A SHORT STORY

The Mule-Driver of Rilo-Dagh and the Rebels

(From the Hungarian.)

All through the gorge of the Barenta floated a delicious odor, the odor of thousands of roses borne by the warm winds from the gardens and distilleries of Rilo-Dagh, a valley almost as famous for its roses as the vales of Kezanlik and Iran.

In other years at the same season, the steep, perfumed slopes of the Turkish Balkans were the scene of an extraordinary animation. Along the numberless paths, winding in every direction, came donkeys laden with baskets of flowers and looking as if adorned for a fete of roses. But today all the countryside was quiet and deserted.

Ten thousand Turks occupied the Barenta from Rilo-Dagh as far as the Thipka passes on the Bulgarian frontier, and this time it seemed as if they could not fail to capture the famous bandit chief, Boris Schokol, who, with his Macedonian followers, had been completely surrounded and cut off in their mountain retreat. It could only be a question of hours at the most.

And in order that not one of the band should escape through disguise, the Turkish soldiers had been given orders to arrest all travellers, whoever they might be and journeying for whatever reason. A man must indeed have cared little for his life who would run the gamut of cross-firing from the sentinels in ambush at each corner of the ravine. Nevertheless there was one traveller brave enough, for a mule driver had just appeared on the path which leads to the Gabrov farm, situated half-way up the mountain side.

He was a peasant, of simple, peaceful appearance, dressed in rags and with bare feet and a rose stuck in the crown of his tattered hat.

Thirty steps before him trotted a little silver-gray mule, carrying two baskets full to overflowing with fading roses, and fastened to his saddle was an enormous flowering rose bush whose soft leaves rustled caressingly.

The driver, whose white hair was in striking contrast with his youthful, almost childish face, strode along with an easy step, glancing about indifferently at the desolate countryside. Once or twice, however, at the sight of charred ruins of what had formerly been a prosperous farm, a pile of smoking timbers from which arose the dreadful odor of burned flesh, the old man turned away his head, and a dark shadow crossed his bright face.

Still walking at a discreet distance from his donkey, the peasant had just reached the summit of a steep hill when a bullet whistled by his ear.

"The music has struck up for the dance," he murmured. "The Turks are going to have a good time now."

But he trembled an instant and turned slightly pale as the rose bush which was fastened to the saddle stirred as if by a sudden wind. A shower of petals fell to the ground while a rose, evenly severed from its stem, was carried twenty feet.

"The clumsy fools!" growled the driver, but his cheeks were white.

A score of stinging pellets hissed by him, and the dust sprang up in little spurts about his feet.

"I like that better," he remarked thoughtfully, again repeating his enigmatic phrase, "the clumsy fools! What an omelette it would make!"

The Macedonian hastened to descend the hill on the other side. A few scattered shots passed over his head, and the echoes caught and repeated the report. The donkey haulted, frightened. His long ears wavered back and forth and his delicate legs shook violently.

The driver ran to him, embracing him and patting his sleek neck.

"Come, come Filiberta, my little white lamb, be quiet; there is nothing to make you afraid now. The worst part is over. A little more, and we will be among friends, the soldiers of Lieut. Achmed. They are honest people."

In fact, after this the firing ceased, but the traveller was none the less observed and followed. From time to time a hat with a red fez emerged from its hiding place, looked and quickly disappeared.

The bashi-bazouks knew the mule driver with the rose-decked hat for a poor devil a grower of roses and something of a poet; an unmistakably oriental character with no other love but his flowers, which were the finest in Rilo-Dagh. Several of the Turkish officers, whose commissions he executed, had taken him under their protection.

Presently a soldier hailed the inoffensive traveller.

"Hullo, there Filiberta!"

The gardener, whose name was doubtless the same as his donkey's looked about him.

"Good day, Gulkana, good morning, bravest of soldiers."

"Where are you taking your roses?"

"To the camp at Thipka. They are for the commandant there, the brave and handsome captain, Mourad-Bey, who will give me a fine Turkish gold piece for my pains——"

"Haven't you anything for me in your pack?"

"Nothing, child of the prophet, red-headed soldier of the crescent; but perhaps it will be a different story when I return if the commandant be merciful to his slave."

"May Allah inspire him, then!"

The mule driver continued on his way. A kilometer distant he made a halt before the farm of Gadrovo, now occupied by the soldiers, stopped by the sentinel at the gateway. As the two stalked together the driver felt in one of his baskets and produced a small box, which he handed to the guard.

"For the brave Lieut. Achmed," he said

Just then the officer himself came around the corner, wearing a long curved sword, which dragged on the ground. He was a man of tall stature, with a heavy, cruel face, true type of a Turksh executioner.

"Have you brought me the eggs?" he demanded, sharply.

"Yes, my lieutenant," replied the Macedonian. "They were chosen especially for you, and each one is absolutely fresh. They were tested by lamplight particularly."

"Good," interrupted the officer. "Do not forget that I detest chatter boxes."

Then, continuing his questions, he added:

"What in the name of the prophet have you tied a rose-tree to your saddle for?"

"The rose-bush," said Filiberta, assuming a mysterious air, "is for our friend the captain, Mourad-Bey, from a lady—but you must not betray her!"

Achmed smiled coarsely, revealing his sharp teeth.

"And these?" he went on, striking the baskets with his heavy hand so that a few petals fluttered to the earth.

"Those—those are for one of my friends a poor distiller in the mountains. He is a faithful servant of the sultans, for whom may Allah be praised, and he is trying to prepare his essence now as in other years."

"Did you see anything of the rebels on your way up?"

"Not the least sign of one, my lieutenant. Since you and your soldiers came, the bandits have run to cover like so many rabbits. But I struck quite a shower of bullets."

"Who fired them"

"The Turks, of course. They were practising, I imagine."

The officer laughed.

"Weren't you afraid?"

"Bah! the length of your life is decreed before we are born! However, I did tremble once for you, or for your eggs, at least, and for my donkey also. If I had only brought you a fine omelette, what would you have said?"

"Nothing. But I would have had your ears cut off."

"And you would have done well. Fortunately the shooters were too far away."

Achmed ceased his catechism.

"It's just as well for you that they were. They wanted to make you afraid. Would you like me to send a guard with you?"

"No, my lieutenant, though may Allah be praised for the great kindness of his servant; but I do much better to go alone. The Bulgarians have no powder to waste on sparrows or such poor devils as I am, while ——. You have no message to send to the captain?"

"Nothing, except to tell him that I offered you an escort, and you refused, for you do refuse?"

"Yes, it will be better."

"Very well, go to the devil in your own way, then. There will only be one less fool in the world!"

The mule driver hastened to obey. Once out of sight of the camp, he grasped the donkey's bridle and turned abruptly aside from the regular mule track to follow a cross path marked by little piles of stones carelessly thrown together by the side. Two hours later he reached the high crests of Thipka, behind which the sun was sinking in a mist of rich purple haze.

The peasant branched off along a trail already covered in darkness, when a man suddenly rose from the bushes beside him, a man with powder-blackened hands, who demanded, hoarsely:—

"Have you been successful, Filiberta?"

The mule driver straightened his shoulders with an air of intense satisfaction and pointed to the baskets of rose leaves.

"There are the bombs, Boris Schokol," he said.

The night fell upon the mountain tops, bringing with it a furious storm.

In the ravine the 300 men of Mourad-Bey, worn out by thirty hours of vain and constant search, lay sleeping heavily, guarded by their sentinels, when suddenly a loud firing broke the silence, followed by the sound of horses galloping madly.

At the same moment a hailstorm of bombs burst throughout the intrenchments, reaping a fearful harvest of death and disorder.

Then fifty men, fifty demons whose hands cast thunderbolts, rushed like a whirlwind through the lines, destroying everything in their passage and gaining the road which led from the mountains to the plain below.

Boris Schokol, the terrible Macedonian chief, was free once more.—Translated from the Hungarian.

Mrs. Belva Lockwood had an important part in settling the Cherokee claims case, the decision in which gave the eastern and emigrant Cherokees nearly $5,000,000. The suit was pending for years, and Mrs. Lockwood prepared several able briefs, presenting her argument skilfully, point by point. Her share of the fees will be about $50,000. She has another million dollar case before the court of claims now.

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On Board S. S. "Lady Eileen" at Carleton, Quebec, 1905.

To the Editor of The Times:

Sir,—I take great pleasure in handing you herewith this letter descriptive of my trip down the Gaspe coast, on the S. S. "Lady Eileen" of the Interprovincial Navigation Co. of Canada, Ltd.

On a Saturday we leave Campbellton at 10 a. m. sailing down the beautiful Bay Chaleur. We pass close to Chamber's Point, a big headland with lighthouse and summer camps and then beautiful Oak Bay. Next we reach Dalhousie, the town of saw mills and wood working factories, its harbor well filled with vessels loading the lumber.

On the north side of the bay we pass a long range of high cliffs of red sandstone, at the end of which is Magusha Point, with the high, blue mountains in the distance called Carleton Capes. What is usually thought to be an uninteresting part of the trip, is certainly interesting for an observer of scenery.

The next stop is Carleton, a pretty village, and quite a summer resort, situated near the foot of the Carleton Mountains, which tower above in the background over 2000 feet.

A few miles further is the village of Maria, situated on a wide, fertile flat, with ranges of mountains in the background. The water here being quite shoal a small boat comes off to the steamer, as along the St. John river. The next stop is New Richmond, a village with several saw mills, and a number of ships in the harbor loading lumber. It is also situated at the mouth of the Cascapedia river.

We pass close along Black Cape, cliffs of high black rock full of numerous holes and caves. We then pass close along the shores of Caplan and miles of fine farm lands, thickly settled with good and well painted buildings. At the village of Bonaventure they come off to the steamer with a large sail boat, and those North Shore Frenchmen know how to handle a boat, in any kind of weather. The next stop is New Carlisle, the capital of Bonaventure Co. and it is also the eastern terminus as well as head office of the Atlantic & Lake Superior Railway. It is quite a smart town. A few miles further we stop at Paspebiac, a prettily situated place and a regular village of nicely kept and well painted fish houses, with also a beautiful beach. C. Robin Collas, the fish king, has his summer residence and a beautiful private park here also.

We then pass along a few miles with an occasional boat stop til we reach Port Daniel. You want to see this view at sunset to appreciate its beauty. Entering the harbor we pass a big headland on the south side, while to the west is the village with a large fleet of fishing vessels at anchor in front. To the north is the long pier and lighthouse. with a high, round-topped mountain straight up from the water's edge and thousands of feet high.

After leaving these scenes, it grows dark. We pass the Perce Rocks, and other interesting places during the night, but if you request it, the genial captain will call you at 1.30 a.m. to see the rocks as you pass, and, if moonlight, you will certainly have a grand view. If an early riser, on Sunday morning, you will see Point St. Peter, with its large fleet of fishing boats at anchor, the village away on the distant hills.

We then enter the mouth of Gaspe Bay. On either side as we go up are high mountains, with an occasional cove, flat and village. Next is Douglastown, with its usual fishing fleet, fish houses, etc. The sloping hills and old village church look pretty in the morning sunlight. We next enter the S. W. arm of Gaspe bay, going up to Gaspe. The passage is quite narrow and deep. High, round topped mountains are on either side.

Gaspe is certainly the prettiest town on the whole trip. Nature made the place almost perfect for scenery. Every way you turn is a pretty view. It is almost an ideal summer resort, with up-to-date hotels, public buildings and residences, good boating, bathing and fishing, and an excellent harbor for yachting. A number of wealthy Americans now have summer residences there. We arrive at Gaspe about 8.30 a.m., and leave again at 9.30 p.m., having all day Sunday, with time to go to church in the evening.

We pass Perce again in the night on the return, also numerous other little ports, arriving at Newport about daylight Monday morning. We see Port Daniel again in the morning sunlight, also all the other ports above mentioned, arriving at Campbellton about 5.15 p.m.

I think this is one of the most enjoyable summer sea trips in the Maritime Provinces. There is no fog or cold, damp air; and seldom is it very rough. The Lady Eileen is a first-class steamer, and admirably fitted up for the comfort of her passengers. She is safe and speedy, and the officers are most courteous and obliging. Yours,

H. F. ALBRIGHT.

YELLOW FEVER IS INCREASING

NEW ORLEANS, Sept. 15 — There was an increase in the number of new cases and of deaths from yellow fever yesterday. There were really seven yellow fever deaths, but one of them does not appear on the record. It is the case of an Italian who, in the delirium of the fever, secured a revolver and blew out his brains. The situation at Tallulah is improving. Other country reports were:—

Patterson 20 cases, two deaths; Kenner 8 cases, two deaths; St. Rose, two cases; Barrataria, two cases; Clarke Cheniere, one death; Sarpy, two cases; Berwick, one death; Houma, two cases.

NEW YORK, Sept. 15 — The following is the yellow fever report to 6 p.m. last night: New cases, 49; total to date, 2,462. Deaths today, 6; total to date, 329. New foci, 15. Cases under treatment, 316; discharged, 1,814.

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THE EVENING TIMES has the finest equipped plant of any afternoon paper East of Montreal.

IT IS THE LEADING EVENING PAPER, AND THE PEOPLE SAY SO.

GREAT POTATO FARM

(Carleton Sentinel).

Lincoln W. Tompkins, a prosperous and highly intelligent farmer, who lives about a mile and a half out of Houlton, was in Woodstock this week. Mr. Tompkins, who is a Northampton boy, brought with him the product of two hills of Green Mountain potatoes, weighing twelve pounds. The tubers are magnificent in size and regular in shape. He has ten acres in Green Mountains, from which it is expected that 1,000 barrels will be marketed. Then again he has an eight acre field in other varieties, from which 600 barrels will be dug. In Houlton potatoes were selling at from $1.00 to $1.20 this week.

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