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A DAY AND A NIGHT IN KUSTENDIL

STREET SCENES LIKE OPERA, THOUGH BLOODSHED IS NOT FAR OFF

The Soldier Chorus as It Marches to the Public Bath—A Babel of Many Voices—Reflections of the More Seasoned Folk Over Coffee at the Dragoman—The Disappearing Youth of the Night and What His Words Meant.

By ALBERT SONNICHSEN

[Special Correspondence of The Evening Post.] KUSTENDIL, Rumania, December 31.—Here we are in the center of a great white circle of gray ribbed peaks; everything beyond the town is white or gray, as far as the eye can reach, even to the sky above. The wine-colored tiles of the houses, visible from my window, show here and there in patches where the wind has brushed off the light covering of snow that fell last night, and the mountain stream surges under a thin, uneven crust of ice. The winter is here in earnest now; we hear that we may be snowed in before many days, cut off from the great world outside. But the Kustendilians do not care—Kustendil is a world in itself. If the great world outside does not choose to interest itself in Kustendil, Kustendil can rise to a similar lofty indifference. So we do not worry about how deep the snow lies in the past. The last post from Sofia has just arrived, so it isn't likely a few months' blockade will interfere with its regularity; a law is bound to come before it is due again.

Our life is a lively thoroughfare; all the peasants coming in with asses or carts loaded with produce pass under my window, urbanized and red-tipped cattle dealers from Albania or Macedonia, fur-capped Bulgars in heavy sheepskin jackets and broad, red sashes peeping out between the lapels. Some wear peaked hoods, like cowls, which, together with the bagginess of their trousers above the knees and their heavy walking staves, give them a quaint, ill-favored appearance. There are women, too, in the peasant dress of the land, a wonderful combination of colors, suggestive of grand opera chorus, especially if the girls are young and pretty, as a good many are, for grandmothers don't come to town much in this cold weather.

From my window it is very much like grand opera. It is Saturday morning, the liveliest of the week. What has suggested opera to me is a deep, growling chorus of men's voices coming in from up the street, at least a hundred voices, strong, increasing in volume, rolling over all the town, echoing back from the steep, snow-streaked cliff that towers up as a background to the houses opposite. I have never seen every Saturday morning since I have been here, so I know that the soldiers are coming in from the barracks to wash at the hot springs that sputter up in the middle of the town. With a sudden increase of the low roar, they turn the corner, march into view and are passing, the same fur-capped peasants lifted out of their picturesque costumes into long, gray overcoats and heavy boots. They, too, wear the high-peaked, green cowls, which make them look like so many long-casocked monks; grand opera monks, of course. I feel vaguely that something has gone wrong, because they do not form in a semi-circle before my window and point their right hands upward while they roar out that mighty chorus. I feel the same about a troupe of young village girls passing a few seconds later humming a refrain of the soldier's song together, but half a dozen woolly little donkeys trotting in after them spoil that effect. They (the girls) see my bare head poked out of the window and they begin to giggle. "Gospodin!" cries one in feigned alarm, "where's the song you're going to drop on the back of your neck?" That raises a loud laugh at my expense. "Buy a young sow, Gospodin!" shouts another; "see, she's as fat as an egg." More laughter. I cannot afford to compromise my dignity, so I draw in and slam the window to. But the glass is not thick enough to close out their peals of merriment. My interest was that the audience should do the laughing.

A RICH MAN'S FUNERAL

I am gradually becoming conscious of a new sound from outside, growing more distinct through the sudden ceasing of all other noises. It comes as a low, continuous murmur, rising and falling by a note or two, a low, solemn chant, that I do not recognize. There are a number of peasants against the low wall opposite, their fur caps removed, all facing down the street toward the town. As I open the window again the chant bursts in on me in all its monotonous volume; two bearded priests in black cassocks and high black head-gear appear, one swinging burning incense, the other carrying an open book, both chanting. More priests march in, four abreast, all chanting, all bearded to the waist, twenty in all. They might have stepped out of "Aida"; if the chorus were not so solemn; it is deeply impressive, even to one not of the Bulgarian Church. Every person in view up or down the street is standing, head uncovered and bowed.

THE DRAGOMAN

The Dragoman, the retreat of Kustendil's sophisticated method, of men who know life as it is, of men who have known life's bitter disappointments. Here we gather of evenings about the tables, smoking, discussing politics, the war, the latest reports from Macedonia, having served to us Turkish coffee, lemonade, tea, very mild beer, and, to some of the older men, plum brandy. Naturally to such men dancing sounds a trifle frivolous. The landlord of the Dragoman realizes that, so he has had imported at great expense, he says, something that could divert the minds of more serious men—a phonograph. It stands in a corner of the room, trained on us as though

WEST POINT'S CADET DEBTORS

THEY PAY THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS AFTER GRADUATION

Trusted for Four Years by a Jeweler, a Grocer, a Photographer and a Hotel-keeper in This City—Only Security is the Army Man's Word of Honor

There is a small group of New York business men who will collect next summer an annual unsecured debt of several thousand dollars with a little difficulty as far as the payment of the bills is concerned. The debtors are the members of the class of 1905 in the United States Military Academy at West Point. They owe the money principally for jewelry, confectioneries, photographic work, and rare hotel bills.

The pay-after-graduation credit system at the Point is as well established as the rest of the Academy's iron-bound, and better-known, customs. Few, if any, of next June's class will emerge from their four years of toil free from debt, and the financial confidence their creditors have reposed in them has been practically unlimited. They could order whatever they liked, and some of them are "in for" as much as \$800 or \$700 apiece.

The result is that the "good spenders" will see their equipment funds wiped away immediately after graduation day. This accounts for the accumulation of small monthly sums retained by the cadets for the purchase of the cadet's salaries. It should aggregate about \$300, which is intended to give the newly demoted army officer a start in the way of uniforms and incidental necessities. Fortunately the officer finds the same ease as the cadet in obtaining credit, so that the swamping of his fund simply prolongs his period of indebtedness. Where, as he owed money to New York photographers, hotel men, and sweetmeat dealers before his graduation, he afterwards owes it to the tailor.

A well-known jewelry house, a big grocery store, the popular hotel proprietor, and a photographer are the most regular creditors of the cadets. From the jewelry store the embryo soldiers buy Christmas and wedding presents and the like. "Enclosed find my visiting card," a cadet writes to the firm. "Please ship to me a suitable gift, costing \$300." Sometimes he furnishes to the jewelry house an elaborate description of the person for whom the gift is intended—maybe his sweetheart in a far-off State, or his sister or his mother. The firm has a man who has studied the duty of selecting presents. The cadet learns later what has been sent. The amount of his bill is \$300. He should die or should be expelled, or for any reason should fail to "make good," his classmates club together to pay his bill, however large or small it may be. The merchant knows his money is sure to come.

"Do you have to pay interest?" a cadet was asked. "No," was the reply. "They charge us fancy prices for everything, so as to avoid the trouble of calculating interest." From the grocery establishment, which carries candles and fruits as a side line, the cadets receive frequent shipments, especially during the summer months. "What do you do with the sweets?" Are they for gifts to the girls?" was inquired. "Not a bit," said the cadet. "The girls who come to West Point give us candy by the peck, you know. These boxes we get from New York are additional. Of course, it's against the rules for us to receive packages of any sort or money in letters. The High School of the city is a mile below in a wagon and smuggled into camp or barracks."

THE PHOTOGRAPH ACCOUNT. If a young woman were to spend as much for photographs as does a West Point cadet, she would be open to the charge of extreme vanity. But the cadet has to do it. There are the folks at home, calling for pictures of him and his uniform every little while. His young women friends—and he has many of them if he is a cadet of the usual calibre—are making similar demands, and there are scores of others. The result is that the New York camera man reaps a harvest of debts, which, like those of the other dealers, are as certain of payment as a note. There is a rumor that a merchant once attempted to build up a clientele at the academy and demanded written promises to pay, and that the cadets, indignant at the reflection on their honor, swiftly determined deliberate pull on the merchant.

One of the creditors who is sure to have almost every member of each graduating class on his list, is the proprietor of the hotel at which the youngsters stop in passing through New York during their infrequent furloughs. For years the cadets have had a free rein there, getting whatever the house afforded without restriction as to cost. They register, eat, drink, occupy the best rooms available, use theatre tickets bought with money advanced by the hotel, all with no thought of paying until years or months afterward.

For the first time they begin to figure up their debts when the last year is well under way. About this time, for instance, the graduates-to-be of next June are arguing a knowledge as to "where they will stand." "Possibly four or five men in our class," said one of them the other day, "will pocket their equipment funds nearly complete, but I don't believe there is a single man who will escape with no debts at all. Most of us have been surprised, I might say dumfounded, at our financial condition. A week or two ago I heard one of the fellows talking at the bill at the jeweler's."

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WHY, NO, I JUST WROTE 'EM TO SEND SOMETHING NICE BY EXPRESS, AND THEY DID IT.

"That's the way with most of us. We've been too busy studying and drilling to practice economy, and now the waking-up is a terrible shock." The cadet mournfully remarked that he hoped to get out of debt by the time he reached a first lieutenant, but the check for his equipment fund, he said, would be endorsed over to his creditors in toto.

Most of the West Pointers come from families of small means, but there are a few whose supply of cash from home is limited only by the strait rules of the Academy. They cannot receive money orders, and it is troublesome to have checks cashed, so the remittances, for the most part, are in the form of greenbacks and are sent in letters, which, of course, the officials cannot open. It is said that the graduates who owe the largest amount of money at the end of each year are the ones who have received most from home, while the poor members of the corps keep their obligations down to bare necessities.

The extent of cash shipments to cadets was indicated just before a recent football game in Philadelphia against the Naval Academy. From the "middles" there came a telegram: "Can you raise \$2,000?" "Yes," was the answer. "We have gathered together \$2,000 to bet on our team. Can you cover it?"

The West Pointers began to hustle. A committee was formed to raise the amount, for a challenge like this from the navy must not remain unanswered. The barracks were canvassed thoroughly, and each cadet produced from his hiding places a small cash as he wished to wager—in most cases all he had. Within less than three hours after the telegram came the needed sum had been collected, and the news was wired back to Annapolis. Every cent of the money had been pledged to the Academy authorities in regulations, and now the blanket bet was made with equal disregard of rules.

As it happened, West Point won the game, and a week later the hiding places in barracks had been replenished with whatever treasure was left over after the holiday expenditures in Philadelphia.

THE INGENUOUS FILIPINO YOUTH Who Wished to Marry, and How He Got the Funds

When a Filipino boy earns the sum of ten dollars each month, he is then, according to Filipino customs, rich enough to marry and raise a family, so we were not surprised to have our neighbor, the colonel, drop in one evening to consult us about the selection of a wedding present for his table boy. Several of us had long known Beppo, and we considered the colonel fortunate to retain so faithful and loyal a boy. We advised the colonel to give him money, but, no, the colonel wanted to buy something for the boy to keep and the purchase was put off till after the wedding. Then Beppo failed to return to serve the dinner, but then everybody takes a holiday when he takes upon himself a wife, so Beppo was forgiven.

Next day, with a view to buying the present, the colonel went to the trunk where he kept his surplus funds and behold his stores had diminished. The lock was intact so whoever had taken the money must have had a key to the trunk.

The police were notified and Beppo was rounded up. On his person was found a key which fitted the trunk and thus was the faithful, much-trusted Beppo proven guilty. He told the judge that he took only what he needed and, in most commendatory tones, asserted that he had left forty dollars in the trunk for the colonel's use. He needed the money to get married; fifteen dollars for carriage hire, forty for the priest and ceremony, and eighty-three pesos for the bride's trousseau.

A REMARKABLE PERSIAN FRENZY

WILD RITE IN HONOR OF MAHOMET'S TWO GRANDSONS

Description by an Eyewitness of a Singular Festival Procession in Constantinople—Devotees of the Persian Quarter Perform Between Lines of Stolid Turkish Policemen—The Savage Sword-Bearers

On the last Sunday in March, 1904, thousands of spectators witnessed the sanguinary memorial-rite which was celebrated at Constantinople, in honor of Hussein and Hussein, the ill-fated sons of Ali, and grandsons of Mahomet. This annually recurrent frenzy among the Persian devotees of the Shah sect of Mohammedanism can be explained only by the presence of some emotion, persistent enough to outwear many centuries, and potent enough to arouse each year a fanaticism of grief which culminates in self-flagellation and bloody self-mutilation.

An article by Matthew Arnold, in the Cornhill Magazine for 1871, quotes Count Gobineau, formerly the French minister at Tehran, as explaining this frenzy of the Persian Shahs by a national symbolism. Count Gobineau believed that the Persians, conquered and converted by "the religion of the sword," see, in the fate of the murdered sons of Ali, a parallel to their own overthrow; and their zealous commemoration of Hussein and Hussein therefore becomes a national rite, expressive of undying protest and fanatic hope.

The simpler and more probable explanation of this strange memorial rite is to be found in the power which a heroic human personality always holds over the idealizing imagination of men. Ali, the cousin, son-in-law, and favorite lieutenant of Mahomet, was a noble Arab type, so fierce in war that he was called "The Lion of God," yet possessed of the self-control and mystical piety of an anchorite; his lofty self-abnegation deeply appealed to the more spiritual of Mahomet's followers; and his sons, Hussein and Hussein, grandsons through Fatima—of the great Prophet himself, possessed their father's high spirit, combined with fine ethical sensibilities. When Hussein was attacked and harassed by the relentless Emir of Kufa, he begged his chiefs to leave him to his solitary fate and to save themselves by flight. When poisoned, Hussein lay languishing in the pangs of death, he was urged to speak the name of the person who had suspected of being his murderer; but he answered: "This world is only a long night; leave my enemy alone until he and I shall meet in open daylight, in the presence of the Most High!"

Fancy and sentiment have wreathed the names of these two grandsons of Mahomet with tender and adoring memories. As children, they had sat upon the Prophet's knee, and had been kissed and embraced by him; in their maturer years they had grasped and exemplified the deeper spiritual realities of the stern Moslem faith. For these reasons, the annual memorial festival, held in their honor, always arouses the devout participants to a pitch of frenzy and to a fanatical self-infliction of physical pain and mutilation.

This rite was celebrated at Constantinople in the Persian Quarter. At four o'clock hundreds of curious spectators gathered in a large square, some of them hiring positions at windows in the surrounding buildings, most of them standing, two and three deep, against the house in the rear for the collection of about fifteen dollars for carriage hire, forty for the priest and ceremony, and eighty-three pesos for the bride's trousseau.

The boy was sent to Billiard prison and the trousseau, all that was left of the spoils, was sent to the colonel. We hear that his wife and daughters are coming on the next steamer to join him and we are looking forward to their making-use of that Filipino trousseau, but a point of still greater interest to us is the fact that Beppo's family thinks that even though he must remain at Billiard for the next six months, his position at the colonel's is still open to him, and it is true Filipino style the prisoner's family has arrived at the colonel's—the bride, her mother and two sisters—and they have installed themselves in the servants' quarters. We wonder how the colonel will explain to his wife and family the presence of such a harem.

Poor Beppo in true Filipino fashion had been honest through a long period of servitude and like all his "little brown brethren" he had needed money to help himself, but he had in mind, he took only what he needed and let some for the colonel.

Of a truth they are a strange people. EMILY WAINWRIGHT BABBITT. MARCH 7, 1905.

ING SO POWERFULLY THAT THE DULL, SLEEPING THUD WAS AUDIBLE A HUNDRED YARDS AWAY.

We heard them, we heard them. After the second group came several men bearing large glass lamps of standard size and these lamps, as darkness drew on, were lighted. Gas-jets, upon the fronts of the houses, were also lighted; several heaps of oil-saturated wood, distributed about the square, were now ignited, as were also the combustible in several brassieres on long iron poles, the whole casting a flickering, lurid glare over the entire enclosure and its excited mass of human beings.

Last of all the groups came the "sword-bearers"; of these there were about thirty, clad in long white gowns, and with their heads encased in low, black, cylindrical turbans. In his right hand, their pale faces were not coarse or brutal, but in their eyes there was the wild light of fanaticism; those spectators who were nearest the inside were doubtless thankful for the closely drawn cordon of swarthy stolid Turkish police interposed between spectators and devotees; yet at no time did any fanatical cohort seem conscious of slight else than his own position and part in the ceremonial.

These "sword-bearers" marched, like the others, in twos, and for a quarter-hour joined in whichever of the two chants caught their ears; presently they halted, and at a signal from a priest, who was leading and inciting them to greater fervor, they fell in loud ejaculations, "Hussein! Hussein! Hussein!" each man marching with the rhythm, by a sharp strong gesture of the right hand with his uplifted sword; then came the most sanguinary feature of the ceremonial; for several of the fanatics could be seen at intervals of time, raising their swords and giving themselves cuts on the top of the head; from these cuts blood began to flow freely; others, as the march continued, did the same; the long white frocks began to show spots of red; then the spots grew into large patches, both on the front and on the back; the faces of the frenzied men could now be seen flowing red streams, and some of them occasionally dashed the backs of their left hands across their eyes, to clear them of blood.

For an hour the entire procession, with its several groups, marched and chanted, and the beating and lashing and cutting continued; the chants and ejaculations grew wilder and more disorderly; the men were becoming physically weak, yet were upheld by nervous excitement; the crowd was very silent as if at a funeral service, European spectators were absorbed with curiosity and perhaps with dread, and the Persians in the crowd were profoundly serious and sympathetic; some of them brought pails and jugs of water, from which they quenched the thirst of such devotees as showed any sign of fainting. The crowd on, and the flowing blood thickened larger and larger portions of the gowns, until, in several cases, but little of the original white color was left; all was saturated red. Here, and there, a ghastly figure could be seen to have nearly reached his limit of strength, for he reeled and staggered, yet moved forward mechanically, as if mechanically cut himself, at short intervals.

THE FRANTIC SWORDSMEN. Round and round the square the three groups slowly moved, each continuing its peculiar self-infliction; but the frantic swordsmen now had become the centre of attention. Occasionally some Persian bystander hastily availed himself of a devotee—probably a brother of some kind—at the same time cleaning the face and eyes of the swordsmen; now and then a devotee of obscure blood, now and then a devotee of the same blood, would be seen to dash the face of the swordsmen with the glass of torches and besoms, rolled and falling fainting to the ground; all such were drawn outside the line of march by the Persian bystanders, were given water, their faces were bathed, and they were helped to walk, or were carried, into some adjacent house.

In this way the ranks of the swordsmen gradually thinned, until only half the original number was left, and these now seemed half unconsciously, staring vacantly and walking heavily like automata.

The spectacle had lasted nearly four hours; beacons and banners, until now replenished, were left to die out; the red glare upon the scene became more and more feeble; all the celebrants were exhausted; and now arose a new volume of sound; the fresh chorus of voices of youth, as a band of twenty children, singing the song of entrance into Paradise, joined themselves to the end of the processions; and the close of the sanguinary memorial was at hand; the mourning for Hussein and Hussein was over, but the cause of their death was now portrayed as having passed the Gate of Death, and entered on the joys which await the Faithful.

BRADLEY GILMAN. AN UNEXPECTED SHOCK. The waiter had shown me to a table and before I had ordered he brought a woman of about sixty and placed her across from me. The car was swaying and humming and a new piece of track and the old lady seemed perturbed by the jarring and the noise. Her hair was nearly white and it was waved over the temples. A little bonnet was held in place by broad silk ribbons, and she wore a long, thin chain, holding a pair of glasses were the only relic, from the black silk frock. There she sat, the primest old lady I had ever seen away from a mohair sofa. There was even a trace of a pucker to her nose, but she was contented. Most apparently on her way to the Missionary Society's district convention, she had contemplated having a small bottle of milk instead of beer, and the waiter had taken it to her. I do not know how she had come to be there, but she had been before she said a word—she ordered two eggs boiled medium, dry toast, and a pot of hot tea. "What's that?" she called, as he turned away, "before you bring the eggs I want a Scotch highball!"

That's what she said. The car made a particularly wild lurch just then, which helped me to hide my surprise. It was all that I could do to keep my seat. She had all that I could do to keep my seat. She had all that I could do to keep my seat.