for that nation to go into the melting-pot.

And another cause may be this: Southern Slav history is sad—it is heart-breakingly sad. Looking back along the vista of centuries we see the track of it emerging indistinctly from the twilight mists of that great upheaval—the great migration which was the consequence of the invasion of the Huns under Attila. Then the road gradually becomes wide and fair till it passes along in the full daylight of prosperity and promise from the 10th to the 12th and 13th century. When Croatian kings were lords of the Eastern Adria, and soon afterwards the great kings of the house of Nemanja made Serbia to appear the natural heir of the Greek Empire. And then—quite suddenly—while our

eyes are still dazzled by the noonday glory of Tsar Dušan's reign (great alike in war and peace) the way sinks downward into black shadow, like a road that disappears into a narrow gorge, where over-hanging cliffs shut out the light of day, where no sound is heard save the trickling of hidden streams and the drip of water from the slowly rotting stones. For nigh five centuries Serbia's way moved in the darkness of hideous slavery, illumined only by the undaunted heroism of her sons and daughters; then close to our own the path winds out into the light once more—the cold, grey, stormy dawn of the 19th century. Over endless obstacles, twixt giant boulders, falling over gaping precipices, it moves forward, steadily forward, till it reaches a little patch of sunlight once more, and even as we look the shadows fall, and they have not yet lifted.

One of our tritest quotations about women refers to the fact that trouble seems to bring out their best qualities. Perhaps that is another reason why Serbia's history is not only a history of crushed hopes and sacrifice without end, and without worldly reward, but a history of great women. All down the path of her story they form a long line—like the gallery of Mestrovic's caryatides—and when the road plunges into gloom, it seems that it is they who carry the lamps that light up the darkness from one generation to another till better days.

As if in support of my argument, during the early part of Serbia's history, her notable women distinguished themselves in much the same way as their contemporaries in other European countries. As I have already said, from the 12th to the 15th century, Serbia was a flourishing State—young, strong, and with a well-developed civilisation. It had grown up advantageously influenced by both Bysance and Rome, and was bidding fair to develop a special type of culture which reflected much of what was best in both. That short-lived period of prosperity has bequeathed many a lovely church and abbey, and a wonderful school of design, which to this day expresses itself in lovely embroideries and textile fabrics. A remarkably large share in the building up of that civilisation was borne by the prominent Serbian women of that day. The princesses and great ladies of mediæval Serbia seem to have looked upon the care of religion and instruction as their special province.

Queen Helen, the mother of St. Sava, the founder of the Serbian Church, spent the eve of her life in a convent. Almost all the queens of mediæval Serbia followed her example in this—so that they might spend their declining years in meditation and devote them to study and scholarship. Serbian princes took a pride in having their daughters well educated, and the Serbian princesses were not only accomplished needlewomen, like all great ladies of their time, but capable help-meets for their brave husbands, well able, if necessary, to hold the reins of government themselves during their widowhood or the minority of their sons.

There is a distinctly modern touch about the schools founded by Helen, wife of the despot Uroš. She founded two large schools, one for the daughters of the nobility and one for those of humble birth; there was no distinction made between the quality of the education provided in both schools. But it is there, where the shadows gather, that we find the Gates of Sorrow guarded by a monumental group of women. Some of them belong more or less to the mystic world of poetic tradition, others come forward distinctly into the world of historic fact. As to the first, both in historical order and in virtue of her dignity as the mother of Kraljević Marko, I think precedence should be given to the Lady Jevrossima.

It is surely not a poetic accident that we find her there, just where Serbian history moves swiftly downwards towards tragedy, inseparably linked with her son, the Serbian national hero, as his guide and counsellor, wise, kindly and heroic, like himself. Surely these two are among the brightest constellations in the firmament of Serbian poetry. Tradition lingers lovingly over her virtues, praising her loyalty as wife and mother, but above all her loyalty as a sister. In Serbian idealogy there is no relation between man and woman more beautiful than that between brother and sister. "As a sister loves a brother." "Be thou my sister-in-god, and I will be thy brother-in-god"—these are phrases you constantly find in Serbian poetry. So greatly did these men value a sister that if it so happened that several brothers had no sister of their own, they would adopt one to be their possestrima, and then they became her pobratimi, and this bond was held as sacred and imparted the same respect and responsibility as if they were indeed brothers and sisters of one house. This custom is not really

extinct yet, even in our matter-of-fact days, and the custom of young men to choose a pobratim—an adopted brother as a chum above all other chums—is quite usual. A man's pobratim is his best man at his wedding, and so on—but this by the way.

Jevrossima's husband was King Vukašin. He married her primarily because she was so loyal a sister to her brother, whose death he himself had compassed. Historically, I can't tell you anything about King Vukašin, and the picture of him which is thrown on the screen of tradition may be blurred and unfair. According to that he seems to have done precisely two sensible things in his life—one was that he married Jevrossima, and the other that he never interfered in her bringing-up of their son Prince Marko. Those were days when evil began to fall upon Serbia. For the great Tsar Dušan was dead, cut off in the midst of his career, and there was none to take his place, or rather there were too many, as so often happened in those turbulent times. Then :—

Four armies are met together
On the plain, the fair plain of Kosovo,
Beside the white church of Gracanica ;
The first one was that of King Vukašin,
The second one that of the despot Ugleša,
The third one that of the Voyivode Gojko,
The fourth one that of Tsarevitch Uroš ;
The Kings contend for the Empire ;
They are about to slay one another ;
To slay one another with their golden daggers,
And they know not whose is the Empire ;
The King Vukašin says : "It is mine ! "
The despot Ugleša : "No, it is mine ! "
The Vojvoda Gojko : "No, it is mine ! "
Silent was the youth, the young Tsarevitch, Prince Imperial :
Silent the youth and nought said he,
Not daring to speak, fearing his kinsmen,
Fearing his kinsmen, the Mrljavcvic.

Eventually it is Marko, son of King Vukašin, who was called upon to decide between the rival pretenders. But ere he attended the bidding of the kings he took counsel with his mother. I have been told by my Serbian friends, and veritably, judging even by my limited experience, I think it is no exaggeration to say that every Serbian man, woman and child knows the advice of Jevrossima to her son by heart. They are brought up

on it. I have not asked one so far who could not quote it off-hand. And those lines disclose an ideal:—

> Greatly as Marko himself loved justice,
> Greatly his mother thereto advised him:
> "Marko, thou only son of thy mother,
> Let my milk not in thee be accursed;
> Do not utter an unjust judgment;
> Speak not in favour of father nor kinsmen,
> But speak for the justice of the God of Truth;
> It is better to lose thy life
> Than to lose thy soul by sinning."

There it is, all of it in seven short lines, the antithesis of Patient Griselda and others like her—the ideal women of western mediæval romance. Jevrossima, most loyal of wives, counselled her own son rather to withstand his father, yea, though that were to risk death at his hands, than by blind obedience to assist him in wrong-doing. She would sooner let her husband lose a crown—she would sooner risk his hate—than see him triumph in unrighteousness.

Marko obeyed his mother, and got thereby a curse and a blessing, both of which were fulfilled in due course—but these are other stories.

But the dissensions of the nobles were only the prelude to a fiercer tragedy.

The greatest event, and at the same time the greatest calamity, in Serbian history was the overthrow of the Serbian Empire by the Turks. Very soon after the beginning of the 14th century the Turk began to batter at the gates of Europe. Bulgaria was quickly conquered, then the outlying province of Macedonia, and finally Serbia, in the fatal battle of Kossovo (the field of blackbirds), on June 28th, 1389, when the defeated Serbian army covered itself with an undying glory, which illumined the centuries of slavery that followed, and is shedding its undimmed light even over the horrible struggles of to-day.

In this battle perished Prince Lazar and all his army. A few sorrowful messengers carried the terrible news to the wives and mothers who were waiting at home. Thus the wife of the old Jug Bogdan, one of the great lords of the empire, was told that her husband and her nine sons were slain. Yet her heart was so strong that she shed no tears, nor did she wail or even bow her head—and all marvelled at her. Then came one who

brought her a hand, the severed hand of a youth—and she knew it for the hand of her youngest son, Damian. "Tell me," she said to her youngest daughter-in-law, "if this be indeed the hand of our Damian?" and the young widow knew the hand by the ring-finger. But the mother held the hand to her breast and crooned to it softly as a mother croons to her babe—as the last whisper passed her lips her heart broke, and without a sigh she died. But in the ballad of her death she is enshrined for ever, the type of courage which rises above all sorrow, till grief waxes stronger than life itself.

Another type of womanhood, remembered for ever with the tragedy of Kossovo, seems like an elder sister of so many devoted friends of all of us to-day. For she took store of bread and red wine and fresh cold water, and went down to the field of slaughter to assuage the torments of the dying and refresh and save the wounded. Most of all she had come to succour three friends—friends of hers and god-brothers to each other—young Milos Obilić, Kossančić Milan, and Ivan Toplica. In happier days they had each given her gifts, such as maidens prize—and one was to give her away on her wedding-day—and the second was to be the groom's man—and the third had promised to wed her—if e'er he returned from Kossovo field. But instead of her friends she only found one old man who knew them well; and he, too, was sore wounded and stricken unto death. And he bade her seek them where the dead were piled most thickly, for they, too, were slain. Then she sat her down beside him on the sward, and mournfully said: "Ah! me, that am so wretched, that were I to touch the green oak tree, my grief would straightway wither all its greenness."

I cannot tell you her name; she is always referred to as the Maiden of Kossovo—Kosovka djevoika.

It will, perhaps, be objected that these are, in the main, legendary types. But I say that if these women themselves did not live, just so; and just then—then their prototypes did live just so and just then, or they would not have been celebrated in song—for Art can typify, and glorify, and enshrine, but it cannot invent; and if it is the poet's function and right to give the tresses of Berenice a place among the stars, it is because to him is given the vision which discerns the crown of stars on the brow of a mortal woman. And I have no scruples whatsoever in

grouping the women I have just spoken of with others less shrouded in half-mystic tradition.

Tsar Lazar's memory was very beautifully and pathetically honoured by one of his kinswomen, the Lady Jefimia, daughter of Voihna, and one of the most accomplished women of Serbia in her day. She was an only daughter and her education had been the best the age afforded. Later on she married the despot Ugleša, but only he lost his life in the battle on the Marica. Jefimia took refuge too soon at the Court of Prince Lazar—but the battle of Kossovo robbed her once more of her home and protector; and then, weary of the sorrows of the world, she retired into a convent, there to devote herself to commemorating the martyrdom of her sainted kinsman by embroidering a pall for his coffin. First she thought to embroider a beautiful, fanciful design—but when she began her work, it seemed false and inadequate, and so she composed an "In Memoriam" poem instead, one of the pearls of Serbian history; and this she embroidered in threads of gold on fair white silk for a pall on Lazar's coffin.

If Jefimia chose Mary's part in honouring the heroic dead, another woman of Serbia was most decidedly the Martha of the time, and it is an interesting piece of historical psychology that after this crushing calamity, which at one blow deprived the country of practically all its great men, *several great women* of the land strove to save what was left of the wreckage.

Militza, Lazar's widow, bravely took up the task of governing what was left of the realm, in the name of her son Stepan, nor did she relinquish what she felt to be her duty when humiliation after humiliation was imposed upon her by the Turkish conqueror. Sultan Bajazit paid her the undoubted compliment of asking the hand of her daughter in marriage, and after the Serbian Queen had reluctantly given him Princess Mara (afterwards called Olivera) to wife, he became a frequent if not over-welcome guest at his mother-in-law's Court, and eventually even obliged her to build a mosque for his especial use—close to the church raised in memory of her husband Lazar. Finally Prince Stepan was summoned by Bajazit to assist him in his campaign against Tamerlane the Great. Stepan returned safely, but Queen Militsa could no longer face the anxieties and strain of the worldly life. She founded the beautiful convent at Ljubostinja, near Kruševac, retired thither, and died there as its Abbess.

After the deaths of Militza's son Stepan and his kinsman George, Serbia was once more administered by a woman, Jerina, the widow of George. This lady seems to have resembled Black Agnes, Randolph of Murray's sister, more than anyone else in our own history. Possessed of considerable strategic ability, and utterly fearless, she boldly attempted to reorganise and fortify Serbia, whom the Turks were now seeking to enslave completely. She turned the city of Smederevo, on the Danube, into a most formidable fortress, dotted the country with strongholds, and constructed roads and highways through the country. Unfortunately these enterprises cost money. Jerina had to rely on taxation to defray her military schemes, and her efforts were scarcely appreciated by her oppressed and impoverished subjects. She figures in many ballads, but rather as the indomitable task-mistress of her people than as the strong-minded patriot she undoubtedly was.

It is a relief to turn from these stricken countries to the one bright spot in Southern Slav lands—to the tiny free republic of Dubrovnik (Ragusa). There the refugees from the conquered territories were welcomed, there flourished science, poetry and art; and there we find a charming poetess the centre of a circle of intellect and art. Most aptly she was named Cvijeta (flower or Flora), for, from the midst of her admiring fellow-poets, she smiles to us across the centuries like a flower set in a wreath of laurel. She excelled in short, brilliant poems and witty epigrams. (Cvijeta Zuzoričeva.)

Meantime the western and northern Southern Slav lands—*i.e.*, Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia (except Dubrovnik) and the Slovene lands—had drifted into a state of vassalage to Austria or union with Hungary. It may be well to point out here that the triple kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia-Dalmatia voluntarily entered into union with Hungary something on the same principle as the union between England and Scotland. But Hungary always worked the union on the principle of "heads I win, tails you lose"; hence endless trouble and unrest. If the tragedy of Serbia is *red*, that of the Southern Slav lands in Austrian domain is *drab*, drab enough to have rotted out the soul of a nation with less resiliency.

One of the bravest attempts at defending the proper independence of Croatia against foreign ascendancy was the conspiracy headed by the Ban Petar Zrijnski and his brother-in-law, Prince

Krsto Frankopan, the two Croatian national heroes. The conspiracy was discovered, and the leaders were bidden to Vienna, under a guarantee of safe conduct from the Emperor himself. On their arrival they found that like, on the Czech reformer Huss, another occasion, that the Emperor's guarantee was less valuable than the parchment on which it was written. They were cast into prison, subjected to a mock trial, and executed on April 30, 1671. With them suffered differently, but not a lesser martyrdom, a noble woman, Catharina Zrijusha, Princess Frankopan, sister of the Ban and wife of his friend, and a writer of considerable merit. She, too, was cast into an Austrian prison, where she died—insane.

But whenever a blow was struck for freedom, whenever there was a forward movement in art or intellect, we find the Southern Slav women fighting and striving shoulder to shoulder with their men. In Serbia there were girls among the guerilla warriors who made the Turks feel that their conquest of Serbia was never too secure. In Montenegro, which was a fortress, and in Croatia, which was a wall against the Turks, life through centuries is best summed up thus: The men were the garrison and the army, and the women were the army transport corps. Never has the Montenegrin's army been provisioned in any other way. Even in this last supreme war the Montenegrin women carried the food across the mountains to their men in the fighting line.

When, at the beginning of the 19th century, Serbia rose in her final and successful effort to free herself from her Turkish oppressors, we find her first deliverers "Kara" George (Black George—so called by the Turks on account of his valour and swarthy complexion, much as the Black Douglas came by his name), and Miloš Obrenović, supported and encouraged in their struggles by wives as devoted and heroic as their ancestresses, and who shared the perils of guerilla warfare with their husbands, even as Torfrida shared those of Hereward the Wake.

The wife of Miloš Obrenović was named Ljubica, a name borne by many distinguished women of Serbia. When the Turks defeated her husband's forces at Čačak, and the Serbs in full flight had to pass Ljubica's door, she went out to meet them, distaff in hand, and offered them her spinning-tackle in exchange for their weapons. Faced by a greater horror out of their panic,

the Serbs then turned upon the Turks and won a decisive victory. The parallel between Ljubica's fate and that of Torfrida unfortunately does not end here. Later Miloš gave her cause for jealousy in connection with a lady named Petrija, who spent more time at the Court than Ljubica approved of. In a fit of jealousy Ljubica shot her rival, and Miloš put away the companion of his early struggles, an action which caused much trouble in Serbia, where Ljubica was still revered for her great qualities. That a woman should have recourse to fire-arms was less startling than it now appears. In times when a lonely farm might at any moment be raided by marauding Turks in the absence of the men of the house, many Serbian women habitually carried arms in defence of their homesteads and their honour.

It is a boast of the Serbians that their race is now as pure as it was before the Turkish invasion. Let every thinking man and woman consider these words, and realise all they mean; above all things, what a record of patriotic strength and heroism on the part of the women of the nation.

It is not possible to speak of Serbia's great women without mentioning the present Queen Milena of Montenegro. Her maiden name was Vukotic and she was the daughter of a noble Montenegrin house. In her youth she was the most beautiful woman in Montenegro. All her children have inherited both her beauty and her intellect. A friend of mine, who was upon one occasion the guest of King Nicholas and his wife, said that what had most impressed him about the king's manner was the ring of affection and admiration in his voice whenever he referred to "Milena, my wife."

Serbian women, however great a part they play in history, poetry and the social constitution of the country, are neither idols nor toys, but, like their men, plain hard-working people, pious without being bigoted. In Dalmatia, where Austrian misrule has driven the majority of the male population to seek work over-seas, the bulk of work of all kinds is done as a matter of course by women. They do the heavy farm-work, and even in times of peace they are to be found as porters at railway stations. It is, however, not at all characteristic of Serbia that women should be made beasts of burden, and in Western Serbia the women do no heavy field-work at all. In Eastern and Southern Serbia more hard work is expected of

them, but probably this is largely due to the rougher nature of the country and a more unsettled state of conditions.

Till recently, all home industries in Serbia were in the hands of the women. Every scrap of stuff in a Serbian home was spun and woven by the women of the household, and the exquisite embroideries on the national peasant costumes bear witness to the skill and good taste, no less than to the patience of the embroideresses.

Even in their domestic accomplishments Serbian women found an opportunity to display their patriotism. In the days when Serbia was an Empire, men of substance had the backs of their coats embroidered with the Serbian arms. When the Turks discovered the significance of this design, it was promptly prohibited. Henceforth the ingenious wives and daughters of the land embroidered the national arms under the arm-pits, where, of course, they ordinarily remained hidden.

From the earliest time the whole social system of Serbia has been founded on the Zadruga or family commune. The head of the commune was the head of the family, and on his death he was very frequently succeeded in his authority, not by the next male relative eligible, but by his widow, who had probably been in fact his adviser and fellow-ruler of the commune during his lifetime. Most of the innovations by which a primative social system has been gradually and satisfactorily adapted to modern conditions have been helped if not actually initiated by women, who in Serbia, as elsewhere, have the knack of combining conservative tendencies with progressive instincts.

The Serbian proverb, "Kuća ne stoji na zemlji, nego na zěni" (the house does not stand upon the soil, but upon the wife), is a true expression of the duties and responsibilities of the Southern Slav women—and in this connection the following particulars concerning the everyday life of the Southern Slav women in Croatia are interesting and illuminating. The whole of the house, the yard, the poultry, and the cows are managed by the women. The men have to attend to the field-work, the orchards, and the horses, also to the hay-ricks, and the harvest generally. Once a week the whole house is whitewashed inside and out, and this, too, is the women's duty. Even if there were only one woman in the house she would undertake all this work, but, of course, that would be a most rare exception. Usually there

are more, and then they take these duties in turn, each woman being for one day at a time the "reduša" (the woman of the day), who keeps house, while the others help in the fields. In winter the "reduša" still keeps house, while the others devote themselves to sewing, embroidering, knitting, &c. As soon as the man (the master of the house) returns from his work, the wife, or the "reduša," immediately places the meal on the table. She herself does not sit at the table, but waits on everybody, the family and the servants, before taking her own meal separately. On Sundays the girls dance the "Kolo" on the green, but married women, after church, do not join in these open-air dances; they only stand by and look on. On the other hand, when there is a dance indoors to celebrate a wedding or a christening, or at the village balls, &c., the married women may also join in the dancing.

The time of courtship is a beautiful and romantic episode in the life of the Croatian peasant, very different from the sordid and brutal trafficking in young lives which prevails among the German peasantry, where the youth has little and the girl nothing at all to say in the matter.

The language of Croatian lovers is a speech apart, almost pure poetry, and different to the talk of everyday life. So long as the father, however, has not given express permission to his daughter to meet her lover, she will not speak to him, even if he addresses her, save by looks, which are eloquent enough in these cases all the world over. But when the father has given his permission, the young people meet beside the well, or in the orchard, and in the winter the young man may come to her window. It is usual to have an engagement lasting for about one year, in order to give the young people time to make sure of themselves. If the engagement is broken off owing to incompatibility, no blame attaches to anyone, but if the young man jilts the girl for another one he may look out for trouble, as the girl's relatives are bound to avenge the insult. They would not go so far as to kill him, but they may set his house on fire.

And these quiet, exceedingly moral and domesticated women are the very same who in time of trouble come boldly forward to share every danger and hardship with their men. In the Croatian military frontier (the *Granica*), that wall, of which I have already spoken, the women, like those of Montenegro, often joined in the actual fighting, besides conveying the food to the

troops. In 1903, when all Croatia flared up in open rebellion against the Ban, Count Khuen Hidervary, a near relative of Count Tisza, the Hungarian Premier, the women were the boldest and most indefatigable demonstrators. Neither did the men consider their patriotism unbecoming.

No, it is *not* out of keeping with the heroic traditions of Serbian women that the qualities most highly esteemed and praised in a wife are humility and modesty, whereas in a girl the most valued talent is a beautiful voice and the gift of singing. One charming custom shows that poetic wit is not only appreciated in a woman but expected from her. A bride, when she enters her new home, is expected to bestow characteristic nick-names on her new relatives. When a death occurs, it is the duty of the women to bewail the dead and to compose songs and poems about them.

Modern Serbia has her women's educational, religious and social societies and associations, like every other European country. Some fifteen years ago the Kneginja Ljubica founded the religious society named after her, which has for its object the care of the Serbian Orthodox communities in Turkish territory, where they are greatly oppressed and harassed. The principal women's educational society in Serbia goes by the pretty name of the Kolo Sestara (the Circle of Sisters).

There is also the Materinsko Udruženje (Mothers' Association), which takes care of the infants of the poor.

Yet another Ljubica distinguished herself in the trials brought about by the present war. In the spring of 1915, Madame Ljubica Luković was among the few—men or women—who dared the horrors of Valjevo, where a camp of 3,000 Austrians was left behind in a condition which beggars description. The story of the epidemic that followed, of the heroism and devotion displayed by the Scottish and English nurses and doctors who hastened to the rescue, has been told recently and in full in the newspapers. Madame Ljubica Luković herself fell a victim to typhoid in Nish.

That the spirit of the plain Serbian women of to-day is equal to that of the heroic princesses of old is best shown by two little anecdotes.

A poor woman in Belgrade had her wounded son in the house during the Austrian occupation. Fearing his discovery,

she dared not go out to buy food, but barred her door as if the house were deserted. Every day she brought him food from her diminishing store, and when he asked her why she would not eat with him, she answered that she had already had her meal. One day she failed to answer his call. With an effort the soldier rose to look for his mother, and he found her—dead of hunger.

When the Rev. Dr. Nikolai Velimirović (to whom I am indebted for most of the details of this article) inquired of an old friend of his, a wealthy woman before the war, "Where is your son?" She answered quite simply: "I gave him to Serbia, and now my prayers dwell with me in his stead."

I have only one more picture to-day, and like the first I have shown you, I cannot quite tell you whether it is a picture of one belonging to the world of daylight or of such a one as we see in dreams—or both—and, strangely enough, I found it in an evening paper.

There is a man—his name doesn't matter—born in Serbian lands but in Austrian service. He has the pen of a ready writer, and so during the war he was sent to report upon matters in Serbia for the worldly purpose of the paper that employs him—and the honour and glory of Austria—and his own bread and cheese—and because the ghastly happenings there made good copy. He was provided with the motor car and an escort of hussars to follow the refugees and write about them. We all know how a terrific blizzard swept the land, already sorely stricken by famine and the sword, and how, in the midst of all these terrors, the nation fled southward, ever southward, over the mountains through the storm and the snow.

And all along this *via dolorosa* of a people the man followed, snug and well-found in comfort, and made notes. But the storm grew worse, the snow dragged on the car heavy as a curse, the wind moaned and the whirling snow drifted past like wraiths, and the endless stream of human misery surged round him. He says that he and the hussars filled the car with half-starved fugitives and saved as many as they could—I think they felt that if they did nothing to allay so much despair that they would never sleep or eat in peace again—and so, as men give a wretched dole to a starving beggar, not to save life, but to keep their own consciences quiet, so the man in Austrian pay set

about to save some twelve, while 12,000 were perishing, and as the car was slowly and painfully pushing through the snow, a woman passed him—tall, dark, stately, a woman of the people. She walked on, her eyes wide open and gazing fixedly before her into the shrouded distance. Her clothing was torn to rags and whipped about in the storm, and as she breathed sharply in the icy air he saw her teeth gleaming. Her breast heaved as though some tireless engine and not mere flesh and blood were urging her forward, and breath came from her like steam in the bitter cold. On her back she carried a child, a little girl. The man called out to her, "Come into the car—come to safety—come." Her lips moved, but there was no sound. He held out some bread and meat to her. "Take this at least—take it from me—let us give you food." Then she spoke: "For the child," she answered—for to-morrow"—and she strode forward—and he saw her no more.

Yes, most profoundly I believe that he saw a poor peasant woman gallantly striving to reach safety and freedom; but most profoundly I believe that in that wilderness of sorrow, in the twilight of a world, he saw not only a woman—but our Lady of the Sorrows—in the guise of Serbia, striding past him into the snow and the mist, ragged, but not forlorn, undaunted, her pride unbroken, her faith unshaken, steadfast in hope, and sheltering in her arms her little girl-daughter—to be the future mother of heroes.

P.S.—For the material for this lecture I am indebted more or less to *all* my Serbian and other Southern Slav friends, besides the assistance of Father Nikolai Velimirović, and wish specially to acknowledge that of the Professors Bogdan and Pavle Popović, Mr. Srgjan Tucić, Mrs. Ivanitch, and Mrs. Miloyevitch, and Miss Nikolaevitch, who most kindly lent me a genuine Serbian peasant costume to wear when I delivered the lecture, and Dr. Grgich, who also kindly helped me on that occasion.

F. S. C.

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