



ALONG THE BOULEVARD IN SOFIA.

A BULGARIAN OPERA BOUFFE.

I.

HE was a small waiter with a slightly bald head, and of no very pronounced nationality, and he spoke the fag-ends of five or six languages, one of which, I was delighted to find, was my own.



PRINCE FERDINAND.

These fragments he hurled continuously at other waiters of more pronounced nationalities — French, German, Hungarian, and the like — who were serving little groups of Turks, Russians, and Bulgarians scattered about the coffee-room.

Directly opposite me hung a half-length portrait of a broad-shouldered young soldier bristling with decorations, his firmly set features surmounted by a military cap.

“Is that a portrait of the prince?” I asked.

The man of many tongues stopped, looked at the chromo for an instant as though trying to remember to which one of the late princes I had referred, and then said blandly:

“Yes, monsieur; the present king; Prince Ferdinand.”

“Is he now in Sofia?”

The slightly bald attendant elevated his eyebrows with a look of profound astonishment.

“Here? No, monsieur.”

“He has really run away, then?”

The eyebrows fell, and a short, pudgy finger was laid warningly against his lips.

“Monsieur, nobody runs in Sofia. His Majesty is believed to be in a monastery.”

“Yes; so they tell me. But will he ever come back?”

The man stopped, gazed about him furtively, refilled my glass, bending so low that his lips almost touched my ear, and then whispered, with a half-laugh:

“God knows.”

I was not surprised. All Europe at that precise moment was straining its ear to catch a more definite answer. The conundrum was still going the rounds of the diplomats, and the successful guesser was yet to be heard from.

All that was positively known concerning his imperial highness was that several weeks prior to the time of this writing he had left his palace at Sofia,— within musketshot of where I sat, — and, attended by a few personal friends, had taken the midnight express to Vienna. From Vienna he had gone to Carlsbad, where for several consecutive weeks he had subjected his royal person to as many indoor baths and as much outdoor exercise as would entirely eradicate the traces of gout and other princely evils absorbed by his kingship during his few years' stay in the capital of the Bulgarians.

This done, he had visited his relatives in different parts of Europe; held midnight conferences in Vienna, now with his mother, Princess Clementine, now with the representatives of his uncle, Duke Ernest of Saxe-Coburg, and again with the Austrian authorities.

All this time the air had been full of the rumor of his abdication. The Russian ambassador at the court of Paris, Baron Mohrenheim, in an interview granted to the Paris correspondent of a St. Petersburg paper, insisted that there was no doubt that Ferdinand had quitted Bulgaria for good, "his life there being in constant danger." While the Austrian ambassador at Constantinople, Herr von Radowitz, was reported to have advised the Porte to postpone taking action on the Bulgarian Note for the present, hinting at the imminent retirement of the reigning prince, and a consequent solution of impending difficulties more in harmony with the purport of the Berlin Treaty.

These announcements continued, and with such persistency that the Bulgarian prime minister, M. Stamboloff, deemed it necessary to telegraph to a newspaper correspondent, "The rumors of the prince's intended abdication are pure fabrications."

More emphatic still was Ferdinand's own manifesto, issued through the columns of the Carlsbad "Temps," to the effect that "while there is a great national effervescence going on at this moment in Bulgaria, the Bulgarians are, nevertheless, free, and will welcome me back with rejoicings."

It was remarked, however, by the thoughtful that the prince made no statement as to the precise date of his return, or, in fact, as to whether it would ever please his highness to return at all.

Some idea of the "effervescence" through which the prince's adopted country was then passing may be gathered from two published statements in the Paris edition of the "Herald":

the first by M. Petko Karaveloff, President of the Council of Ministers of Bulgaria during the Servian war. M. Karaveloff says:

"The men who are now in power care little about the future of their country. They have no time for such an unimportant matter as the fatherland. Perhaps they are aware that five years hence their names will never be mentioned among us except with execration, and that they will be living in exile as disgraced and unworthy citizens. At present they are exclusively engaged in exploiting M. de Cobourg [Prince Ferdinand] and robbing the coffers of the country.



PRINCESS CLEMENTINE, MOTHER OF FERDINAND.

"A great disaster to the country, the purchase of the seventy thousand Mammlicher rifles from Austria, was a good stroke of business for M. Stamboloff. His little commission amounted to 320,000 francs. M. Toncheff, Minister of Justice, and Dr. Stransky, Minister of Foreign Affairs, his own colleagues, admitted in my presence that the premier took this enormous *pot de vin*. Should they have the audacity to deny the charge, which I now for the first time make public, I will confront them with convincing proof.

"These men have only time to look after their own interests. Patriots of all parties must look on powerless, and watch Bulgaria drifting hopelessly into troubled waters."

The second statement is from M. Radoslavoff, who was prime minister down to the accession of Ferdinand, and who was, and now is, the editor of the "Narodny Prava" ("National Rights"), a journal which always appears with big white spots where the government censor has made erasures.

"My paper has been going two years and four months," said M. Radoslavoff, "and dur-

ing this period ten of my editors have been sent to jail for terms amounting in all to 162 years. M. Peter Doneff, the responsible editor, was sentenced to twenty-three years' imprisonment, but after a year and a half he was pardoned by the prince. At present three of our editors are in jail — M. Evan Georgrieff and M. Stoianoff at Stamkoff, where they each have four more years to serve, and M. Voutsko Sot-



S. Stamboloff

iros, who is incarcerated here in Sofia, where he will have to remain two years and six months longer.

"During our journalistic career of two years and four months the paper has been brought to trial on sixty-eight separate occasions. We have tried to publish 400 times. We have only succeeded in getting out 160 issues. In no single instance has our original impression been allowed to stand unchanged by the authorities. Since January 20 last, when, in order to suppress and conceal from Europe the indignation of the Bulgarian nation over the arrest and mock trial of Major Panitza, the preventive censorship was inaugurated by Stamboloff, not so many of our editors have been sent to jail, — only about fifty per cent., — because their articles are not allowed to appear.

"Everything is done to hinder and hamper the appearance of the paper, in the hope that it will be given up in despair, and this would have been the case long ago were it not that the articles are written, the type set, and the distribution made, by patriots who ask for no remuneration."

It was while this political "effervescence," as the prince was pleased to call it, continued that the royal liver grew torpid enough to demand a change of air. This torpidity lasted, in fact, long after the change had been made, and long after the Carlsbad doctors had pronounced the diseased organ cured. Talleyrand tried the same experiment with similar results nearly a century before.

Then one day the prince turned up serenely on the slopes of the mountains, dismounted like a weary knight, and knocked for admission at the monastery at Ryllo.

It was here that my waiter had located him.

BEING myself a wanderer in this part of the world, with an eye for the unexpected and the picturesque, and anxious to learn the exact situation in Bulgaria, I had hurried on from Budapest, and at high noon on a broiling August day had arrived at a way station located in the midst of a vast sandy plain. This station the conductor informed me was Sofia. Following my traps through a narrow door guarded by a couple of soldiers, I delivered up my ticket and passport, crept under a heap of dust propped up on wheels and drawn by three horses abreast with chair-backs over their hames, waited until a Turk, two greasy Roumanians, — overcoated in sheepskins wrong side out, — and a red-necked priest had squeezed in beside me; and then started off in a full gallop to a town two miles away. Our sudden exodus obliterated the station in a cloud of dust through which the Constantinople express could be seen slowly feeling its way.

The interview with the waiter occurred within an hour of my arrival.

Half an hour later I was abroad in the streets of Sofia armed with such information as I had gathered from my obsequious attendant.

In the king's absence I would call upon the members of the cabinet.

It did not take me many hours to discover that his Excellency M. Stamboloff, Minister President, was away on a visit, presumably at Philippopolis; that the Minister of Justice, M. Salabashoff, had resigned a short time before; that Doctor Stransky, Minister of Foreign Affairs, had followed suit, the portfolios of both being still unassigned; that the Minister of Finance was in Varna, and Colonel Moutkourov, the Minister of War, in Vienna. In fact, not a single member of the Bulgarian Government from the king down was to be found at the capital. The Bulgarian Government had apparently absconded. Not a member, not a representative, was to be found, unless a gimlet-eyed man of about forty, with a forbidding countenance, a flat military cap, and a tight-fitting white surtout incrustated with



A STREET IN SOFIA.

gilt buttons, who answered as prefect of police, might be so considered.

I ran up against this gentleman before I quitted the palace grounds. He had already run up against me at the station on my arrival,—as I afterward discovered,—and had entered me as a suspicious character at sight.

In five minutes he had bored me so full of questions that I became as transparent as my passport, which he held up to the light so that

he could read its water-mark. Next he went through my sketch-book page by page, and finally through all my letters until he came to one bearing at its top the image of the American eagle and at its bottom the superscription of one of its secretaries, answering for my sobriety, honesty, and industry; whereupon he waved me to the door with full permission to roam and sketch at my will. Then he put a special detective on my track, who never took his eyes from me during any one of my waking hours.

I did not ask this potentate whether the prince was coming back. I did not consider it an opportune moment.

Neither did I discuss with him the present condition of Bulgaria, there being nothing in the cut of his coat—nor of his eye, for that matter—to indicate his present political views. He might have been an adherent of the prince, or a believer in Panitza, or a minion of Stamboloff, or he might have been so evenly balanced on the edge of events as to be all three or none.

Nor did I explain to him how grieved I was that his present lords and masters should have seen fit to absent themselves just at the precise moment when their combined presence would have been so agreeable to me. I had really crossed desert wastes to study their complicated comedy, and now all the principal actors were out of town.

A REHEARSAL of the preceding acts of this play may be of use to the better understanding of the whole drama as it was then being developed in Bulgaria. It is not heroic; it cannot even be called romantic, this spectacle in which three millions of souls are seen hunting about Europe for a sovereign—a sort of still-hunt resulting in the capture of two kings in four years, with hopes of bagging a protector or a president before the fifth is out. But to the play itself.

At present in Bulgaria there are, first, the Russophiles, who, as Petko Karaveloff says, “pray for the time when Bulgaria shall march into Salonica, while Russia marches into Constantinople,” and who believe the Czar to be their natural friend and ally, with the only hope of settled peace in his protectorate. Secondly, the loyal oppositionists, headed by M. Radoslavoff, who would support the prince with certain concessions, but who detest his advisers. And thirdly, the sympathizers of Major Panitza, the murdered patriot, who was “shot”—so ran a proclamation a week old, patches of which were still pointed out to me decorating the walls of the king’s palace—“by the order of the bloodthirsty Ferdinand, the scoundrel Stamboloff, and the ‘Vaurien’ Moutkourov.”

The most active and aggressive of all these "traitors," as Stamboloff calls them, are the friends of Major Panitza. Their sympathy is not to be wondered at, for the circumstances surrounding Panitza's arrest and execution had not only been horrifying to his friends, but to many of his enemies as well; and all had been shocked at the brutal haste with which the death penalty had been inflicted.

This young officer, a devoted adherent of Prince Alexander, had served with distinction in the Servian war, having led one of the famous charges at Slivnitza. After the abdication of Alexander and the accession of Prince Ferdinand, he had taken the oath of fealty to the new régime, although he had never been a warm admirer of the prince. Becoming rest-

out for more than a week against the combined assaults of Stamboloff and his brother-in-law, Moutkourov,—then Minister of War,—and it was not until his prime minister threatened the resignation of the entire cabinet that he finally yielded. There is even a story current that when this threat failed Stamboloff followed the king to Lom Palanka with the death-warrant in his hand, and that when he still hesitated that implacable dictator remarked sententiously:

"Sire, Major Panitza dies on the morrow. If you continue to object, there is one thing we can always do for your Majesty — we can always buy you a first-class ticket to Vienna."

The next morning at ten o'clock a close carriage containing a priest, a gendarme, and the condemned man was driven from the house of detention to the summer encampment, two miles outside of Sofia. The whole garrison was drawn up. Panitza walked with a firm step to a designated tree,¹ saluting the officers as he passed. When a sergeant stepped forward to blindfold him, he caught the handkerchief from his hand. Then, with a cry that rang through the camp of "Long live Bulgaria!" he fell, pierced with twenty-one bullets.

So perished a gallant young soldier whose only crime, viewed in the light of the unrecognized government then assuming to rule Bulgaria, seems to have been his disagreement with the present political views of M. Stamboloff.

In view of these and preceding events it must not, however, be thought that the fortunes of Ferdinand and his prime minister are identical. If the prince is playing king in Bulgaria because he loves the sense of power,—and it is exceedingly difficult to believe that he can have any other motive,—it is still true that Stamboloff is manager and holds the box-office, and that he is likely to change the "star" whenever it pleases his fancy; provided, of course, the Bulgarian audiences still come to the play. In other words, provided the various factions struggling to get control do not break up the theater and throw the company and the properties into the street.

It is also equally true that M. Stefan Stamboloff is to-day by far the most commanding personality in his country. Never a soldier, and always a politician, with only three years' schooling at Odessa, he became when hardly grown a Russian correspondent, and for some years thereafter a Russian agent. Rising rapidly by his own force of character, he was appointed a regent by Alexander when he abdicated, and now when only thirty-six years of age occupies more of the nervous attention



MAJOR PANITZA.

less under what he considered the despotism of Stamboloff,—a man whom he knew thoroughly, being his own relative,—and believing that the only salvation for his country lay in Russian interference, he had joined hands with a Russian spy, Kolobkoff, in fomenting discord in the army. Unluckily, his own letters, carrying unmistakable evidence of the plot, fell into the hands of Stamboloff himself, resulting in his immediate arrest, trial, and condemnation by court martial. In consideration, however, of his former distinguished services to the state, the court urgently recommended the commutation of his sentence to banishment or imprisonment.

It is greatly to the credit of Prince Ferdinand that he was strongly inclined to grant the appeal and to spare Panitza. He, in fact, held

¹ This tree has since been carried off piecemeal, cut to its very roots by admirers of Panitza.

of the governments of eastern Europe than any other one man west of the Bosphorus.

Stamboloff's plan for governing was simple and to the point. It called for five millions of rubles and a king. Who this king might be, or where he should hail from, was a matter of detail. Anybody but a Russian or a Turk would do. And so numerous offers were made in a confidential way to various gentlemen who thought they had an especial, divine gift for reigning, and who lacked the opportunity only because of the depleted condition of their bank accounts. At last a fond and ambitious mother and an obliging son with an almost unlimited reserve fund—unlimited for the ordinary needs of life—took the bait.

It was not, however, a harmonious family arrangement; for it was well known that the young prince's uncle, the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, did what he could to prevent the final agreement; he being an older and wiser diplomat, and having had a long and varied experience in the ups and downs of several see-saw governments. Among other things, the duke boldly stated that it was only a question of money with the Bulgarian regents, and that Ferdinand would leave the throne when his guldens were gone, as Alexander had left, to whom the Bulgarian Government then owed three millions of francs. The duke's prophecy is not yet fulfilled. If, however, the statement of reliable Bulgarians is to be taken, a very considerable portion of Ferdinand's private estate (variously estimated at from one-half to all of it) has already been absorbed.

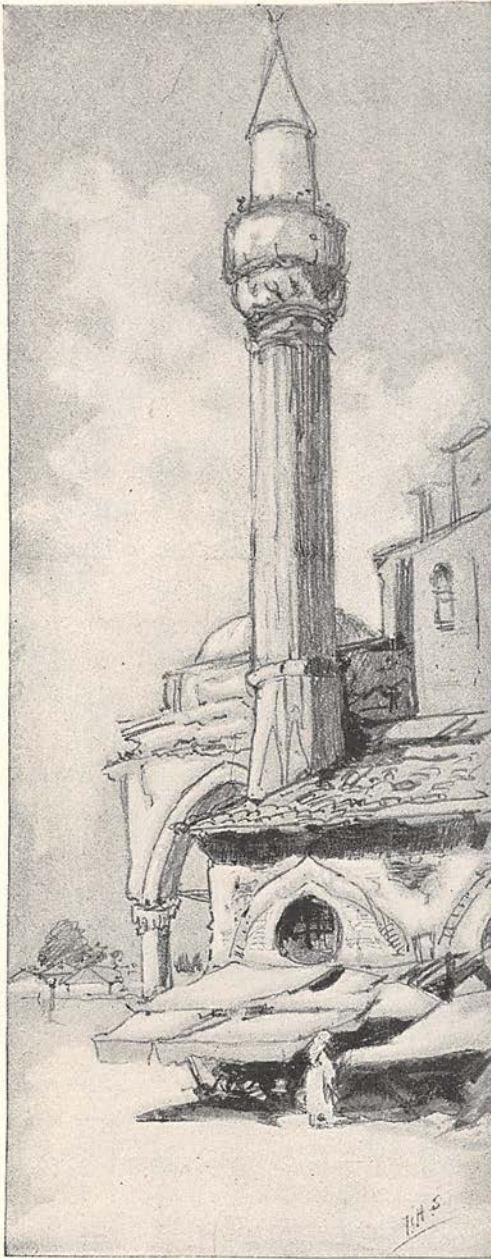
There were, of course, cogent reasons for these drafts on the king's exchequer, so the cabinet said. The army was to be re-armed and clothed, an important railroad built, and a thousand and one improvements made. The



MARRIAGE COSTUME OF A BULGARIAN PEASANT.

money, of course, would be returned. This schedule has been literally carried out,—except the money item,—if not to the benefit of Bulgaria herself, certainly to the depletion of the prince's bank-account.

Among these schemes the beautifying of the capital was the most seductive. Streets were to be opened, and trees planted, and flowers made to bloom. I recall now that vast band of stagnant dust leading from the station to the town, separated from its surrounding monotony by sundry depressions and grades indicated along the line by the excavated debris which fringed its edges; with a double row of infant trees marking its curb-lines, each one of which was shriveled to a crisp by the blistering heat. Added to this mockery, at regular intervals stood flower-beds in ovals, and diamonds, and circles, filled with plants burned to



MINARET OF BANIA-BASHIE, SOFIA.

a cinder, their very blossoms, which no man had dared pluck, dead for months, and still standing brown and dust-begrimed.

Such is the great boulevard leading from the railway to the palace!

Moreover, these particular adornments were not made at a season when it might have been possible to have justified their existence, but in the beginning of the hot season and during the continuance of a drought which lasted four

months. Indeed, many prominent oppositionists did not hesitate to say, and to say openly, that the haste with which these so-called improvements were carried out was due as much to the unsettled condition of public affairs as to anything else, and that the old adage of making hay while the sun shone had a double meaning in this case.

The boulevard, however, is not the only part of Sofia illustrating the prevailing taste to overturn and reconstruct. One sees it in the new part of the town, where government buildings, bare, white, and forbidding, are going up in all directions, replacing the humbler dwellings of the poor. One sees it also in the old mosque-and-garden-landmarks left standing high above new streets now being cut to their very edges; their preservation a tacit acknowledgment of their right to exist, their isolation a forerunner of their death—quite as the old traditions are being undermined by the present Government.

Many of these streets serve a double purpose. They make a short route to the palace of the king, where some of them end, and they provide right of way for hasty artillery practice. One cannot always tell in so changeable a climate as Bulgaria when the prevailing political wind may shift.

The palace itself, a great hospital-looking building surrounded by a garden, its mansard roofs rising above the trees, is barren and uninteresting, and contains only a few of the luxurious appointments one expects to find in an abode reserved for kings in high places. Indeed, the whole air of the interior suggests only stately discomfort and emptiness. In walking through its great halls and scantily furnished salons, I could not help pondering upon the peculiarities of human nature, and wondering what could have induced this fine young officer—and he is a fine fellow in every sense of the word—to give up his brilliant life in Vienna, the most delightful capital in Europe, and to a young man of fortune the most fascinating, in order to bury himself in this ugly pile of masonry. But then the market is never overstocked with empty thrones, while would-be kings are a drug.

The old part of the town is still quaint and Oriental, and has thus far escaped the restless shovel and saw. It lies in the dip of a saucer-shaped valley, surrounded by bare brown hills, the palace and the new buildings being on the upper edge. Netted with crooked, dirty streets and choked with low, shambling houses, with here and there a ruined mosque, it remains a picturesque reminder of the days of Turkish rule, unchanged since the signing of the Berlin Treaty, when in a single year five thousand of Mohammed's chosen shook the

dust of Sofia from their feet and sought refuge under the sultan.

One of the most interesting of these relics is the mosque of Buyuk-Jami with its queer half-dome-like inverted teacups on a tray — now used by the Government as a place for storage.

It stands, however, in the line of march of one of M. Stamboloff's new boulevards, and next year its beautiful façades and graceful roof will be toppled into the dust-heaps. That is, if the bank-account holds out and the king holds over. One could almost wish that the unspeakable Turk might come back, claim his own, and save it.

Several other of these quaint remnants of Oriental architecture are found in the old part of the city, the Mosque Bania-bashie, dating back to the year 1279, being by far the purest in style. This mosque is still the resort of the devout Mohammedan, who prays therein five times a day with his face towards Mecca, and who, despite the restrictions that vex his race, still prostrates himself on the floor of the mosque below, in obedience to the call of the muezzin from the slender minaret above.

To one unaccustomed to the forms of the Mohammedan religion, and especially to one who sees them for the first time, I know of no religious spectacle more impressive than that of a barefooted Turk standing erect on his prayer-rug with his face towards Mecca and his eyes looking straight into the eyes of his God. It is not a duty with him, nor a formality, nor the maintenance of a time-honored custom. It is his very life. Watch him as he enters this wretched interior of Bania-bashie, with its scaling and crumbling walls, and its broken windows, through which the doves fly in and out. Outside, at the trickling fountain, he has washed his feet and face and hands, bathing his throat and smoothing his beard with his wet fingers. He is a rough, broad-shouldered, poorly clad man in fez and skirt, his waist girt with a wide sash ragged and torn. He is perhaps a "hammal," a man who carries great weights on his back — a human beast of burden. His load, whatever it may be, is outside in the court. His hourly task is his daily bread; but he has heard the shrill cry from the minaret up against the sky, and stops instantly to obey.

He enters the sacred building with his shoes in his hands. These he leaves at the edge of the mat. Now he is on holy ground. Advan-

cing slowly, he halts half-way across the floor, and then stands erect. Before him is a blank wall; beyond it the tomb of the prophet. For a moment he is perfectly still, his eyes closed, his lips motionless. It is as if he stood in the antechamber of Heaven, awaiting recognition. Then his face lights up. He has been seen. The next instant he is on his knees, and, stretching out his hands, prostrates himself, his forehead pressed to the floor. This solitary service continues for an hour. The man stands erect one moment, with a movement as if he said, "Command



PORTICO OF MOSQUE BANIA-BASHIE, SOFIA.

me; I am here." The next moment he is prostrate in obedience. Then he backs slowly out, and, noiseless, regains his shoes, bends his back to his burden, and keeps on his way, his face having lost all its tired, hunted look.

There is no mistaking the impression. It is not a religious ceremony, nor a form of devotion, nor a prayer. This man has been in the very presence of his God.

Next to this crumbling mosque stands the Turkish bath, with its round dome pierced with bull's-eyes through which the light falls in parallel bars upon clouds of boiling steam. The water gushes from the ground at a temperature of 110° Fahrenheit, the pool being shoulder-deep and filling the whole interior excepting the narrow edge around which cling

the half-boiled natives in every variety of undress uniform from the Garden of Eden pattern down to the modern dressing-gown.

Outside of this circular room are cooling apartments smelling of wet towels and furnished with divans upon which men lounged half-clad, smoking cigarettes. Now and then from an inside cubbyhole comes the whiff of a narghile and that unmistakable aroma, the steam of smoking coffee.

What a luxury after a four months' drought and its consequent accumulation of Bulgarian dust! I wanted a bath at once; for I realized that whatever attempts had been made in the different capitals of Europe and America to establish this Oriental luxury,—even in Constantinople it is a delusion and a snare,—they were all base imitations compared with this volcanic-heated symposium. For more than six hundred years, and in fact before the mosque was built, had this pool of Siloam comforted the sick and soothed the well and cleansed the soiled. And it is hot, too—boiling hot out of the ground, running free night and day, and always ready with its accompaniments of Turkish coffee, pipes, and divans. Go to, with your marble slabs, and radiators, and high-pressure boilers under the sidewalk.

Beyond this section of narrow streets there runs a broad highway lined with booths attended by all sorts of people—Gipsies, Turks, Jews, Greeks, and Hungarians, selling every kind of merchandise entirely worthless to anybody but a native. There are rings of bread, squares of leather for sandals, messes in bowls with indescribable things floating about in boiling grease, heaps and lumps of other things served smoking hot in wooden plates, and festoons of candied fruit strung on straws and sugared with dust. Then there are piles of melons and baskets on baskets of grapes,—these last delicious, it being the season,—and great strings of onions, pyramids of tomatoes, and the like. Everywhere is a mob in rags apparently intent upon cutting one another's throats to save half a piaster.

Farther on is the Jews' quarter, the street Nischkolitza, with its low houses eked out by awnings under which sit groups of people lounging and talking, and behind these, in little square boxes of rooms let into the wall, squat the money-changers, their bank-accounts exposed in a small box with a glass top through which can be seen half the coinage and printage of eastern Europe.

If the king's continued absence caused any uneasiness among the people crowding these streets and bazars, there was nothing on the surface to indicate it. Many of them looked as if they had very little to lose, and those who had a little more either carried it on their per-

sons in long chains of coins welded together—a favorite form of safe-deposit with the Bulgarians—or, like the money-changers, hived it in a portable box.

Nor could I discover that any one realized that he was living over a powder-magazine with a match-factory next door. On the contrary, everybody was good-natured and happy, chaffing one another across the booths of the bazars, and bursting into roars of laughter when my brush brought out the features or costume of some well-known street-vender. This merriment became boisterous in the case of a bread-seller with a queer nose whom I stopped and sketched, and who contributed his share to the general fun, a slip of my brush having unduly magnified the already enlarged nose of his jolly face.

The only native who really seemed to possess any positive ideas on the uncertain condition of public affairs was a Polish Jew, the keeper of the bath, whom I found berating two soldiers for refusing to pay extra for their narghiles, and who expressed to me his contempt for the ruling powers by sweeping in the air a circle which embraced the palace and the offenders, spitting on the floor, and grinding his heel in the moistened spot.

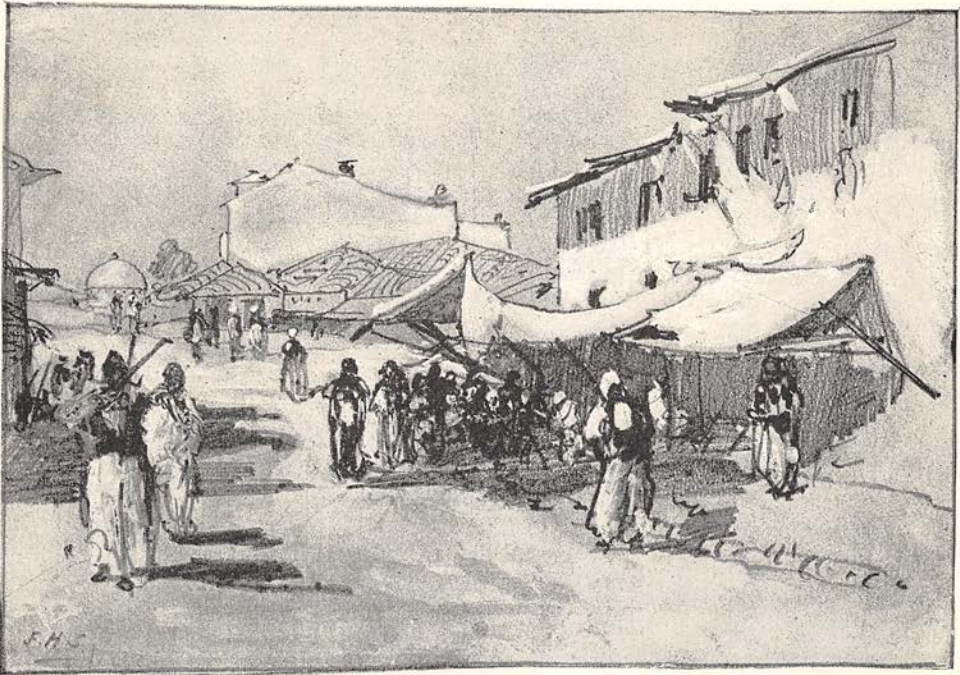


MOSQUE AND BATH, SOFIA.

II.

NEAR the bath and, in fact, almost connected with it by a rambling row of houses is one of the few Oriental cafés left in Sofia—a one-story building with curious sloping roof, its one door opening upon the street corner. It is called the "Maritza." On both sides of this entrance are long, low windows shaped like those of an old English inn, and beneath these—outside on the sidewalk—is a row of benches, upon which lounge idlers sipping coffee and smoking cigarettes. Within are a motley crew of all nationalities liberally sprinkled with Bulgarian soldiers out on a day's leave.

Coffee is almost the only beverage in these Turkish cafés. It is always handed you scalding hot in little, saucerless cups holding hardly a mouthful each. A glass of cold water invariably accompanies each cup. This coffee



THE STREET OF NISCHKOLITZA.

is generally the finest old Mocha, with an aroma and flavor unapproachable in any brand that I know except perhaps the Uruapam coffee of Mexico. In preparing it the roasted bean is ground as fine as flour in a hand-mill, a teaspoonful of the powder, with half the amount of fine sugar, being put into a brass pot with a long handle. To this is added a tablespoonful of boiling water. The pot is then thrust into the coals of a charcoal fire until it reaches boiling point, when it is caught up by the waiter, who runs to your table and pours the whole into your cup. Although it is dark and thick, it is never strong, and there is not a wakeful hour in a dozen cups.

There is nothing so interesting as one of these Oriental cafés, and so I turned in from the street, drew a square straw-covered stool up to a low table, and held up one finger. A fez-covered attendant shuffled over and filled my cup. As I raised it to my lips my eyes caught the riveted glance of a black-bearded man with a beak-like nose and two ferret eyes watching me intently. He was dressed in a half-cloak ornamented with a dark braid in twists and circles, and wore a slouch-hat.

Being stared at in a café for the first five minutes is so usual an experience for me in my tramps abroad that I accept it as part of the conditions of travel. But there are different kinds of stares, all induced and kept up for the most part by idle curiosity, which generally ceases after my dress has been examined, and

especially my shoes, and when my voice has been found to be like that of other men.

This man's stare, however, was devoid of curiosity. His was the face of a ferret; a sly, creeping, half-shrinking face, with an eye that pierced you one moment and slunk away the next. The thought flashed through my mind of a Spanish Jew who hides his gold in a hole, and who is here changing money while the "effervescence" lasts. When I looked again a moment later he had disappeared.

The face haunted me so much that I traced its outlines in my sketch-book, trying to remember where I had seen it, and finally persuading myself that it must have been a resemblance either to some passing fancy or to a memory of long ago.

I finished my coffee, lighted a cigarette, and, picking up a stool, planted it across the street, and began a sketch of the exterior of the café.

The usual crowd gathered, many following me from the room itself, and soon the throng was so great that I could not see the lower lines of the building. No language that I speak is adapted to Bulgaria, and so, rising to my feet, I called out in honest Anglo-Saxon:

"Get down in front!" accompanied by a gesture like a policeman's "Move on."

Nobody got down in front or behind that I could detect. On the contrary, everybody who was down got up, and the sketch was fast becoming hopeless, when four gendarmes arose out of the ground as noiselessly and myste-

rously as if they had issued from between the cracks of the paving-stones, formed a hollow square, with the café at one end and me at the other,—the intervening space being as clear of bystanders as the back of my hand,—and stood like statues until the sketch was finished. When I closed my book half an hour later a man, wrapped in a cloak, on the outer edge raised his hand. The crowd fell back on each side, a gap was made, and the four gendarmes passed out and were swallowed up.

I turned and caught a glimpse of a black hat half-concealing a dark, bearded face. It was my friend of the café. Not a Spanish Jew at all, I thought, but some prominent citizen

two months watching this mouse-trap. Come into the café, where we can talk. You don't know what a godsend an American is in a hole like this."

An interchange of cards settled all formalities, and when, half an hour later, numbers of mutual friends were discovered and inquired after, we grew as confiding and comfortable as if we had been the best of friends through life.

B— belonged to that type of man of whom everybody hears, few people see, and not many people know—one of those men with homes fixed by a telegram. Men with wits like their pencils, sharpened by emergency, with energies untiring and exhaustless,



CAFÉ MARITZA.

respected by the police and anxious to be courteous to a stranger. And again I dismissed the face and the incident from my mind.

Just here another face appeared and another incident occurred, neither of which was so easily forgotten. The face enlivened the well-knit, graceful figure of a young man of thirty dressed in a gray traveling-suit and wearing a derby hat. Every line in his good-natured countenance expressed that rarest and most delightful of combinations—humor and grit. From this face proceeded a voice which sent down my spine that peculiar tingle which one feels when, half-way across the globe, surrounded by jargon and heathen, he hears suddenly his own tongue, in his own accent, spoken by a fellow-townsmen.

"I heard your 'down in front' and knew right away where you were from; but these Bashi-bazouks blocked the way. My name is B—, correspondent of the ——. Been here

who ransack, permeate, get at the bottom of things, and endure. Individual men, sagacious, many-sided, and productive, yet whose whole identity is swallowed up and lost in that merciless headline "Our Correspondent."

I had heard of B— in Paris a few weeks before, where his endless resources in the field and his arctic coolness in tight places were bywords among his fellow-craftsmen. At that time his friends supposed him to be somewhere between Vienna and Constantinople, although none of them located him in Bulgaria; great morning journals being somewhat reticent as to the identity and whereabouts of their staff.

"Yes," he continued, "life here would reconcile a man to the bottomless pit. I was in London doing some Irish business,—rose in your buttonhole at breakfast, Hyde Park in the afternoon, and all that sort of thing,—when a telegram sent me flying to Paris. Two hours

after I was aboard the Orient express, with my shirts half-dried in my bag, and an order in my inside pocket to overhaul Stamboloff and find out whether the prince had left for good, or was waiting until the blow was over before he came back. You see, the Panitza affair came near upsetting things here, and at the time it looked as if the European war circus was about to begin."

"Did you find Stamboloff?" I asked.

"Yes. Reached the frontier, learned he had left Sofia; and, after traveling all night in a cart, got him at Sistova, and caught our Sunday's edition three hours later. Here I have been ever since, waiting for something to turn up, and spending half my nights trying to get what little does turn up across the frontier and so on to Paris. And the worst of it is that for four weeks I have n't had a line from headquarters."

"What! Leave you here in the lurch?"

"No; certainly not. They write regularly; but these devils stop everything at the post-office, open and re-seal all my private letters, and only give me what they think good for me. For two weeks past I have been sending my stuff across the frontier and mailing it in Servia. How the devil did you get permission to sketch around here?"

I produced the talismanic scroll with the water-mark and the image and the superscription, and related my experience with the prefect.

"Gave you the freedom of the city, did he? I wager you he will go through your traps like a custom-house officer when you leave, and seize everything you have. They have been doing their level best to drive me out of here ever since we published that first interview with Stamboloff, and they would if they dared. Only, being a correspondent, you see, and this being a liberal, free monarchy, it would n't sound well the next day.

"Come, finish your coffee, and I'll show you something you can never see outside of Bulgaria."

We strolled up past the bazars along the boulevard, stopping for a moment to note the cathedral, with one end perched up in the air—Stamboloff's commissioners of highways having lowered the street-grade at that point some twenty feet below the level of the porch floor.

Opposite this edifice was the skylight of the local photographer. The old, familiar smell of evaporating ether greeted us as we entered his one-story shop,—it would be a poetic license to call it a gallery,—and the usual wooden balcony, with its painted vase and paper flowers, was found in its customary place behind the iron head-rest.

Here were the portraits of the prince and

his mother, the Princess Clementine, and of poor Panitza,—whom I really could not help liking, traitor as he was to Stamboloff,—and the rest of the notables, not forgetting the de-throned prince, Alexander of Battenberg, and all of whom had occupied the plush arm-chair



PRINCE ALEXANDER OF BATTENBERG.

or had stood behind the Venetian railing with the Lake Como and Mont Blanc in the distance.

B— hunted through the collection of portraits scattered about the table, and handed me two photographs—one of a well-built, handsome man with pointed mustache, dressed in the native costume and shackled with heavy chains fastened to his ankles. He was standing in a prison-yard guarded by a soldier holding a carbine.

"Good-looking cutthroat, is n't he? Might be a diplomat or a night editor? Too honest, you think? Well, that's Taco Voyvoda, the famous bandit who was caught a few years ago in the act of murdering a detachment, and who was filled full of lead the next day at the Government's expense. Now look at this"; and he handed me the other photograph.

I held it to the light, and a shiver ran through me. On a box covered with a piece of canvas rested the head of a man severed from the body. One eye was closed. The other was lost in a ghastly hole, the mark left by a rifle-ball. The mustache was still stiff and pointed, one end drooping a little, and the brow and the mouth were firm and determined. The whole face carried an expression as if the death agony had been suddenly frozen into it. About the horror were grouped the bandit's carbine, holsters, and cartridge-belt bristling with cartridges.

The belt hung over the matted hair framing the face.

B—— watched me curiously.

“Lovely souvenir, is n't it? The day after the shooting they cut off poor Taco's head, and our friend here”—pointing to the photographer—“fixed him up in this fashion to meet the popular demand. Their sale was enormous. Bah! let's go to dinner.”

My friend had a better place than the one presided over by my slightly bald waiter with the



TACO VOYVODA.

Tower of Babel education. He would take me to his home. He knew of a garden where a few tables were set, girt about with shrubs and sheltered by overhanging trees that had escaped the drought. At one end was a modest house with a few rooms to let. His gripsack was in one of these. That was why he loved to call it his home.

Soon a white cloth covered a table for two, and a very comfortable dinner was served in the twilight. With the coffee the talk drifted into the present political outlook, and I put the universal conundrum:

“Will the prince return?”

“You can't tell,” said B——. “Formyself, I believe he will. He must do so if he wants to see his money again, and he can do so in safety if Stamboloff succeeds in carrying the elections next month,¹ which I believe he will. If he fails, the nearer they all hug the frontier the better; for there are hundreds of men right here around us who would serve every one of them as the soldiers did Taco Voyvoda. They know it too, for they are all off electioneering

¹ September 11, 1890.

except the prince, who, I understand, has left Ryllo to-day for Varna. He is hanging on the telegraph now. Not the poles, but the despatches.

“The worst feature of the situation is that most of the factions are backed up by Russian and other agents, each in their several interests, ready to lend a hand. To-day it is a game of chess between Russia and Turkey; to-morrow it may involve all Europe. Through it all my sympathies are with the prince. He has been here now nearly three years trying to make something of these barbarians, and so far not a single European power has recognized him. He will get nothing for his pains, poor fellow. When his money is all gone they will bounce him as they did Battenberg.

“Certain members of the cabinet are not safe even now,” continued B——. “While I was at Sistova the other day I had an opportunity of seeing some of the risks that Stamboloff himself runs, and also how carefully he is guarded. He was in a café taking his breakfast. As soon as he entered, a tall sergeant of gendarmes with his saber half-drawn and his red sash stuck full of pistols and yataghans moved to his right side, while another equally as ferocious and as heavily armed guarded his left. Then the doors were blocked by half a dozen other gendarmes, who watched everybody's movements. There is really not so much solid fun being prime minister in Bulgaria as one would think.”

While B—— was speaking three officers entered the garden where we were dining and took possession of an adjoining table. My friend nodded to one of them and kept on talking, lowering his voice a trifle and moving his chair so that his face could not be seen.

The Bulgarians were in white uniforms and carried their side-arms.

The next instant a young man entered hurriedly, looked about anxiously, and came straight towards our table. When he caught sight of me he drew back. B—— motioned him to advance, and turned his right ear for a long whispered communication, interrupting by such telephone exclamations as, “Who told you so? When? How did he find out? To-morrow? What infernal nonsense! I don't believe a word of it,” etc.

The young man bent still lower, looked furtively at the officers, and in an inaudible whisper poured another message into B——'s ear.

My host gave a little start and turned a trifle pale.

“The devil, you say! Better come to my room then to-night at twelve.”

“Anything up?” I asked after the man had gone, noticing the change in B——'s manner.

“Well, yes. My assistant tells me that my

last letter has been overhauled this side of the frontier, and that orders for my arrest will be signed to-morrow. I don't believe it. But you can't tell—these people are fools enough to do anything. If I knew which of my letters had reached our office I would n't care; but I have n't seen our paper since my first despatches appeared, more than a month ago."

"That need n't worry you. I have everyone of them in my bag at the hotel, and every issue of your paper since you arrived here. I knew I was coming, and I wanted to be posted."

B—— looked at me in open astonishment. "You!"

"Certainly. Come to my room; get them in five minutes."

"Well, that paralyzes me! Here I have been stranded for news and blocked for weeks by these brigands who rob my mail, and here you pick me up in the streets and haul everything I want out of your carpet-bag! Don't ever put that in a story, for nobody would ever believe it. Give me a cigarette."

I opened my case, and as I handed him its contents my eyes rested on a man watching us intently. He was sitting at the officers' table. With the flaring of B——'s match his face came into full relief.

It was my friend of the morning.

"There he is again," I blurted out.

"Who?" said B—— without moving.

"The man in the Turkish café—the one who ordered the soldiers around. Who is he?"

B—— never moved a muscle of his face except to blow rings over his coffee-cup.

"A mean-looking hound in a slouch-hat, with rat-terrier eyes, bushy beard, and a bad-fitting cloak?"

"Yes," said I, comparing the description over his shoulder.

"That's my shadow—a delicate attention bestowed on me by the prefect. He thinks I don't know him, but I fool him every day. I got two columns out last night from under his very nose—right at this table. The waiter carried them off in a napkin, and my man nabbed them outside."

"A spy?"

"No; a shadow—a night-hawk. For nearly two months this fellow has never taken his eyes off me, and yet he has never seen me look him in the face. Come, these people are getting too sociable."

In an instant we were in the street and in three minutes had entered my hotel. Leaving B—— in the hall, I mounted the broad staircase, went straight to my room, picked up my pocket sketch-book, and thrust the "clippings" into my inside pocket.

When I regained the corridor outside my door the man in the slouch-hat preceded me downstairs.

Smothering my astonishment,—I had left him sitting in the garden five minutes before,—I followed slowly, matching my steps to his, and turning over in my mind whether it would be best to swallow the despatches or drop them over the balusters.

I could see B—— below, standing near the door absorbed in an Orient express time-table tacked to the wall. (I was to leave for Constantinople the next day.) He must have heard our footsteps, but he never turned his head.

The man reached the hall floor,—I was five steps behind,—stood within ten feet of B——, and began striking matches for a cigar which was still burning.

I decided instantly.

"Oh! B——," I called out, "I found the sketch-book. See what I did here yesterday"; and I ran rapidly over the leaves, noting as I turned, 'The Jews' Quarter'—'Minaret of Baniabashee'—'Ox-Team down by the Bazar,' etc."

The man lingered, and I could feel him looking over my shoulder. Then the glass door clicked, and he disappeared.

B—— raised his hand warningly.

"Where did you pick *him* up?"

"Outside my door."

"Keyhole business, eh? Did you get them?"

I touched my inside pocket.

"Good." And he slipped the package under his waistcoat.

THE next morning I found this note tucked under my door:

The game is up. Meet me at station at twelve.

B——.

Five minutes before the appointed hour my traps were heaped up in one corner of the waiting-room. I confess to a certain degree of anxiety as I waited in the station, both on my own account and on his. I was yet unable to understand how the night-hawk could have reached my chamber door ahead of me unless he had sailed over the roof and dropped down the chimney, and I was also willing to admit that something besides a desire to see me safely in bed had induced him to keyhole my movements. Perhaps his sudden disappearance through the glass door was, after all, only preparatory to including me in the attentions he was reserving for B——.

When the exact hour arrived, and the Orient express direct for Philippopolis and Constantinople rolled into the depot, and still B—— did not appear, I began to realize the absurdity of waiting for a convict at the main entrance. He would of course be chained to two soldiers and placed in a baggage-van, or perhaps be shackled around the ankles like

Voyvoda and lifted out of a cart by his waist-band. The yard was the place, and I made my way between the two door-guards, who eyed me in a manner that convinced me that I was under surveillance and would most likely catch both balls in the vicinity of my collar-button if I attempted to move out of range.

But there was nothing in the yard except empty cars and a squad of raw recruits sitting on their bundles awaiting transportation, and I tried the boulevard side again.

No B——.

Just as I was about to give him up for lost and had begun turning over in my mind what my duty might be as a man and an American, a fresh cloud of dust blew in the open door, and a cab pulled up. From this emerged a pair of leather gaiters followed by two legs in check trousers, a hand with white wristbands and English gloves, and last the cool, unruffled face of B—— himself.

"Yes, I am late, but I have been up all night dictating. You got my note, I see. I go as far with you as Philippopolis, where I get out to reach the Pomuk Highlands. You remember I told you about that old brigand chief, Achmet Aga, who rules a province of forty square miles and pays tribute to no one, not even the sultan. You know he murders everybody who crosses his line without his permission. Well, I am going to interview him."

This he said in one breath and with as much ease of manner and indifference to surroundings as if the man with a slouch-hat had been an idle dream instead of an active reality.

"But, what about your arrest, B——? I expected——"

"Expected what—dungeons? Nonsense. I simply went out on my balcony last night before I crawled into bed, sneezed, and called out in French to my man inside to pack my bag for this train. That satisfied my shadow, for all he wants is to get me out of the way. Don't worry; the dog will be here to see us off."

B—— was right. That ugly face was the last that peered at us as we rolled out of the station.

Six hours later I left my new friend at Philippopolis with a regret I cannot explain, but with an exacted promise to meet me in Constantinople a week hence, when we would enjoy the Turks together.

The week passed, and another, and then a third, and still no sign of B——. I had begun to wonder whether after all the brigand chief had not served him as he had done his predecessors, when this letter, dated Sofia, reached me:

Just returned from the mountains. Spent a most delightful week with Achmet Aga, who kissed me on both cheeks when I left, and gave me a charm against fire and sword blessed by all the wise women of the clan. Would have joined you before, but had to hurry back here for the opening of the Sobranje.

Stamboloff's party carried the day by a small majority, and the town is full of his men, including the prince, who opened parliament here yesterday.

F. Hopkinson Smith.

IN DISGUISE.

YOUR face possessed me while we talked;
It seemed the picture of a heart
In whose fair garden Sorrow walked,
While Joy, poor errant, stood apart,
A suppliant at the gate.

You do not dream that she is near,
So still she waiteth, and so shy.
You are not thinking of her, dear;
Almost you have forgot to sigh
She comes no more of late.

I know, I know, she longs to come,
And lift the latch with quick surprise;
And yet she standeth strange and dumb,
And looks, behind that still disguise,
As one you never knew.

But if she came with smile and dance,
With banners flying, music gay,
Oh, would you run with answering glance,
Or only turn your head away
From what was not for you?

I understand; you need not speak:
The heart that is for Sorrow strong,
For Joy too joyful were too weak;
She must not come with dance and song,
But lightly as a dove.

'T is thus she comes, and makes no claim;
She whispers soft, she kneeleth low,
And wears the while a gentler name.
Oh, hear me breathe it! Must she go?
The name she wears is Love.

Frances Louise Bushnell.