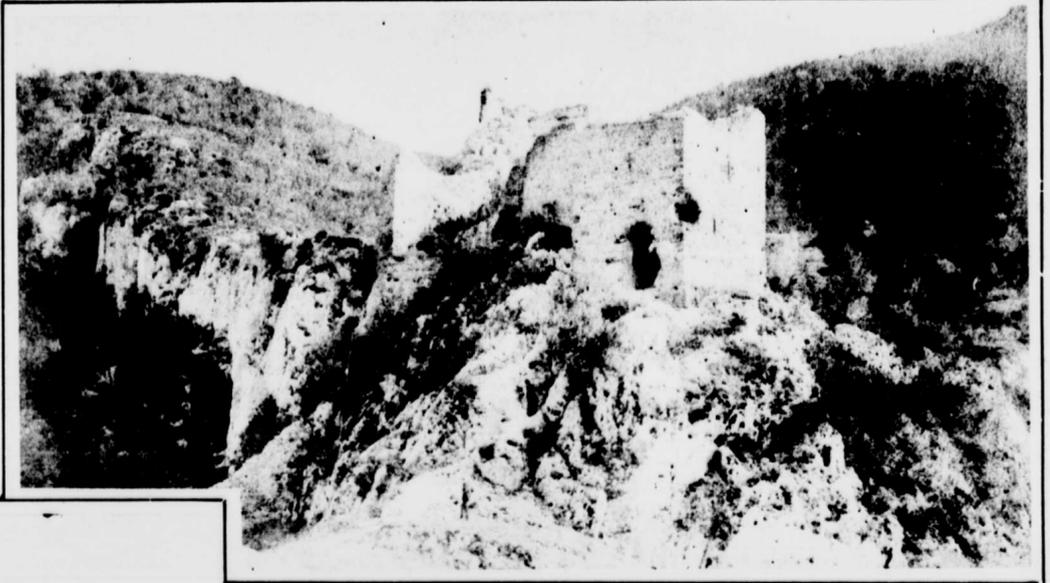


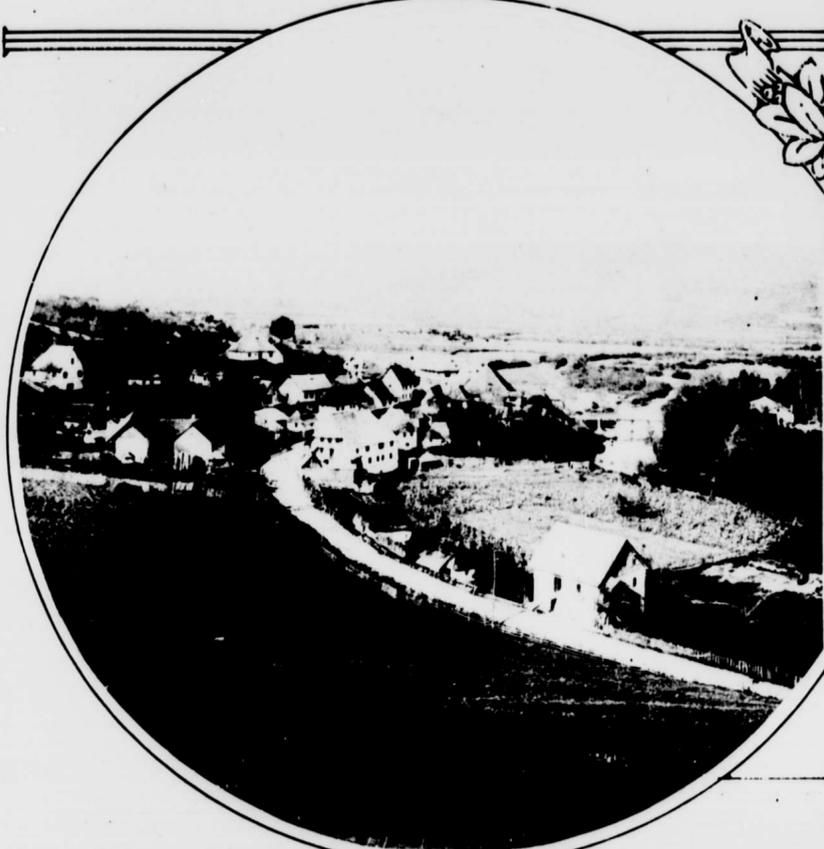
# ANCIENT MACEDONIA AGAIN MENACED BY INVADERS



ON THE ROAD FROM VELES TO PRILEP. THE HOUSE MARKS THE OLD BOUNDARY LINE BETWEEN TURKEY AND SERBIA.



THE WHITE TOWER OF MARCO, THEME OF MANY SERB BALLADS, STANDS ON A GREAT ISOLATED ROCKY MOUNT.



THE PLAIN OF KOSSOVO, OR "FIELD OF BLACKBIRDS."

THE Serbians are fighting their most desperate battles of the present invasion upon their most sacred soil. Driven from "Old Serbia," the kingdom as the world has known it for the last half century, they have left only parts of "New Serbia," that portion of their territory which they won in the last war against Turkey. This was the ancient Macedonia, a rugged, wild, unknown land, which for the last twenty-five years has been the scene of almost continuous racial and political strife, but which is endeared to the Serb people by all the traditions and poetry of their race.

To defend this hard earned possession against the overwhelming Teutonic and Bulgarian hosts that had been sent against them they had about all else to defend two great passes, the Babuna and the Katchanik, which are the gateways from the central valley of the Vardar River to the great highlands beyond. Over the former, on the south, leads the road from Koprivnik (Veles) to Prilep and Monastir, the Albanian frontier and southwestern Macedonia. Through the latter was built the railroad from Eschab northward across the plains of Kossovo and on to the little town of Mitrovitz, some fifty miles from the Austrian southern frontier.

A SIX company went through both of these passes just before the outbreak of the war and also over the length and breadth of the land that lay back of them. The problem of defence presented by each is materially different both to invader and defender. The Katchanik is a narrow wooded defile that a small company could hold against a regiment. There are vantage points on rocky cliffs that rise up beside the railroad and on the tree covered knolls. The Albanians, with a mere handful of men, have in the past stopped the attacking Turkish forces and have forced them to only look into the valley below but have often turned on to the protection of the defences of Eschab.

The Babuna pass is a wide valley, of which the slopes are almost entirely denuded of trees. The shrubs grow along the course of the Babuna and as little tributary streams that are fed from the springs of the heights. It is a picturesque, beautiful valley, but sombre and grey, except save for the bright red blotches of the poppy farms. Winding along the western slope of the valley and clinging closely to the overhanging cliffs is the Koprivnik-Monastir road, a highway that Kaiser Bismarck started to build to show the world that the Young Turks were busy bent on reforms in Macedonia, but which through the fortunes of war the Serbs were compelled to finish.

Half way to the top of the pass stood a little black guardhouse that must have been an inspiration for patriotism to the Serbians. This



KATCHANIK PASS, GATEWAY FROM VARDUN VALLEY TO THE HIGHLANDS.



PRISTINA, THE LARGEST TOWN IN KOSSOVO PLAIN.

Only meagre details remain to tell of the battle, which ranks as one of the decisive engagements of the world's history. It was in fact almost a century after it took place when the Turks were overrunning southeastern Europe and battering at the gates of Vienna that western Europe began to appreciate its great importance. In the records of the time very little was said of the struggle, and today its story is told principally in old Serb songs and ballads. The Turks advanced to the battlefield from the north and east and were under the command of Sultan Murad himself and followed by some of his most valiant Generals. The Serb army, which was made up of almost the entire nobility of the land, came up from the south. The two forces clashed near what is now the town of Pristina. The clash, according to the old chroniclers, was like that of the "thunders of the world" when the two great "hosts of waving spears met and the plains ran red with the blood of heroes." At noon the Serbs felt so confident of victory that the commander sent a message to Venice and Paris proclaiming the defeat of the Turks. This message, which caused much rejoicing in western Europe, is still preserved among the French papers of St. Petersburg.

But the aid that the Serbs had expected from Bosnia and Herzegovina did not arrive. The Turks reformed and made a final desperate charge. They broke the Serbs line in what is yet called "the point of victory" and drove them back with fearful slaughter. Practically the entire Serb nobility was killed and, for tradition sake, the names of the nobles who were killed in battle chose rather than survive defeat to return to the field and die by their own swords. Sultan Murad was killed in his tent by a Serb who has since been immortalized in the Serb folklore and ballad. The bones of the Sultan and his favorite General, which were stored at the "point of victory," are the only monuments that have remained through the centuries to mark the site of the battle. In 1912 the present Sultan made a journey to the plains of Kossovo, the first visit of peace that a Sultan had ever made to a distant Ottoman province, for the purpose of inspiring the allegiance of the Albanians to the Ottoman empire.

After the battle of Kossovo the Serbs were completely subjugated by the Turks. The anniversary of the defeat became a day of mourning throughout the whole Serbian world, and the Montenegrins have ever since worn a black band on their caps as a symbol of sorrow. In the last Balkan war the Serbian battle cry was "Remember Kossovo!" and it was with a feeling of reverence, mingled with their rejoicing, that after six centuries of oppression they returned to their ground, so hallowed by all of their traditions and history. Whether they shall return after the present defeat to their ancient domain will be one of the interesting questions of the war.



THE BROAD PLAINS OF VELIKA, VIEWED FROM MOUNT ZETOVAZOV.

little structure in the Balkan war was defended by only a score of Turks when a company of Serbians advanced to capture it, yet for a day and a night they held out. Not until the last Turk was dead did the Serbs advance. The heroic defenders were buried in the garden in the rear, and the little house, shot shattered, its windows, roof and doors destroyed, was left standing as a memorial to their bravery.

The Bulgarians sent a part of their force up the road, and the Serbs fighting down upon them from their position on the heights, for a week held them in check. Seeing that advance by this route was both costly and doubtful the Bulgarians finally sent a force around by way of Melnik. It climbed up the steep, narrow goat path to the rear of the Serbian defence. The Serbs, having no troops to spare from their small detachment to repel this flanking movement, were compelled to retire. The Bulgarians lost 4,000 men, more than the entire force of the Serbian defenders.

The way was thus opened to the great upland valley that spreads out west of the Babuna range and runs through to Monastir and almost to the Albanian frontier. The largest town on the way is Prilep, which nestles at the foot of

a great isolated rocky mount, where the heroic Marco had his castle. The footprints of his plover and steel are shown on a stone, and a picture of the giant horse, said to have been painted by a Byzantine artist of centuries ago, still adorns a huge rock.

The castle was built on the top of a porphyry cliff, and in its day it must have been impregnable to attack. Marco saw to it too that his enemy could not starve him out, for during sieges his men planted and sowed crops on the wide acres on the heights of his position, and he laughed at the efforts of the encompassing forces.

The ruins of the stronghold are still to be seen, and the white tower of the Serb ballads is yet in a fair state of preservation. Old Prilep is a town of importance; its churches numbered more than a hundred and their heavy stone walls and towers, even after centuries of neglect and exposure to the elements, are still standing. But modern Prilep has few of the glories of its past, and when the Bulgarians applied the torch after the retirement of the small defending force they set ablaze only rows of small wooden or plaster houses.

Beyond the Katchanik pass on the north are

places, now fallen prey to the invaders, that are of even more legendary or historic interest. Prizren, one of the towns at which the fugitive capital of Serbia rested, was one of the chief cities of the ancient empire. It is one of the brightest and cleanest towns of the Balkans, for a mountain stream rushes through it, flooding the gutters and washing the streets. A medieval fortress crowns the hill overlooking Prizren, and a few miles away was the castle of Czar Lazar, where he and his hard fighting and hard drinking warriors held sway and from which they rode to the field of Kossovo.

This fateful field, where the Serb people went down in defeat before the Turk in June, 1389, is about twenty miles away. It is too about the same distance north from the Katchanik pass. The retreat of the Serbians is not so much the retreat of an army as the retreat of a nation, and it seems one of those strange freaks of fortune that the Germans and Austrians in driving them before their arms should force them to make another stand upon the plain with which their greatest national disaster is so closely associated.

The plains of Kossovo, "the field of the blackbirds," as the Serb peasants call it, is a great

level upland that extends from the Katchanik northward to Mitrovitz. Through it runs the Sittica and west of this the railroad that has its northern terminus in the old Turkish sanjak of Novi Bazar. It has long been the richest and most fertile part of this section of Macedonia and was spoils of war that the Sultan, after the battle that was fought over it, gave to his Generals. Serb traditions say that each spring the land is covered with blood red flowers sent by God as a memory of the Serb defeat.

The most important town of the plain is Pristina, pretentiously situated on the foothills of the range to the east. Five miles to the south is the church of Gradbanisa, one of the finest examples extant of the ancient Serb architecture. It was here that the Serb army on the morning of the battle stopped for holy communion. The building after the Turkish conquest fell into neglect and was used by the conquerors as a stable. But after the Balkan war it was returned to its original use, and it was with a feeling of great relief that the restorers found that by removing the coat of white wash the priceless old frescoes and paintings representing ancient Serb royalty were still in a fair state of preservation.