

## INTRODUCTION

IF there is a certain gratification in presenting to the English public the first specimen of the literature of a new people, that gratification is lifted above triviality, and grounded upon a serious critical basis, when the book so presented is in itself a masterpiece. I do not think that it will be questioned that *Under the Yoke* is a romance of modern history of a very high class indeed. That it should be the earliest representation of Bulgarian *belles-lettres* translated into a Western tongue may be curious and interesting, but the book rests its claim upon English readers on no such accidental quality. In any language, however hackneyed, the extreme beauty of this heroic novel, so simply and yet so artfully constructed, so full of ideal charm, permeated with so pure and fiery a passion, so human and tender, so modern and yet so direct and primitive, must have been assured among all imaginative readers.

The story is one of false dawn before the sunrise. The action proceeds, as may gradually be discovered, in the years 1875 and 1876, and the scene is laid in that corner of Bulgaria which is not even yet completely freed from Turkish rule—the north-west part of Thrace—overshadowed by the Balkan on the north, and now forming part of