

# FROM VIENNA TO CONSTANTINOPLE ON BOARD THE VESSELS OF THE AUSTRIAN DANUBE STEAM-NAVIGATION COMPANY (1834-1842)

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The introduction of steam navigation on the Danube is linked to the initiative of two British ship-builders, John Andrews and Joseph Prichard, who, in 1829, after obtaining the exclusive privilege, for three years, of running steam vessels on the river, established the "First Austrian Danube Steam-Navigation Company" ("Erste osterreichische Donau Dampfschiffahrts Gesellschaft" – DDSG).<sup>1</sup> In September 1830, the steamer "Francis I" made its trial trip from Vienna to Pest<sup>2</sup> in 14 ½ hours, and the return voyage in 48 hours. The success of the enterprise led, in February 1831, to the introduction of a regular service of steamers on the river, but the decisive incentive was given by the wholehearted involvement in the project of the enlightened count István Széchenyi, appointed royal commissioner for navigation on the Danube.

In the following three years, after continuous surveys and complex technical works in the dangerous places where proper navigation was hindered, the Steam-Navigation Company managed to secure an uninterrupted and safe voyage on the route between Vienna and Constantinople. In the absence of any railway facilities, a steam voyage along the Danube and the western coast of the Black Sea, "in spite of crowded cabins, suffocation, mosquitoes, and fevers, was preferable to the land-journey to Belgrade by the passage of the Balkan – a journey of nearly eight hundred miles performed entirely on horseback, and seldom done, except by couriers, in less than ten days."<sup>3</sup> Secondly, the roads over the Balkan Mountains were frequently impracticable, and travellers were obliged to carry all provisions with them, "with often no other accommodation, when [...] forced to stop, than could be afforded by small huts."<sup>4</sup> Another important reason for choosing the steamboat solution was linked to the more favourable and predictable arrangements of quarantine regulations, which assured a safer journey in the perilous times when the plague was raging.

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Hajnal, *The Danube. Its Historical, Political and Economic Importance*, The Hague, 1920, pp. 123-125; see also Jerome Blum, *Transportation and Industry in Austria. 1815-1848*, in "The Journal of Modern History," vol. 15, March 1943, no. 1, p. 29 and Paul Cernovodeanu, *Relațiile comerciale româno-engleze în contextul politicii orientale a Marii Britanii (1803-1878)*, Cluj-Napoca, 1986, pp. 64-67.

<sup>2</sup> The toponyms along the Danube will be given in their nineteenth century most common English forms.

<sup>3</sup> Brother Peregrine, *The Danube*, part I, in "Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country," vol. XXII, November 1840, no. CXXXI, p. 560.

<sup>4</sup> Charles William Vane, Marquis of Londonderry, *A Steam Voyage to Constantinople by the Danube and Rhine in 1840-41 and to Portugal, Spain &c in 1839*, vol. I, London, 1842, p. 146.

Thus, the number of travellers grew continuously, from 17,727 in 1835 and 105,926 in 1839 to 211,401 in 1842; in the same chronological interval, the fleet also increased from 5 ships with a total driving force of 296 horsepower to 22 vessels, totalizing 1,754 horsepower, plus other 5 tugs or auxiliary ships employed in fluvial or maritime navigation. Nevertheless, despite the considerable augmentation in the capital of the Company and the major investments made in nautical equipment or accommodation facilities for passengers,<sup>5</sup> the line was not operated in very good financial conditions. To give only an example, the stretch Skela Cladova – Galatz was run, in 1842, at a loss of 89,087 florins, the total annual deficit being 103,000 florins; facing this financial shortage, the line of steamers could be maintained only with the political and economic support of the imperial government, which regarded it as a means of developing Austrian influence in the East.<sup>6</sup>

Based entirely on contemporary travel literature, this paper aims to reconstruct the usual conditions which a voyager from Vienna to the Golden Horn came in contact with during a regular journey onboard DDSG's steamers. It is, as any other attempt implying travel writing with historical value, a rather subjective perspective, much depending on the sex, age, social position, occupation or experience of the traveller; however, by providing examples from extremely diverse authors in terms of the above mentioned variables, the general picture of the cruise may be considered as relatively accurate.

At the same time, by choosing a descriptive rather than analytical style, with enough quotations to make the reader get the gist, the author of this paper has tried to preserve the flavour of the original accounts and recreate the unique atmosphere of a voyage in a period when "the technology of steam transport was young, [and] the journey itself had a value because it meant taking part in a new experience, either in technology or of the transfer of progressive European ideas."<sup>7</sup> From reasons related to the density of travel accounts, as well as taking into account the continuous changes which occurred thereafter, this paper will refer to realities extant from the effective establishment of the line of steamers (1834) to the conventional year 1842, when the management of the Company abandoned the solution of transferring its passengers from Czernavoda to Kustendje.



At the beginnings of the DDSG, the new Danube routeway could be justly considered as exhibiting "one of the most important triumphs over time which the steam-engine has yet accomplished."<sup>8</sup> Steam navigation was also "a most powerful instrument of civilization; for it

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<sup>5</sup> Virginia Paskaleva, *Shipping and Trade on the Lower Danube in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, in vol. *Southeast European Maritime Commerce and Naval Policies from the Mid-Eighteenth Century to 1914*, ed. by Apostolos E. Vacalopoulos, Constantinos D. Svolopoulos, Béla K. Király, Boulder & Highland Lakes, 1988, p. 137.

<sup>6</sup> H. Hajnal, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-148.

<sup>7</sup> Reinhold Schiffer, *Oriental Panorama. British Travellers in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Turkey*, Amsterdam & Atlanta, 1999, pp. 40-41.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Quin, *A Steam Voyage down the Danube. With Sketches of Hungary, Wallachia, Servia, Turkey, etc.*, third edition, Paris, 1836, p. 131; for references to several British travellers (Claridge, Elliott, Quin, etc.), cf. Edgar Ditmar Tappe, *English-Speaking Travellers by Boat on the Lower Danube*, in "Bulletin – Association Internationale d'Etudes du Sud-Est Européen," t. IX, 1971, nos. 1-2, pp. 34-40; fugitive remarks also in Stevan K.

is quite true that steam and civilization are daily becoming almost convertible terms. Wherever one of these is found, the other cannot be far distant.<sup>9</sup> For another British traveller, “steam is calculated to prove the precursor of civilization, civilization of education, education of religion, and religion of happiness.”<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the reality was far beyond these high expectations, a fact which can be related not only to the infancy of the enterprise, but also to the malfunctions of the system, flaws which can be divided into three types of difficulties: complications related to the navigation in the problematic or dangerous places, hardships resulting from quarantine regulations, and administrative drawbacks.

In theory, the departures and arrivals of the steamers were arranged in order to forward passengers from one end of the line to the other with as little interruption as possible; in practice, frequent delays occurred. The voyage downstream could be accomplished in between 13 and 17 days, with prospects to reduce it to ten, especially in summertime. The return voyage took a longer period, about 17-20 days, not including a quarantine of ten days at Orsova. For a short period (1839-1842), besides the traditional fluvial routeway, the Company also used an alternative variant through Dobrudja: by transferring passengers from Czernavoda to Kustendje, the average time of the voyage was reduced by two days. The cost of the trip was, in 1836, from Pressburg to Skela Cladova, 41 florins for first class passengers and 27 florins & 20 kreutzers at second class; from Skela Cladova to Constantinople the ticket was 75 fl. at first class, 52 fl. & 40 kr. for second class travellers and 20 fl. & 20 kr. for steerage (third class). Children under ten years of age paid half the price. Passengers were allowed 60 pounds of luggage free, but they had to pay for extra weight both at downstream and upstream voyages. The passengers' names and addresses had to be clearly and distinctly written on the luggage, in order to prevent any mistake. The price for excess luggage was 1 kr. per lb., paid for small sections of the trip (Pressburg – Pest, Pest – Semlin, Semlin – Drenkova, Drenkova – Skela Cladova, Skela Cladova – Rustchuk / Giurgevo, Rustchuk / Giurgevo – Galatz, Galatz – Varna, Varna – Constantinople).<sup>11</sup> For a regular journey, the whole expense amounted to no more than about 11 pounds, a sum which did not include the charges with food and accommodation in Orsova, Pest and Galatz.<sup>12</sup> According to the information provided by the Austrian tourist Laura Ida Pfeiffer, the first-class to Constantinople cost 120 fl., the second 85 fl., exclusive of provisions, and without reckoning the hotel expenditures at Pressburg.<sup>13</sup>

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Pavlowitch, *Early Nineteenth-Century Serbia in the Eyes of British Travellers*, in “Slavic Review,” vol. 21, June 1962, no. 2, pp. 322-329; part of the travellers' accounts covering their passage through the Romanian territory, as well as their biographies, can be found in the collection *Călători străini despre Țările Române în secolul al XIX-lea*, new series, vol. III 1831-1840 and vol. IV 1841-1846, ed. by Daniela Bușă, București, 2006-2007.

<sup>9</sup> M. Quin, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Boileau Elliott, *Travels in the Three Great Empires of Austria, Russia and Turkey*, vol. I, London, 1838, p. 192.

<sup>11</sup> H. Hajnal, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-143.

<sup>12</sup> Edmund Spencer, *Travels in Circassia, Krim Tartary &c Including a Steam Voyage down the Danube, from Vienna to Constantinople and round the Black Sea in 1836*, vol. I, London, 1837, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> [Laura] Ida Pfeiffer, *A Visit to the Holy Land*, Teddington, 2006, p. 12.

The journey between the Austrian and Turkish capital consisted in five different phases, which will be detailed below.

### I. From Vienna to Pest (about 200 miles)

The distance was covered in one or two stages, according to the level of the river in the sector upstream of Pressburg: as “the current is extremely rapid, and is interrupted by numerous islands and shallows, with a channel consequently very intricate”<sup>14</sup> and the Danube “is so shallow during the summer,” no vessel, “even of moderate burden, can come higher than Pressburg.” Nevertheless, in spring, when the river “was swollen by the melting of the snows on the mountains,” or whenever the conditions allowed it, the DDSG’s management sent their vessels directly to Vienna.<sup>15</sup> When the steamer could not ascend the river, a diligence ran regularly between Vienna and Pressburg, leaving the former place at 6 o’clock in the morning and arriving at the latter, at a distance of approximately 60 miles, in about seven hours.<sup>16</sup> Other possibilities were to hire a light carriage with horses, which ran along the post road, on the right bank of the Danube,<sup>17</sup> or to use, downstream or upstream, the numerous trains of barges, drawn by horses, which carried goods along the Danube.<sup>18</sup> When the river was sufficiently high to allow steamers to go directly to/from the Lusthaus in the Prater, the voyage occupied between four and five hours in descending, and twice as much in ascending. Whenever applicable, the Company employed the same vessel to cover the whole distance, from Vienna to Pest, a trip which usually lasted, due to the numerous technical difficulties, for more than 24 hours. The return trip took at least a double amount of time, very much depending on the weather conditions and the season, which greatly influenced the force of the current. As important for understanding these relatively long delays were the regulations which compelled captains to anchor in the dark and allowed them to continue their voyage during long summer days or in clear moonlight nights; in other seasons, when the evenings closed in rapidly or the mornings were misty, the voyage was proportionately shortened and breaches of engagement occurred.<sup>19</sup>

The vessels which steamed from Vienna / Pressburg to Pest in the chronological interval analysed in this paper were “Francis I,” “Nador,” “Galatea,” “Arpád” and “Maria

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Snow, *Journal of a Steam Voyage down the Danube to Constantinople, and Thence by Way of Malta and Marseilles to London*, London, 1842, p. 21.

<sup>15</sup> Ed. Spencer, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> R. T. Claridge, *A Guide along the Danube from Vienna to Constantinople, Smyrna, Athens, the Morea, the Ionian Islands, and Venice, from the Notes of a Journey Made in the Year 1836*, London, 1837, p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> *A Handbook for Travellers in Southern Germany; Being a Guide to Bavaria, Austria, Tyrol, Salzburg, Styria, &c., the Austrian and Bavarian Alps, and the Danube from Ulm to the Black Sea*, London, Leipzig, Paris, 1837, p. 355 (references will be made to two editions of this influential guide edited by John Murray Publishing House: 1837, with information dating from 1836, and 1844, with details relative to the year 1842).

<sup>18</sup> Brother Peregrine, *op. cit.*, part II, in “Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country,” vol. XXII, December 1840, no. CXXXII, p. 694.

<sup>19</sup> In the summer of 1842, steamers went daily from Vienna to Pest, the voyage occupying 3 hours to Pressburg, and about 10 more thence to Pest. Twice a week the vessels descended in a continuous cruise of one day from Vienna to Pest. It took 34 hours to ascend from Pest to Pressburg, and 13 from Pressburg to Vienna. *A Handbook for Travellers in Southern Germany*, 1844, p. 425.

Anna.”<sup>20</sup> “Francis I” had “a cuddy about twenty-four by eighteen feet, lined on three sides with seats capable of affording sleeping room to ten persons, but destitute of cots. The ladies’ cabin has a semicircular floor, of which the radius may be four feet. A double row of benches, one above the other, surrounds this; and in two corners are indifferent couches.”<sup>21</sup> The “Nador,” captain Rau, was a ship of forty-two horsepower, which could carry a very large number of passengers: the British officer Edmund Spencer, who travelled in 1836, estimated that “there could not have been less than from two to three hundred persons on board.”<sup>22</sup> The arrangements for accommodation were not very satisfactory, as compared to those in the Rhenish steam-vessels, “and some of the persons objected to the high charges for refreshment.”<sup>23</sup> On the “Galatea,” the accommodation was, even for a very pretentious traveller such as the diplomat Charles William Vane, Marquis of Londonderry, “very clean, fair, and all that could be desired.”<sup>24</sup> The vessel provided separate cabins for wealthy or distinguished passengers, and “the cuisine on board was also very fair.”<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, despite the fact that first class conditions seemed excellent, passengers with second or third class tickets had to deal with a completely different situation: although there were distinct cabins for men and women (the ladies occupying the stern cabin), the sleeping accommodations were awful. Regardless of number, the men were stowed into the fore-cabin, “the sofas and cushions of which are attached to the sides, and, at the hour of rest, small tickings, about two feet wide, are drawn out and unfolded from under the sofas; these have an iron frame and two iron bars, that rest on the floor. A coverlet is given as the sole furniture to these sad narrow pallets, on which you may lie flat on your back, but in which few can turn without falling off.”<sup>26</sup> In the women’s cabin, “there are only the usual seats around, with cushions and pillows; so that all lie pell-mell, covering themselves with their cloaks, or what they possess, and wallowing together like a herd of cattle; than which nothing can be more inconvenient and indelicate.”<sup>27</sup> The “Arpád” was an eighty horsepower steamer, measuring 180 feet,<sup>28</sup> the longest vessel on the river; it was “curiously constructed with a projecting platform before and abaft the paddle-boxes, a few feet below the maindeck of the vessel; thereby securing the advantages of two decks.”<sup>29</sup> This additional structure was

<sup>20</sup> Hans Christian Andersen, *A Poet’s Bazaar*, vol. III, London, 1846, p. 251.

<sup>21</sup> C. B. Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72.

<sup>22</sup> Ed. Spencer, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>24</sup> C. W. Vane, *op. cit.*, pp. 345-348 (*Report to Prince Metternich of the Navigation of the Danube. Pera, November 14, 1840*); Lord Vane’s account should be read together with his wife’s similar impressions: Frances Anne Vane, *Narrative of a Visit of the Courts of Vienna, Constantinople, Athens, Naples etc. by the Marchioness of Londonderry*, London, 1844.

<sup>25</sup> C. W. Vane, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 112-113; an explanation for this is provided by Adolphus Slade, *Travels in Germany and Russia, Including a Steam Voyage by the Danube and the Euxine from Vienna to Constantinople, in 1838-39*, London, 1840, p. 126: “the steamers above Pest have no sleeping accommodations in consequence of the expectations of reaching a town before dark.”

<sup>27</sup> C. W. Vane, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-113, 345-348.

<sup>28</sup> H. Hajnal, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>29</sup> Brother Peregrine, *op. cit.*, part. II, pp. 692-693.

extremely necessary, for it was plying on a very crowded route, where hundreds of passengers were present onboard at each cruise.

A common incident for the entire trip along the Danube was the stopping of the vessel in the numerous sandbanks which obstructed navigation on the river. Travellers were thus put in tragicomic situations, as that narrated by the naval officer Adolphus Slade, traveller on the river in 1838: the confused captain “invited the passengers to lend him their bodies *en masse*, first at the bow, then at the stern, then on either side, to jump and run together, in the hope of shaking the vessel free.”<sup>30</sup> When more serious accidents happened, everything was landed, hawsers were laid out to capstans erected on the banks (on account of the frequency of these misfortunes), and, with the vessel lightened up, it was either heaved away or towed free by means of another boat or with horses.<sup>31</sup>

## II. From Pest to Drenkova (510 miles)

The trip took place on the vessel “Zrinyi,” of 80 horsepower, “Franz I,” of 60 horsepower, or “Galatea,” of the same force. The boat left early in the morning and the journey lasted for about three days downstream, mainly due to the fact that the route was very circulated, and the vessels had to call at almost every port (Földvár, Tolna, Mohacs, Neusatz, Semlin etc.), to embark / disembark passengers and goods. At these stations, the vessels stopped for about a quarter of an hour, a boat rowing off from the shore bringing and fetching back passengers. In the major ports, the vessels remained for longer amounts of time, as it was the case mentioned by Laura Ida Pfeiffer, who travelled on the river in the spring of 1842: the ship stopped at Semlin to unload 180 cwt. of goods, in exchange of which it took onboard “coals, wood, and wares of various descriptions.”<sup>32</sup>

“Galatea” was, according to the famous Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen, a “roomy and handsome steam-vessel,”<sup>33</sup> carrying more than three passengers, together with “chests, sacks, bundles, and packages,” lying heaped up as high as the boxes of the paddle-wheels.<sup>34</sup> The crowd was so immense that “people had to sleep on tables and benches, nay, under the tables and benches, even in the cabin windows. The ladies’ cabins were equally overfilled: a few of the eldest took courage, and a manly heart, as we call it, and sat down within the door of our cabin with us! Others took up their place on the steps, the one over the other. The whole deck was one large bed. One could not take a step without treading on them.”<sup>35</sup> “Zrinyi,” captain Mayr, provided the same unsatisfactory sleeping conditions, especially for passengers travelling upstream and for longer distances. To their little veiled amazement, when arriving on board, the voyagers found “that there was not a single bed in the vessel; the only preparations for sleeping were sliding benches pulled

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<sup>30</sup> A. Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 124.

<sup>32</sup> Ida Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> H. C. Andersen, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 224.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 236-237.

out from beneath the divan which ran round the cabin, a cabin-stool for the feet, and a cushion upon the bench – without mattresses, blankets, or pillows!”<sup>36</sup> As other unfortunate voyagers mentioned, uncushioned benches served for seats by day and for beds by night<sup>37</sup> and passengers lay down “upon extemporaneous beds made up in the cabin, and got as much sleep as the tender mercies of the fleas and mosquitoes would allow.”<sup>38</sup>

Another important discomfort, all year round, was related to the fact that the crowded cabins automatically meant, taking into account the hygiene conditions available, a very unpleasant odour.<sup>39</sup> When the weather was bad, the poorer passengers “are accustomed to hasten from their third-class places to those of the second class, where their presence renders it immediately desirable to open every outlet for purposes of ventilation.”<sup>40</sup> Needless to insist on the reality that the same situation always occurred during the hot summer nights, when the air in the cabin seemed to be completely irrespirable. Thus, no wonder that whenever the weather conditions allowed it, the passengers chose to sleep in the open air, on deck. Even if it was cold, it still was “a luxury compared with the overheated and crowded cabin.”<sup>41</sup> First class passengers were, in their turn, discontented with the conditions onboard the vessel: “the damps arising from the river at night, added to the wet from the decks, which flowed into our cabins, made them like a pool. Our beds and linen were cold, and never dry, from the torrents above and the humid vapours below. The constant tremulation or shaking caused by the machinery in these small steamers, arising from the paddles of the engines being underneath the vessel, occasioned disagreeable sensations.”<sup>42</sup> This type of sensations were linked, several times, to the common event of the vessel running aground, rubbing upon the natural bed of the river, although the sailors were constantly stationed at the prow to sound the bottom of the Danube.

The meals were not included in the cost of the ticket, but onboard the steamers there were tolerable restaurants, which, according to the Company’s officials, provided refreshments at moderate prices. A regular meal was described by Michael Quin, who wrote a travelogue of his steam-voyage on the Danube (in 1834): “we commenced operations with rice soup, which was followed of course by *bouilli*; next came sundry dishes of roast fowl, and of fowl cooked as gIBLETS, and well cooked too. By way of relaxation, we were then invited to admit a layer of bread pudding upon the said fowls, with a view to prevent them from finding fault with what was to come after – a prudent measure! The dinner was closed by capon, served up with plums in their own syrup for sauce. [...] We were not, however, fortunate in our wine: it was pale and sour; a degree or two beneath small beer.”<sup>43</sup> Another dinner seems to be as tasteful: “vermicelli soup, bouilli served up with beet-root, roast fowl

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<sup>36</sup> Brother Peregrine, *op. cit.*, part II, p. 685.

<sup>37</sup> Ida Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>38</sup> R. Snow, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>39</sup> “The air of the room was fraught with unsavoury odours.” C. B. Elliott, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>40</sup> Ida Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>41</sup> Brother Peregrine, *op. cit.*, part II, p. 686.

<sup>42</sup> C. W. Vane, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-119.

<sup>43</sup> M. Quin, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

presented on a couch of stewed cabbage, beef-steaks, boiled rice sweetened and browned before the fire, together with roast capon, accompanied as usual by plum sauce.<sup>44</sup>

During the trip, the male passengers were almost constantly engaged in playing cards, at a round table, whereas the ladies used to knit or were involved in such activities as conversations and telling each other's fortunes on cards, or arranging them on the table in a diversity of figures.<sup>45</sup> Reading was also habitual for many passengers, whereas singing or playing different instruments were frequently heard onboard. In the evenings, the "menu" consisted in community games, such as card games. Nevertheless, other curious and grotesque occupations could be seen, such as that described by Quin, when several women were executing for each other, alternately, "without the slightest consciousness of the external effect of the operation, the agreeable task of disburdening their hair of its multitudinous inhabitants."<sup>46</sup>

In 1836, the steamboat went regularly once a fortnight from Pest, the descent to Drenkova being accomplished in about 2 ½ days in summer and up to 4 days in other seasons.<sup>47</sup> Later on, in 1842, steamboats went regularly twice a week from Pest to Drenkova.<sup>48</sup> When the river was extremely low, the captains were obliged to stop at Moldova, a village twelve miles higher up, as firm sandbanks began to check navigation below Moldova and rocky traverses obstructed it entirely beyond Drenkova.<sup>49</sup>

### III. From Drenkova to Skela Cladova (50 miles)

Drenkova, the terminus point of the steamer from Pest, was an important mark on the map of the voyagers downstream the Danube, the small inn built by the Company, where passengers could find "capital fare, a warm room, and tolerably comfortable beds," being the first place at which they were able to "thoroughly warm and refresh" themselves.<sup>50</sup> But the reality was far from what was presented in the DDSG's prospectus, as several travellers found there "nothing beyond the guardhouse and a magazine for the service of the steamers"<sup>51</sup> or merely "a log-house of the Steam-Navigation Company" and "a temporary shelter for travellers and merchandize."<sup>52</sup>

Between Drenkova and Skela Cladova, in the region of the rapids of the Danube, the river ran over more than 6 reefs of rock, the narrow and difficult channels over them having often no more than 18 inches of water, with a rush like the race of a mill-stream. Thus, the stretch could only be traversed by steamers when the river was at its highest, but for the greater part of the year the channel was quite impracticable for larger vessels.<sup>53</sup> In order to

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 45; see also p. 99.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 51; "coffee and singing, succeeded by meat supper and cards." C. B. Elliott, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>46</sup> M. Quin, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>47</sup> *A Handbook for Travellers in Southern Germany*, 1837, p. 367.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, 1844, p. 439.

<sup>49</sup> A. Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

<sup>50</sup> Ida Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>51</sup> A. Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

<sup>52</sup> William Beattie, *The Danube, Its History, Scenery, and Topography*, London, 1844, p. 208.

<sup>53</sup> *A Handbook for Travellers in Southern Germany*, 1837, pp. 378-379.



overcome these obstacles, three solutions had been considered by the Austrian Steam-Navigation Company: a) to blast the reefs so as to allow the passage of the steamers; b) to cut three canals on the Servian shore, lateral with the principal reefs, for vessels to pass through; c) to make a road from Moldova to a point below the “iron gate,” where steamers could safely ascend.<sup>54</sup>

The distance from Drenkova to Skela Cladova was thus covered in two stages, with a stop at the beautiful Orsova, close to the Austrian-Wallachian border. The journey could be done either in small boats or by land, on the road constructed by the Hungarian government along the left bank of the Danube. Thus, at Drenkova, passengers were transferred into eight or ten oared barges, with flat-bottomed boats following, bringing luggage and carriages.<sup>55</sup> Robert Snow described, after his voyage in 1841, that “our whole party in the rowing-boat consisted of about twenty-five passengers [...]; we were rowed by six men in the bow, and two in the stern; one other acted as steersman. [The rowers] pulled well together, with a paddling stroke, well calculated for a heavy boat, with bad short oars.”<sup>56</sup> Quin was as puzzled by “the oars, which were just like our fire-shovels, with short handles,” manoeuvred by three rowers, “the excess of velocity at one side being corrected by the long oar of the patron at the stern.”<sup>57</sup> Other travellers describe the sailing cutter “Tünte,” a vessel furnished with a small covered cabin capable of holding about 25 persons.<sup>58</sup> Aboard the cutter, passengers “were soon involved among the eddies and currents, which render this passage so formidable to the unexperienced traveller, and are never without danger, when the vessel is in the hands of an unskilful pilot. The intricacy of the navigation was so apparent, that we felt it difficult to divest ourselves of serious apprehensions for the result – especially when, at frequent intervals, the vessel seemed to be hurrying towards projecting rocks, around, and over which the breakers were continually tossing their foam with a thundering roar.”<sup>59</sup>

On the return trip, from Orsova to Drenkova, the luggage was sent off in the cutter belonging to the Company, whereas carriages were provided for the transport of the passengers on the recently constructed road, “worthy to rank among the grandest works of modern times.”<sup>60</sup> After a terrible accident in 1839, when fourteen persons died, the travellers were conveyed upwards in good commodious carriages provided by the Austrian Company. The journey, lasting about ten hours, was done on the fine new road along the banks of the Danube, in many parts cut out of the bold rock, and constructed at the sole expense

<sup>54</sup> A. Slade, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-166; see also Saint Marc Girardin, *Souvenirs de voyages et d'études*, vol. I, Paris, 1852-1853, pp. 215-216; cf. *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. III, pp. 525-526.

<sup>55</sup> C. W. Vane, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120.

<sup>56</sup> R. Snow, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>57</sup> M. Quin, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>58</sup> *A Handbook for Travellers in Southern Germany*, 1837, p. 378. A. Slade (*op. cit.*, pp. 159-160) tells us that the travellers embarked “in comfortable boats, covered in abaft, and rowed by eight men each.” Helmuth von Moltke (*Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. III, p. 383) mentions an “elegant open boat, with sails, having at the stern benches for eight travellers, under a canvas cover,” and Saint Marc Girardin (*ibidem*, p. 523) speaks about “a beautiful boat pulled by eight strong rowers. The boat could carry 25 passengers and had a small, elegant cabin, which could shelter five-six ladies.”

<sup>59</sup> W. Beattie, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

<sup>60</sup> Brother Peregrine, *op. cit.*, part II, p. 684.

of Count Szechenyi. This celebrated road was “most substantially made, and finished upon the principle of the macadamized roads of England.”<sup>61</sup>

Orsova was a revivifying place for the journey, as here the travellers going downstream had to wait for several days the arrival of the steamboat from Galatz and the transfer of their baggage and merchandise from one steamer to the other. The locality was provided with excellent accommodation for the voyagers, who seldom took advantage of the opportunity to visit the marvellous region and make an inland excursion to the baths of Mehadia, at a distance of 12 miles. An inconvenience may be considered the fact that the house belonging to the Company was not “devoted to the accommodation of travellers, as at Drenkova. Here, as at Pressburg and Pest, each passenger is required to pay for his night’s expenses,” an arrangement criticized by many passengers, as it meant that everyone had to pay twice, namely for the place on the steamer and the room in the inn.<sup>62</sup>

Orsova was also the place where voyagers coming from Turkey had to perform ten days of quarantine, or even more when the plague was raging. Some authors were luckier: George Fisk, for example, was a “prisoner” for only a night and part of the following day.<sup>63</sup> The travellers were brought to the lazaretto of Schupanek, “a spacious and convenient building, situated in a healthy and airy valley open to the east, at the distance of about a mile and a-half from the town.”<sup>64</sup> Though obliged to sleep two or three in a room, and badly supplied with actual comforts, the voyagers were contented, according to Peregrine, “with having an abundance of the finest water, good bread, and clean beds.”<sup>65</sup> Andersen mentioned that “a table, a chair, and a wooden pallet, were the furniture assigned to each; the walls were newly whitewashed,” whereas the prisoners’ schedule consisted in getting a good rest, as well as in writing letters or reading a good book.<sup>66</sup>

The 8-10 miles from Orsova to Skela Cladova were done either by land in a cart, in a 3 hours’ drive, or, more usually, in a flat-bottom boat. In this situation, passengers were embarked “on a new craft, the *Saturnus*, which is only covered in overhead, and is open on all sides. So soon as a traveller has stepped upon this vessel he is looked upon as unclean, and may not go on shore without keeping quarantine.” Thus, an officer of the “Oesterreichisches Contumaz” accompanied every vessel up to Galatz and, as described below, vouched for the fact that the passengers had not disobeyed quarantine regulations. The travel from Orsova to Skela Cladova, on the Wallachian bank, or Cladova, on the Serbian one, was very short, for

<sup>61</sup> George Fisk, *A Memorial of Egypt, the Red Sea, the Wilderness of Sin and Paran, Mount Sinai, Jerusalem, and Other Principal Localities of the Holy Land Visited in 1842, with Brief Notes of a Route through France, Rome, Naples, Constantinople, and up the Danube*, New York, 1850, p. 433.

<sup>62</sup> Ida Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>63</sup> G. Fisk, *op. cit.*, p. 431.

<sup>64</sup> Brother Peregrine, *op. cit.*, part I, pp. 570-571. According to the Murray guide, the quarantine station in Orsova was “an extensive establishment, walled round, and said to be tolerably comfortable,” *A Handbook for Travellers in Southern Germany*, 1837, p. 385; 1844, p. 458.

<sup>65</sup> Brother Peregrine, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 571.

<sup>66</sup> H. C. Andersen, *op. cit.*, p. 170. For a similar description, cf. Julia Pardoe, *The City of the Sultan: and Domestic Manners of the Turks in 1836*, vol. III, London, 1838, p. 275: “windows both barred and grated; walled whitewashed and weather-stained; chairs, table, and sofa, all of wood, which is a *non-conductor*, and whitewashed like the walls.”

about two hours. This sector of the "iron gate" ("caused by a ledge of rock, three quarters of a mile wide and one mile and a quarter in length, over which the river rushes rather than flows, with a fall of fifteen feet in a mile"<sup>67</sup>) was equally beautiful and dangerous. The beauty of the landscape was overshadowed by the fact that, as many travellers thought, "this shipment was by far the worst of all," as it was made on Wallachian boats, "very rudely constructed." "Although covered over with wood at top, they are open on both sides and in front and rear, courting a total exposure to cold, wind, and rain, and for no earthly purpose that I could discover, as they might as well have protection from the inclement season. The helmsman stands up at the stern, as in a galley, his rudder being a pole, bound by cord to a plank, while four paddles aft and six on the fore-part of this ill-shapen canoe carry it along."<sup>68</sup>

When going upstream, the travellers were brought to the quarantine station at Orsova "in one of the large unpainted open boats so common on the Danube; it was drawn by eight oxen, assisted by about twenty men," the party being escorted by a guardian and a soldier. "The boat in which we embarked was of the rudest construction; the floor was perfectly flat, and the knees were simply branches of trees cut off short, without the least effort to reduce them to any uniform shape. Paint was as much out of the question as a waterproof cabin; but the weather was fortunately fine, and we had no occasion to regret the absence of a better conveyance. Two long planks lashed alongside the stern-post served as a rudder, which it required four men to manage [...]. As we ascended towards the Iron Gates, or Eisern Thör, several passengers were requested to land, and walk along the bank with the trackers, in order to lighten the boat."<sup>69</sup> Andersen was either luckier or less pretentious: from Cladova "the passengers and goods were re-shipped in a large, handsomely painted boat with a wooden roof," the boat being dragged up against the stream by fifty or more Servians with a rope and iron chain, they walking on a pathway and hauling it along."<sup>70</sup> According to Peregrine, who travelled on this route in 1839, the voyage lasted for nine hours.<sup>71</sup>

#### IV. From Skela Cladova to Galatz (620 miles)

Two steamers plied regularly between Skela Cladova / Cladova and Galatz. In the period covered by this paper, they were "Argo," "Pannonia" and "Zrinyi," transferred from above. As the quarantine regulations prevented them to call at the towns on both banks, one vessel coasted along the Wallachian, the other along the Turkish bank, neither having any communication with the opposite shore.<sup>72</sup> In 1842, the steamers left Cladova / Skela Cladova six times a month, three times through the Sulina branch of the Danube, three times by landing passengers at Czernavoda in order to transit Dobrudja.

"Argo," 50 horsepower, is portrayed by Andersen, in 1841, as having "a saloon with mirrors, books, maps, and elastic divans; the table was spread with steaming dishes, fruits,

<sup>67</sup> A. Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

<sup>68</sup> C. W. Vane, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-123.

<sup>69</sup> Brother Peregrine, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 570.

<sup>70</sup> H. C. Andersen, *op. cit.*, pp. 155-156.

<sup>71</sup> Brother Peregrine, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 571.

<sup>72</sup> *A Handbook for Travellers in Southern Germany*, 1837, p. 389.

and wine; all was very good on board.”<sup>73</sup> The crew was Italian, while the captain, Marco Dobroslavich, a Dalmatian, “an excellent, humorous old fellow, soon became endeared to us all.”<sup>74</sup> “Pannonia,” a small steamer of 36 horsepower, captain Clician, “was as dirty as any collier,” being stowed, as Lord Vane described it, “fore and aft, with carriages of merchants going to Galatz and Odessa; and so enormous was the quantity of other baggage and stowage, that no passenger had space to move. Such was really its state when I first went on board, and ere long three enormously laden boats from Orsova and two carriages arrived; will it then be believed, that it next packed in all these in addition to the crew we brought!”<sup>75</sup> In accordance, the vessel was frequently “obliged to tow down another large boat for it, at the tail of the Pannonia; and I need scarcely add, that they took further advantage of this, by stowing a great lot more of merchandize,”<sup>76</sup> a procedure which retarded the steamer with at least two hours out of six. For brother Peregrine, “Pannonia” was “a much smaller vessel, very inferior in accommodation and deficient in power,”<sup>77</sup> whereas for Spencer, it was a pretty little flat-bottomed boat, with the form and interior arrangements similar to the vessels running between London and Gravesend. “The accommodation was excellent, so far as regarded a ladies’ cabin, and a large saloon furnished with divans, the whole kept remarkably clean; but there being no regular berths, the sofas performed the duty of beds, and the traveller is much inconvenienced while performing his toilet.”<sup>78</sup> Lord Vane confirms the crowded state of the cabins during his journey, in 1839: “in the fore-cabin, where only twelve should be accommodated, thirty-six or thirty-eight were stowed. In the first cabin (though somewhat better), the ladies were so closely packed that only one had room to dress at a time; and, contrary to all practice and usage, the whole deck was covered with the carriages and merchandize, so that it was impossible to walk about.”<sup>79</sup> For Slade, “Pannonia” was much too weak for the service, the steamer’s progress being much influenced by the strength of the current. “The Captain of the *Pannonia* told us that he required in the autumn five quarters of an hour to perform (descending the river) what would occupy him three and a half quarters of an hour in the spring: vice versa for the ascent.”<sup>80</sup>

The regulations of the refreshments were also criticized by the passengers who came from Constantinople and could compare them with the system prevailing on the steamer “Ferdinando Primo,” plying between Galatz and Constantinople. “In the Ferdinando, a dollar a-day was paid by each passenger; and breakfast, dinner, and tea, were served in a truly English style. In the Pannonia, and in the other vessels on the river, the meals are managed by a *restaurateur*, and, consequently, half of them are considered as extras, and are as

<sup>73</sup> H. C. Andersen, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 119.

<sup>75</sup> C. W. Vane, *op. cit.*, pp. 124-125. An explanation for the frequent transport of carriages onboard the Austrian steamers was later given by Xavier Marmier who stated that newly made carriages were brought to Bucharest, where they were much valued. *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. IV, p. 622.

<sup>76</sup> C. W. Vane, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>77</sup> Brother Peregrine, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 564.

<sup>78</sup> Ed. Spencer, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>79</sup> C. W. Vane, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

<sup>80</sup> A. Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

indifferent as can be expected.”<sup>81</sup> Despite these unfavourable remarks, the same traveller alluded to the fine fish from the Danube served onboard: “among these, the carp, pike, and sturgeon may be mentioned as particularly excellent; and the small craw-fish which were supplied to us as we approached the Hungarian frontier were received as a real luxury.”<sup>82</sup> Spencer also mentions that the refreshments were considered “as too high-priced for a country where provisions may be purchased at a lower rate than in any other part of Europe. The stranger, however, has the advantage of being able to resort to a fixed tariff, in which the price of every article has been regulated by the directors of the steam navigation company.”<sup>83</sup>

The distance to Galatz was covered in three or four days, much depending on the weather conditions (rain and fog) and the frequent incidents causing the vessel to be stranded on sandbanks. The immoderate weight of the vessels also retarded the trip, as well as the sometimes long stops in the Danubian ports. As mentioned above, vessels called only at the ports from one side of the Danube: on the Bulgarian side, they stopped at Widdin, Rustchuk, Silistria and Czernavoda, on the Romanian one, they landed at Calafat, Giurgevo, Braila and Galatz.

An attempt to shorten the entire voyage by two or three days was done in 1839, when the Danube Steam-Navigation Company established a transit by land from Czernavoda to Kustendje, “for the convenience of passengers proceeding by the Danube to Constantinople, and vice versa”;<sup>84</sup> thus, “the journey is now shortened by 200 miles, and exposure to the mosquitoes and the unwholesome swamps of Galatz is avoided.”<sup>85</sup> As the small village of Czernavoda did not afford the slightest accommodation for travellers, they were compelled to sleep onboard until all preparations for the transit were ready. During this time, “the steamer was being unloaded of its heavy baggage, which was packed on small wagons, each drawn by two oxen, and immediately forwarded overland to Kustendje.”<sup>86</sup> The route over the Dobrudja isthmus was made “in light carriages, each drawn by four horses, driven by a postilion. The luggage had been forwarded overnight by one of the bullock-wains. We went the whole distance with the same horses, stopping three times, twice for a very few minutes, and once for an hour and a half. The whole journey was performed in less than seven hours, including the stoppages.”<sup>87</sup> At the Black Sea, passengers were received at the Company’s house, rebuilt and fitted up “in a humble way for the accommodation of their passengers. There were two regular beds, but we all, chiefly for fear of the insects, preferred sleeping on the simple divans or sofas belonging to the rooms, and passed the night with very tolerable

<sup>81</sup> Brother Peregrine, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 564; Julia Pardoe (*op. cit.*, p. 249) mentioned that the “table is infinitely better served than that of the first vessel.”

<sup>82</sup> Brother Peregrine, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 569.

<sup>83</sup> Ed. Spencer, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>84</sup> A. Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

<sup>85</sup> R. Snow, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 39-40. “After dinner, our luggage was packed in large waggons, made entirely of wood, to be sent off to the Danube; and as they were drawn by oxen, they said it would occupy the whole afternoon, night, and the following day to reach Czerna-Woda, that we must stay in Kustendje that night, and that by starting in the morning we should arrive the same time as the luggage.” H. C. Andersen, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

comfort.”<sup>88</sup> Other voyagers confirm the fact that the inn was “particularly inviting from its cleanliness. A balcony with a projecting roof of reeds led into the best room, which was appropriated to the passengers in the first cabin.”<sup>89</sup> At Kustendje, the voyagers were embarked onboard the “Ferdinando Primo,” and reached Constantinople in about 24 hours.

The main problems for the travellers during the journey from Skela Cladova to Czernavoda / Galatz were the agglomeration onboard the steamer, which always looked like a crowded bazaar, with all types of characters and languages, with carriages, and innumerable piles of boxes of merchandize. “All this and more was crowded on an arena both filthy and black with the coals of the steam-boat, mixed with flakes of water, and nothing to wash the decks; while the oil of the engines, and the stench of garlic issuing from a four-foot square cupboard, by way of kitchen (from which effluvia no part of the deck was free)” formed an explosive mixture for the senses of an aristocratic traveller.<sup>90</sup> Depending on the season, another nuisance came from the mosquitoes: “the sufferings of the passengers from mosquitoes, and the crowded state of our small cabin, induced many of us to spread our mattresses on the deck during the night; and we contrived to sleep there with comparative comfort, and, fortunately, without any ill-effects from the climate of the river. Towards evening the roof and beams of the low cabin became positively black with the mosquitoes which had collected there, and the three French passengers regularly got up a crusade for the destruction of the cousins. With coats thrown off, and large towels in their hands, the whole party resolutely set to work every evening, amid screams of horror.” Although the cabin-windows of the “Pannonia” were carefully covered with fine muslin in order to exclude the mosquitoes, “long before night the cabin was swarming with them; the irritation of their bites contributed to hasten the pestilential influence of the malaria, and several passengers were soon confined to their beds by that terrible species of intermittent, which the physicians of Vienna emphatically designate by the name of «the Danube Fever».”<sup>91</sup>

As for their past time, in many travelogues there are extensive references to the mixture of peoples, religions and habits which populated the Austrian steamers: as Snow mentioned “the figures and dresses of the sailors, and the second-class passengers in the fore part of the vessel, amused us very much; several women scalding fowls, an old Turk sitting cross-legged cleaning knives, with other characters to us both new and entertaining.” The same author also refers to the steamer’s “library,” a shelf of books in the cabin, designed for the amusement of the passengers, where one could find “*Sketches* by Boz, *The Pickwick Papers*, and some of Mrs. Trollope’s most popular writings,” standards of recreation on board a Danube steamer.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>88</sup> R. Snow, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>89</sup> H. C. Andersen, *op. cit.*, p. 100. G. Fisk, *op. cit.*, p. 430: “We spent the remainder of the day and night there at a small comfortless albergo.”

<sup>90</sup> C. W. Vane, *op. cit.*, p. 126. R. Snow (*op. cit.*, pp. 34-35) considered that the “steamer was cleaner and better appointed than the one in which we came to Drenkova from Pest.”

<sup>91</sup> Brother Peregrine, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 565.

<sup>92</sup> R. Snow, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-36.

### V. From Braila / Galatz to Constantinople (450 miles)

In the ports of the Maritime Danube, passengers had to comply with the difficult quarantine regulations. When coming from upstream, passengers were not allowed to land until the Austrian quarantine officer, present onboard every steamer, “stepped forward, and vouched for the fact that we had neither landed nor taken up any one on the right bank of the river; thereupon the strangers were allowed to set foot on terra firma.”<sup>93</sup> Voyagers coming from Constantinople and landing at Galatz or Braila had to perform the quarantine period of fourteen days, whereas those heading upstream were transferred, in the sector of the lazaretto, from one vessel to the other. When the steamer came from Constantinople, it was moored “alongside the place assigned to ships in quarantine, which was separated from the town by the Parlatorio, a space of about six feet broad, extending for some distance along the bank, and protected from intrusion by a high palisade on each side. Our walk along the Parlatorio was the only bit of Moldavian ground to which we were allowed access.”<sup>94</sup> The same situation occurred in Braila, at a distance of two hours, where, close to the anchorage place, was a Parlatorio, similar to that of Galatz.<sup>95</sup>

Galatz was the last station for a traveller on the route between the Austrian capital and the Golden Horn. Depending on the schedule and on weather conditions, the travellers going to Constantinople were compelled to wait here for several days. The journey was done onboard the “Ferdinando Primo,” of 100 horsepower, captain Everson, which was, according to Lord Vane, neither large enough, nor in any way adapted for carrying passengers across the Black Sea;<sup>96</sup> anyway, the opinion was very relative, as other writers considered it “one of the best vessels of the Austrian company.”<sup>97</sup> Though not a large boat, the “Ferdinando” “is comfortable and well built,”<sup>98</sup> and it possessed commodious and comfortably arranged cabins, “well fitted with every requisite for lessening the inconvenience of ship board.”<sup>99</sup> The same appreciative conditions result from Andersen’s presentation: the vessel was comfortable and well arranged on board;<sup>100</sup> “elastic divans, and convenient hammocks surrounded a large ornamental saloon with mirrors, pictures, and books; fresh Egyptian figs, plucked a week before, were set out on the table, with grapes from Smyrna, and wine from the far distant Gaul.”<sup>101</sup> Even the second-class cabin is neatly arranged, but “unfortunately even here the men and women are not separated in the second-class cabin; but care is at least taken that third-class passengers do not intrude. Twelve berths are arranged round the walls, and in front

<sup>93</sup> Ida Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>94</sup> Brother Peregrine, *op. cit.*, pp. 562-563. Julia Pardoe, *op. cit.*, p. 239: “a small space railed off for the exclusive use of the steam company, and separated from the road leading into the town by a double palisading of wood about breast-high.”

<sup>95</sup> Brother Peregrine, *op. cit.*, part I, pp. 563-564.

<sup>96</sup> C. W. Vane, *op. cit.*, pp. 351-352.

<sup>97</sup> Brother Peregrine, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 560.

<sup>98</sup> Ida Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>99</sup> Julia Pardoe, *op. cit.*, p. 229. *Ibidem*, p. 248: “The cabins were comfortably fitted up, and supplied in the most liberal manner with every thing that could contribute to the convenience of their occupants.”

<sup>100</sup> H. C. Andersen, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 93.

of these are placed broad benches well cushioned.”<sup>102</sup> Another good practice onboard the “Ferdinando,” as mentioned by Laura Ida Pfeiffer, was the fact that basins and towels were handed to passengers, “a custom totally unknown upon former vessels. For provisions, which are tolerably good, we are charged 1 fl. 40 kr. per diem.”<sup>103</sup>

The main problem with the region of the Danube Mouths, especially during the hot summer months, was that represented by mosquitoes. Thus, it was a common advice for travellers, if they valued “either skin, sleep, or comfort,” not to journey down this part of the Danube without a mosquito net, as they were certain “of being assailed by myriads of mosquitoes and sand-flies, to say nothing of the hornets; by these I was attacked, sometimes alternately, sometimes in conjunction. But it is during the night that the mosquitoes are most troublesome; then we found them so numerous as frequently to extinguish the lights in the cabin: no contrivance on our part could prevent their attack, so insatiate is their thirst for blood.”<sup>104</sup> Thus, the voyagers were careful to procure everything necessary to make the trip easier: “the most important of these were mosquito curtains, and London porter from Stampers celebrated store. Travellers who follow this route will do well to bear in mind, that to the use of this beverage in the pestilent swamps of the Lower Danube during the dog-days, the exemption of many passengers from malaria fevers is very generally and perhaps justly attributed.”<sup>105</sup>

The voyage from Galatz to Constantinople lasted for about 2 ½ days, but it could be retarded either by the condition of the Sulina bar of the Danube (which sometimes, as in the case of Lord Vane, was very difficult to be crossed) or by the storms so prevalent on the sea. These situations were very dangerous for third class passengers (deck-passengers), who had to cope with the perils of an angered sea. The vessels stopped at Varna, took / landed passengers and goods, and then headed for the Bosphorus.

Steam navigation on the Danube was, in the fourth and early fifth decades of the nineteenth century, a bold undertaking, although not completely disagreeable in terms of interest and human experience. It brought the travellers in contact with appealing regions of Central and Eastern Europe, which otherwise would have remained beyond the attention of western voyagers. If the problems still persisted during this period, one of the causes was the reality that the Austrian Danube Steam-Navigation Company had not decided whether its aim was to assure the conveyance of merchandize, as a means to stimulate and develop the Austrian economic penetration on the Eastern markets, or to guarantee the safe, prompt, and convenient accommodation of the passengers. By intermingling the two components and crowding up the vessels with piles of goods, the DDSG always brought about numerous inconveniences for the voyagers, in terms of comfort, facilities and expedience.

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<sup>102</sup> Ida Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 21.

<sup>104</sup> Ed. Spencer, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-80. Jean Baptiste Morot mentioned that the only solution for several passengers was to dive repeatedly into the water. *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. III, p. 800.

<sup>105</sup> Brother Peregrine, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 560.