

B*eyond the Adriatic* by *HARRIET W. PRESTON*

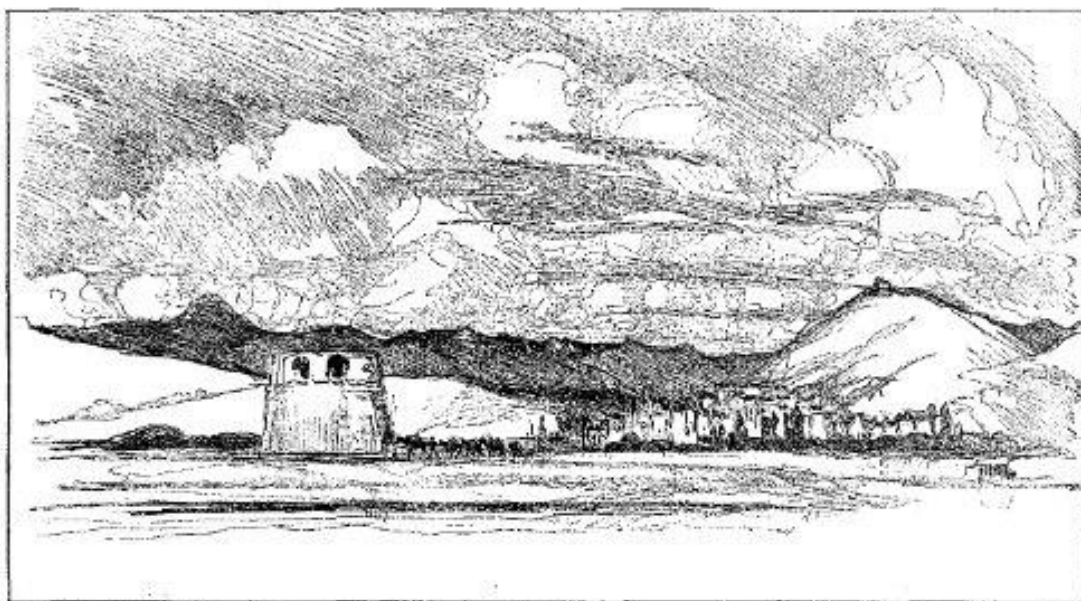
THIRD PAPER.

WE embarked overnight on the steamer that was to take us from Spalato to Metković, on the frontier of Herzegovina, ten miles inland from the mouth of the river Narenta. Our route lay between the islands and the shore, and the outlines of the latter, below Spalato, were fine and grew constantly finer. The long succession of low, rounded hills, of which we had often wearied in the upper waters of the Adriatic, now gave place to mountains of undeniable grandeur, springing almost abruptly from the water-side as the Savoy Alps rise from the borders of the Lake Geneva. Culture and verdure extended but a very little way up these huge acclivities, the few and insignificant hamlets huddle



tween them and the shore; above, the purple shadows of the passing clouds pursue their wayward chase alone. The only town of any importance at which the steamer calls is Makarska, which has a good harbor almost as nearly landlocked as that of Sebenico, whereby it was a famous pirate station for many centuries—from the days of Pompey the Great, in fact, until the eve of our own.

ram and Budapest. The stage navvies rush on board our boat, seize our hand-baggage, and dash with it down a hundred yards of narrow-gage track to where a small station with a deep veranda is poetically placed between a pine-grove and a rose-garden. Having seen our traps deposited here, we sally forth to visit Metković; and since the town lies over the river, we naturally make first of all for the



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

METKOVIĆ.

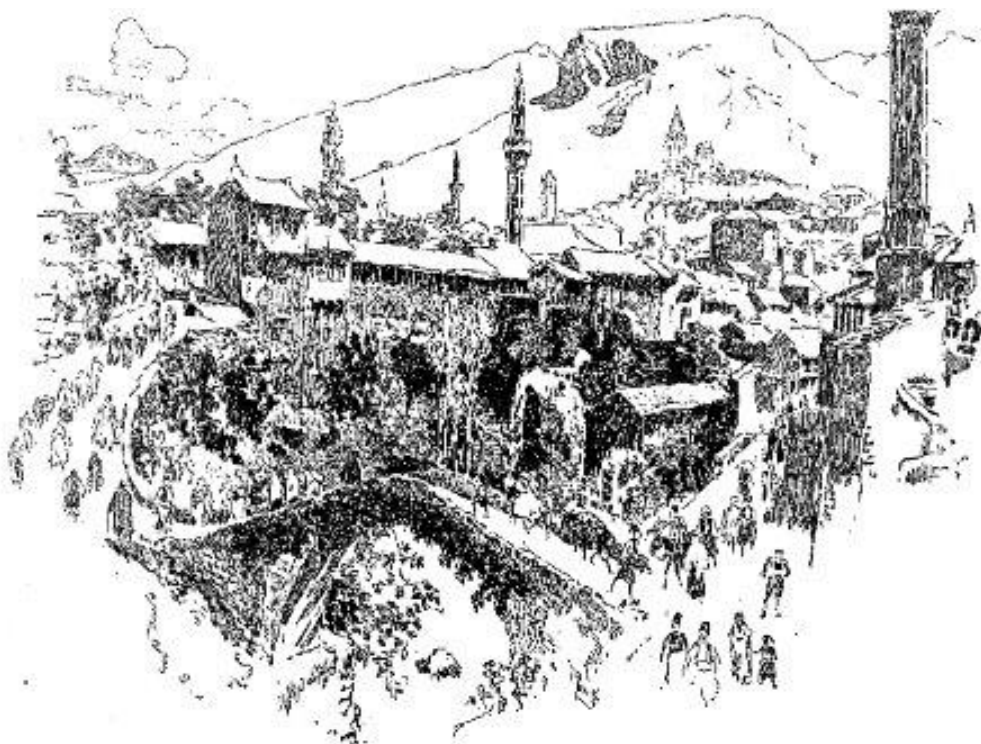
Here, having duly paid our compliments to the shades of the sea-rovers of all time, we descended to the well-appointed and appetizing lunch which is always to be had on a boat of the Austrian Lloyd; and while we were discussing it the steamer turned into the Narenta, so that we found the scene changed as if by magic when we reappeared on deck. Again one is reminded of Savoy and the upper Rhone valley; for a flat, sunny, flowery, and presumably pestiferous, marsh extends on each side of the reedy river to the base of the mountains.

After about an hour of river travel, Metković was discerned crowning a hill to the right; and the last navigable stretch of the stream accomplished, our engines stopped, and the boat was pulled up to an embankment by a troop of most theatrical-looking navvies, with brilliant caps and sashes, who managed in some mysterious way, amid all their pulling, hauling, and gesticulating, to keep their jackets hanging jauntily from their shoulders. The newly completed railway, at the terminus of which we thus find ourselves deposited, leads up the river-valley to the capital of Herzegovina, and thence to that of Bosnia, connecting at the latter (Serájevo) with through lines to Ag-

bridge, whereof Joanne gives in his guide-book a clear and pleasing description. Alas!

Where the laughter that shook the rafter?
Where the rafter, by the way?

It may possibly be that the frail structures, composed seemingly of superannuated hurdles, which now project a little way from each bank into the turbulent stream, once formed a continuous causeway, and that the central portion was swept away by the freshets of yesterday; but the only feasible mode of transit presented to us consisted of a flat-bottomed boat moored by the hither bank of the stream, and propelled by two stalwart rowers. Into this primitive conveyance had already entered two of our fellow-passengers by the *vapore*—a commercial traveler, nationality not evident, and a slim Austrian lieutenant; and seating ourselves as they had done, we were laboriously pulled over the Narenta, to the tune of the commercial gentleman's muffled and plaintive remonstrances. For the wind was brisk, and the craft bobbed merrily, and the color of the little man's cheeks presently vied with that of the water. "*Lente, lente; fo male,*" he pleaded, while the boatmen grinned, and slightly increased their exertions.



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THE MINARETS OF MOSTAR.

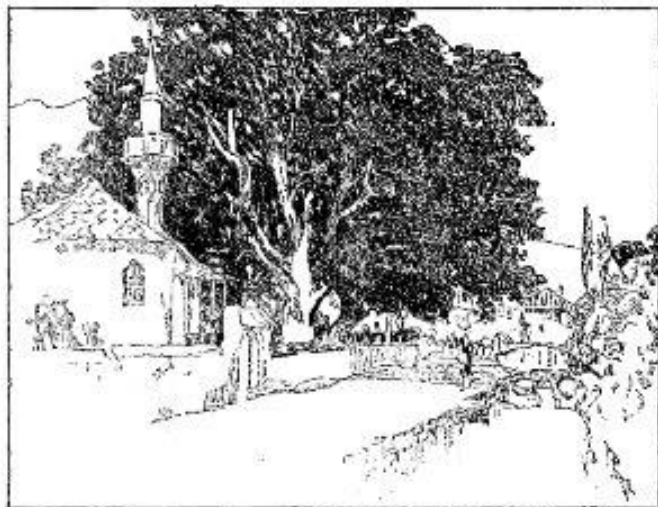
We exhausted Metković in about twenty minutes, and there were four whole hours to be disposed of before we could take the evening train for the capital of Herzegovina. It had been a question whether we should allow ourselves this brief divagation from our main route; but the fascinating fame of the mainly Mohammedan little city, a very outpost of the East, where the children of the Prophet have held their own with peculiar tenacity, proved too strong to be resisted, and none of us, I think, will ever regret anything less than our flying visit to Mostar among the mountains.

Pacing the river-bank in the declining after-

noon, or lounging in the pretty shrubberies of the station, we arrived at the unanimous conclusion, which we pass on for the encouragement of those who may follow us, that however uninteresting as a town Metković may be, the dire tales told of its insalubrity must be greatly exaggerated. No doubt it was bad enough in times not very old, but now that the bed of the river has been confined by solid embankments, and the wide interval at this point thoroughly ditched and drained, and converted into one enormous wheat-field, there can be no serious trouble from malaria; nor did we see a single face with the unmistakable fever-mark upon it.

The view over the reclaimed plain on the right-hand bank of the river was not without a certain charm: a sea-like level of green, rippling grain, lines of feathery young poplars along the straight water-courses, wattled huts here and there for the housing of the crop, with a steep mountain barrier encircling all. It was exactly, so our own artist said, like a reproduction in miniature of the central Transylvanian plain.

Our train took its time about starting, as trains and men are wont to do where there is no competition. It stood ready for full three quarters of an hour beside the vine-draped station before the pompous little guard would consent to pull the tongue of the station bell, and un-



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

" MOSQUES . . . SHADY WITH TALL TREES." (MOSTAR.)



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

THE OLD BRIDGE, MOSTAR.

lock the doors of either first, second, third, or fourth-class carriages. These last were mere unfurnished boxes, but what did that matter to the swarthy, long-limbed beings, clad with startling simplicity in red turbans and short white cotton pajamas, who squatted upon their heels along the platform outside, and awaited the guard's pleasure "in patient, deep disdain" of this new, noisy, clumsy contrivance for locomotion of the uneasy Western mind? We were indeed upon the confines of a new world.

Pulling slowly up the ever-narrowing river-valley, with the light of the May moon glinting through oak and chestnut boughs upon the limpid surface of the Narenta and the white cascades of all its tributary brooks, we halted at last in a place of orchards and gardens, where the night air was perfumed with syringa and full-blown roses. Our first impressions of Mostar were confused, but happy. Though it was now late, the people seemed to be all awake and abroad, and the place was wonderfully illuminated for a remote little mountain town. They asked for our passports at the station gate,—it was the first time they had been demanded,—but it seemed a mere formality, and we were presently whirled across a long bridge above

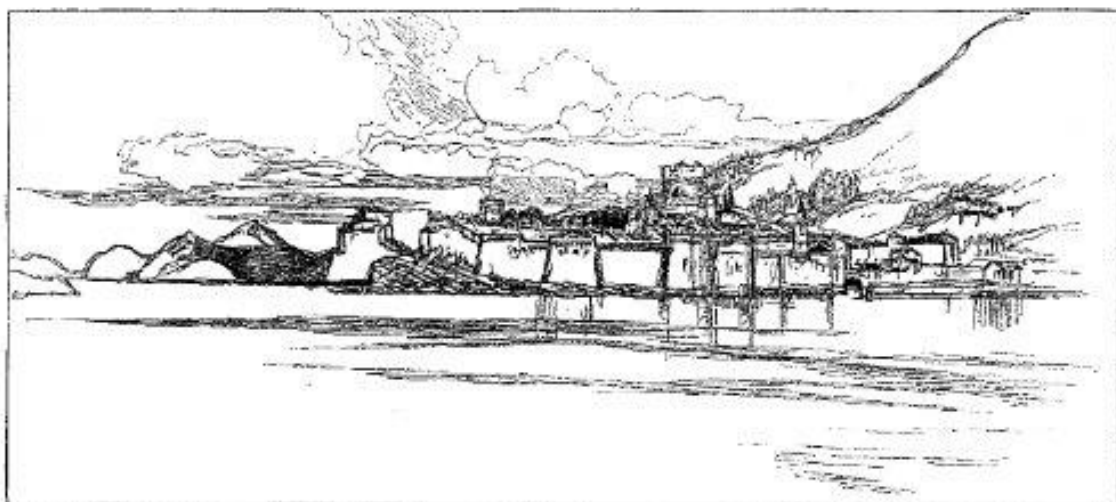
a deafening rush of water, and set down at the entrance of a huge, new, and rather disgustingly smart hotel.

We had telegraphed for rooms, and were therefore disposed at the first blush rather to resent the proposition that we two should ascend to the very top of this pretentious caravansary, while our own artist accepted lodgment for the night in a commodious bath-tub upon the *piano nobile*. But we were mollified when the anxious and plainly half-distracted landlady explained to us, in a queer variety of German, that she had both a "Hoheit" and an "Excellenz," with their suites, among her guests



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

"LOW STRUCTURES OF A PERFECTLY ORIENTAL CHARACTER." (MOSTAR.)



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"A LITTLE CITY OF THE PAST."

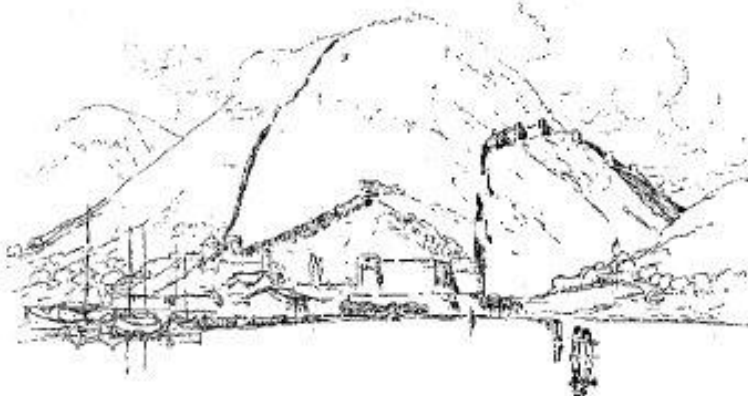
that night, and "*natürlich!*"—The Hoheit proved to be the old Archduke Albrecht, and the Excellenz a great military personage on a tour of inspection; and their presence amply explained the phenomenal stir and brilliancy which we had noted outside. We were glad, moreover, even at the cost of some personal inconvenience, that our visit should have coincided with theirs, when we awoke next morning, and threw open the round attic windows, which appeared about as large as port-holes when viewed from the ground, but which admitted great drafts of mountain air, and framed our matchless outlook in the most artistic manner.

But how describe, in the trite language of conventional prose, the view we saw? Mostar would be a sensation any day; but Mostar *en fête*, under the sapphire skies of May, is a thing never to be forgotten. Down through the middle of the picture dashed the Neretna, storming and foaming between the massive piers of the bridge at our feet, swirling and swerving in all the beauty of its original and self-sought curves—clear green and white from the perpetual snows of the interior mountains. The immediate borders of the stream upon each hand have all their native wildness of abrupt or shelving rocks, leaping cascades and leaning trees, white masses of cornel and



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THE APPROACH TO RAGUSA.



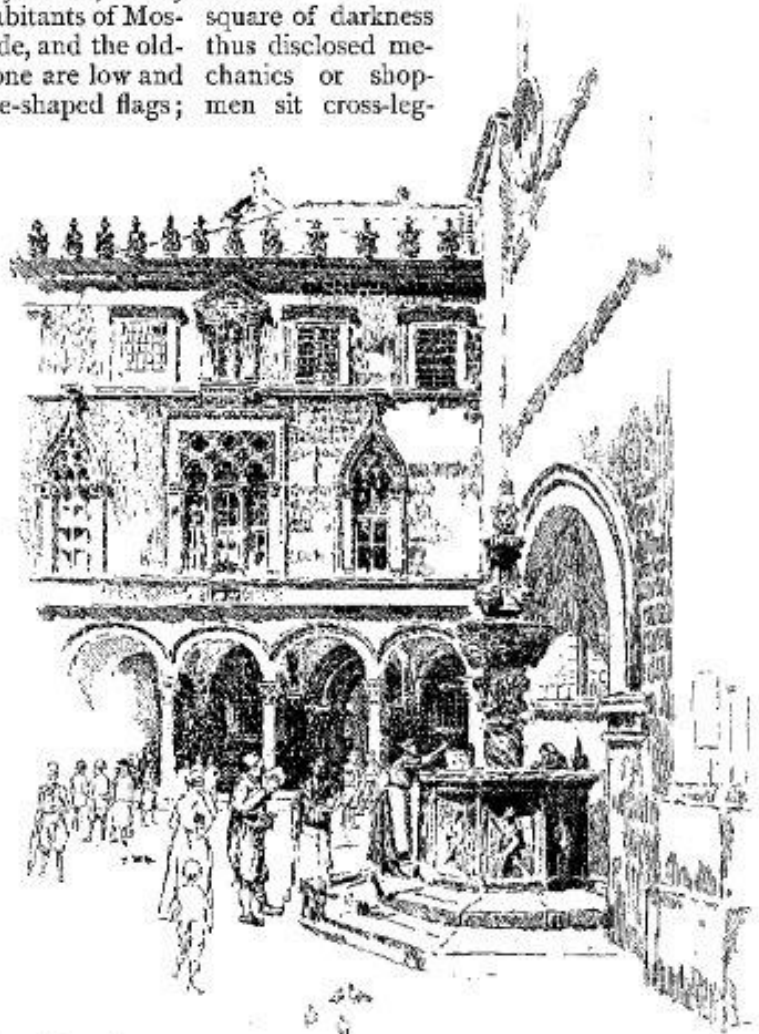
DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

STAGNO GRANDE.

elder-flower, full drapery of blossoming vines. The town is rather crowded between the left bank of the river and the base of the mountains, but on the other side there is a mile or so of rich, open plain, dotted with farmsteads and crossed by shady avenues leading to the fine post-road which mounts the western hills, and by which you may drive, if you will, to Sinj and Knin. The well-to-do inhabitants of Mostar live mostly on this latter side, and the old-fashioned dwellings of gray stone are low and plain, and roofed with lozenge-shaped flags; but even the simplest have always a veranda and a bit of garden and an overshadowing tree. Along the new bridge and over both halves of the town the gayest of bunting was flying: the yellow and black of Austria, the orange and deep red of Herzegovina, with hundreds of lesser streamers, white, scarlet, and pale blue. Yet all this fluttering of ephemeral rainbows appeared only to enhance the curiously solemn and striking effect of the twenty or more pallid minarets of time-worn stone which one could see springing skyward above the tiled roofs at various points on each side of the valley vista. The mosques to which these minarets appertain are for the most part ancient and humble, and wholly without architectural significance; but the high-walled inclosures in which they stand are shady with tall trees, and their deep porches are often painted with quaint arabesques.

Going out for our first morning stroll, we found the main commercial street of Mostar profusely adorned, not with flags only, but with garlands of roses and oleander, as well as a dazzling display of Oriental rugs hung out from window and balcony; while the costumes of the crowd that surged along the narrow way vied in gorgeousness with these rich decorations. There are some blocks of modern buildings in the vicinity of the hotel,

and more are going up; but they soon give place to low structures of a perfectly Oriental character, with projecting upper stories and closely latticed windows, the ground floors consisting always of a row of tiny shops, from each of which the whole front is removed every morning, like a kind of comprehensive shutter. In the square of darkness thus disclosed mechanics or shopmen sit cross-leg-



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BY THE PORTA PLOCCE, RAGUSA.



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THE CITY GATE, RAGUSA.

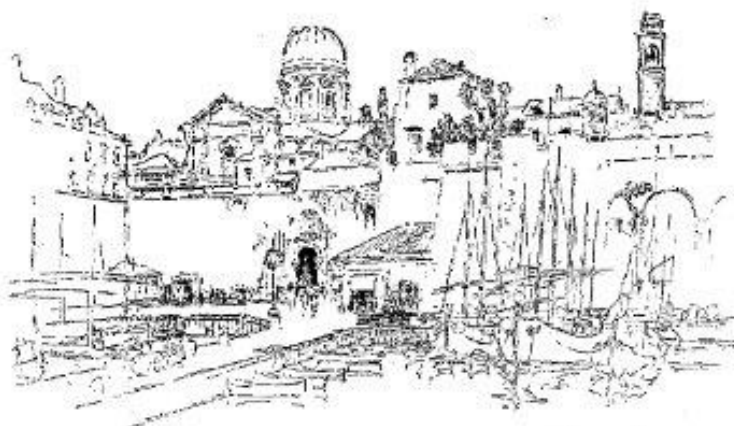
ged, smoking, or drinking black coffee out of tiny enameled cups, and plying his trade, or dispassionately offering his wares in the intervals of these more absorbing occupations. High up on the hillside to your left, as you meander down this bewildering thoroughfare, you can see the dome and towers of the great Greek cathedral, backed by a chestnut grove, and a little farther on, the belfry of the one Latin church; while if you follow the same highway to the confines of the town, you will be somewhat abruptly reminded of the end of all earthly things. For here, with only a few black cypresses growing in its inclosure, stands a venerable mosque; and beyond it, on each side of the road for a good half-mile, the ground is one sad, neglected waste of briars, thistles, and unmown grass, all bristling with the insignificant stone pillars which mark the resting-places of the Mohammedan dead.

It is a depressing sight, and we gladly turn our backs upon it, and proceed to explore the ancient and exceedingly quaint bazaar of Mostar, where every conceivable trade is carried on, the green-grocer succeeding the goldsmith, and the shoemaker's last the potter's wheel. Beyond this curious congeries of low arcades and miniature shops lies the chief architectural wonder of the town—the enormous old single-arched bridge, defended by towers at each extremity, with a span of a hundred feet, and a height above the water-level of about sixty. The history of this amazing monument, which for bold-

ness of design and skill of construction rivals, if indeed it does not surpass, the famous Ponte Maddalena in the province of Lucca, is almost unknown. It bears an Arabic date corresponding to the last quarter of the fifteenth century, and two Turkish inscriptions, about the meaning of which the learned are by no means agreed: for some find it recorded that the bridge was wholly constructed, and others that it was rebuilt upon old foundations, at the period in question. If the latter are right, the foundations are probably Roman; but they do not look so, and it is almost certain that there was never a Roman town upon this site. It would indeed be hard to find another state capital at once so appealing to the imagination in its aspect, and so

lightly encumbered with authentic history, as Mostar, and this may be one secret of its extraordinary charm. Stephen, the first independent duke of Herzegovina, owed feudal service to the sovereign of Bosnia, but is thought to have compounded with the Turks for the immunity of his province, and certainly paid tribute to the sultan. He ruled his little realm with marked ability until his death in 1466, after which it lapsed to the sultan, and continued for many years to be reckoned as a Turkish province.

We were not inclined to attempt the climb to either of the new Austrian fortresses which occupy the heights immediately above the town on each hand; and when weary with our fascinating wanderings, we could always leave our happy artist at his work, and go back to our high post of observation in the Hotel Narenta. Here, sitting down before our round windows, in the best imitation we could manage of the native's favorite posture, and each armed with a good opera-glass, we could watch the endless



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

WATER GATE, RAGUSA.

procession crossing the Franz Josef bridge, and take in every detail of its wonderfully varied apparel. For here came stately old Mohammedans, plainly men of traditions and of substance, with silvery beards, and delicately folded white turbans, sashes of rainbow-hued silks, full trousers, and long, fur-bordered paletots of peculiarly fine cloth, in the most beautiful shades of green, brown, or blue. Here came women in flat-soled yellow boots, muffled to the crown in flowing white or black drapery, which was lifted a little way from the forehead and eyes by a gold or silver vizor. Here came little school-girls in long, fluttering trousers of the gayest silk or cotton,—preferably pink,—with curious short jackets trimmed with gold braid, and fastened tightly just below the armpits. A group of youths, brown, thin, and well-featured, would follow, swinging their shapely limbs in the freest manner, wearing dark-red fezzes and sashes, and close-clinging skirts of striped orange and white. And to these would succeed a drove of white oxen, or a troop of variously laden donkeys, driven by peasants from Bosnia, in the dress with which we had become familiar at Sinj, or by natives in that same airy kind of pajama which we had observed at the Metković station.

At the opposite extremity of the bridge from the hotel was a little square with a fountain, one side of which was occupied by one of the most frequented of all the mosques; and we could see the old men bring their praying-rugs, and drop under the shadow of the wall, and at the appointed hour the muezzin emerge upon the dizzy little gallery, and turn successively to the four points of the compass, making a trumpet with his hands in the way that sailors do. But the sound of his impressive call was oftenest carried away by the breeze, or drowned by the rush of the river.

Sharp features of modern life did indeed obtrude themselves from time to time amid all this imagery of the East and the past, with an effect of rather ribald pleasantries. Thus, exactly opposite a Mohammedan school-house, outside which all the pupils' little shoes were reverently deposited, and through the open windows of which came the droning sound of young voices reciting the Koran (exactly as the school-boys of Fez used to do in the days of Nicholas Clanerts), there was an agency for the sale of sewing-machines and petroleum stoves. And when it came to taking down the profuse decorations of the streets, and laying them away for the Hohheit's next visit, a man was rolled about upon a fire-escape—which was really rather a clever idea.

How many days did we stay in Mostar? I really cannot say. I only know that we were sorrowful to leave it at the sacred hour of sun-

rise, on May 19, and retrace our steps down the river-valley to commonplace Metković.

At Metković it was no spacious Austrian Lloyd on which we embarked, but a tiny steamer whose deck was furnished with the narrowest of benches, and whose first-class saloon could with difficulty accommodate eight per-



DRAWN BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

NARROW STREET, RAGUSA.

sons at table. The tall, white-bearded captain was of a social turn, and seemed to know every port of the world from Canada to Tasmania. He had been three times in "Nuova Yorka," but was shy about using the English which he had picked up there, remarking modestly that it was "English of the ships, not of the books." It seemed a rather "somber close" to his adventurous day that he should be spending his last years in taking this insignificant tub four times a week back and forth over forty miles of Adriatic seaway; but to judge by the tales he told us over our midday meal, even this sheltered voyage is no joke in winter, and we were doubly glad, as we listened, of our glassy sea. We were now in the deep bay which di-