The St. James' Club

And The Story Of A Golden Wedding.

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By D. W. H.

INGOMAR—Parthenia, What is love?
PARTHENIA—
"Two souls with but a single thought,
Two hearts that beat as one."
—Ingomar, the Barbarian.

"Did you ever hear of Captain Wattle?
He was all for love and little for bottle."
—Dibdin.

The passer along the western side of Humboldt street, between Government and Douglas, will observe a two-storey frame building, now occupied, I think, as a boarding-house. This building formerly stood on Government street, corner of Broughton, occupying part of the site where Weiler's furniture store now rears its imposing front. It was built in 1860 by ex-Mayor Richard Lewis, an old-time contractor and undertaker, and in its day was considered quite a smart structure. It was at one time the City Hall, and many of the impassioned scenes that characterized the mayoralty of the late James Drummond were enacted within its walls. Before passing into the hands of the city it was opened as the St. James' Club by three Londoners. One was a former army officer, another a naval commander, and the third had done literary work on the London press. All were very much down-at-the-heel when they opened the St. James' and as neither had had any experience at hotel-keeping it will be readily understood that their financial condition did not improve very rapidly.

The fall of 1862 witnessed the return from Cariboo of a large number of miners with heavy swags of gold dust, and Victoria was the theatre of many uncourious gatherings and routs. The owners of the Abbott, Point, Diller, Steele, Barker, Adams, Cameron and many other of the very rich claims on William creek congregated here and seemed to find difficulty in getting rid of their money fast enough. There is a story told of Abbott, chief owner of the Abbott claim, from which gold was washed by the bucketful for many weeks. Abbott had fished for a living at Frasermouth before he went to Cariboo and was a very poor man indeed when he settled on the piece of mining ground which afterwards bore his name. He was an easy mark for the gamblers who infested the mining section and played high and lost with unvarying good nature. He was known to have wagered $5,000 on a single poker hand and having lost appeared the following night with another big sum which he sent hurtling down the table in search of that which had gone before—sending good money after bad, as the saying is. Abbott with a number of friends entered the St. James' bar one evening and called for drinks for the crowd. Having been served he asked what the mirror behind the bar was worth.

"Forty dollars," replied the barkeeper.

Taking a number of nuggets from his pocket Abbott discharged them full at the glass, breaking it into many pieces.

"Take its value out of that and keep the change," he said as he left the place. The nuggets were sold at the express office for a figure rising $100.

The next day nearly all the bars in town were equipped with large mirrors in the hope that Abbott or some other suddenly made rich fool would break and pay for them as had been done with the glass at St. James'. But Abbott had gone out of the looking-glass business, for he broke no more, and none of his friends followed his silly example. I published this incident the day after its occurrence. It has since been extensively copied and every now and then crops up in a distant publication as a fable. It is, nevertheless, perfectly true and occurred just as I have stated.

Early in the year there had arrived from London, a Mr. and Mrs. Shoolber. They brought with them a complete and valuable stock of dry goods, furs, mantles and millinery, which had been selected from the wholesale stock of a very extensive dry goods firm in London, whose chief partner was father of Mr. Shoolber. In addition to the stock the Shoolbers brought with them a young servant girl or "slavey," a milliner, a dressmaker and a saleswoman. Now it so happened that the milliner and dressmaker, being attractive persons, were shortly wooed and won by two of the rich miners, and as they were under contract with the firm for a year to avoid legal complications they skipped off to the Sound and were married and remained there. The saleswoman, being rather plain, did not attract as many admirers, but one day a miner known as Bill Lovidge made up to her and proposed matrimony and after a two hours' courtship the pair became engaged.

Mrs. Shoolber was unconsolable when the news was broken to her. She had paid for the passages of all three out and before they had been here a month two were gone and the other was preparing to go. She appealed to Mr. Lovidge as a gentleman of honor not to take a mean advantage of the firm; but to wait until the expiration of a year before marrying the woman. But Bill was obdurate. He wanted to get married and he wanted to get married right away. What was the pecuniary value the firm placed on the services of the woman for the next ten months? A trifle of $1,000 was named. Pshaw! that was a mere fleabite. He would pay it. But there was the passage money and sundry other expenses amounting to say, $500. That would be all right. Mr. Lovidge would pay them, too. Then there was a trousseau. A final clause in the agreement under which the girl would be given her liberty must be that Mrs. Shoolber should have the providing of the bride's wedding outfit. How much would that amount to? Well, another bagatelle of $1,000, not to exceed that—making $2,500 in all. A mere nothing, quoth Bill. "Prepare a demand note and I'll sign it." This being done the work of preparation went rapidly and gaily forward. When it came to providing clothes for the prospective bridegroom Mrs. Shoolber recommended Goldstein & Co., who had a tailoring establishment on Government street where the old post office is now. I presume that she got what is termed a "rake-off," because she guaranteed the account, which ran up into the hundreds, for both firms just laid on their charges as with a trowel. The Shoolbers were friends of the St. James' trio; had known them in London, so to them was assigned the task of preparing a banquet. They were directed to spare no expense in providing for one hundred guests.

At the end of two weeks the preparations were complete. The bride had tried on her gowns and hats and hoops, and they were pronounced perfect dreams. The happy man had been fitted with his wedding garments to his own satisfaction if not to that of his friends, and the forage on the henneries and pigstys had been so complete that not a cock crew, a hen cackled, a chicken peeped, a duck quacked or a sucking pig squealed within five miles of Victoria—all having been requisitioned for the Lovidge wedding feast. Carte blanche had been given the caterers and Mrs. Shoolber in the matter of invitations, and as it was to their interest to have lots of food and drink consumed, about one hundred persons were asked. When the evening at last arrived the dining hall was crowded with all classes and conditions of men and a dozen or fifteen women. The table decorations were superb. There were few flowers, but there were many tiny flags. Suspended on colored cords from the ceiling were numerous tin angels and cupids in short dresses in various attitudes of flight with expanded wings and fat legs that seemed too big for the bodies. There were fairy lamps and wax candles flaring merrily away and here and there on the board were sprigs of evergreen in earthern pots that in the end got sadly mixed up with floating island, boned turkey and corned beef, not to mention two young pigs and sundry fat geese. I looked in vain for holly and the disappointment was great when I saw that there were ladies present and no mistletoe. Whether the fair ones shared in the disappointment I never knew, but I am under the impression—I do not speak from personal experience, that as the feast proceeded the absence of mistletoe was disregarded and that before the final break up no complaint was heard on that score; things swung on just the same as though the mistletoe had been there all the time. The unique decorations imparted a recherche flavor to the affair that would otherwise have been wanting. As one stout old lady remarked, "They say matches is made in Heaven, and there's the proof of it," pointing to the angels. "They've brought blessings on their wings," and she giggled at her witty remark.

The banquet was announced for 7 o'clock, but it was 8 before the eatables appeared. In the meantime the guests had been industriously filling their empty stomachs with wine, beer and whiskey, so that when at last they sat down, amid much confusion, laughing and loud talking, many of the number were decidedly "fou." The eatables were dumped on the tables all at once, as it were, leaving the guests to make their selections after the manner in which goods are chosen on a bargain counter in the present day. Some of the ladies wore dresses low-cut in front and behind, and others wore high waists that reached nearly to their ears. In thinking over these grand costumes I have often wondered what would have happened had the high neck and the low neck, like two extremes, finally met. Before the bride and groom appeared the half-famished guests had fallen foul of the food. There was a plentitude of knives and forks, but spoons were shy, so when some of the guests required to stir the contents of their cups they used the handles of the knives and forks in preference to their index fingers. When Bill Lovidge and his wife entered some stood up and cheered, but most retained their seats, being far gone on the road to inebriety, and contented themselves with calling out "Howyer, Bill," "Wish you good luck, old feller," "How's yer gal?" and so on.

I shall not attempt a description of the bride's get-up, except that it was gorgeous and stunning as a rainbow. But Bill Lovidge—ah! he was arrayed like the lilies of the valley—Solomon would have been out of sight by his side. He wore a tall black hat with a very narrow brim, a light brown sack coat (the tailors complained that he refused to have a coat with tails at any price), a pair of Shepherd's plaid trousers, a red vest and a flaring necktie with long ends and a paper-collar. His gloves were white and he refused to take them off, persisting in eating with them on, in spite of the remonstrance of his bride. When he first took his seat he did not uncover, insisting that it was out of fashion to do so; but at last, yielding to the request of one of the hosts, he consented to remove the tile, placing it carefully by the side of his chair, where it was slyly kicked and cuffed and buffeted by the waiters as they passed to and fro until it was reduced to a condition of pulp and could never be again worn. To top everything Lovidge wore eye-glasses, and the patronizing air with which he regarded his guests and fellow-diggers of the mine, as he gazed along the tables was too funny to be described. I believe the bride and groom were the only ones at the table who were provided with napkins (Bill had his tucked beneath his chin) and served with soup, and as the eye-glasses were a very ill-behaved pair they had a disagreeable habit of occasionally dropping from the bridge of Bill's nose into the soup, from which he fished them with his spoon, and having dried them with the napkin returned them to their proper resting-place, the operation being repeated half-a-dozen times during the evening until Bill's face wore a fat expression of greasy contentment.

It cannot be denied that the bridegroom was under the influence of the rosy god and so were nearly all the guests. The supply of drinkables was unlimited. There was plenty of food, too, but it was badly cooked and worse served and was as cold as ice. The corps of waiters was very limited, and it was by the greatest good luck that any one who had not the ability to help himself got anything at all. The waiters, too, were suffering from the general complaint, and now and again a great crash would be heard, succeeded by a few smothered oaths, a sound as if a heavy body was being dragged over the floor towards the door, accompanied by a thump! thump! We were told that the literary man of the firm had converted himself into an all 'round bouncer and that he was busily employed in looking after the welfare and morals of the unhappy waiters who had taken too much by kicking them out of the room.

The sound of revelry by night that Byron wrote about would have been dead silence if placed by the side of the Golden Wedding banquet at the St. James'. I doubt if Wellington would have heard the roar of the opening guns at Waterloo above the din had he been present on the memorable evening of which I write, and the map of Europe would have been considerably altered in consequence.

As the evening wore on I was much amused by a wordy conflict between a northern and a southern man as to the merits of their respective sections. The war between the North and South was then on and feeling ran high. From words the men came to blows and then they clinched. In their struggle they fell across the table, shattering crockery and glassware and upsetting food and wine. The women screamed. One fainted and did not revive until one of the male guests proposed to dash a goblet of water in her face, and another produced a snuff-box and insisted upon giving her a pinch, while a third wanted to sever her stay laces, which were drawn quite taut, when she suddenly came to, passed a hand dreamily over her face, and after hysterically demanding to be told where she was resumed her place at the table. Meanwhile a ring had been formed about the belligerents and the late Ned Allen, afterwards M. P. P. for Lillooet, who had done a little pugilism in his day in England, undertook to act as umpire. Now, as fate would have it, while nearly all the guests wore sack coats, and some who had no sacks appeared in their overcoats, those who had neither came in the miner's ordinary gray shirt (with a pistol belt (minus the pistol) around their waists to keep up their trousers, one of the combatants, the Northern man, had on the only dress coat in the room. He was the pride of the occasion—the pink of fashion and the mould of form. Amid that singularly arrayed company the claw-hammer coat of the Northerner stood out in bold relief like a storm-signal against a cloudy sky or a game-cock on top of a fence hurling defiance at the Sultan of a neighboring barnyard. The other male guests felt that they were at a disadvantage. The wearer was the Beau Brummel of the evening. It was true that the rest of his apparel did not conform with the coat, for he wore a pair of H. B. Co.'s corduroys. He had the coat buttoned up as far as the buttons went, but peeping out from behind the lapels was the vision of a "biled" shirt! These two innovations proved his ruin. The claw-hammer coat or the "biled" shirt might have been condoned had either stood alone, but the two together were a combination not to be borne by a company such as had assembled in honor of the distinguished bride and bridegroom.

That the ladies rejoiced that there was one gentleman in the room who had been well bred and had been somewhere before, was evidenced by the approving glances they shot at him ever and anon. Every little while a lady would raise her glass and calling the dress coat wearer by name would exclaim, "I looks towards you;" and the gentleman would rise in all the magnificence of his fashionable apparel, place his hand on his heart and reply as he drained his glass, "I likewise bows."

"The h'only person dressed like a gentleman at this table," remarked one belle, as she conveyed a piece of cold ham to her mouth on the blade of her knife. "I should like to be introducted."

Another fair one was heard to remark, "He puts me in mind so much of a 'andsome gentleman I met at 'ome the last time I dined at the dook's."

I was greatly amused by a colloquy between two ladies who occupied seats on opposite sides of the table. Said one, speaking across the board, and referring to he of the clawhammer:

"That's Mr. Perkins, of Barkerville, ain't it?"

"Yes," said the other, "that's him. My! Don't he look fine!"

"Indeed he does. He's quite caffee or lay."

"Wh-a-at?" returned theother. "You mean oh! fat (au fait, she intended to say, I thought) don't you?"

"I mean just what I said—Caffee or lay," glared the vis a vis. "Oh! fat, indeed! Do you want to insult him?"

"Why what you said means coffee and cream."

"When I went to school it meant that a person was just the thing—that he was all there," was the scornful retort.

"Oh!" retorted the friend, sarcastically. "Parley voo Frankay?"

"No thank you," snorted the other with indignation, "I never use Chinook in company—only low people do that."

"Person!" cried the lady on the opposite side.

"Woman!" was tossed back with a hiss.

"Oh! oh!" screamed the other. 'She calls me a woman! Take me away. Some one lead me off to bed. I cannot bear the sight of that ugly face no more." And she threw herself back in the chair and commenced to beat a sort of devil's tattoo on the floor with the heels of her shoes, while she wept and laughed by turns.

"Hysterics," exclaimed one of the waiters who rushed on the scene. "Here, some one take off her shoes and stockings and spank the soles of her feet hard with your bare hands. That'll bring her too. My sister used to have them fits, and that's the way we used to cure her."

Someone made a move to follow the instructions thus given, and actually removed the shoes; but before the stockings could be taken off the patient sprang to her feet and walked to the door with her shoes in her hand, sobbing as she went "She called me a wo-woman!"

Her late antagonist fanned herself violently and beamed affectionately on Mr. Perkins of Barkerville and his tail-coat.

All these things had not been lost on the other guests who were thrown into the shade by the brilliant get-up of the Northerner, and I have not the slightest doubt that the fight was prearranged with the object of taking the beau of the evening down a peg or two. Under the guidance of Allen the parties clinched, and were struggling and panting with excitement when suddenly a tearing sound like the ripping of a cross-cut saw through a thin plank was heard. The Northerner uttered a sharp cry, as he dropped his antagonist and placing his hands behind him discovered that his precious garment had been ripped from waist to shoulders and flapped loosely on either side with naught but the collar and the arms to keep it from an absolute divorce. The sight was too funny for anything. The whole company broke into hysterics of laughter. Men almost threw themselves on the floor and rolled over and over in their hilarity. The Southerner jumped up and down and cracked his heels in his glee, while the wretched victim made frantic efforts to draw the tails together. All in vain, and the laughter grew louder and more pronounced when through the rent it was seen that the supposed "biled" (or dress) shirt was only a dickie or false bosom, held in position by tapes that were tied about the man's body and that beneath the rent was revealed the victim's underwear! Like the happy man of Oriental legend he had no shirt! The poor fellow turned round and round in pursuit of his divided skirts like a revolving hay figure in the Westside show-window, but the tails kept ever one lap ahead, until falling behind hopelessly in the race he paused and glaring across at his late antagonist, who was pounding the table in his mirth, shouted:

"Durn you, Bill Savage, if it hadn't a been for you this ere thing wouldn't have occurred. Wait till I catch you outside!"

"Bah!" retorted Savage: "Joe Perkins, it jest serves yer right. If yer hadn't a put on frills an' airs, and made believe yer was somebody like the man in the Holy Scriptur' when everybody knows you ain't nobody at all, yer wouldn't have bin rigged out like a scarecrow and come here to lord it over us fellers. It just serves you right."

There was a murmur of approval in which the women joined when Savage ceased and the other fellow, finding that he had been deposed as a swell and exposed as a fashionable fraud, broke through the yelling crowd and vanished out of the door, his split coat waving its tails in front of him as he went. The scene was the funniest I ever witnessed in real life. No comedy was ever so ludicrous, and I cannot recall in all my experience (and I have a keen sense of the ridiculous) a more laughable picture than that presented by the unfortunate man as he left the dining hall a baffled and betrayed person and sought the silence of the streets and the midnight air to reflect upon his blighted career as a lady's man and lay for Bill Savage.

The wild revel went on, and the fun continued fast and furious till long after midnight. More than one of the guests disappeared under the table or left for home. Lovidge still held his own in spite of the expostulations and entreaties of his wife, who was rather a nice little body and hadn't touched a drop all evening. But William, who was obstinate, was not disposed to leave while there was any liquor remaining to be drunk. The St. James' people were also interested in opening as many bottles as possible, for the more wine disposed of the larger their bill would be. Among the goodies that occupied space on the bargain counter—I beg pardon, dining table—was a huge rice pudding. About one-half had been eaten and the remainder, which closely resembled a broken cartwheel thickly encrusted with mud, sat patiently awaiting events in the pan in which it had been baked. No one would have imagined that out of so innocent a thing as a rice pudding an event which wrecked a Golden Wedding would grow. About two o'clock Bill Lovidge consented to be led or dragged to the nuptial chamber. Two of his Cariboo friends took each an arm and the tearful spouse with the crushed hat in her hand, followed. It had been arranged to speed the departing couple with a shower of rice and many of the guests had filled their pockets with the grain and threw it in great handfuls upon the pair as they prepared to leave. One of the guests, who had failed to provide himself with rice, looked about for a substitute. It was Bill Savage. In an evil moment his eye alighted on the dish containing the remains of the rice pudding. With Savage to conceive was to execute, and in an instant he had plunged both hands into the soft, yielding mass and hurled it straight at the receding pair. It fell in great pasty patches upon the heads and clothes of Lovidge and his bride and bedaubed their friends as well. In a moment there was great excitement. Savage was pitched upon by the indignant quartette and a number of the guests and kicked from the room, where he fell into Perkins' hands, and was most unmercifully mauled. Others became entangled in the row and a free fight was in progress when Sergt. Blake of the police appeared and dispersed the party.

And so ended the Golden Wedding. I know I shall be reminded that the popular idea of a golden wedding is the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the nuptials of a couple who, having passed through the joys of honeymoon and survived the storms and temptations of wedded life extending over a half century, assemble their friends about them and receive their congratulations and presents as tokens of esteem and love. The picture I have pen-painted today is not of the adventures of a pair who had been married for a period of fifty years, but of a couple who had been married scarcely as many minutes when their friends came together and celebrated their union in one of the maddest, wildest and funniest festivals in which it has ever been my lot to take part. Why was it called a Golden Wedding? Because Bill Lovidge was falsely represented, as "Big Larry" put it, as "rowlin' in gowld," and because his Cariboo friends had related far and near that he was the owner of the richest claim in all Cariboo—that it had prospected as high as $50 to the pan and that he was the wealthiest man in Cariboo. It was these reports that won him a bride and secured him unlimited credit. The claim was called the Never Sweat and George Hunter Cary, the brilliant and gifted Attorney-General of both Colonies, had visited the property in person, had gone down the shaft and had dug with his own hands a panful of the gravel, had brought it to the surface, still holding it in his hands, never once losing sight of it, and had washed the gravel himself and got a prospect of $50. Charmed with the result Cary, who had never heard of a "salted" claim—that is a claim which had been purposely prepared with the object of deceiving the unwary tenderfoot, purchased a control in the Never Sweat. From that prospect sprang the famous Cary Castle. Upon the profits he had hoped to realize from the Never Sweat the walls of that ill-starred building were reared and when the Never Sweat proved to be a delusion and a snare the beautiful castle in the air which the too credulous gentleman had built crumbled. There remained the castle on the rocks, to be sure; but it soon passed out of Mr. Cary's hands and into that of the government and from 1865 until its destruction by fire three years ago it was the residence of British Columbia's Governors.

But to return to William Lovidge and his bride. The banquet and the strange doings thereat were the gossip of the town on the next and many following days. The bills that came pouring in to the newly married man were enormous. Every one had charged his own price for everything. I think I heard that the accounts footed up $5,000—and the strangest part of the story is that there was not a dollar available with which to discharge them. The Never Sweat was worthless, and the money paid Lovidge by Cary had been dissipated long before the feast at the St. James'. The St. James' bill was about $1,800. For quick cash the club offered to accept $1,500. Otherwise the case must go to court. Mrs. Shoolber asked for $3,000 and the tailor's bill and a few casuals brought the total to $5,000 or thereabouts. There was imprisonment for debt here at that time and while the creditors were preparing to take out writs Lovidge, with the assistance of some of his Cariboo friends, managed to slip away to the American side in a sloop and did not return to Victoria. His wife joined him at Seattle and Lovidge, who was a butcher by trade, got employment at San Francisco. The St. James' Club firm came to grief in consequence of the bills they had incurred on account of the Golden Wedding supper. Under the impression that Lovidge was rich they had joined with Mrs. Shoolber in making the bill as large as possible and in common with her lost everything. The following week the St. James' closed its doors and a red flag betokened an auction sale. The Shoolbers suffered a similar fate, and so ends the story.

Speaking of ex-Mayor Lewis, I am reminded of an amusing incident in connection with him which will be worth telling now. He was taken very ill on one occasion and for a few days fluttered on the border of the other land. Drs. Trimble and Powell, who attended him, pronounced him convalescent after a short time, but he had made up his mind that he was going to die and die he would. No argument, no persuasion could convince him that he had yet several years of life before him. His friends pleaded with him to make an effort, but he wouldn't stir hand or foot to save his life. "It is written," he said, "and what's written can't be blotted out. I am doomed."

The physicians were at their wits' ends. Here was a man with whom there was nothing the matter actually dying for want of pluck. Various plans to arouse the man were conceived, but they all failed in execution. One day Trimble was summoned in great haste to the sick man's bedside. On his way the doctor encountered a Mr. Swigert, Now Swigert was the opposition undertaker, and there was a brisk rivalry between the two for funerals. An idea struck the doctor. He entered the sick room and after feeling Lewis' pulse said, "You're well—get up."

"No," said Lewis, "I'll never get up again."

"Very well," rejoined Trimble. "Hurry up and die, then, for Swigert's waiting outside to bury you, and he says he cannot wait much longer."

In a moment Lewis sat up in bed and in another moment he was scrambling into his clothes. "He'll never bury me, by gracious, for I'll live to bury him." And he did. Swigert died of smallpox in 1868 and Lewis buried him.

Archibald Forbes would occasionally, when campaigning, be exceedingly smart in his personal appearance, and at other times he would be quite the reverse. Probably year in and year out he was mostly the reverse. He, however would smarten up at odd periods, when one would least expect it. We were on the road to Tirnova in July of 1877 with the Russian army, a few miles to the right of the advance. The march, though a forced one, was like a military parade, or grand procession, all the way from its first step on Turkish soil. Forbes and I were slowly riding along a stretch of country studded with bright little villages, with their inhabitants all agog at the victorious advance of their emancipators from the Turkish yoke. In their enthusiasm the villagers had decorated their cottages, and here and there on the line of march triumphal arches were erected. Presently our attention was attracted by a man mounted on a shaggy little pony. He was in the picturesque garb of the Bulgar peasant, and, which surprised us considerably, he wore or carried no weapons with the exception of a razor. Forbes at once, with that intuitiveness which always characterized the famous war correspondent, knew that his man was just the man he wanted to meet. In fact, he was an itinerant barber, and my friend required a shave.

Forbes had that morning borrowed my glass to see how far his nose had been skinned by the sun, and discovered that he was growing too much beard, so here was an opportunity to have it pruned down to what is known by some as a "Charley"—a little tuft on the chin similar to that worn by the unfortunate English monarch, the first of that name. At a signal from Forbes the barber was off his horse in the twinkling of an eye, a saddle cloth was spread on the ground, and Forbes, seated upon it, was soon in the busy hands of the shaver, being relieved of his superfluous hair. Meanwhile the horses and myself stood quietly watching the proceedings. After the performance we took the opportunity of the halt to eat something, and as the barber had bread to spare, we shared with him, that which he had never known the delights of before, some sardines. For this discovery he was so grateful that he generously offered us a pull at his gallon gourd of native wine, which was hitched on to the pommel of his saddle, and which we had taken for water. We tried to trade for that gourd, but even a full box of sardines and a cake of tobacco would not tempt him to part with the precious liquor.

We had expected to hear the sound of fighting, but as yet the gruesome noise of cannon did not mar the beauty or the sylvan quietude of the lovely country we were now traversing. The only sound that broke the noontide siesta, which all nature seemed to enjoy, was caused by the numerous babbling brooks, purling down from the foot hills of the smaller Balkans. Our track now converged on to the main road, and we were soon in the atmosphere of dust which always hangs round the flanks and rear of a marching army. The Russian cavalry were halted at the mouth of the Zavada gorge, through the trough of which flows the river Yantra, a picturesque canon, the rocky, precipitous flanks of which were covered with vigorous foliage. Crowning on either side the apparently inaccessible heights were two quaint and ancient monasteries, their sunny walls flashing out of the dark green scrub. At first the gorge appeared to open into the weird circle of a gloomy crater, and the road we were traversing might be winding over its central cone; while the rapid river in the heart of the gorge, but for its cool murmur, might be the flow of boiling lava.

A few shots now echoed through the hills, and then the mounted men hurriedly pushed forward up the tortuous throat of the pass, over the cone on the top of which was perched Tirnova—a conglomeration of rocks, crags, houses, and shanties all huddled together, intersected by sinuous courts and alleys, which here and there cut into the main thoroughfare, that switched back till it delved down into the strath which is flanked by the higher Balkans.

The Turks practically made no stand at the old Bulgarian capital. They had hurriedly retired on the sight of the Russian advance guard, who had hastened the Moslem rear with a rifle volley. The enemy had retreated in hot haste towards the Shipka.

In their joy the inhabitants of this town also had hastily decorated their houses with bunting, and had come out en masse to welcome us. The streets were full of women, girls and children, and the windows of the quaint, overhanging walls of the houses were teeming with pretty faces. It was with difficulty that we advanced, for the women and young girls clung round our horses, decorating their bridles with flowers, and thrusting their posies into our laps. Many mothers held their young ones up to us to be kissed; others would press their lips against our boots, and not a few of the softer sex showed little reluctance when the stalwart Cossacks lifted them into their saddles and heartily embraced them.

Radesky at the Shipka.

Arriving at the little market place, where but a few hours before the Turks had arranged to execute some of the prominent citizens, the joy and excitement of the people at our arrival was expressed with such fervor that Forbes and I found some trouble in dismounting. When we at last succeeded we were carried off our feet by the mad enthusiasm of the crowd.

Dusty, hot and weary, with difficulty we held on to our horses, hustled on all sides by the excited people. Presently, a pretty, dark haired girl plucked at Forbes' tunic, and as he turned towards the wench a familiar voice cried: "Couldn't get near you, so I asked Maritza to squeeze through the throng." It was our good friend MacGahn who was greeting us.

"And this is her mother," continued he as a buxom lady bowed and smirked to Forbes and myself. "She wants you and Villiers to stay with her. Excellent woman, she will make you most comfortable, so come right away."

There was no hesitation on our part. Leaving our horses we followed the old lady and her fair daughter. We soon arrived at our destination, a little clock maker's shop abutting on the main street. The first floor was virtually the top storey, for the house was built down the precipitous, rocky sides of the cone. The common room was at the back of the shop, and looked over the roofs of half a dozen houses clinging to the heights above the valley. As we entered it from a narrow side street, the mingled tunes of numerous musical boxes greeted us, a pleasant surprise for such honored guests as we, arranged by the watchmaker, the only son of the robust widow, and brother of the charming little Maritza. The sun was sparkling through the lattice of the window, and danced about a silver salver placed on a stool in the centre of the room, on which were sections of a luscious black seed melon. Its deep pink flesh seemed to have a frosty rime upon it, and it was both cool and sweet. Maritza herself waited upon us, and, after handing round Turkish coffee, rolled us cigarettes with her own deft little fingers. Her mother had been suspected by the Turks of belonging to some revolutionary committee, and had been condemned to death, and, in fact, was about to be executed that very afternoon, and was simply saved from the rope by the timely arrival of the Russians. There was, therefore, a true ring of hospitality about the welcome accorded to us by the widow and her family. Her charming daughter was, I am afraid, a flirt, and immediately set her cap at my friend Forbes, whose handsome person and gallantry were always attractive to the fairer sex. But it still might have been possible that if Forbes had not been so fortunate as to have met with a barber that morning I might have been in the running myself! I could hardly console myself with the widow. Then again MacGahn was a persona grata with that lady, having been her guest the previous winter when he was acting as "Bulgarian Atrocity Investigator" for the Daily News. So I sketched the picturesque group instead as they squatted or lounged on gay colored carpets round the salver, smoking, sipping coffee, or munching melon, while Maritza sang quaint Bulgarian songs, accompanying herself with an instrument which combined the banjo with the sweetness of the guitar. Probably we should have enjoyed her song more if the various musical boxes had been of the same key and tune. They, however, were all vigorously playing their own airs, and the clocks in the adjacent shop did not improve matters as they loudly chimed the quarters, or "co-coo'ed" the hours.

I shall never forget our first night in our hospitable abode. Between the tickings of those clocks, the biting of myriads of fleas and other more pungent vampires, we were awake all night We sat up, smoked and read, till our hostess and her fair daughter came in with lighted tapers and organized a flea-hunt. The marvellous dexterity with which the ladies dipped their fingers in the tallow and then as quickly as a flash caught up the little insects and cremated them in the flame, was a sight worth watching. After about an hour's sport of this kind the ladies retired. Soon the chill of the dawn cooled the biting ardour of the remaining little tormentors, and left unmolested, we fell asleep. The sun had been up several hours before the hostess came in with our coffee and the pretty Maritza brought the ewers of water on the balcony for our ablutions. She had already been in the yard where our horses were tethered to give them a feed of corn. Her mother, while we were washing, arranged the common room to serve our breakfasts in, and later, as we consumed that meal, all the music boxes in the establishment recommenced their madding melodies. Forbes and I made Maritza's house our headquarters for several weeks, but neither Forbes nor myself had the heart to request our hostess to stop the noise of those musical boxes, for they seemed to give her and her family so much pleasure.

The Turks scattered for a moment.

One day the sound of music of a different sort came with a dull thunder from away over from towards the Balkans. Our nags were full of mettle after a long period of inactivity, and rampant with good feeding, capered around as we waved adieu to Maritza and her mother who watched us careering down the zigzag paths of the valley below followed by the full blast of those wretched music-boxes. The fight for the supremacy of the "Blue Danube" and "God Save the Queen" still lingered with us till Maritza's waving handkerchief, bright eyes, and the tinkling music were suddenly cut off as we flanked the rocky base of the Tirnova crag.

The distant rumble of cannon denoted to us that this big event we had been anxiously waiting for was about to come off. Forbes, when at Gorney Studen, the Russian headquarters, had wormed out of the authorities that General Radeski in command of the 8th Russian corps had received information that the Turks, 50,000 strong, under Suleiman, the famous Turkish General, fresh from his successful campaign in Montenegro, were now threatening the southern passes of the Balkans, and had hurried off with his men to the Elena Pass to stem the Turkish advance; but this noise of cannon came from another direction over by the Shipka, where Darozinski, with only 5,000 men, was standing guard at the mouth of the pass, a small enough force to attempt to stop Sulieman's advance if he concentrated his large army against it. The continuous rumble of cannon presaged stiff fighting, and we presently came across signs of the conflict that was going on in the distant mountains. Our road now became a jumble of munition carts, of artillery, and asprinkling of laggards hurrying to catch up with their companies. Soon the whole stretch of country to the foot of the Balkans be-

Our quarters at Tirnova.

(Continued on Page Eight.)