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The German historian Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886) is considered a founder of modern source-based history, introducing ideas such as reliance on primary sources, emphasis on narrative history and international perspectives. (His works on the history of England and the papacy are also reissued in this series.) While historiography and empiricism, as practised by Ranke, are now considered outdated, his emphasis on primary sources and the use of quotations to illustrate arguments remains hugely influential. First published in German in 1829, this work was based on eye-witness accounts of the Serbian Uprising of 1804, and was one of the first modern works on the Balkan nation. The early chapters review the history of the Serbs from the ninth century CE, to contextualise the chapters on the sixteenth-century Ottoman conquest and subsequent rule. This translation, published in 1847, is based on the second German edition of 1844.

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Leopold von Ranke

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MAP OF SERBIA AND THE ADJOINING COUNTRIES
 To illustrate Mr. Alex. Kerr's Translation of Ranke's History of Serbia.
 Engraved by J. & C. Walker.

A
HISTORY OF SERVIA,
AND THE
SERVIAN REVOLUTION,

FROM ORIGINAL MSS. AND DOCUMENTS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF LEOPOLD RANKE,

BY

MRS. ALEXANDER KERR,
AUTHORESS OF "SONGS OF HOPE AND MEMORY," ETC.

LONDON:
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P R E F A C E.

THE eminent position assigned to Professor Ranke among modern historians renders any tribute to his distinguished merits superfluous, and at the same time affords a sufficient guarantee for the authenticity of every production emanating from such high authority.

No subject elucidated by the researches of Ranke can be otherwise than valuable; and the Revolution of Serbia is one of greater interest and importance than may at first sight appear.

The geographical position of Serbia, between Turkey and Austria, and forming, with the neighbouring countries, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Wallachia, and Moldavia, a border-land between two great empires of opposite creeds, has made this country the seat of a protracted struggle between European civilization and Oriental despotism — between the Christian and Mahomedan religions.

In the midst of these conflicting forces, the

Servians present the interesting spectacle of a brave, hardy, and simple people, contending for national independence and religious freedom. Christians in faith, and subjected to the cruel persecutions of their infidel oppressors, their efforts to throw off the Moslem yoke met with little encouragement from Christian nations; except so far as they could be made instrumental in checking the encroachments, or counteracting the policy of other powers.

The Servians are too little known to the rest of Europe. While the other countries of Europe have been overrun by the herd of English tourists, Serbia and the neighbouring states separating Austria from Turkey are almost *terra incognita*; even to the travellers who visit Vienna and Constantinople. And though steam-boats ply on the Danube, Mr. Paton is as yet the only writer who has made English readers acquainted with Serbia*: to the ability and intelligence of this gentleman the English public are indebted for a lively and faithful account of the present state of the Servians and their country.

Viewing them as a Christian people subjected to an infidel despotism, the Servians excite a sym-

* *Servia, the Youngest Member of the European Family.* Longmans, 1845.

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pathy that ought to be extended to the Bulgarians also. Professor Ranke, in a letter to the translator of this work, expresses a hope "that his History of the Servians may excite in our mighty nation an interest for the Christians under Turkish rule." This feeling influenced the translator in venturing upon a task, the difficulty of which would have induced her to shrink from it had she not been animated and encouraged by an ardent hope of thus promoting the author's views.

Since so accomplished a German scholar as Mrs. Austin thought it necessary to bespeak indulgence for any imperfections in her translation of Ranke's History of the Reformation, the translator feels that an apology is almost required from her for venturing upon an undertaking so arduous as the present. She can only hope that whatever defects in her performance may be apparent to those acquainted with the original, she will have the benefit of such excuses as German scholars are best able to find in the great difficulties of the work.

The almost legal exactness and judicial caution of Ranke, and the peculiarities of his style which present many obstacles to the conscientious translator, characterise the present beyond any of the other works by the same author. This may

be accounted for, partly by the vague and fragmentary character of the materials, and partly by those minute details of circumstances where effects appear disproportioned to causes. For it is a prevailing characteristic of all revolutionary periods, that great events arise out of seemingly trivial accidents; and the springs of action in national movements must often be sought for in the breast of an individual, or in the latent feelings of a small and yet uncivilized community.

This work, though professing only to treat of “the Revolution in Serbia,” and occupied chiefly with the most stirring and recent period of its history, is however not limited to the revolutionary era: the “Retrospective Sketch” of the Servians to which the earlier chapters are devoted, gives as complete an account of the rise and fall of the nation as is necessary to enable the reader to understand the position of affairs at the commencement of their struggle for independence. Perhaps it may even be as satisfactory a picture as any that could be drawn through the veil of obscurity which shrouds the annals of Serbia. Viewed as a whole indeed, Ranke’s history is a valuable contribution to our very imperfect knowledge of a most interesting people: it exhibits in a striking manner the impotence of Moslem despotism, even when

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allied with warlike European powers, against the energies of a Christian people united in defence of their civil and religious liberties.

Servia — anciently a kingdom, then reduced to the state of a Turkish province, almost without a name, and now a principality under the government of Georgewitsch, the son of their liberator Kara George — may be regarded as the precursor of the minor States of the Eastern corner of Europe, in their struggle for emancipation from Turkish thralldom.

In all barbarous or semi-civilized states, there is a want of that high moral tone, which is the soul of national honour. Human life is held lightly; the rights of property are not respected; and individual will and might prevail.

“ Sufficeth them the simple plan,
That he should take who has the power,
And he should keep who can.”

This is painfully apparent throughout the history of Servia. The divine principle of Christianity, though stifled in the fierce conflict for existence, was not wholly extinct. But it is not until Christianity — a vital religion, purified from fanaticism and superstition — becomes firmly established in the hearts of a people and the institutions of a country, that the duties and rights of man can be

fully understood and truly observed, or that the character and influence of woman can be rightly appreciated.

The History of Serbia, as traced by Ranke, suggests the consideration of many and great truths, moral and political; but it is beyond the province of the translator to enter upon their discussion.

It may, however, be permitted her to remark that the subjection of Christian nations to the infidel yoke, is matter not merely for regret, but a subject that calls for the attention and active sympathy of the enlightened and powerful governments of Christendom.

And in these days of enlightenment, when missionaries are diffusing the doctrines of Christianity among the heathen in the remotest parts of the world, and the legislature is organising a comprehensive educational scheme for the people at home, it is surely not unreasonable to hope that the condition of a Christian people so near to us as Serbia, will excite the sympathy of their brethren in faith in this free country.

The fanaticism of their Moslem rulers is so strongly opposed to every attempt of the Servians and Bulgarians to form educational institutions, and even to acquire the elements of Christian knowledge, that it is only by foreign intervention

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—not the less effectual for being of a peaceful kind—that the means and opportunities so earnestly desired by the Christian population of these countries can be afforded them.

The Turks have been intruders in Europe from the first; grinding down the people, and impoverishing the countries which they overran; and warring alike against liberty, enlightenment, and Christianity. If we are to judge of a faith and a government by their fruits, we should all unite in hoping that the Mahomedan religion and the obstructive despotism of the “Sublime Porte” should yield to the now swiftly-advancing tide of Christian civilization.

*Grosvenor Street,
July, 1847.*

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