

From The Contemporary Review.

Macedonia is practically as unknown to the general public as the great Unshapen Land in which dwelt the three Grey Sisters who helped Perseus on his errand of death. Even the well-informed politician who could comfortably pick his way through Central Africa is very often unable to tell the difference between a Pomak and a Zinzar, a Yooryk and an Arnaut, or to say whether they are fruits, implements, or peoples. Not only is the geography of the country a highly complicated and unsatisfactory study, seeing that nearly every district, river, lake, and town is known by at least two wholly different names, the one Turkish and the other Slavonian, Greek, or Albanian—both of which are occasionally omitted from the few maps we possess—but the ethnography is more bewildering than a Chinese puzzle, and no man born or woman can ever hope to solve the problems it offers in a way that will satisfy the peoples of Eastern Europe. In spite of a railway net of about 600 miles, communications with the interior are not merely primitive and painful, but highly dangerous. It is practically impossible to visit any of the outlying and many of the main districts without an escort of Turkish Zaptiehs, and sometimes even a few Arnaut cut-throats, as a homoeopathic precaution over and above. There are places in Macedonia—especially in the country between the river Vardar, on the one side, and the Drin and Morava on the other—which have been untrodden by European feet since the days when the warlike Samuel was King, about 900 years ago.

Macedonia, the land of the three streams, Vardar, Struma, and Vistritsa, is hemmed in by lofty mountains, of which the best known or the highest are Olympus, Shargagh, and Rhodope, the last named rising to between 8,000 and 9,000 feet above the level of the sea. It is among the most picturesque countries of Europe, abounding in magnificent forests, which climb hills, fringe rivers, and cover islands; in wild mountain scenes, wonderful waterfalls, silent sailless lakes—an appropriate setting for gems of emerald islets, deep gorges, dizzy mountain paths, smiling plains, and desolate passes, which ought to prove an irresistible attraction to the traveler who regards genuine danger and real discomfort as the appropriate condiment of pleasure.