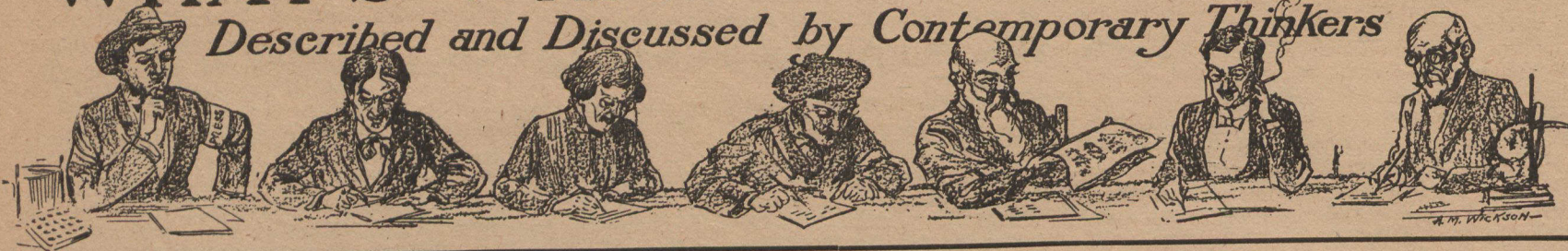


WHAT'S WHAT *the* WORLD OVER

Described and Discussed by Contemporary Thinkers



BUCHAREST THE GAY

A Description of Roumania's Capital Before the War Came

WHETHER W. F. Bailey and J. V. Bates may be, they write highly interesting articles. In the last issue of the *Courier* we quoted from their article on the Dobrudja. Now (from a later number of the *Fortnightly Review*) we quote from their article on Bucharest, as follows: It is along the boulevards of Bucharest, as it is along the boulevards of Paris, that the traveller can best study the life of the city in its most characteristic phases. Here the dull, grey, serious world seems to be non-existent. To the town-bred Roumanian, born a flaneur, the streets are a source of never-ending delight. There is so much to stare at, to marvel at, to revel in. It seems scarcely credible that fifty years ago these streets were nothing better than rough country roads, in the mud of which ox-waggons and carriages were wont to stick fast, while the sidewalks were paved with boulders taken from the bed of the Dombovitz. Well within the memory of the older inhabitants petroleum lamps were the only lights obtainable, sanitation was conspicuous by its absence, and the Royal palace was little better than a huge farmhouse. Now there is not a vestige of an old building to be seen from one end to the other of the grand boulevards, where nationalism, independence, petroleum wells, granite quarries, and grain have changed an old into a new Roumania. Turn, however, down any one of the side streets leading off the main thoroughfares and enter the older quarters of the town, and it will be possible to fancy oneself back again in a Roumanian country village. Small, low, white or pink, wooden-roofed cottages, with stacks of firewood and sheds leaning up against them, surrounded by tall, bright green, poplar, mulberry, and plane trees, and orchards, fronted by tiny gardens full of lilies, roses, and sunflowers, meet the eye. Everywhere is heard the cackling, gobbling, crowing, and screeching of cocks, hens, turkeys and geese. Here in one open space a flock of white sheep with fawn-coloured ears and fawn-coloured feet are resting, guarded by a couple of shaggy, bare-legged, bronzed shepherds clad in huge brown felt cloaks, with black astrachan caps, the size of a tea-cosy, on the swart heads, and with ten-foot staves in their hands. Deplorably mingled with the sheep are the goats—goats of all sorts and styles, black, brown, white, and mottled; goats with horns sweeping in immense curves over their back. Not far off, under a clump of alders and willows, are some ox-waggons, and beside these, on the dusty ground, sleepy-eyed white oxen and buffaloes lie chewing the cud, while others of their species are hauling along their squealing, wooden-wheeled, overlaid carts, the noise from which is enough to set the strongest nerves on edge. Behind booths set out upon the roadways the market folk are serenely waiting for purchasers. The women turn their distaffs, the men smoke and play cards and leave fortune unwooded, apparently indifferent as to whether or not they do bad or good business.

To get away from the (noon-day) swelter of the streets one turns involuntarily towards the hills, towards the big, golden-hued cathedral.

The sun is a white furnace overhead, the sky as blue as any turquoise. To the left lies the Parliament House, to the right is the home and garden of the Metropolitan, a garden where the jarring noises of life never penetrate, where amongst roses and clematis, lilies, lavender, heliotrope, fiery geraniums, carnations, pansies, poppies, and larkspur the bees and butterflies flit from sweetness to sweetness, where the paths are sticky with honeydew and strewn with the dropping tassels of the acacias' blooms, where the nightingales pour out their hearts in song the whole fragrant night through.

Down—not far down—in the valley lies a city of phantasy, built of silver and gold and emeralds and pearls, for so Bucharest appears from this height

with its blue and gilded and copper domes and spires, its white houses, and verdant green parks and avenues scintillating in the sun's rays as would gems. Colour—colour laughs and rollicks and flames. Not a vestige of smoke sullies the atmosphere, although three hundred thousand people have their being within its walls. See there the long avenue of the Chaussee, which runs on without a break right into Transylvania. As far as the racecourse, in the suburbs, it is planted with waving trees and bright flowerbeds, behind which—so curiously intermingled is town with country—are meadows knee-deep in grass. There too are the roofs of the market booths and the little tumble-down by-ways, where the forenoon was spent, where the ox waggons rumble, the sheep bleat, the Jews cheat, and the tragedies and comedies of the humble are played out. The quays show signs of busy life, but further out, where the town begins to thin—if one were near enough to see—herds of creamy oxen are resting, lost to view on the mud-slopes under the green foliage.

In the Roumanian capital there is none of the cant of a morality that is not. Pretty women are fair game here, and the hunters make no secret of their zest for the chase, nor do the hunted fair ones manifest the slightest desire to escape from pursuit. Fem-



Why will she bring that Disagreeable Child?

—Brinkerhoff in New York Evening Mail.

nine innocence in the City of Joy stands for want of charm, and that is only another word for failure. The woman who has not been gossiped about considers herself ill-used, and even the fair-haired and pretty Queen is not exempt.

But to the traveller the temptation comes to wander through the ancient quarters of the town—the mysterious places where the Tziganes dwell, where fortunes are told, and music is heard the night through. The splendour of the sunset has faded, the sky is soft and pale, with delicate dove-like tints, and the stars are peeping out of its still depths. Solemn indigo and black shadows have gathered in the deserted market-places and along the small rustic streets, behind the gleaming boulevards. Round the doors of the pale-faced shops, where the quaint, old-world signs hang out, groups of humbler folk are interchanging small talk, playing dominoes, smoking, sipping coffee, and reading the evening journals. From a distance comes the noise of music. Following the direction of the sound, passing down a laneway running between some little fenced-in gardens, overlooked by low white houses with dark verandas, from which, seen dark against interior light of the rooms, figures are leaning out, one arrives at a large open

square bordered with limes. It is plainly the batatura of the locality, for over yonder is the public-house or inn, now ablaze with light and surrounded by a score of tables and benches. The scranciob or swing, which is always erected in such places at Easter, is still standing, black and clean-cut against the sky. White-clad figures are converging from every side towards the open doorway of the tavern, and the light from the swinging lamps suspended from its balcony and from the trees flickers down on the scarlet sashes, white shirts, and lambskin caps of the men, on the silver-embroidered aprons and sequin-spangled, head-coverings of the women. The music ceases indoors, and presently the players emerge, thread their way through the crowd clustered about the doorway, and take their places on a raised platform beneath the lamp-hung verandah. The tables are deserted, white figure clutches at white figure, hands are outstretched, and soon a giant ring is formed, and the Hora commences.

The circle widens, more and still more couples join in, the pace increases, the chanting grows louder. The ring breaks into two rings, into three rings. Spangled veils and silver and gold embroideries glitter, gold and silver and coral necklets twinkle, sandalled and high-booted feet fly until the circles melt into three whirling, blurred white clouds flecked with light and colour. The music is wilder and stranger and more fascinating even than the dance; sometimes it is frenzied and passionate, sometimes it is a long, slow rhapsody drawn from the heart of memory, and sometimes the melody—if so it can be called—sinks to a mere whisper, to a murmur which steals into the ear and thrills the soul with a craving for what is out of reach or what is perhaps past and lost for ever with a feeling that could one but follow where it leads one would reach the lands of heart's desire. In the crude, guttering lamplight these Roumanian Tziganes, with their delicate profiles, olive skins, lustreless black hair falling in masses on the shoulders, with their soft, glowing, gleaming dark eyes, almond-shaped Oriental eyes—which have nothing European in their setting or glance—stand writhing and swaying above their instruments. From time to time they shriek untranslatable things in Romany, and show their glistening teeth in mocking, ribald laughter.

The hours fly by on winged feet. The moon sails above the shining domes and roofs to smile with tender splendour in the pansy-blue sky, and at last the east blushes crimson, the birds begin to sing in the gardens, the pleasure-surfeited dancers reluctantly awake to the fact that another day's work is before them, and the wily Tziganes slip off towards their camp on the outskirts of the city.

ART AND THE PUBLIC

The Museum and the Service it May Render to the Young

WE have not many art museums in this country, and while the war lasts we are not likely to build any. Nevertheless, Mrs. Schuyler Van Rensselaer's article in the *North American Review* has a bearing on Canada. Really, she writes, the trouble in most of our American cities is that the people do not feel enough at home in their palaces of art. They enter them too much as though they were the palaces of kings, condescendingly opened for their timid inspection. Many are awed by the space, the silence, and what seems to them the grandeur of their unaccustomed surroundings. They do not need to be discouraged from staying too long. They need to be made to feel that they are very welcome, that the place exists for them. Many other people even among the professedly cultivated—the vogue of loan collections makes it plain—visit galleries of art as a certain kind of woman goes about among the shops, "just to see what they have got," and having superficially seen this, do not come again until the stock has been replenished with novelties.