An Episode of the Balkans

By ALBERT KENYON

When the Balkan states had expelled the Turk and were anxious lest the powers should intervene and inflict their ancient enemies upon them the two powers most able to help or harm them were Germany and Russia.

At this time Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria sent a young man in his service to the emperor of Germany to offer certain inducements for him to restrain Austria. This person was Boris Meloff, a very determined young man, who, so far as strength and bravery were concerned, was well adapted to get the message through to Berlin. Austrian spies were on the watch to checkmate any move Prince Ferdinand might make, and Meloff was liable to be attacked and his dispatch taken from him.

On the day of his departure he went to his home and told his wife that he was to go on a journey and the object of it, directing her to get out his pistols and a couple of short knives, which he intended to take with him for defensive purposes.

"Fighting is but half the defense you will have to make," said Kristina, his wife. "You will be in greater danger of losing the dispatch by stratagem. Where will you carry your dispatch?"

"Where would you suggest?" asked Boris.

"I will think it over and let you know later."

Boris gave her the dispatch that she might know its size, and before he left her she opened his valise, which she had packed for him, and showed him the dispatch, addressed to his imperial majesty the kaiser, on top of his other clothes, where every one could see it. Boris was astonished at this and was about to take the package to put elsewhere when his wife stopped him.

"Boris," she said, "leave it where it is. No one will look for it in your valise. It will be sought for on your person. Keep your weapons on your person and the dispatch in your valise."

The young husband concluded to humor his wife. He kissed her and the children goodby and sallied forth.

There is a railway running north westward from Sofia, and Boris went by train, his route lying through Servia and Austria. There were traitors and spies everywhere, and he had not been long on the train before he knew that there were Austrians aboard who had been informed of his errand. He dare not go apart from the others lest he be attacked. So he kept his seat in the train. He had a letter in his pocket from his wife, which he was tempted to read to while away the time, but he dare not. Besides, she had distinctly charged him not to do so unless he should lose the dispatch. In that case he would find in it a suggestion.

On reaching Belgrade a man stepped up to him and whispered to him that his wife, Kristina, had sent him to say that after Boris had left her she had learned that an attempt would be made to relieve him of the dispatch in changing trains at that point. The man handed Boris a note from his wife, written in her well known hand, advising him to give the messenger the dispatch to take from the train, to be returned on the train leaving Belgrade for Budapest. Boris hesitated; but, having every confidence in his wife, he concluded to do so. Going with the man to a room in the station where they would not be observed, he opened his valise and gave the man the package.

That was the last Boris saw of the man or the package. After leaving Belgrade he looked for him through the train and, not finding him, was in agony at having been duped. His great wonder was how the fellow could have duped his wife. Remembering the letter he was to read from her containing a suggestion in case he lost the dispatch, he opened and read it.

Kristina said in the letter that she had no hope of his getting the dispatch through unless by stratagem. She had commissioned a friend to reveal to an Austrian that Boris was going to Berlin with an important dispatch, and the friend offered to get a letter from Boris' wife that would secure it for a money consideration. Kristina's object was to throw others who were after the plunder off the track. The Austrian paid the price for the note and boarded the same train as Boris.

"But," continued Kristina's letter, "if you give him the package in your valise you will not give him the dispatch. I opened the envelope, took out the prince's letter to the czar and replaced it with waste paper. The dispatch you will find sewed in the lining of your coat. If my stratagem is successful you will proceed from Belgrade unmolested, for he who thinks he has the dispatch will doubtless send it unopened to Vienna."

Never was man more delighted at receiving a letter from his wife than Boris Meloff. But he dare not give vent to his feelings lest he be watched by some of those who had followed him from Sofia. On second thoughts, however, he remembered that he was no longer shadowed, since his enemies believed that they had captured the dispatch. At any rate, he saw no further evidences of intended interference and on reaching Berlin took the dispatch from the place where Kristina had concealed it and delivered it to the foreign office.

Whether or no it had effect on the latter in inducing him to curb Austria is a state secret.

A Goat in a Studio.

Among other stories in the "Reminiscences of Augustus Saint Gaudens" by father and son is a confession by the son. When he was a boy in Cornish he had a pet goat which he had trained to play a butting game. The goat would butt, Homer would dodge, and then, to his great glee, the goat would butt the wrong thing or the air. One day at dinner time when the studio barn was deserted Homer was playing this game. Beyond the open barn door stood the wax model of the Logan horse "waiting to be cast in plaster. This time when Homer dodged the goat butted the back of the horse; but, since it did not fall or break, the relieved child thought it wasn't hurt and didn't tell. Before any one noticed that "the rear of the animal was strangely askew" the horse had been cast in plaster and the enlargement begun. This meant the loss of a whole summer's work—just one more of the accidents and errors that increased the "toughness of the sculptor's life." — Ariadne Gilbert in St. Nicholas.

Early Day Railroad Travel.

On Nov. 26, 1833, a car made the first trip over the Portage railroad. This was the most remarkable engineering undertaking of the time. The railroad was thirty-six miles long, extending across the Allegheny mountains from Hollidaysburg to Johnstown. There were ten inclined planes, five on each side of the mountains. Engines at the top of each plane pulled up four cars at a time. The ascent on the east side measured 1,398 feet. Then there was a tunnel of 870 fee and a descent of 1,172 feet on the western side. Passengers on canal boats entered the cars at Hollidaysburg and were carried over the mountains, embarking in other boats on the western side and thus continuing their journey to Pittsburgh. Later boats were built so that they could be taken apart into three or four sections and placed on a car for the trip over the mountains. The construction of the Portage railroad cost $1,500,000.—Philadelphia Record.

Sorting Bottles by Touch.

One of London's queer trades is that of empty bottle sorting at the London bottle exchange, off Blackfriars road. These bottles have been salvaged from dust bins, cellars, the holds of ships and wherever bottles go astray. Every year at least 2,000,000 bottles, after many wanderings, find their way to the bottle exchange. They are sorted and returned to their rightful owners, who pay an annual subscription as well as a few shillings a gross for returned bottles. Reared on the bottle, as it were, a sorter at the exchange must be a man of keen eye and delicate touch. All that he has to guide him in thousands of cases is the embossed name on the glass, and swiftly, unerringly and with almost uncanny deftness he picks out a bottle which has wandered from Glasgow and puts it in the case bound for the north.—New York Sun.

Sixteenth Century Self Pye.

A quaint publication is "The Booke of Cokerye," printed in the sixteenth century. The full title of the book is:

A proper newe Booke of Cokerye, declarynge what maner of meates be best in season, for al times in the yere, and how they ought to be dressed, and served at the table, bothe for fleshe dayes and fyshe dayes. With a newe addition, verye necessarye for all them that delyghteth in Cokerye.

One of the recipes in the book is the following:

Pyes of mutton or beif must be fyne mynced and ceasoned wyth pepper and salte, and a lyttle saffron to coloure it, suet or marrow a good quantite, a lyttle vyneger, prumes, greate raysins and dates, take the fattest of the broathe of powdred beyfe, and yf you wyll have paest royall, take butter and yolkes of egges and so tempre the flowre to make the paeste.

English Greetings.

Erasmus, coming to England in Henry VIII.'s time, was struck with the deep heartiness of our wishes—good, aye and bad, too, but he most admired the good ones. Other nations ask in their greetings how a man carries himself, or how doth he stand with the world, or how doth he find himself. But the English greet with a pious wish that God may give one a good morning or a good evening, good day or "god'e'en," as the old writers have it, and when we part we wish that "God may be with you," though we now clip it into "Goodby."—Friswell.

His Foolish Father.

"I suppose you keep hard at work these days?"

"No. I'm not doing anything just now."

"I thought your father had given you a position in his bank?"

"He did. But he wanted me to earn my salary."—Chicago Record-Herald.

Polish.

"You have a bright look, my boy," said the visitor at the school.

"Yes, sir," replied the candid youth. "That's because I forgot to rinse the soap off my face good."

Giving Her Away.

"Uncle, we want you to give the bride away."

"Very well. I'll announce to the gathered assembly that she's thirty-two."—Boston Transcript.

Two Ways.

There are two ways of learning the value of anything we want. One is to get it, the other to lose it. — R. W. Kauffman.

If a man is square it is easy to put up with his sharp corners.

An Escape

By LUCY K. WYNKOOP

Joe Green, a boy ten years old, lost his father, then his mother, and was thrown out upon the world at an age when he should have been subject to the necessary training to direct him in an honorable career.

Joe was a bright boy and fitted for a better life than robbery and passing the principal part of his life in jail and the rest of it undergoing the risk of jail or something else. But the time had not come for him to show strength of character enough to enable him to break away from the path in which fate had placed him. When he was fifteen he and some other youngsters attempted to rob a man who defended himself till a policeman arrived, and the boys were all caught in the act.

Joe, who was the youngest of the lot, was sent to a reformatory. It was one of those prisons where boys are taught some trade by which to earn an honorable living. There was a power house, with an engine to drive the machinery in the other buildings. Joe was interested in this engine as soon as he saw it and succeeded in getting himself assigned as a helper to the engineer. He began by shoveling coal into the furnace, but showed such aptitude for mechanics that he was advanced to the post of assistant engineer.

To be more explicit about Joe's aptitude, he was full of resource. Where another person would take an ordinary way to accomplish a mechanical result he would take a short way. The first notice that was taken of this faculty was one day when a machine broke. A piece of work that was due to be finished at a certain time was dependent upon it. It would require some time to procure the broken part, and it seemed that the work it was doing must stop. Joe suggested a way by which it might be temporarily repaired and the work go on. His suggestion was acted upon and the work finished in time.

Joe became so infatuated with machinery that he was anxious to get out into the world and become a machinist. He was not a patient boy—few persons whose abilities are of the kind called genius are—so his inventive brain turned toward a method of escape from the reformatory that he might go to some place where his past would not be known and enter upon a career connected with machinery. He thought over a number of plans by which he might get out of the prison, but none of them were practicable.

But at last he hit upon an original conception, one that was allied to the science of mechanics. Some mathematical knowledge was required to put it into practice, but there was a school in the reformatory which the boys were required to attend, and Joe showed a considerable aptitude in a mathematical way.

The suggestion came in this way: The power house was built against the prison wall. Besides the engine, it contained a broad leather belt turned by the shaft, the upper end running over gearing attached to the ceiling. Beside this gearing was a window, which was usually kept open in order to let out the heated air of the engine and furnace room.

One morning it occurred to Joe that the belt might possibly be used as a conveyance to carry one to the window, whence he might lower himself to the ground outside the prison wall.

But no one could jump from the belt to the window without running the risk of being dashed against it or falling to a brick yard pavement below it, or both. There was but one time when such a ride could be taken. That was when the steam had been shut off and the belt was slowing up previous to stopping its revolution. This was attended to by the engineer himself at 6 o'clock every workday evening, and there were usually other persons, prisoners or officials, about during the closing hour; therefore the feat must be performed in presence of others.

Joe found time when he was supposed to be studying to calculate a point where he could jump on to the belt, be carried to the window and stop there, though the basis of these calculations was obtained by watching the belt revolve previous to stopping, noting especially the position of the lacing with reference to the point at which the belt must be boarded.

He was months making these notations and calculations and at last was enabled to fix a point which many notations at the closing hour showed always stopped at the window.

One evening when there was no one but the engineer and Joe in the engine room the former saw the boy seize a coiled rope that he had kept ready for his purpose, jump on the belt, hold on to each edge, ride to the window and disappear. The engineer was too astonished to give an alarm, and whether he gave one at all was not settled at the investigation that followed the daring feat.

It was midwinter when Joe Green made his experiment, and it was not only dark without, but a snowstorm was raging. Joe was never heard of again, but a much respected and wealthy contractor for machinery named Joseph Greer is living in Rio de Janeiro. He never talks about his boyhood, but has given away a fortune for the betterment of boys who are deprived of a home training and has helped hundreds of young men who have served terms in prison to a means of earning an honest livelihood.

Who Owned the Cart?

An old law in Carmarthen county, in Wales, required that every conveyance passing over the turnpike toll roads should be plainly marked with the name of the owner so that the perpetrator of any lawlessness could be easily detected.

One young farmer known as Stammering Jim was summoned before a magistrate, who demanded why his name did not appear on his two wheeled cart.

"W-w-whose n-n-name am I to put on?" stammered the defendant.

"Your own, of course," said the magistrate.

"B-b-but it isn't my cart, your worship," says Jim.

"Who is the owner, then?" demanded the squire.

"T-t-that's the t-t-trouble, sir," said Jim. "The old sh-shafts belong to D-D-David T-T-Thomas, the wh-wheels b-b-belong to Hugh J-J-Jones, the old axle to W-W-William B-Bowser, the t-t-tab belongs to Joshua M-M-Morgan, the t-t-tailboard belongs t-to me. Then w-w-whose n-name am I t-to put on, sir?"—National Magazine.

Melba's Pullman Porter Critic.

One American experience recurs to me at the moment. I had been appearing in "Faust," at Washington, and, getting into the train after the performance rather tired, was not unnaturally annoyed at finding my stateroom unprepared. I called the colored attendant, who kept me waiting a long time before he condescended to appear.

"Why is my berth not ready?" I began.

He looked me up and down indifferently.

"I saw you play Margaret (Marguerite) this mornin'," he said defiantly, "an' I thought you weren't a bit o' good. You'll hev to wait. But Flankon (Plancon) was fine," he added as an afterthought.

Two years afterward I received a letter from this same ebony critic. "I heard you last night as Manon Lescaut," it ran, "and it was real fine. You beat the band. I take it all back."—Mme. Melba in Strand Magazine.

England's Great Little River.

One could hardly fancy an England without the Thames. It is the source, the inspiration, the participant, in so much that distinguishes England's sylvan beauty. In the centuries that have lived upon its banks it has been a potent factor in the civilization of this island kingdom. It cuts in twain and laves the burliest city in all the world, a dark mass of human structure impenetrably profound. It rides a vast commerce from London to the sea, and along its jutting wharves nights are often made darker with its tragedies. Years agone kings and princes and the fairest women in the land rode upon its tide in functions of state or in the idle pose of pleasure. Those were the days of the garlanded barge or the hooded galley foist, which, gliding stealthily beneath the Tower portcullis, lost another noble to the world of politics and intrigue.—From "In Thamesland."

Clement Moore's One Poem.

Just one poem was written by Clement Clarke Moore, whose grave is in Trinity churchyard, at One Hundred and Fifty-fifth street, Washington heights. "'Twas the Night Before Christmas" lives because it touches now and has always touched human hearts. It was put into an autograph album in 1822 and published a couple of years later without the consent of the author, who was professor of Greek and Hebrew at Columbia college and did not think it comported with his dignity to write children's verse. Dr. Moore died in 1863 at the ripe age of eighty-four. His fame as a scholar is lost. His fame as the author of that one real poem will live while the English language is spoken and read anywhere on earth.—Brooklyn Eagle.

Notwithstanding.

A teacher had been at great trouble to explain to her class the meaning of the word "notwithstanding" and, on asking for a sentence in which the word occurred, was somewhat nonplused to receive the following effort from a blushing maiden of some eight summers and winters:

"Please, miss, my little brother has a hole in the seat of his trousers, and it's notwithstanding."—London Mail.

No Friends of His.

"Well, what did your better half say to you?"

"She said a-plenty."

"You always seem to have friends to take you home after these banquets."

"Not friends. My enemies do it."—Pittsburgh Post.

Foggy.

"James, I understand the fogs are thick in London."

"I remember one, sir, that held for three months. I was working on a tunnel, sir, and we cut a ninety foot tunnel through a sixty foot hill."—Washington Herald.

An Ostrich Trick.

Naturalists state that an ostrich never goes straight to its nest, but always approaches it with many windings, in order, if possible, to conceal the locality from observation.

Melancholy.

Melancholy may be defined as a state of mind in which a man is so out of touch with his environment that life has lost its sweetness.—Sir William Osler.

How many people live on the reputation of the reputation they might have made?—Ruskin.

She Learned to Keep a Bank Account

By OSCAR COX

"My dear," said Robert Read, "what is this nonsense about your joining the suffragists?"

"Why, it's no nonsense at all, Bob. I've joined."

"Will you kindly tell me your object?"

"Well, you see, there are lots of women who own property, and they are interested in making the laws that govern that property. They should have a voice in electing the right officials."

"But you have no property?"

"Haven't I a husband who has? And mayn't he die and leave it to me?"

Mr. Read found this argument too much for him. He thought awhile.

"What you have said," he remarked later, reminds me that, I being liable to die before you do, you will need some knowledge of taking care of property. I think I had better give you some instructions in that direction, else a vote will do you no good, for you won't know enough to use it."

"No fear of that. However, I am ready to be instructed."

"I shall begin with teaching you to keep a bank account. Ever since I went away and left orders with the bank to honor your checks and you forged my name I have felt that you should know more about such matters."

"That was very stupid, wasn't it?"

"I should say so."

A few days later the husband gave his wife a check book, a pass book and a check for a hundred dollars, explaining what each book was for, and told her that she was to deposit the check in the bank. He also told her how to enter each deposit in her check book and subtract each check from her total deposits so that her balance would be always before her. He wrote "For deposit" on the check and told her to sign her name under it, explaining that the words were to indicate the purpose for which it was indorsed and that if was not to be paid to any one. Then he made out her deposit ticket for her, put it with the check in the pass book and the lesson was ended.

A few days later he came home and found his wife in tears.

"What is it, sweetheart?" he asked anxiously.

"I dare not tell you!" she moaned.

"Anything happen to the children?"

"No."

"Don't keep me in suspense."

"I've lost the hundred dollars you gave me for the bank."

"Why, I didn't understand that you were going to draw it."

"I didn't put it in."

"Oh, well, if you've only lost the check it doesn't matter."

"I haven't lost it." Fresh tears started.

"Well, what became of it?"

"I was cleaning out my desk and burning the old papers in it. I threw a lot of things into a wastebasket and dumped them into the kitchen range. The check and the little book it was in are all burned up."

She sobbed as though her heart would break.

Her husband looked at her pityingly, a smile of hopelessness on his lips. She thought the check was destructible, like a bank bill.

He kissed away her tears, explained how he would give her another check in place of the one she had burned and gave her another lesson on the subject. She was sure she understood him perfectly. The lessons were continued for many months, and Mr. Read became convinced that his wife had learned all about banking. At any rate, she made deposits and drew checks as well as anybody.

Then one day when Mr. Read went into the bank he was called in to the office of the cashier, who gave an "ahem" and said:

"Your wife, who has an account with us, needs some explanation of banking methods."

"What's she been doing?"

"Nothing of any importance; nothing wrong. It is simply a matter of ignorance of banking. We notified her a few days ago that her account was overdrawn, and she sent us her check on our own bank to cover the deficiency."

"Humph!" grunted Mr. Read. "How much is it?"

"Two hundred and forty dollars."

Mr. Read drew a check for the amount and when he went home in the evening kissed his wife as usual and began reading the evening paper.

"Anything new in town today, dear?" asked Mrs. Read.

"Yes; it is reported that a new banking law has passed congress."

"Indeed! What are its main features?"

"It will make paying an overdraft with a check of the person overdrawing, drawn on the bank where the overdraft has occurred, illegal. You can't do that any more."

"Isn't it fortunate that I paid up before the law was passed?"

"Very. If you're tired of the trouble of keeping your account suppose you put yours in with mine."

"I think I will. You know I only did it to learn how, and now that I have learned, I don't need to bother with it any more."

"Just so. Let's go down to dinner."

"Bob," she said a few days later, "I've been thinking that if you should die before me how nice it will be now that I've learned business and will be able to take care of my own affairs."

"You won't need another husband, will you?"

She looked at him reproachfully.

Trapping a Spider.

The coyote is one of the most cunning and hardest of all fur bearing animals to trap. He delights in digging up traps, springing them, eating the bait and otherwise disturbing the set without getting caught. His sense of smell is very acute. The best way to trap him is to build a bonfire over the set after the traps have been properly placed. Throw into the embers some bones, rinds, chicken heads or, better yet, pieces of soap box or grease. The coyote habitually searches about campfires for stray bits of meat and is therefore less wary. The fire obliterates the traces of the set, eliminates the traces and smell of a human being, and the odor of the burned meat will attract him from a long distance. He is more likely to walk into the trap thus baited with the remnants of a campfire than any other unless you have a carcass literally surrounded with traps with a savory winter as and no other carcasses within miles.—W. F. Wilson in Farm and Fireside.

Meeting Mrs. Spider.

In "Insect Biographies With Pen and Camera" the author pictures the plight of the unlucky fly who has entered Mrs. Spider's parlor:

It is struggling to escape from the unexpected net which in some mysterious manner has suddenly enveloped it when a creature of terrible appearance hastily rushes out upon it. Eight loathsome eyes glare wildly upon the terrified fly. A large, hairy and horrible finger-like palpus on each side of this appalling face waves and beckons with angry menace in the air, incessantly quivering with malignant glee. Then one of these combed and clawed feet is stretched toward the helpless prisoner, and the threads that hold the fly are suddenly tightened, just as the monster pulls them together. Then the spinneret ejects a shower of silken strands over the fly, and it is spun round and round and round and round that hold it until at last it is securely enveloped, still alive, in silken bonds.

Artistic Temperament Cured.

It will be news to many of her myriads of admirers to hear that that petted artist Titiens "used to suffer from a bad temper, and in these outbursts she felt a strong desire to smash anything that came handy. How Titiens was ultimately cured of the habit Mr. Gye relates in his reminiscences. "She was sitting at supper after a concert in a provincial town when the manager made some remark which annoyed her. As usual, she took the first thing that came to hand, a soda water bottle, and flung it at him. The manager was sitting at the table with his back to the window. The bottle missed him, smashed through the window and nearly killed a casual passerby. This said Titiens, gave her such a shock that she was completely cured of her failing."—Pall Mall Gazette.

Clear Seeing Monsenet.

Critics have not yet consigned the late M. Massenet his permanent niche in the temple of fame, but many of them agree that he was a charming although not a great composer. He had one quality of character, however, which is not the invariable accompaniment of genius, musical and other—he could appreciate genius in others. An anecdote taken from the Paris Figaro attests it:

A critic was indulging in extravagant praise of Massenet to his face and wound up his flattery:

"Wagner! What was he? His talent is most absurdly exaggerated. We have to pick and choose among a lot of rubbish in Wagner."

"Is that so?" commented Massenet suavely. "I should be quite happy with what you leave."

Birds.

The first "birds" were not much like those of the present time. The pterodactyl, supposed to be the pioneer of bird life, was a great feather winged monster, with great spears on the edges of the wings and a mouth full of sharklike teeth. The pterodactyl did not sing, and could we have seen him we would not have felt like singing ourselves. True birds, and especially the warblers, are very late in geologic time. There was no bird melody in the carboniferous jungles. The singers, in all probability, did not greatly antedate the human race.—New York American.

Where Sentiment Stops.

Mary Johnson in her book "Hagar" has Mrs. Green, one of the characters, reply to the heroine's wish that she could make money by saying: "It ain't so easy for women to make money. There's more ways they can't than they can. It's what they call 'sentiment' fights them. Sentiment don't mind their being industrious, but it draws the line at their getting money for it."

A White Hope.

"I have a mind to give you a good whipping!" exclaimed the impatient father.

"Well," replied the athletic youth, "maybe you can, but if you succeed it will be some item for the sport page."—Washington Star.

Not Whisky.

Ma—You've been drinking! I smell it in your breath. Pa—Not a drop. I've been sitting from legs. What you smell is the hop.—Harvard Lampoon.

When Money Took Wings.

Comedian—Did the ghost walk?

Soubrette—No; it was an aviation comedy, and the ghost flew after the first week.—Exchange.

It is the uplifted face that finds the shining of the sun.