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978-1-108-06096-7 - *Illyrian Letters: A Revised Selection of Correspondence from the Illyrian Provinces of Bosnia, Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia, Addressed to the Manchester Guardian During the Year 1877*

Arthur John Evans

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### Illyrian Letters

Although remembered today chiefly for his archaeological discoveries in Crete, Sir Arthur John Evans (1851–1941) became Britain's leading expert on Balkan affairs after publishing his account of travelling through Bosnia in 1875 (also reissued in this series). In 1877 he returned to the region as a correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian*, reporting on the continuing insurrection against Ottoman rule. Evans is at pains to point out that he does not regard himself as a war correspondent, but wishes to introduce 'in a tolerably peaceful fashion the insurgents and their little mountain territory to the English public'. Published in 1878, these letters offer historical, social and religious background to the insurrection. In so doing, they provide a valuable insight into the genesis of more recent conflicts in a region that has always been a melting pot of peoples and cultures.

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Heu micat Illyricum perverso lumine sidus :  
Turcarum referunt patria signa jugum ;  
Quod prius impositum lunæ, nunc cornubus astrum  
Luna premit : tristes fata dedere vices.  
Austriacæ stellam, victrices et sine Marte,  
Restituant aquilæ quo fuit ante polo !

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# ILLYRIAN LETTERS

A REVISED SELECTION OF CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE ILLYRIAN  
PROVINCES OF BOSNIA, HERZEGOVINA, MONTENEGRO, ALBANIA,  
DALMATIA, CROATIA, AND SLAVONIA, ADDRESSED TO THE  
'MANCHESTER GUARDIAN' DURING THE YEAR 1877

BY

ARTHUR J. EVANS, B.A., F.S.A.

*Author of 'Through Bosnia and the Herzegovina on Foot'*



LONDON

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1878

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‘ The Inhabitants of any Country, who are descended and derive a Title to their Estates from those who are subdued, and had a Government forced on them against their free Consents, *retain a Right to the Possession of their Ancestors* though they consent not hereby to the *Government*, whose hard *Conditions* were by *Force* imposed on the *Possessors of that Country*. For the first *Conqueror* never having had a Title to the *Land* of that Country, the People who are the Descendants of, or claim under, those who were forced to submit to the Yoke of a Government by Constraint, have always a Right to shake it off, and free themselves from the Usurpation or Tyranny which the Sword hath brought in upon them, till their Rulers put them under a Frame of Government as they willingly and of Choice consent to. Who doubts but the *Grecian* Christians, Descendants of the ancient Possessors of that Country, may justly cast off the *Turkish* Yoke which they have so long groaned under whenever they have an Opportunity to do it? For no Government can have a Right to Obedience from a People who have not freely consented to it ; which they can never be supposed to do, till either they are put in a full State of Liberty and choose their own Government and Governors, or at least till they have such standing Laws to which they have by themselves or their Representatives given their free Consent, and also till they are allowed their due Property, which is so to be Proprietors of what they have, that nobody can take away any Part of it without their own Consent ; without which Men under any Government are not in the State of Freemen, but are direct Slaves under the Force of War.’

LOCKE, ‘ *Of Civil Government.*’

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## P R E F A C E.



THE small collection of letters now republished in the present form does not pretend to be a comprehensive history of recent events, even so far as concerns the western part of the Balkan Peninsula, or what may fairly be comprised under the good old term Illyria. It is nothing more than a representative series of observations made in the Illyrian Provinces during the troubled year 1877, throughout which I corresponded, as occasion arose, with the 'Manchester Guardian.'

A previous acquaintance with those lands, some account of which I have already given to the public in my book on Bosnia, and a still earlier acquaintance with their history had led me to conceive an extraordinary interest in their condition, and I had accordingly taken up my abode at Ragusa as a convenient centre for working at the language and antiquities of Illyria and the *Leben und Treiben* of her peoples.

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The exciting events of the hour, however, diverted me from these more tranquil pursuits. The deplorable condition of Bosnia, the *fiasco* of the new Constitution, the daily outrages committed by the Irregulars, the unutterable misery of the Refugees, the difficult problems suggested by the internal divisions of the Province ; the Insurrection ; the life-and-death struggle in Montenegro, the movement among the neighbouring Slavonic Provinces of Austria-Hungary, —these and other objects of urgent interest would have been amply sufficient to exhaust the energy of many chroniclers. But while the attention of Europe was centred on the Bulgarian and Armenian battle-fields these in many ways not less important fields of contemplation were almost entirely neglected. While journalists were drawn elsewhere, the temporizing and immoral policy of Austria-Hungary exerted its utmost to shroud the Bosnian Reign of Terror in a veil of diplomatic silence : and false impressions of the Province conceived within the walls of the English Consulate distorted even the scanty information that found its way into the blue-books of our Foreign Office.

Nothing could have been further from my object than to act as a War Correspondent. In so far indeed as the guerilla operations of the Turks and insurgents in Bosnia are concerned it would be a tedious and unprofitable task, even if it were possible, to follow

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them at length. I have therefore in the Letters now re-published contented myself with introducing in a tolerably peaceful fashion the Insurgents and their little mountain territory to the English public, without attempting in this place to follow the ups and downs of the later course of the Insurrection. The war in Montenegro, indeed, presents a series of more striking pictures, and having been in the Principality at the time of the critical struggle with the Turks, I thought it might be to the convenience of my readers to sub-join in the form of appendices to my letters a brief *résumé* of the chief events of the earlier periods of the war; while a prolonged stay at Nikšić led me to gather together some more minute details of its capture. Happily, so far as Montenegro is concerned, the world may expect a more exhaustive record from a competent military critic, whom hardships and difficulties greater than those of ordinary war could not deter from following step by step the incidents of that brave struggle. Mr. W. J. Stillman, the distinguished 'Times' Correspondent of whom I speak, may indeed be said to have made the modern history of Montenegro his own, and those who venture on his ground must perforce feel themselves to be intruders.

It has been my own object to take a rather comprehensive view of all the Illyrian Provinces, and by

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extending my observations from the Save to Central Albania to survey them from a variety of standpoints. And in so doing I have not considered the scenery of those countries, their antiquities, and even the folklore and domestic life of their peoples, beside my purpose. I have often deliberately preferred to lead up to political conclusions by such apparently indirect channels. It is practically impossible to separate peoples as primitive as the inhabitants of those lands from their surroundings. Where man is ignorant, Nature still is his mistress. The broad distinctions between politics and the relations of domestic life that exist among civilized nations are out there non-existent, and even the nymphs and dragons that haunt the Bosnian caves and forests may, in their way, play as real a part in the affairs of men as Insurgents or Bashi-bazouks. Nor should any one who desires to present the 'Illyrian Question' adequately before the world fail at least to touch upon the antiquities of those historic lands, where the monuments of the Past present the weightiest protest against Present ruin, and form the true mirrors of the Future. My letter about Durazzo is thus largely occupied by antiquarian suggestions and historical reminiscences which point their moral: yet, while glancing at these topics I have purposely reserved for other occasions any disquisitions that might be called archæological.

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Thus it will be seen that my Letters are rather side-lights on the Eastern Question than an attempt to exhibit an act of the Russo-Turkish war. They have, indeed, little to do either with Turks or Russians. In Bosnia, the province of the Ottoman Empire with which I am chiefly concerned, even among the native Mahometans there are, strictly speaking, no Turks ; and, on the other hand, Russia has deliberately resigned the province to the sphere of Austrian Interests.

As far as I can see all that I have related in these letters points to one conclusion, the conclusion typified in the heraldic device on the title-page, and explained by the Latin lines that I have ventured to append to it,<sup>1</sup> namely, that in the interests of the populations that lie between the Save and Adriatic, in the interests of the Hapsburg Monarchy itself, in the interests of Europe and of humanity, Austria should incorporate Bosnia in her dominions, and restore the lapsed suzerainty of the Hapsburgs over the whole of Illyria. I do not love Austria, and I cannot be said to have dealt too leniently with her in the course of this book. I have been led to these conclusions with great regret. But I confess that, so

<sup>1</sup> The device on the Illyrian escutcheon previous to the Turkish Conquest was an eight-rayed star above a crescent. The Turkish

device, as every one is aware, is the same star to the right of the crescent. This curious heraldic coincidence suggested the epigram.

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far as I can see ahead, the extension of Austria to the South and East, and the ultimate reconstitution of the monarchy on an Illyrian or South Slavonic basis, is the only consummation that can prevent Russia from ultimately advancing to the shores of the Adriatic..



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## KEY TO THE PRONUNCIATION

*of the SERBO-CROATIAN ORTHOGRAPHY adopted for Illyrian names  
in this book.*

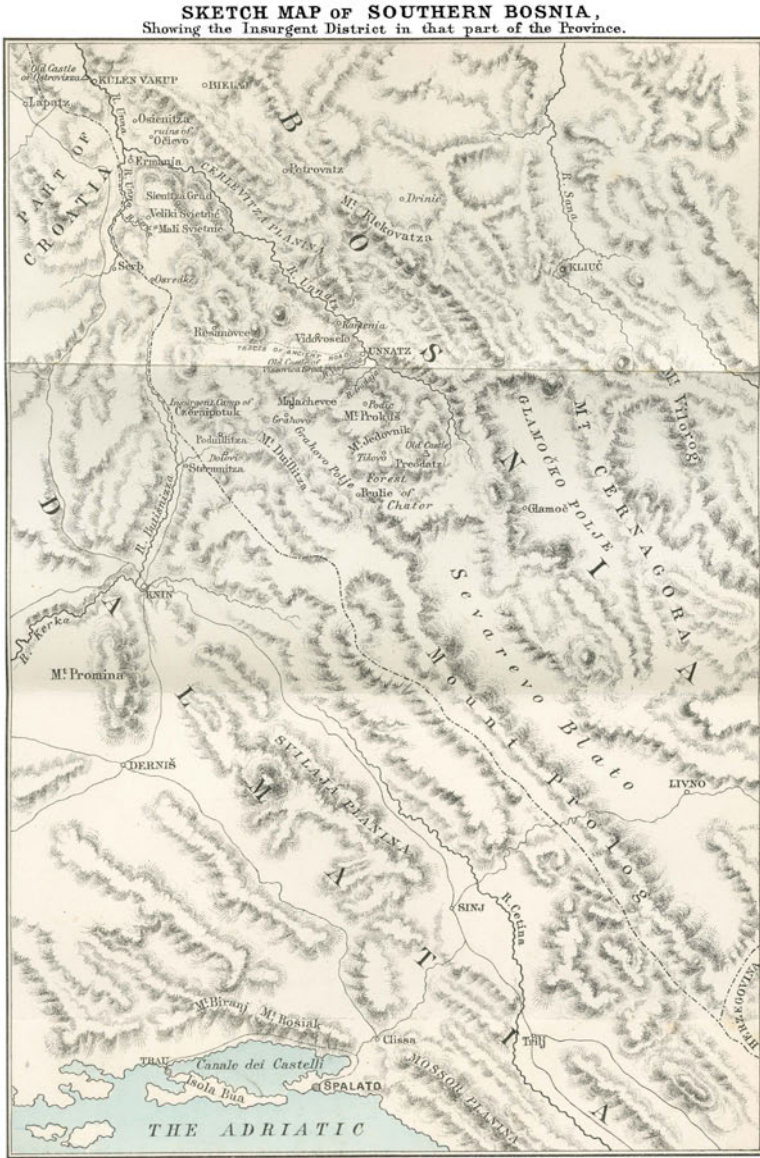
Serbo-Croatian Letter.	Approximate Sound.
č	= like <i>ch</i> or <i>cs</i> , before a vowel <i>ty</i>
č	= German <i>tsh</i>
j	= <i>y</i>
lj	= Italian <i>gl</i>
nj	= Italian <i>gn</i>
š	= like <i>sh</i>

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