

JOINING THE BULGAR COMITAJIS

REVOLUTIONISTS TOUCHED BY THE VISIT OF AN AMERICAN

Defiance Required to Elude the Turkish Espionage of the Towns and Take to the Hills—'Dead' Leader Found Very Much Alive—Warm Welcome of the Macedonians

By ALBERT SONNICHSEN

ON THE LAKE OF THE TWO REPUBLICS, MACEDONIA, February 23. This is not the official name of this region, but that is what the inhabitants call it. Turks call it Karaterra Lake, or the Slatonza Swamps, but as Turks never come here, obviously they have no right to impose such a name on a place in which they dare not venture. The swamp mires swallow up all who come in haphazard, and only the "comitaji" know the windings and turns through the tall cane brakes and swamp grass.

Here, in the center of the great swamp, bordering on the lake itself, are the two republics, of which more later. Here, at any rate, we find a grateful rest after the merry chase the askers led us last week. They seemed first to think the Greek bands had abducted me, then decided that the blood-drinking Bulgarian brigand, Luca, had me somewhere in a cave. Since two days ago they have been quiet; perhaps they are beginning to suspect the joke. Our only means of information is the local committee in town, and their knowledge is limited. Letters from Sofia have not had time to come. Everything was carried out according to programme; the organization indeed works smoothly.

I left Salonica on the morning of the 15th, by the Turkish Government line, running up to Monastir. We rolled leisurely over a low, flat plain from the sea, the mountains a blue outline on the horizon. Voden at last. At the station I underwent the "last" of my many official "ordinals"—my passport, my moral character, my business, and my baggage were all carefully inspected. No bombs in my baggage, no visible bluish on my character, passport all correct, and I passed into the crowd of local inhabitants who stood curiously inspecting the new arrivals.

I scanned the faces for one I knew, the courier between Voden and Salonica who knew me. I saw him make a sign and a boy with him stepped out and grasped my hand. I took care that all of the crowd of aspiring candidates, he should be my porter. He was a lad of fifteen, a Vlach, but speaking Bulgarian. From the station to the town was a mile of open road and we had chance to talk.

"I am to take you to the Greek hotel," he said. "After dinner, visit the Greek school, the katmakam, and the Greek bishop. At four o'clock return to the hotel; you will see me lounging about the street; then follow."

Through the crooked, narrow main street we came to the hotel where, my porter, demanding to be a fee, caused a row between him and the hospitable hotel-keeper. I remarked that my host, though a Greek, in a land where Bulgars are officially non-existent, spoke fluent Bulgarian. As I learned later, he knew no more Greek than I. Poor fellow, he was imprisoned later in compliance with my murder, but I solemnly declare he is innocent.

FINDING AN INTERPRETER.

My call on the katmakam, the governor of the province, was short. He was a small, jolly-looking Albanian, but as we found no language we knew in common, we greeted, shook hands and parted again. My inability to communicate with those about me was becoming painful, and at times I was tempted to resort to Bulgarian, which I heard all around me. I had relied on finding a Spanish Jew, in town as interpreter, but the Jewish population was less than one. On the other hand, it was difficult to hear the personal remarks expressed among those with whom I tried to make myself understood by signs. My distress was becoming obvious. A growing group of mixed Christians and Mussulmans were escorting me about from place to place, all loudly voicing my demand for someone speaking English or German. They brought me to a Bulgarian railroad engineer, but he disclaimed any knowledge of German. As I learned afterward, he knew it well, for we met again that evening, but he did not desire my acquaintance in public. He suggested that they find me the station master on the railroad, an Austrian, who at last came to my relief.

down the street toward the open road, leading to the station. There was a bridge just beyond the last houses. Two men stood there smoking. As I approached they started slowly along the road, away from the town. The two men turned suddenly and dived into an adjoining orchard, while I followed at a quick pace. Deep in among the trees we came together, and continued our fast walk in single file. We passed through half a mile of orchards and vineyards, before coming to a country. There we halted. One of my companions uttered an oath. Out in the darkness among some bushes rose two figures. We came together and shook hands.

"These are the couriers," said one of my companions from the town, "you must be back before closing up, or we might be missed. Take this, God guard you in your work." He gave me a six-shooter and a belt of ammunition, then he and his companion left us.

The two couriers and I continued on toward the mountains, one far ahead of me, the other behind. Coming to the railroad line, we closed in, for at every few hundred metres along the line is stationed a sentry.

"If they challenge, fall flat," said the courier.

We crept carefully through the brush, crossing the track over a tunnel. Below I heard the voices of the guards, who, at night, group themselves together, for company. Turkish askers are not very dangerous at night time. We were getting well up into the foothills of the mountains now, a sploch of snow here and there, the air fresh and cool, as well as the colder atmosphere, denoting the rising altitude. After an hour's climb, we halted, one of the couriers called, an answering call echoed back from among the rocks above.

We climbed up and found a peasant waiting with a horse which the couriers had mounted. My heavy overcoat and stove hat were taken off my back, and I was glad of the mount. The barking of dogs told me we approached a village. It must have been about ten o'clock when we entered a small settlement of a few dozen houses. A number of villagers greeted me quietly with a handshake.

THE FIVE COMITAJIS.

Presently five mounted men, muffled in great, white sheep cloaks, rode out of an enclosure beside the largest house. Against the pale sky of the horizon, I marked rifle-barrels sticking up from their shoulders, and I knew them as comitaji. They greeted me with a handshake.

"Luca has sent us down to meet you, and wish you his welcome," said one. Bidding the villagers and my two guides good-by, we rode on further up into the mountains. The snow became plentiful. An hour later came to my ears again the barking of dogs, and on a ridge above I saw the black outlines of straw-thatched roofs. By the bright sunlight, I saw a dozen men more coming down the narrow trail before us, the light gliding on the metal of their weapons. Then I heard my name called, a greeting, and I was shaking hands with Luca Ivanoff, chief of the Vodenska revolutionary district, and head voyvoda of the committee's chetas in that territory.

We had no need to introduce ourselves, for we had previously met in Sofia. I was dismounted from my horse in the doorway of a large house, and then was almost carried by the enthusiastic villagers and chetniks upstairs into a well-lighted room, and deposited before a roaring fire in an open fireplace. They had known of my coming for several days.

The beds outside Voden had been wet and deep with mud, so I was washed in my waist, and almost frozen stiff. In a minute they had my clothes off, put me into clean, woolen underwear, and newly made grey woolen trousers, white leggings, heavy stockings, and a dark grey coat—the revolutionary uniform. A motherly old lady brought me in a hot mixture to drink, composed mostly of cognac and beef-buff, half a dozen of his chetniks, and the elders of the village seated themselves on the blankets covered floor in a semi-circle about the fire, and then began their questions and inquiries regarding my experiences since leaving Sofia. The villagers were deeply moved; that a foreigner, not even a European, from a far-away country not interested in their struggle, should come to take up arms for their cause, stirred their emotions. The old village priest went into a long speech on the subject that would have been maudlin, were his sincerity not so plainly visible. They let him go it for twenty minutes.

Supper was served by the women. We sat cross-legged about a low table. Such a supper, too, I had seldom eaten, even in Sofia. The committee in the town had sent up bottles of beer, and bottles of wine. There was the best of the village could offer; chicken and whole roasted lamb, trout from the streams, fresh milk and cheese and eggs, walnuts, oranges, apples, roasted chestnuts, and, most wonderful, grapes that were apparently fresh from the vineyard, preserved, I don't know how.

We feasted on far into the night, talking hour after hour. Some of the statements made by the partisans of the Church to me during my travels immensely amused my new comrades; that Apostol Voyvoda was dead a year, that Luca drank the blood of small children, that the Church bands had cleared Macedonia of comitaji.

At last the table was cleared away, the fire doused, we rolled ourselves up in our shepherd cloaks, and presently I slept, sweetly unconscious of the disturbance my disappearance was causing in town. We heard of that later.

UNEXPECTED.

The street car conductor, served himself for the approaching taxi.

"Madam," he said, stepping alongside the elderly passenger with the aggressive nose, thin lips, and sharp chin, "you'll have to pay fare for that box."

"Certainly," she answered, opening her purse and taking out a coin. I expected to pay for him. He Do I look like a person that would try to take the company out of 2 cents?"

"Madam," he gaped, "you do! That's what I'm looking for!"—Chicago Tribune.

AN OLD HOTEL'S NIGHT OF MEMORY

THE ASTOR HOUSE BALL WILL RECALL PAST GLORY

Once Again Silks and Satins Cut After Patterns of '40 and '40 Will Grace the Ballroom—The Orchestra Will Play Old Tunes and Ancient Portraits Will Look upon the Scene

Richer in memories than any other hotel in America, the Astor House will see its one-time social glories revived for a night on April 18. Through its entrance and corridors, and across the floor of its ballroom—now a dining room—society will make its way. Again there will be music and dancing, long since abandoned so far downtown.

Sixty years ago the Astor was the centre of New York life. There satemen, politicians, social leaders, writers, and heads of business interests gathered, and to be a guest there cost \$7 a day, meals included—most an entrance fee of \$50. There were famous dinners, receptions, and balls were held at the Astor House from 1840 and 1850, and it is to revive interest in this period of New York history—and in old New York generally—that the ball a week from next Wednesday is being held. Everything reminiscent of the '40s, which properly might adorn a ballroom, has been gathered for the occasion. Old portraits will be hung from the walls, and trimmed with garlands; old-fashioned curtains will be at the windows, and the gasoliers will be screened by bowers of flowers. The dancers will wear the costumes of the '40s, and the orchestra will play the music of that period.

The character which occupied the stage those days—Webster, Clay, Jackson, Taylor, Houston, Weed, Calhoun, Fremont, Seaward, Tilden, and a score of others of national and enduring fame, and writers such as Poe, Bryant, Irving, and Hawthorne, stand clearly enough in memory, but individualized and apart from the setting of the scene. To how many of the present-day guests will it be a pleasant memory to look back upon that period of 1840—through which, by the way, the revelers of week after week will wander—out through the room once occupied by Daniel Webster whenever he was in New York. In the room adjoining Henry Clay was wont to stop, and both at times attended service at St. Paul's Church, across the way.

ONE A "SKYSCRAPER"

In the '40s the Astor House was a "skyscraper," easily visible within a radius of the habitations of the aristocracy of the time. When a fire broke out in the building in 1846, and nearly destroyed it, a local paper of the day, reporting the occurrence, said: "Clouds of black smoke hung over the towering structure, and for a time it seemed that the whole pile was doomed." It was also related, and it is a pleasant memory to look back upon, that "after the fire, the proprietors, Messrs. Coleman and Will Stetson, set up an excellent supper for the firemen." A little earlier, when the building had just been completed, in 1836, another newspaper remarked: "The massive structure which has been erected upon the corner of Broadway and Nassau Street is to be a monument to the memory of his name, and to transmit the memory of his name to posterity." It was "transmitted" by the original Astor to his son for the sum of one dollar. The City Hall and St. Paul's and Trinity churches were then the only other really towering structures in New York.

Besides the names already mentioned there were many others identified in an important way with the history of New York, the owners of which were active in the life of the city of the time which the coming ball will recall. Dudley Field was then a young dandy, conspicuous at all the social functions, and hugely popular. Hamilton Fish, sr., was at the beginning of his remarkable political career, starting in the office of the city alms-house commissioner. James Little was the Jay Gould of the Wall Street of the '40s, Daniel Sickles was studying law, and A. T. Stewart was beginning to extend his growing commercial business. Horace Greeley was publishing log-cabin editorials, and Henry Raymond was a reporter. Charles A. Dana was just studying, and the poet Bryant was writing editorials.

WHERE LITERARY MEN GATHERED.

It would not be possible for a single hotel in the great city of the present to compare to itself all the distinction which was the Astor's in the '40s. As a place of gathering for the literary men of the period there was no less notable than as the headquarters of the politicians. Edgar Allan Poe was a frequent guest, going there for the double object of refreshment and news. Poe in 1845, lived at No. 195 East Broadway where now stands the building of the Educational Alliance. The next year he moved to what is now the lower West Side, but which was then not very far from the present limits of the city, and took a room at No. 85 West Third Street. This was in those days named Amy Street, and the dwelling in which Poe lived was now occupied as an Italian hotel. Not far from No. 85 West Third Street, at the corner of Broadway and Leonard Street, his secretary, the late Mrs. M. J. T. H. was unable to pay for his rent.

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THE SWAY OF FLOWER CRAZES

EXTRAVAGANT PRICES PAID FOR RARE BLOOMS

There have been many waves of popularity among the Hot House Products—The Tulip, the Carnation and the Chrysanthemum are, for the time being, dethroned by the Orchid

From the point of view of a very small class, that class devoted to orchid growing, the most important result of the British Government's late mission to Tibet was the rediscovery of the Falvire lady slipper orchid, which has been lost for fifty years. The Falvire lady slipper is not only a beautiful flower in itself, but it is a famous parent, having produced some of the most remarkable hybrids known to orchid fanciers. The specimens brought from Tibet were rushed to the auction rooms and sold like so many diamonds. Plants of two or three years' growth were eagerly purchased for \$300 to \$500. Perhaps the bidding would not have been quite so heated if the buyers had known that another consignment of the precious flowers was on its way to England, but they did not know it, and preferred to run no risks. The plants can be had now for as low as \$25.

Five hundred dollars is not a high price to pay for a choice or rare orchid. If you want it badly enough, a cattyay shown several years ago at a Paris horticultural exhibition, had a light violet blue corolla instead of the violet rose corolla of its kind, and this detail raised the price of the plant to 10,000 francs. The owner did not get a tremendous profit after all, for he had spent much money for it, and had risked his life to get it out of the Venezuelan forest where it blossomed.

Mr. Sanders of St. Albans, England, gave \$4,000 for a new specimen of the *Pseudocypripes pubescens*, not many weeks ago, and seemed to consider that he had a bargain. The orchid, with the long name, is described as an exquisite thing, white, with a faint rose tinge, the petals heavily blotched with red and brown, and the reverse side purple. Other specimens of the same orchid have brought \$4,000, but this one was declared to be the most perfect ever exhibited. Five other rare orchids brought the sum of \$11,000 at the same auction.

For all these extravagant prices, growers declare that there is little profit in orchids, except in the commoner varieties, the cattyays and laelias affected by fungus. These sell in the flower stores all the way from thirty-five cents to a dollar a blossom, and plants may be had from \$2 upwards.

RARE VARIETIES EVASIVE.

It is extremely difficult to raise any except these everyday orchids. The rare varieties are evasive to the last degree, and their production is attended with all kinds of unexpected complications. The seedlings require years of care. In the first place the seeds of orchids are like a fairy dust, so tiny that they can be seen only under a strong glass. The invisible seeds are planted in chopped moss or bark, and they have to be transplanted before they are large enough to be seen except under the glass. Out of a thousand seeds, the grower is lucky if he saves a few dozen plants. Even the common varieties are none too common, so great is the waste of seeds. The orchid does absolutely nothing towards perpetuating itself except to live and bloom as attractively as it knows how. It depends on wandering insects and birds to carry its pollen. Everybody's business is nobody's business, and the pollen thus times in ten is not saved, or is lost. Of every thousand orchid flowers a very small proportion ever seed. Of course the growers have been able to overcome part of this difficulty, but they are at a loss most of the time to produce the rarer flowers. Yet the craze, probably on this very account, is growing year by year.

The carnation is another flower for which fancy prices are obtained. Every year the members of the Lawson park, for which \$30,000 was paid. Now comes word of a newly discovered white carnation, which promises to eclipse that celebrated blossom. In the annual spring show of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, just closed at New Bedford, H. A. Jahn, a local grower, exhibited a white carnation, which as yet bears only a number, but will soon, no doubt, be christened. The flower was exhibited as No. 49, was perfectly snow white in color, and the largest specimen measured four inches across. The largest of the Lawson park were a little more than three inches.

Mr. Jahn does not know how he did it, but he has been making experiments in propagating carnations for some time. The parents of the new flower were splendid specimens, with lineage going back to the William the Conqueror of carnations. They were fragrant pink, and the new flower possesses the last requisite to perfection, although most large carnations are lacking in perfume. Mr. Jahn indignantly refused an offer of \$8,000 for his pink, and, of course, it is worth a great deal more than that. We shall doubtless hear of its propagation for some fabulous sum by one or another of the billionaires.

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teenth century, there was a veritable craze for it. In 1760 growers began to breed off the fringes from one petal of carnations and to try for a larger and more rose-like blossom. Now we have flowers with edges almost smooth, and a very full calyx.

For a time it looked as if the dahlias were going to be another flower for the horticulturists to lose their heads over. The dahlia, like the chrysanthemum, is a work of art, rather than of nature. It has evolved in its present perfection, of the color and color from an insignificant little spiky object, valued chiefly for its rarity and its tendency to variety. In 1784 the director of the botanical gardens in Madrid, a curious orange-red flower set around an orange-yellow centre. The flower consisted of a simple row of many petals, very stiff and upright, like a fan. The Madrid director adopted the flower, calling it dahlia, after Dahl, a Swedish botanist. Specimens of the plant reached Germany soon afterwards, and whoever got hold of it there called it geranium, not after any King George, but in honor of a Russian named Georg. Until recently the flower has been known only as a geranium in Germany.

Botanists and florists soon discovered the extraordinary tendency of the flower to "sport," and they began to make experiments. The first double dahlia was produced in 1808, and soon rivalry has existed between English and German growers since. American florists are enthusiastic devotees of the dahlia at the present time. Big prizes are offered in horticultural shows, and single blossoms are often sold for as high as \$25. The dahlia, however, is not an indoor flower. To be appreciated it needs to be massed in large spaces out of doors.

Of course, these stories irresistibly recall the historic tulip craze which swayed the Netherlands in the seventeenth century. That madness, often alluded to, is yet little understood nowadays. The story of the tulip mania, as it is called, is that a certain Dr. Chastel, residing in Leyden, one of the country and occupied himself with the pleasant amusement of a garden. He had bought with him from Germany a number of bulbs which the climate of Holland was remarkably favorable to, and also garden of Dr. Chastel became famous in a single season for its tulips. All the flower lovers in Leyden, and later many growers from other cities flocked to the place to admire the new flowers. The ground was so completely an abode of tulips, and steadily refused all offers to sell a single bulb. It is said that he refused an offer of \$35 for a bouquet of blossoms.

The reward of his selfishness was swift. He awoke one morning to find his garden looted of every tulip. In the night some of the neighbors had climbed the wall and took what they had been unable to get by legitimate means. The old man was heartbroken. Nor did he ever enjoy his revenge, for by this time people began to import bulbs from Germany, and when tulips began to blossom all over Leyden next spring it was impossible to tell which had been stolen and which imported.

The cultivation of tulips now became the fashion: To produce a new variety of tulip became a veritable passion. The tulip is one of the most variable of plants. The bulb, formed almost like an onion, and their production is attended with all kinds of unexpected complications. The seedlings require years of care. In the first place the seeds of orchids are like a fairy dust, so tiny that they can be seen only under a strong glass. The invisible seeds are planted in chopped moss or bark, and they have to be transplanted before they are large enough to be seen except under the glass. Out of a thousand seeds, the grower is lucky if he saves a few dozen plants. Even the common varieties are none too common, so great is the waste of seeds. The orchid does absolutely nothing towards perpetuating itself except to live and bloom as attractively as it knows how. It depends on wandering insects and birds to carry its pollen. Everybody's business is nobody's business, and the pollen thus times in ten is not saved, or is lost. Of every thousand orchid flowers a very small proportion ever seed. Of course the growers have been able to overcome part of this difficulty, but they are at a loss most of the time to produce the rarer flowers. Yet the craze, probably on this very account, is growing year by year.

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