

Ages they were usually the subjects of the feudal chiefs and monasteries. The leader of the caravan, also a Vlach, provided an adequate armed escort, and undertook to protect his charge against the brigands. Most of the traders were Ragusans or natives of the other coast towns, but Slavonic merchants also took part in this trade, especially those who were settled at Ragusa, where some of them became naturalised so as to enjoy the same exemptions and privileges as the citizens. Even noble feudatories and kings did not disdain this kind of traffic, and employed their own Vlachs for the purpose. The journey was by slow stages, as the paths were steep and rocky, and many precautions were necessary. In Bosnia and the Herzegovina, in spite of the roads and railways, much of the traffic is still carried on on pony-back, the more valuable goods in gaily painted green boxes, the rest packed up in canvas, secured to clumsy wooden saddles. Save for the proportions of the caravans, which are now much smaller than in the heyday of the Ragusan Republic, and for the fact that armed escorts, so far as Bosnia and Dalmatia are concerned, are no longer necessary, but little has changed. The importance of this traffic was very considerable, as it was then, as I have said, the chief link between the Western world and the Slavonic lands; Ragusa probably did far more to civilise the latter than was attempted by the Greeks, with whom the Slaves have always been in eternal conflict.

Vlachs are numerous, and preserve both their language, which belongs to the Neo-Latin group, and their nomadic habits. There they still ply the trade of cattle-drovers or that of wandering merchants. See Jireček, *op. cit.*, p. 60; also his *Wlachen und Maurowlachen, passim*; and *Turkey in Europe*, by "Odysseus."